

**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE RESIDENCY ROUNDTABLE:**

INDICATORS OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

**Boston Marriott Long Wharf
Boston, MA**

September 19th – 20th, 2002

Sponsored by:

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
The Ford Foundation

Hosted by:

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Participating States:

Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin

Purpose:

This meeting was the second in a series of small work sessions to help states make accelerated progress in selecting and/or developing school readiness indicators in priority areas. Participants included state agency data and policy staff from Early Intervention, Early Childhood, Education, Health, Human Services and Governor's Offices as well as state school readiness team members from child policy organizations, universities, and Head Start. The roundtable focused on indicators related to the healthy language and literacy development of children from birth to age eight. The indicators reflect state investments in programs and policies for young children and families as well as child outcomes. Participants received background materials prior to the meeting in order to inform the discussion. Materials in the briefing binder are available on the Initiative website at www.GettingReady.org.

Meeting Objectives:

- To identify the issues that are critical to the language and literacy development of young children, including family environment, community conditions, child characteristics, and service systems for young children and their families.
- To consider a set of school readiness indicators that reflect child outcomes (language and literacy development of infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and early elementary school children) as well as systems outcomes (state policies and programs that affect young children and families).
- To select priority indicators to track progress in supporting the language and literacy development of young children from birth to age 8.
- To identify potential data sources for indicators of the language and literacy development of young children.

Thursday, September 19

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Executive Director
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

The first National Meeting of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative took place in October 2001 in Newport, Rhode Island. National Meetings are meant to bring together state teams to develop school readiness indicators and create strong policies for children and families. The Initiative realized that full National Meetings were not sufficient; smaller, more focused meetings would be necessary to discuss important issues in-depth. Ann Segal suggested Residency Roundtables as the means of achieving this goal. Residency Roundtables bring together a small group of state and national experts to discuss the most pressing issues in our work.

While our meetings are often regarded as timely, this Residency Roundtable is particularly so. An article appeared in the day's *USA Today* highlighting preschool funding cuts. Early care and education is on the national scene, and it is there to stay.

Language and literacy development is one of the five domains that fully define school readiness. The indicators used to measure progress in these domains must be firmly rooted in the states and communities where children live. The School Readiness Indicators Initiative puts power in the hands of states. We have 17 diverse states, and the Initiative benefits from the differences among us. We will continue to work together to formulate our best thinking as we measure the success of our children.

Lisa Klein, Senior Program Officer at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, addressed the group by first recognizing Ann Segal, a longstanding partner in the School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Ms. Klein expressed her thanks to the states for their hard work. The Kauffman Foundation funds this Initiative because of its deep commitment to children and families. Kauffman's new CEO, Carl J. Schramm, has renewed the Kauffman Foundation's longstanding commitment to early education. We will work together to learn how kids are doing as we build policies to improve their well-being and school readiness.

State and Federal Policies: Focus on Language and Literacy of Young Children

Kristie Kauerz
Program Director – Early Childhood
Education Commission of the States

Ms. Kauerz provided a background on the federal policies affecting early literacy. Particular attention was paid to the No Child Left Behind Act, *Reading First* and *Early Reading First*.

Ms. Kauerz's report *No Child Left Behind Policy Brief: Literacy* is attached.

Additional points:

For most of ECS's history, the organization was focused on K-12 education. Under New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen's leadership, ECS began focusing on prekindergarten, making it a permanent initiative. Governor Shaheen understood that early education is key to the entire educational spectrum for children. Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn then brought a focus to K-3 literacy under his administration. Governor Roy Barnes will combine the early childhood education and K-3 literacy initiatives and focus on closing the achievement gap for children. His administration will look at school readiness, literacy by 3rd grade, and numeracy by 8th grade.

Other national groups are becoming more involved in early childhood issues. The National Governors Association will soon launch a task force on school readiness assessment.

The No Child Left Behind Act, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law in January 2002, brought sweeping changes to the educational landscape. Two programs make up the literacy component of this act: *Reading First* (K-3) and *Early Reading First* (pre-k). These programs are different from Clinton's reading program, the Reading Excellent Act.

