



State Profiles: School Readiness Indicators and Lessons Learned

*From the State Poster Exhibits Presented at
the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative Meeting
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During the final National Meeting of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative in May 2004, members from the 17 state teams gathered in Newport, Rhode Island to share their progress, challenges and lessons learned during the three year Initiative.

At a poster session exhibit held on the first evening of the meeting, each state team presented a poster that highlighted their state's individuality with state demographics, a short list of school readiness indicators currently being measured in the state, and highlights from their data, policy and communication strategies.

This publication presents the materials shared at the state poster exhibit and enables the reader to learn about the indicators each state selected and the challenges they faced as they worked to create a school readiness agenda.



The School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Making Progress for Young Children

Background

Too many children enter kindergarten with physical, social, emotional and cognitive limitations that could have been minimized or eliminated through early attention to child and family needs. Ongoing research confirms that children's readiness for school is multi-faceted, encompassing the whole range of physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills that children need to thrive. Top-notch school readiness indicator systems at the state and local level are necessary to sustain current investments in the most effective programs for children and to make the case for new investments to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Making Progress for Young Children is a multi-state Initiative that uses child well-being indicators to build a change agenda in states and local communities in order to improve school readiness and ensure early school success. The task of participating states has been to develop a set of child outcome

and systems indicators for children from birth through the fourth-grade reading test. The objectives of the Initiative are:

Objective 1: To create a set of measurable indicators related to and defining school readiness that can be tracked regularly over time at the state and local levels.

Objective 2: To have states and local governments adopt this indicators-based definition of school readiness, fill in the gaps in data availability, track data over time and report findings to their citizens.

Objective 3: To stimulate policy, program and other actions to improve the ability of all children to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

The school readiness indicators that have been developed are comprehensive and practical. Indicators are and will continue to be tracked at the state and local levels to monitor the capacity of child and family programs to meet the variable needs that exist across communities. Indicators reflect child outcomes as well as state investments in programs and policies for young children and families. The indicators are broad enough to present a picture of the whole child, including children's

health status, what children know and can do, children's mental and emotional health and children's economic well-being. Indicators have been developed to fill the gap in knowledge between children's status at birth and their status at school entry.

State Teams

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Making Progress for Young Children involves 17 states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin. Over the course of the Initiative, the 17 state teams have worked individually and as a group to develop a comprehensive set of measures to monitor school readiness outcomes for children and families. This is envisioned to be a "menu" of indicators that reflect the full range of child outcomes and systems outcomes that are critical to the well-being of young children and families across the nation. The School Readiness Indicators Initiative has engaged the highest levels of state government including the Governor's offices and key state agencies serving children. States have worked as individual state teams and across states to conceptualize relevant indicators,



increase the state's capacity to obtain and use data and develop effective communications strategies. Each state has created a multi-agency state team of senior policy and data staff who have worked together to develop and use indicators to measure progress for young children. These individual lists of indicators support each state's policy agenda to improve school readiness and enhance outcomes for children from birth through the beginning of fourth grade.

Project Strategies

A *peer-to-peer learning network* of the 17 state teams was created and facilitated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. Because states are at different stages of skills and experience in developing and using indicators for policy change, they have provided valuable technical assistance to their peers. The state teams have used collaborative decision making to guide the development of forums for learning, sharing and achieving state and cross-state goals for developing and strategically using indicators to make change for young children. The forums that have taken place include:

Six **National Meetings** in which representatives from state teams met to provide peer-to-peer support on indicator development and conceptual issues, data and

technology issues and communications strategies.

A *Website* (www.GettingReady.org) that is designed to share information on best practices in policies and programs for young children, to share measurement and indicator tools, to enable each state to post relevant materials and provide updates on progress, and to link to print and organizational resources.

A *listserv* that provides a vehicle for problem-solving and for the interactive sharing of ideas and resources.

Four *Residency Roundtables* were convened to tackle tough conceptual issues in a focused way. During these roundtables, 30 to 40 state leaders and field experts worked together to make accelerated progress in priority school readiness indicator areas, such as social-emotional development, language and literacy, cognitive development and the development of infants and toddlers. Formal written reports and conclusions from the meetings have been distributed to the 17 states and are posted on the website for widespread dissemination.

Expert consultants with particular skills and experience have been engaged as needed to support the work of the Initiative. On a selective

basis, expert consultants were able to provide on-site consultation to individual states in order to advance their school readiness work. States receiving individual consultation shared progress and lessons learned as part of the peer-to-peer learning network.

