



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 17 December 2006

Note: This is the final issue of the Ready Schools e-newsletter. To access the archive of all issues, please visit http://www.ccsso.org/whats_new/newsletters/ready_schools/index.cfm.

The Ready Schools e-newsletter is a monthly publication from CCSSO that provides information, ideas and resources to support schools as they strive to become more prepared and ready to meet the needs of all children. A "ready school" is a critical component of the school readiness conversation and school improvement efforts. Through this newsletter, we will highlight efforts at the state and local level that support schools in their process toward becoming "ready schools."

Ready Schools Support Children's Transition to Kindergarten

Transitioning to Kindergarten: A Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators
<http://www.getreadytoread.org/content/view/260/>

This toolkit from the National Center for Learning Disabilities provides materials for school administrators, child care providers, and kindergarten teachers to effectively plan and implement kindergarten transition activities. Materials include

- a kindergarten readiness indicators checklist
- observation and activity guides
- templates to collect writing and drawing student samples
- the Getting Ready to Read early literacy screening tool
- multiple parent resources available in English and Spanish
- a training PowerPoint presentation on the toolkit

Ready Schools Encourage Continuity and Alignment between Early Care and Education Programs and Elementary Schools

The **New Jersey** State Department of Education created Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality. Similar to the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards, it provides a benchmark of effective practices for local school districts that includes

- home, school and community partnerships
- the learning environment
- assessment

- teaching and learning in the areas of social/emotional development, creative arts, health, safety and physical education, language arts/literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages

Local school systems are encouraged to use the document as

- a resource for ensuring appropriate implementation of the curriculum being used in the classroom
- a guide for instructional planning and teaching
- a framework for ongoing professional development opportunities
- a framework for the development of a comprehensive early childhood education assessment system

For more information on Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality, please visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/expectations/>

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

Core Knowledge for PK-3 Teaching: Ten Components of Effective Instruction

<http://www.fcd-us.org/pdfs/SadowskiBrief.pdf>

This brief from the Foundation for Child Development describes the “core knowledge” needed among educators teaching grades preschool to grade three. It recommends changes to multiple entities involved in teacher preparation and quality that include school education programs, state certification benchmarks, and district/school level professional development planning. Deriving from standards and guidelines of national organizations, the following elements of developmentally appropriate PK-3 teaching necessitate an aligned set of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment:

- knowledge of child development
- methods for teaching diverse children
- use of multiple forms of assessment
- organization of learning environments
- curriculum design that helps children make connections
- parent and family outreach
- professional collaboration and development
- reflection for enhanced teaching
- vertical alignment of instruction across grade levels

The Effective Teaching Practices section of the National Center for Learning Disabilities website provides K-8 teachers with information on effective instructional practices. It contains resources for teachers that include

- a how-to guide for screening students’ early literacy skills prior to kindergarten entry
- activities and online games to support early literacy development

- recent articles and research on topics such as classroom instruction, management, and monitoring student progress
- links to additional resources on the web

To access this information, go to

<http://www.ncl.org/content/view/1047/389/>

Effective Preschool Curricula and Teaching Strategies

http://www.nccp.org/rel_16.html

This issue brief from the National Center for Children in Poverty focuses on strategies to increase early literacy and early mathematics achievement among low-income preschool-aged children. It reviews research and practices to present two strategies: the use of an intentional curriculum and the improvement of teacher effectiveness through professional development and supports.

An intentional curriculum is research-based, emphasizes teachers actively engaged with students, includes attention to social skills, and is responsive to cultural diversity and to English language learners. The brief explores professional development and supports for teachers by describing various types of on-going research studies on topics that aim to improve teacher effectiveness. The next issue brief will present the findings of those studies.