The federal government expects all states to submit a *Reading First* plan. These plans must use scientifically-based research as the foundation of all programs. This has become a priority for states. Funding will be competitive since there is not enough funding to cover programs in all states.

Reading First and *Early Reading First* emphasize professional development. Funds must be set aside for professional development and training.

In the *Reading First* initiative, reading has five components that must be addressed:

- *Phonemic awareness*: the ability to hear, identify, and play with individual sounds – or phonemes – in spoken words
- *Phonics*: the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language
- *Fluency*: the capacity to read text accurately and quickly
- *Vocabulary*: the words students must know to communicate effectively
- *Comprehension*: the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read

Early Reading First focuses on local community partnerships rather than state level work. *Early Reading First* plans must support age-appropriate development of language and literacy skills.

These new programs have several positive features. Funding is very strong for both *Reading First* (\$900 million per year projected for six years) and *Early Reading First* (\$75 million per year projected for three years). The No Child Left Behind Act addresses accountability, asking states to test all kids at the end of each year. It also focuses needed attention on teacher quality and educational leadership. These programs put resources on the literacy needs of young children, bringing critical resources at the most important time in a child's cognitive development. The new law creates opportunities for high-level interagency coordination, asking for state literacy coordinating bodies staffed by high-level department representatives. *Early Reading First* builds connections between prekindergarten and public school systems.

On a cautionary note, we have to be careful about some elements of No Child Left Behind. The requirement of “scientifically-based research” calls to question what that means to teaching and curriculum. While the U.S. Department of Education defines scientifically-based, it does not have an approved list of research states can use as resources. States must think carefully about the quality of literacy programs, but little early care and education literacy research exists that talks about age-appropriate curriculum. Since *Reading First* provides funding to states and *Early Reading First* provides funding directly to communities, there is a risk that these programs become fragmented. We must be careful to link and coordinate these initiatives. Another caution is that the new focus on literacy may overshadow the importance of the other dimensions of children’s school readiness. Our early childhood efforts must be comprehensive in nature.

Ms. Kauerz conducted an informal poll of participants, finding that:

- 3 participants were involved in writing their state’s *Reading First* plan.
- 2 participants did not know if their state had submitted a *Reading First* plan.
- 10 participants did not know if any communities in their state had applied for *Early Reading First* funding.

Questions/Discussion

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) inquired why *Reading First* and *Early Reading First* were designed differently. Ms. Kauerz replied that funding was an issue; there is not enough money to fully fund all efforts in all states. The programs are funded differently for a few reasons. *Reading First* is linked politically to K-12 legislation. *Early Reading First* avoids state departments in part because of the fear held by some that states will take over early care and education, putting child care out of business. This fear is probably not going to be a reality. Hopefully these programs will grow and forge partnerships with Head Start and Health and Human Services.

Yasmine Daniel (New Jersey) noticed that *Early Reading First* and Even Start both have similarly structured funding streams. Is there a connection? Ms. Kauerz said that Even Start is a separate program. However, *Reading First* plans must describe connections to existing state literacy efforts including Even Start.

Terry Lochhead (New Hampshire) said that there are Even Start requirements that tie in to No Child Left Behind related to professional qualifications and development. *Early Reading First* in New Hampshire connects to the Best Schools program (a reform initiative) and utilizes Early Learning Teams that support literacy development. These teams include K-3 representatives, child care providers, and prekindergarten professionals. New Hampshire is making these connections deliberately to avoid fragmentation. Ms. Kauerz was impressed, saying how struck she was by how disconnected other states’ reading plans were from other state initiatives. She encouraged participants to find out who in their state is writing the *Reading First* plan and offer to supplement the application.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) said that by not fully funding No Child Left Behind and dragging its heels on TANF and CCDBG, the administration seems to forget that money must be invested in enabling parents to afford high quality programs for young children. How can states use *Reading First* and *Early Reading First* dollars to benefit parents? Ms. Kauerz spoke about a recent interview she did with *USA Today* in which it seemed clear the editorial writer did not understand the connection between child care and early childhood education. That is a

common problem. Combining programs under one administration can combine funding streams. In general, states are not doing all they can to advocate for early childhood programs on the federal level. We cannot expect legislators to understand the issues of early care and education without providing them with the information we have.