Project Management

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, a multi-issue children's policy organization, is the lead agency for the School Readiness Indicators Initiative. In partnership with other key organizations, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has provided project leadership and worked closely with the participating states to meet project goals, develop credible indicators, and inform local, state and national policy change.

Go to www.GettingReady.org for more information on the 17 state School Readiness Indicators Initiative.

Arizona

School Readiness Indicators

Outcomes

- National Assessment of Educational Progress - 4th grade reading
- AIMS - 3rd grade reading

Risks

- Children under age 5 in poverty
- New babies at risk
- % of 1st graders in special education
- % of 3rd graders who changed schools during the school year

Access

- % of poor 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in Head Start
- % of low-income children under age 6 without health insurance
- Lack of adequate prenatal care
- % of low-income children receiving WIC

Quality

- Child care providers' salary relative to kindergarten teachers' salary
- Preschool teachers' salary relative to kindergarten teachers' salary
- % of licensed child care centers that are NAEYC accredited

Readiness of Schools

- % of 4th graders in classes with 25 or fewer children

For more information on Arizona's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Brochure published and well-received
- Policymaker interest in the indicators
- Data collected for Reading First districts
- Governor's School Readiness Plan announced in December 2003
- Funding for early childhood programs preserved in FY 2004 budget
- Great attention to child care subsidies and full-day kindergarten
- Many community groups talking about school readiness
- Child care subsidy information well-received
- Providing health consultation in child care and streamlining licensing rules

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,366,947**

Children under age 6: **459,141**

% of children under age 6 living below the federal poverty line: **21%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Data works best combined with stories, examples, and values discussion
- Well-placed champions are crucial
- Constant need to educate and re-educate policymakers – including allies
- Great challenge to convince some stakeholders of the connection between indicators and outcomes
- Lack of capacity and funding for data collection
- Lack of state funding
- Ideological opposition to “government involvement” in families with young children
- Difficult to move bureaucracies from the status quo
- Challenging to coordinate school readiness issues among three large state agencies (Education, Health Services, and Economic Security)
- Turning interest into action



Arkansas

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Children

- % of births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education
- # of children enrolled in ARKids First
- % of children per child care slot in licensed child care facilities and # of quality slots per child
- # of children served by state and federally funded programs during the program year

Ready Families

- Educational attainment, persons 25 years and older
- Poverty rates by family type and presence of children
- Federal poverty level income thresholds
- Median family income by family type and presence of children under age 18

Ready Schools

- # of children enrolled in kindergarten – 3rd grade by race/ethnicity
- # and % of children scoring “below basic”, “at basic”, “proficient”, “advanced or meeting and exceeding proficiency” on the 4th grade ACTAAP test

Ready Communities

- Employment and unemployment rate
- Employment distribution and average annual earnings by dollar amount and %
- Per capita personal income
- Median household income

For more information on Arkansas' School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Put indicators on the interactive CLIKS system
- Issued a county-by-county report
- Produced *Kindergarten Readiness Parent Calendar of Activities* and the *Kindergarten Readiness Indicator Checklist* brochure
- Distributed more than 100,000 *Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist* (KRIC) brochures to pre-kindergarten programs and public schools
- Aligned pre-kindergarten outcomes and indicators with the Arkansas Department of Education
- Pilot tested 3,800 students at kindergarten entry
- Convinced principals to “buy into” indicators
- Started transition activities with pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers, agencies and programs
- Established “Invest Early in Education Coalition” which drove the policy work to bring in \$40 million for public pre-kindergarten

Demographics

Children under age 18:	680,369	% of children under age 6 living
Children under age 6:	217,545	below the federal poverty line: 24%

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- It is important to look at the **WHOLE** child, not just the academic or the emotional sides
- One agency as the lead communicator for the group is a great way to disseminate information to funders, other agencies and the public
- Data experts and program experts need to be dually and actively engaged
- Finding reliable data sources that can be tracked yearly is difficult
- Gather data at the same time every year, using the same time frames, so that trend information is accurate
- Arkansas' indicators are a framework for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning project
- Challenging to combine philosophies of kindergarten (developmental vs. academic)
- Focus on communicating to parents, general public, legislators, kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers about “what school readiness really is”