Carrots and Sticks: New Jersey's Effort to Create a Qualified PK-3 Workforce

<http://www.fcd-us.org/pdfs/CarrotsSticksBrief.pdf>

In this brief, the Foundation for Child Development examines the efforts taken in **New Jersey** to implement the *Abbott v. Burke* state Supreme Court decision to reduce the achievement gap among the poorest school districts. Compliance to this mandate prescribed upgrading the qualifications of the state's pre-kindergarten teaching workforce by

- instituting a specialized PK-3 certification program among higher education systems
- administering a scholarship program for teachers to attain a higher education degree and teacher certification

At the district level, early childhood supervisors and a team of master teachers were employed to improve the quality of curriculum and instruction of pre-kindergarten programs and to provide various forms of professional development.

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

Community and Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works

<http://www.communityschools.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=46&Itemid=49>

This report from the Coalition for Community Schools presents community engagement strategies for school principals on developing and sustaining a community school. It identifies comprehensive community schools that embody the following conditions for learning:

- a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students
- students are motivated and engaged in learning—both in school and in community settings, during and after school
- the basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed
- there is mutual respect and effective collaboration between families and school staff
- community engagement and school efforts promote a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful and that connects students to broader learning community
- early childhood development is fostered through high-quality, comprehensive programs that nurture learning and development

Interviews and focus groups indicate principals developing the conditions for learning in their schools depend heavily on the support and resources of the partners in the community. Findings suggest seven community engagement strategies:

- incorporate the interests of all members of the school and community
- create a school vision with goals and objectives
- invite community members to share resources and work deliberately with staff, families, and the community to reach objectives
- learn about the community and listen to the needs of the families
- define diversity as a strength and create opportunities for conversations about issues of race and class
- engage all types of community groups and create a political will to support school efforts by using stories and data
- foster partnerships that align to the school vision, regularly reassess, and focus on long-term sustainability

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Transition Alert: Websites Related to Promising Programs, Transitions, and School Readiness

<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/NECTC/DOCUMENTS/TRANSITIONALERTS/LinkstoOrgsSchReadinessTransitionMarch2006.pdf>

This issue of *Transition Alert* by the National Early Childhood Transition Center provides a list of website links to promising practices/model programs, federal school readiness/preschool programs, and school readiness reports and resource centers. Research and reports on school readiness topics include

- Program Evaluation: Outcomes for Children and Cost/Benefit Analysis
- Importance of the Early Years: Brain Research and Early Childhood Education Theory
- School Readiness Assessment
- Guides to Building High-Quality Early Childhood Programs
- Disabilities, Diversity and Cultural Competence

The compiled list is reprinted from Maryland's Countdown to Kindergarten Campaign and First 5 California Children and Families Commission booklet, *School Readiness: Children's Readiness for School and School's Readiness for Children*.

The What Works Clearinghouse website from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences was developed to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. The website provides reviews of the latest research on topics focusing on beginning reading, early childhood education, dropout prevention, elementary school math, English language learners, character education, and middle school math curricula. Updates are made in 60 day intervals.

To access the What Works Clearinghouse website, go to:

<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/>

Staff, consultants, and grantees at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation developed the Ready Schools Reference Guide CD. The CD was created in October 2006 and contains the most up to date resources on ready schools. Reports, articles, and other publications on the CD cover a range of topics relevant to ready schools including:

- Getting Schools Ready
- School Design
- Economic Development
- Community and Family
- Public Pre-K
- Teaching
- Current Reality

- Policy Support

The CD is available for free. For more information on how you may obtain a copy of this resource, please visit:

<http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=101&CID=3&CatID=3&ItemID=5000284&NID=20&LanguageID=0>

About the School Readiness Project at CCSSO

The School Readiness Project is part of the School Improvement Initiative housed at CCSSO and is supported through funding from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#). The school readiness project is designed to support states in the development and implementation of comprehensive systems of early childhood education in low-income communities with a particular focus on ready schools.

To submit a news item relevant to School Readiness-Ready Schools at the state or district level, to provide feedback, or to subscribe/unsubscribe, send an email to Morakot Masokas at morakotm@ccsso.org. PDF versions of all Ready Schools newsletters are available at http://www.ccsso.org/whats_new/newsletters/ready_schools/index.cfm.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on the major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress and the public.

Our mission statement: The Council of Chief State School Officers, through Leadership, Advocacy, and Service, assists chief state school officers and their organizations in achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.