Ann Segal (Action Strategies) discussed the possible move of Head Start to the Department of Education. She suggested that if Head Start goes, then child care should also be moved to Education. Child care was moved to Health and Human Services in the 1970's. She fears that if Head Start alone becomes a program in the Department of Education, child care quality would suffer. Taking 4 year-olds out of child care will leave younger children who tend to cost programs more money. Ms. Segal also mentioned that Head Start programs run by schools have less comprehensiveness.

Barbara Gardner (Massachusetts) argued that standards can align the early childhood community with public schools and improve quality at the same time. This is a good opportunity for early care and education to think about transitions to school. Ms. Kauerz added that early childhood learning standards should align with school standards. Yasmine Daniels (New Jersey) shared that often the transition from preschool to public school is difficult for children and families because of vast differences in program structure such as class size. Ms. Kauerz remarked that this underscores the importance of keeping policymakers informed.

Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) felt that classroom environment indicators would be difficult to measure. Children have greater disadvantages than just not having access to books. There are disparities in oral language, access to quality programs, etc. Our indicators need to capture the range of literacy indicators.

Charles Bruner (Child and Family Policy Center) asked about the research base for the debate over phonics vs. whole language. Ms. Kauerz felt that the Department of Education would say it is not wholly behind phonics and phonemics as the best method of improving children's language and literacy development. Her No Child Left Behind Brief (attached) discusses science-based reading research.

Theresa Garcia (California) informed the participants that California has many resources that meet the government's four requirements for meeting the scientifically-based criteria. We see children succeeding at very high rates who are overcoming multiple barriers such as poverty. Few states are approved for *Reading First* because the criteria are so high. Ms. Kauerz reminded participants that the Department of Education expects states to send proposals to *Reading First*. Teams will work with states to improve grants. In terms of the high research criteria, the requirement sets high standards and, therefore, high expectations for states. The process will be particularly challenging for states that lack resources other states have. *Reading First* suggests programs that meet the criteria but doesn't limit states to only those programs. Sharon Freden (Kansas) shared her impression that the Department of Education may not require states to use those programs, but there is a feeling that other programs will not be funded. Ms. Kauerz replied that we should be proactive about highlighting programs that we know work. The School Readiness Indicators Initiative is being proactive because it encourages states to define what's best in each state's environment. Denise Bradley (Health and Human Services) shared that she is excited to see early childhood education getting federal attention. We will work together to find out what works and share it with other states.

Keynote Presentation

Challenges and Opportunities: Building the Language and Literacy Skills of All Children

Dorothy Strickland, Ph.D.

Professor

Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey

Dr. Strickland explored what it takes to provide all children with the language-rich environments and literacy skills they need to thrive in school and in life. Drawing from her personal research in literacy, she shared strategies to improve the language and literacy development of young children and identified critical challenges that must be overcome to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn and start on a path to reading proficiency. Her presentation drew from an upcoming paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Education entitled *What is Scientifically Based Research in Early Childhood Education: Focus on Early Literacy and School Readiness*. This paper will be made available on the Initiative website (www.GettingReady.org) when it is released.

Dr. Strickland's remarks connect nicely to Ms. Kauerz's presentation. Dr. Strickland has done lots of work on the national level, including work with the *Early Reading First* initiative.

"Literacy is a learned skill, not a biological awakening." This language from *Early Reading First* begs the question "How is literacy learned" and then "How can we measure our success?"

There are two kinds of scientifically-based literacy research: research describing the skills and development of literacy and program-specific research. Our research is stretching beyond qualitative research into clear, thoughtful observation and discussion.