California

School Readiness Indicators

- % of children with medical insurance
- % of children with up-to-date immunizations at age 2
- % of infants born weighing less than 5.8 lbs
- % of 3-5 year olds enrolled in preschool by income
- % of children who experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months
- % of children living in poverty
- % of children who qualify for free or reduced price lunch
- Rate of births to females ages 15-19 per 1,000 females of that age
- % of children born to mothers with less than 12 years of education
- % of students scoring at or above 50th national percentile rank on California standardized reading tests and math tests in 2nd grade and 4th grade

Progress and Highlights

- Kindergarten Entry Profiles (KEP)
- Using the *Modified Desired Results Developmental Profile* in the Fall of 2003, we were able to assess over 5,000 entering kindergarteners and interview over 3,000 of their parents as a representative sample from 88 under-performing schools
- We will repeat the KEP process at 112 schools in the Fall of 2004 and then every 2 years (trend data)
- 10 demonstration sites will be funded beginning in 2004
- Initially we had active participation by the major government agencies: Secretary of Education, Department of Education, First 5 Children and Families Commission, State Research Library, and Health and Human Resources with administrative oversight by Children Now. The indicator list was developed and data sources were identified. Representatives participated in many of the national meetings and roundtables.
- First 5 California has continued to collect data on school readiness indicators

Demographics

Children under age 18: **9,249,829**

Children under age 6: **3,018,386**

% of children under age 6 living below the federal poverty line: **20%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Parents were very willing to participate in interviews and talk about their children
- Kindergarten teachers liked using an assessment tool that looked at all dimensions of the child's development
- Kindergarten data should only be used in the aggregate as trend data to avoid "high stakes" use
- We have a need for California specific data on current programs and workforce issues
- Need dedicated funding sources created by legislation
- Training kindergarten teachers to use the assessment tool
- Obtaining current phone numbers for parents, we had about a 30% disconnected rate and spent a lot of time tracking down working numbers
- Funding and facilities
- Program criteria to assess quality
- Building public support for the importance of preschool
- The fiscal crisis
- Changes in leadership in the Governor's office
- Changes in staff at the highest agency levels



Colorado

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Child

- Low birth weight
- Immunization rates for 2 year olds
- % of children with social or emotional difficulties
- Achievement in 3rd grade reading test
- Proficiency in 5th grade math test
- % of infants and children read to on a regular basis

Ready Family

- % of children living in poverty
- Parents with poor mental health
- Infants born to a high-risk mother

Ready School

- % of kindergarten – 3rd grade classrooms with appropriate class size
- % of under-performing elementary schools

Ready Community

- # of credentialed early care and education educators
- Capacity rate of publicly-funded preschool programs
- % of Colorado primary care physicians that accept Medicaid or Child Health Plan Plus
- High school drop-out rate

For more information on Colorado's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Hosted a retreat to get feedback on draft indicators
- Final report and Executive Summary to be released to legislators and policymakers
- The CO Department of Public Health will create a School Readiness Indicators Dataset, to be updated on an annual basis
- Legislation for the Colorado School Readiness Commission was passed in the 2004 legislative session
- The Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) Team will use the School Readiness Indicators in their comprehensive systems-building work and policy audit
- A Colorado School Readiness Indicators website will be launched in the fall of 2004
- The 2004 Colorado Kids Count publication will focus on School Readiness

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,100,795**

Children under age 6: **357,202**

% of children under age 6 living
below the federal poverty line: **12%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- The inclusive definition of school readiness supports the work of building a comprehensive early childhood system
- Because the word “school” is in the title, the first assumption is that school readiness is restricted to cognitive ability and school performance
- Need to use broad language and constantly remind policymakers and the general public that school readiness is about more than test scores and cognitive abilities
- While data are available from many different agencies, it is important to have a designated lead agency that is ultimately responsible for compiling the data
- Approximately one-third of the final indicators have no statewide data source
- Hope to have county-level data for as many indicators as possible, but this will significantly increase the cost of the dataset
- Colorado's budget shortfall affects any policy change that has a fiscal impact



Connecticut

School Readiness Indicators

Health and Child Development

- % of births to women who received late or no prenatal care by race/ethnicity
- % of births to women who smoked during pregnancy by race/ethnicity
- Rate per 1,000 births of children who die before their first birthday by race/ethnicity
- # and % of births ages 15-19 by race/ethnicity
- # and % of repeat births to teens ages 15-19
- # and % of low birthweight infants (under 2,500 grams) by race/ethnicity
- % of children under age 18 without health insurance
- # of children under age 6 enrolled in Medicaid
- % of on-time well child visits among children on Medicaid under age 2 and ages 3-5
- Immunization rate by age 2 for all children and those receiving care through public vs. private health care providers
- Rates of children ages 1-2 receiving lead screening
- % of children screened, ages 1-2, with elevated blood lead levels
- Infants and toddlers receiving Early Intervention services through the Birth to Three system, by age
- % of children referred to Birth to Three by developmental concern
- % of children receiving special education and related services by age
- Disabilities among children ages 3-5 receiving special education and related services