Literacy is firmly attached to the national scene. Our collective understanding of what literacy means has gone beyond simply "reading skills" to encompass listening, speaking, viewing, and technology. Viewing is a new kind of literacy, but demands the same kinds of comprehension strategies. We are helping children understand text in all its forms: written words, spoken words, and images.

This new attention to literacy brings with it concerns and tensions in the educational community. Is our curriculum adequate? There is a danger that curricula become unbalanced, neglecting other essential domains of child development. We need a balanced curriculum, and communities should decide that.

Teacher quality needs to be highlighted. While strong new teachers can benefit a program, they should replace excellent local teachers. Schools should reflect the population of the communities in which they serve.

Professional development needs to be a priority in communities, states, and the country. Bringing high quality, ongoing professional development to teachers is hard. The No Child Left Behind Act should be applauded for its emphasis on professional development.

A call for systematic reform in early childhood and public education has been made. State departments of education are looking at early childhood education academies. The federal Department of Education is looking at creating federal pre-kindergarten standards.

Assessments are critical, but the curriculum must be broader than assessments. While “what gets assessed gets taught” may be a reality, there is no reason we cannot look at assessments with this in mind to strengthen curricula across the country.

Research is building on the roles adults play in supporting a child’s development.

Dr. Strickland reviewed the five domains of school readiness: physical health and motor development, social and emotional development, language and literacy, approaches to learning, and cognition.

Play is an important component of early childhood education. Learning should be joyful for children. Some early education professionals fear play will be eliminated from children’s educational lives.

The social and emotional side of literacy is self-regulation. Self-regulation is critical to literacy development. Children need to build the ability to make choices about how they use their time and energy on tasks such as reading.

Three names were mentioned as great thinkers in the field of child cognition: Jean Piaget, B.F. Skinner and Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky wrote on children’s complex thinking and adult-child social interaction.

Learning environments must be carefully constructed for children. We are learning that environments can affect how genes work. Environments themselves are neutral, but it is what we do with and within the environment that impacts children.

We are left with three key points to remember:

- Literacy learning starts early and persists throughout life.
- Oral language is the foundation of literacy development.
- Children’s experiences with print greatly influence their ability to comprehend what is read to them and what they read on their own.

Questions/Discussion

Ann Segal (Action Strategies) related a story of her child, who did not make babbling sounds until age 2. After that apparent delay, the child started forming sentences quickly. Dr. Strickland said that stories such as this should be shared. This child could have been harmed if she had been labeled “delayed.” There is no need to be alarmed if a child falls behind a developmental milestone. We simply need to gather more information from a variety of perspectives.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) said that few early childhood teachers in Virginia understood the milestones of literacy development, let alone had the ability to track it. Many providers enrolled in the TEACH program have low language skills themselves. How can we familiarize teachers with the developmental milestones of early literacy? Dr. Strickland replied that all teachers should know about children’s language and literacy development. Curricula should be adjusted to match our knowledge of children’s developmental milestones, keeping in mind children’s individual needs and differences. Phil Baimas (Massachusetts) proposed an assets-based perspective toward teachers. Early childhood educators all have strengths and skills that can be utilized by programs. Tapping into their experiences affirms their connection to the

program and the field of early childhood education. Dr. Strickland reminded participants of the importance of professional development.

Lisa Klein (Kauffman Foundation) said that states are balancing their indicator work between having a full, long set of indicators and a shorter, more powerful list. She asked about the most critical indicators of children's language and literacy development. Dr. Strickland replied that receptive language skills such as responses to stories are critical. We should also look at how children respond to stories expressively. Other important indicators are children's use of language to meet their needs, children's interest in books and stories, and book handling skills.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant (Rhode Island) said that sides are being taken in the indicator world over the issue of knowing if a child is ready for school. It can be challenging to select appropriate indicators. To what extent is an indicator such as letter recognition appropriate for young children? Dr. Strickland responded by saying that letter name knowledge is linked to early reading. However, simply memorizing letters is not the best way to build early literacy skills. Children who know about letters tend to do better in school. The point is not to memorize discrete facts but to know how these facts interact and connect.

Nan Vendegna (Colorado) said that it is a challenge to link developmental milestones to staff development. At the last Head Start STEP training, presenters delivered information "right out of the manual" and did not link it to the day to day experiences of teachers and children. Some participants seemed to lack professional knowledge. Dr. Strickland acknowledged that professionals come with a diverse amount of experience and expertise. A good program, and a good teacher, must be flexible to meet the needs of all children. We need to help professionals make programs work for kids. She added that topics such as phonemic awareness can be overwhelming for early childhood teachers.

Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) shared that the process of teaching reading is important. Adult-child relationships are crucial to the development of literacy skills in children. The visibility of the importance of relationships and environmental components needs to be raised. Dr. Strickland puts the responsibility for raising the visibility on people in the literacy field. People need to know that literacy is not learned in a vacuum. Lisa Klein (Kauffman Foundation) offered that the School Readiness Indicators Initiative can also play a role in sharing information about literacy development. States have the opportunity to use indicators to shape literacy policies back home.

What Research Tells Us: Indicators of Language and Literacy

David K. Dickinson, Ed.D.
Associate Professor, Teacher Education
Boston College

Dr. Dickinson provided an overview of the research base for developing children's language and literacy skills. He highlighted the range of skills expected by teachers at kindergarten entry and identified the contributing factors between birth and school entry that are important building blocks for language and literacy in early school years.

Dr. Dickinson's presentation is attached.

Additional points:

Dr. Dickinson discussed the interrelated components of early literacy:

- *Reading & Writing.*
- *Uses of Print.* The understanding of what print is used for in the world.
- *Sound-symbol correspondence.* The understanding that characters relate to specific sounds.
- *Letter knowledge.* The recognition of the names, forms, and sounds of letters (a strong predictor of later reading success).
- *Phonological Sensitivity.* The recognition of sounds apart from word meaning.
- *Phonemic Awareness.* The recognition of the smallest groups of sounds letters can make (a refined skill; related to vocabulary size).
- *Rich Vocabulary.*
- *Extended Discourse.* Conversations, talk.

The process of becoming literate must be initiated by the child. Literacy must be purposeful and socially-related. The process requires purposefully planned environments with strong support from teachers and other adults. Reading begins at home, and reading begins early.

Children who are accustomed to the language and structure of books have greater reading success. Books should bring about enjoyment and positive memories for children.

The kinds of classroom factors that support low-income children's reading comprehension include home visits from age 3 and regular language and literacy assessments from grades K-7.

Several predictors at kindergarten impact where children will be in seventh grade. These predictors are receptive vocabulary, early literacy skills, understanding and use of academic language, and narrative production. These predictors correlate strongly to seventh grade reading and oral vocabulary success.

Through extended discourse (conversation and talk), children learn how meaning is communicated through language. Home experiences that support extended discourse include book reading, fantasy talk, and sharing personal stories and narratives. In the preschool classroom, teachers' informal 1-1 conversations, large group discussions and pretend play among children build extended discourse skills. When children share their personal narratives with the support of an adult, language skills can be extended and reinforced.

While other children can bring out new language for each other, children are not the best resources for other children when building new vocabulary. Rather, conversations with advanced adult speakers are critically important. Children with more access to the teacher, such as socially outgoing children, develop richer language.

A program's curriculum can overcome most barriers facing children. A strong curriculum can overcome the negative influences of a weak home. On the other hand, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that the effects of low quality care are equal to the effects of low quality parenting and poverty.

The process of writing strongly supports phonemic awareness and letter knowledge.

Observational research of center-based care shows that quality programs greatly impact children's language and cognition.

Child care centers and preschool professionals need training to improve the quality of literacy instructions and opportunities. While a classroom may have a high quality rating for the general environment, the quality of the language and literacy curriculum may very well be low quality.