Safety and Child Welfare

- % of children in foster care by age
- # of children in foster care by age
- Foster children under age 6 by race/ethnicity
- % of children under age 6 by placement type
- # of child deaths per 100,000 children by age
- # of abuse/neglect related fatalities reported to the Department of Children and Families
- # of fatalities among all children active in child protective services cases
- # and % of children substantiated as abused/neglected by age
- Substantiated abuse/neglect allegations by type for all children

- Accepted vs. substantiated child abuse/neglect reports

Economic Stability

- Median income for families with children under age 18
- # of families with children under age 6 below the Connecticut Self-Sufficiency standard, e.g. 200% of federal poverty level
- # and % of children under age 6 below the federal poverty level by race/ethnicity
- % of children receiving TANF benefits by age
- # of children under age 6 receiving TANF benefits by age

Early Care and Education

- # of regulated early care and education slots per 100 children by age and type of setting
- # and % of early care and education slots that are accredited or Head Start
- # and % of early care and education facilities that are accredited or Head Start
- # of children receiving child care subsidies over time
- # and % of children receiving child care subsidies by age
- Utilization of formal and informal care of children receiving subsidies by age and type of care
- # of children receiving subsidies that are in foster care, children with special needs and children of teen parents
- % of kindergarten children with a preschool experience by school district and wealth of district

Ready Schools

- Average # of kindergarten students by wealth of school district
- % of kindergarten children enrolled in full-day, half-day and extended day classes
- # and % of school districts with children in full-day kindergarten
- % of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten by wealth of district

Child Outcomes

- % of children meeting state performance goal in 4th grade

Progress and Highlights

- Published indicator brief (13 indicators) and released at Statehouse
- Prepared full factbook (25 indicators) and released in September 2004
- Established effective interagency collaboration
- Extracted data from multiple databases
- Influenced indicators selected for Kids Count book
- Embedded indicators in Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) planning process and commissioner-level prevention council plan
- Consensus on increased funding for preschool and child care subsidies
- Child care career ladder initiatives are receiving start-up funding
- Launched *Ready, Set, Grow Campaign* - with website, mascot, message, agenda and mobilization

Demographics

Children under age 18: **841,688**

Children under age 6: **270,187**

% of children under age 6 living below the federal poverty line: **11%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- It is important to articulate the differences between child outcome indicators, system indicators, and child assessments
- Publication of the indicators has power in itself
- Focus on early childhood requires building inside and outside voices with a consensus agenda
- Policymakers need to hear many voices with the same message
- Crosswalk between presenting something that looks reliable and research-based but is also engaging in its design
- Data must presented in an accessible way and design matters
- It is necessary to provide guidance on how to use indicators to move policy



Kansas

School Readiness Indicators

Safe and Stable Families

- % of pregnant women who receive prenatal care beginning in the first trimester of pregnancy
- % of infants born to mothers with at least a high school degree
- # of substantiated child victims of abuse and/or neglect per 1,000 children ages birth to 17
- % of children receiving free and reduced lunches

Safe and Stable Communities

- % of teachers with a CDA teacher license or degree in early childhood
- Child care and preschool capacity
- % of median monthly income used for infant/toddler care
- % of children without health insurance
- Rate per 1,000 population of crimes against persons

Schools Support Learning

- Average teacher/child ratio in kindergarten classrooms
- % of kindergarten teachers with early childhood licensure or endorsement
- % of schools with formal working transition plans between early childhood settings and kindergarten

Children Prepared to Succeed in School

- % of kindergarteners with up-to-date immunizations at age 2
- % of kindergarteners who demonstrate age-appropriate skills and behaviors

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Progress and Highlights

- School readiness assessment instrument and pilot project were developed
- School readiness conceptual model project to determine value of data measures
- Kansas Children's Campaign promoted legislative support of early education programs and funding for Smart Start Kansas was increased
- Improved licensure requirements for early childhood teachers
- Early Learning Standards are being developed
- Full-day kindergarten enrollment increased and legislation passed to allow schools to develop preschool programs beyond the 4 year old at risk programs