Questions/Discussion

Yasmine Daniel (New Jersey) asked about the implications for developing indicators of language and literacy in environments with English language learners. Dr. Dickinson said that everything he presented equally applies to English language learners. As an indicator, he would add access to books in a child's primary language. Parents should be encouraged to use their strongest language. Vocabulary in both languages can be an indicator.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) was curious about the reliability of parents' reports as a data source. Dr. Dickinson said that his research uses parent reporting to measure home environment indicators. While the number may not be 100% accurate, it is a very good start and can be used to establish trends over time.

Kristie Kauerz (ECS) asked which indicators make the best policy levers in states. Which literacy measures speak to policymakers? Dr. Dickinson felt that developing standards and using quality curricula are high leverage activities. Sustained professional development is an important policy to highlight.

Barbara Gardner (Massachusetts) inquired about ways to utilize long distance learning as a professional development resource. Dr. Dickinson says some institutions are using two way video conferencing as a professional development tool. Reading is Fundamental is making literacy training videos. Libraries can provide teachers and families access to the necessary technology to use these resources. Laurey Collins Burris (Vermont) shared that Vermont has a literacy training video that is given to families at six months. Resources like this can be shared across the country.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) asked if there is research to show that videos change parent behavior or whether professional development works. Dr. Dickinson mentioned a Whitehurst study showing that parent videos showed progress. Laurey Collins Burris (Vermont) said that Reach Out and Read provides books to children after well-child visits, which is another resource for parent education.

Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) looked at assessment. States are looking at the knowledge and skills children have at kindergarten entry as well as listing the characteristic of quality environments and programs of early care and education. Dr. Dickinson felt it was important to look at kindergarten because it is a universal point of contact for children. Rather than assessing younger kids, it is better to look at the quality of the centers and other environments where children are.

Indicators of Language and Literacy Development of Young Children

Catherine B. Walsh
Deputy Director
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Ms. Walsh facilitated this small group session. Participants worked in small groups to identify the indicators that are currently in place in their states and the ways the indicators are used to inform policy and planning. Special attention was paid to indicators for high-risk populations. Critical gaps in knowledge about the family factors, community conditions, service systems, and child outcomes related to language and literacy development were explored. Participants then came together as a large group and shared their indicator lists. The full list was turned into a worksheet for use the following day.

The indicator worksheet is attached.

Friday, September 20

Indicators as a Tool to Improve State Policies and Programs

Catherine B. Walsh
Deputy Director
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Using the full indicator list developed the previous day, participants worked in small groups to prioritize the indicators of language and literacy development. Using the worksheet, participants were asked to rank each indicator on three criteria: meaningfulness (the connection to language and literacy development), measurability (the extent to which the indicator can be measured), and communication power (how well the indicator can be understood by a general audience). The product was a prioritized list of indicators of language and literacy development of young children.

The prioritized indicator list is attached.

Groups were given the opportunity to report back on their process during the discussion.

Phil Baimas (Massachusetts) reported that his group looked for specific indicators describing children of different ages (0-3, 3-5, 5-8). The group wanted indicators that showed the continuum of language and literacy development from birth to third grade. The group had trouble balancing relevance, measurability and communication power.

Deborah Scott (Missouri) said that her group was able to review and prioritize the entire list. The discussion was interesting and productive. There was an issue about measurability. The group found several excellent indicators that may not be measurable in a state at this time. The pressed themselves on choosing indicators that can be communicated effectively. Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) added that the group looked for indicators that captured both the accessibility and quality of systems and programs for children. The group looked carefully and critically at indicators of children's knowledge, such as number of letters. There was a fear that standards might supercede teaching and learning. Quality in leadership and instruction must be present for learning to happen.

Patricia de Cos (California) reported that her group discussed the issue of age-appropriate indicators. The group felt that indicators for children ages 0-5 were being emphasized over indicators for school aged children. Children in grades K-3 need to be remembered in every discussion. There was an issue of measurability in relation to community indicators. For example, there is no data on access to libraries, and a data source is difficult to create. Yasmine Daniel (New Jersey) suggested that a resource list of literacy tools be developed and utilized.