Demographics

Children under age 18: **712,993**

Children under age 6: **226,862**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **14%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Find a language that expresses the common values of different agencies and programs to come together around outcomes for all children
- Make messages concise, easily understandable and user friendly
- Identify key groups for targeting messages
- Data must be uniformly collected, accessible to multiple users, and accompanied by useful analysis
- School readiness assessments are important and valuable
- Developing a systems plan and approach and getting stakeholders to agree on it
- Need collaboration and coordination of resources to reduce duplication
- Good data is expected, but there is an unwillingness to pay for it



Kentucky

School Readiness Indicators

- % of mothers with late or no prenatal care
- % of women with early entry into prenatal care
- % of infants born to mothers using drugs/alcohol
- # of pregnant women served in substance abuse programs
- Infant mortality rate
- % of newborns receiving newborn hearing screening
- % of infants born low birthweight
- % of uninsured children
- Children below 200% of poverty with Medicaid/KCHIP coverage
- Children with chronic illness
- # of children receiving mental health services
- % of children experiencing abuse and neglect
- Childhood nutrition
- % 4 year old children enrolled in preschool programs who are eligible for free and reduced price-lunch
- # of families receiving support through home visiting
- % of preschool children receiving hearing screening
- % of preschool children receiving vision screening
- # of children ages 3-6 receiving a vision exam using state or federal dollars
- # of child care center placements for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3)
- # of child care center placements for children ages 3-5
- # of family child care placements
- # of school age placements
- % of eligible children served by child care subsidy
- # of eligible children that participate in KY Preschool and Head Start programs
- Retention of early care teachers
- # of programs receiving a STAR rating
- # of children served in STAR rated program
- # of accredited child care centers
- # of accredited family child care homes
- # of resource classrooms
- Rate of neural tube defects in newborns
- % of children age 3 and 4 with disabilities served in a state funded preschool program or Head Start
- % of state-funded preschool children with educational disabilities
- % of minority children referred to First Steps
- % of children from low literacy families referred to First Steps
- # of teachers teaching out of field
- # of teachers in Head Start, Pre-K, and First Steps with IECE certification
- # of teachers with national certification in Pre K-Primary
- # of children spending 5 or more years in primary grades (K-3)
- # of children reaching proficient reading level in 4th grade
- # of children reaching proficient math level in 4th grade
- % of high school dropouts, ages 16 to19
- % of age group over 25 with high school diploma or GED
- % of population living in poverty
- % of children under age 18 living in poverty
- Median household income
- Teen pregnancy rates
- # of homeless families and children
- # of adult participants in adult education
- # of adult participants in higher education

For more information on Kentucky's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Built upon existing resources, strengths, delivery systems, and partnerships to identify the indicators
- *Kentucky Early Childhood Standards* have been developed from birth-five years of age, across all learning domains, and are aligned with the K-12 Program of Studies and the Head Start Outcomes
- A *Kentucky Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide* has been developed that links approved assessment instruments (screening, diagnostic, classroom/instructional) with the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards
- Two Parent Guides (birth to age 3 and ages 3-4) have been developed to help parents understand the *Kentucky Early Childhood Standards* and provide suggestions about how they might support their young children in their daily family routines
- Linked indicators to early childhood work already in progress in the state

Demographics

Children under age 18:	994,818	% of children under age 6 living	
Children under age 6:	320,380	below the federal poverty line:	22%

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Understand that the whole project is a work in progress and will take more time than originally thought
- Map out small steps that lead to the ultimate goal and celebrate small victories
- Technology is not always your friend, and multiple systems that do not talk to each other are a major problem



Maine

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Families

- % of women who receive prenatal care in the first trimester
- % of families who read to their children at least once a day
- # of first time families enrolled in a home visiting program for three or more months

Ready Communities

- % of children age 2 who are appropriately immunized
- % of insured children
- % of mothers with less than a 12th grade education
- % of children under age 18 living in female headed households below the poverty level

Ready Early Care and Education

- % of eligible children enrolled in Head Start
- % of eligible children receiving child care subsidies
- Availability of early childhood education programs
- % of child care centers and family child care homes with quality certificates
- Compensation and turnover
- # of schools with public 4 year old programs
- # of slots available in licensed child care

Ready Schools

- Young children in special education Part C (0-2 years) and Section 619 (3-5 years)
- # of children entering kindergarten exiting special education to regular education
- % of schools with formal working transition plans between early childhood settings and kindergarten
- Opportunities for expanded-day kindergarten