Peter Antal (New Hampshire) also shared his group's issues around measurability. In addition, the group discussed how families support children's language and literacy acquisition. Reading books and telling oral stories are important but should be seen as separate literacy activities. It is important to look at how schools reach out to parents in a planned, deliberate way. The group wanted to look further into assessment methods for children with special needs. Peter Lindsay (Maine) suggested using the Head Start outcomes as measures of language and literacy,

emphasizing the detail of the outcomes. Head Start has measurement tools and can be used as an indicator model.

Terry Lochhead (New Hampshire) and her group felt that there were not enough indicators to choose from that focus on special education. Two indicators that needed more work were children's access to early literacy intervention and access to special education services. Special education trends were a question, i.e. would an increase in special education services be a positive or negative outcome for children? Ms. Lochhead reminded participants that children from low socio-economic environments are more likely to be placed, perhaps unnecessarily, into special education programs alongside children with specific learning disabilities. Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) added that Rhode Island looks at children in kindergarten who require an IEP but were not identified prior to school entry.

Marty Mittnacht (Massachusetts) reported that her group shared many of the issues brought up by other groups, including communications, impact of specific measures, and potential audiences for the indicators. Looking at school readiness assessments, the group wondered what it meant for a child to "fail" a school readiness test. Unfair judgments about children could be made if assessments are used incorrectly. Different states set standards at different levels and therefore measure children's success in different ways. Access to data is equally varied across states. Ms. Mittnacht added that she is pleased that special education is getting so much attention. She reminded the group that the term "special education" is a broad brush when discussing language and literacy; not every child in a special education program has a special language or literacy need. In addition, sometimes the issue is instructional rather than a true disability. She added an additional idea for potential measures: the number of children identified with a disability or learning disorder by age. Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) said that part of our next steps will be to create sets of indicators to highlight specific issues such as special education and children with special needs. Barbara Gardner (Massachusetts) added that a new federal requirement will ask states to align their pre-kindergarten standards to K-3 standards. The requirement is linked to Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) money. Kathy Stegall (Arkansas) said that while centers are required to create these standards, actually application of them is voluntary.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) spoke about future meetings. The data presentations in past meetings have been helpful, and she expressed her hope that we continue to share these important resources. She mentioned that Maryland's survey of kindergarten teachers and the Maryland Model for School Readiness may be useful tools (information on these is available at www.GettingReady.org). In terms of indicator work, her group noted that many indicators on the list would require additional funding to measure, a difficult prospect to most state budgets. She wondered how these budget issues would be discussed. Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) said that this issue would be brought up in future meetings. An additional topic that interests states is early care and education quality measures. States are looking for best practices to move forward early care and education quality agendas.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Executive Director
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Ms. Burke Bryant thanked all participants for their hard work and deep thinking on children's language and literacy development. As a next step, the prioritized indicators will be collected and shared among participants in the Roundtable as well as state team coordinators of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative. The list will be made available on www.GettingReady.org as part of the proceedings of this meeting. Participants will have the further opportunity to work with national experts to narrow the list further as our work progresses. States are encouraged to use the list as an immediate resource for their own indicator lists.

Catherine B. Walsh (Rhode Island) asked participants for feedback on two potential topics for future Residency Roundtables: ready schools and quality child care. Most participants felt that ready schools would be a useful meeting while quality child care was generally seen as less useful without a good look at what measures are available.

Barbara Gardner (Massachusetts) suggested further discussions on screenings for kindergarten entry. Ms. Walsh referred participants to work being done by Charlie Bruner on this topic. More information will be available at the Third National Meeting in November.

Ms. Burke Bryant ended the session gathering feedback from participants on an upcoming conference call with Peter D. Hart Research Associates. Hart Research is looking at what kindergarten teachers feel children should know and be able to do before entering school as well as factors that impact school performance. The research group is creating a telephone survey and requested feedback on this survey from the School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Several suggestions were offered by participants.

The next Residency Roundtable will be held in the Spring of 2003 and focus on the two domains of Cognition and Approaches to Learning.