Ready Children

- % of kindergarten students who demonstrate developmentally appropriate skills and behaviors
- % kindergarten students who can establish and maintain positive relationship with peers and adults
- % of kindergarten students who function appropriately in group learning activities, participating actively, talking, taking turns, following directions and working cooperatively
- % of children experiencing difficulties in language development when arriving at kindergarten
- % of children experiencing difficulties in basic academics when arriving at kindergarten
- % of students with reading proficiency in the 4th grade
- % of children entering kindergarten with untreated vision problems
- % of children entering kindergarten with untreated hearing problems

For more information on Maine's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- School readiness indicators work was built on Maine Marks to allow sustainability
- Held a press conference on Maine Marks and Early Childhood
- Integrated the school readiness work with the Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) grant to begin system evaluation, enhancement and integration of data analysis, and policy development. The indicator work can serve as an initial component of systems evaluation.
- Developed connections and communication among the Department of Human Services, the Bureau of Health, the Office of Child Care and Head Start, the Department of Education, and Maine Kids Count
- Expanded the Task Force on Early Childhood from an initial external group to a broad membership of policy makers, business partners and parents, which will strongly enable effective early childhood system change
- Linked indicators work to Early Childhood Learning Results, which are being piloted in a cross section of early care and education settings
- Briefed all commissioners, both old and new, of the purpose of the indicators and the intentional linkages with the other early childhood efforts

Demographics

Children under age 18: **301,238**

Children under age 6: **85,915**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **16%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Keep the message simple and consistent
- Tie to other relevant initiatives, such as Maine Marks, to model the integrated approach
- Established developmental indicators which we have considered important and for which we do not have data readily available
- Willingness to examine the strength of each indicator in order to select our final list
- Integrating the indicator project with the Maine's Kids Count Report
- Challenges in determining the most effective method for articulating interrelationship of the indicators



Massachusetts

School Readiness Indicators

Physical Health

- % of mothers receiving prenatal care
- % of births to teens as percentage of total births
- # of children at risk of hunger
- % of children who receive well-child visits
- % of children who demonstrate age - appropriate fine motor skills
- % of children who demonstrate age - appropriate large motor coordination
- % of children receiving dental check-ups and services

Emotional Health

- % of children given a periodic developmental screening that includes social-emotional screening
- % of children who demonstrate self-awareness, resiliency and positive self-esteem

Language and Cognitive Skills

- % of children demonstrating developmentally-appropriate pre-literacy skills
- % of children demonstrating age-appropriate receptive and expressive oral communication
- % of children who score at or above “proficient” level on Grade 3 reading tests and Grade 4 MCAS tests
- % of children in Grade 4 who score at or above “proficient” level on MCAS test in Math
- % of English language learners entering kindergarten
- % of children who show cognitive competence

Social Competence

- % of children who demonstrate effective social relationships and interpersonal skills
- % of children who demonstrate self-awareness and positive self-esteem

Early Care and Education Programs and Schools Are Ready for Children

- % of children enrolled in early care and education
- % of children on waiting list for subsidized care
- % of children in special education between ages 3-5, and in elementary school
- Average student/teacher ratio for kindergarten classrooms
- % of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten
- Credentials earned by teachers/aides: Master’s or higher, Bachelor’s, Associate’s, CDA

Transitions

- Transition plans are in place and used regularly between: 1) Early Intervention and preschool; 2) infant/toddler care and preschool; 3) preschool and kindergarten; 4) program to program, and 5) age-group to age-group

Information Sharing

- % of programs and schools with high overall level of parent engagement

Self-Sufficient Families

- % of children living in poverty as defined by federal poverty guidelines
- % of mothers who have 12 years or more of education
- % of families receiving/eligible for food stamps
- % of children and families who are homeless, living in motels or doubled up with friends

Safe and Healthy Communities

- # of supported reports of child abuse and neglect
- % of children and families affected by mental health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse or incarceration
- Availability and accessibility of before and after school care
- Availability and utilization of support services in the community

Progress and Highlights

- Perfect timing! The indicators project built on the Governor's 2001 School Readiness Commission
- Support by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services gave the project "priority" status
- State agencies are taking ownership for collecting and reporting data for their indicators
- State agencies and United Way of Massachusetts are considering using similar indicators and outcomes
- Four Commissioners participated in public meetings on school readiness
- United Ways co-hosted the 6 public meetings, publicized them and issued press advisories
- Partnership greatly enhanced our outreach ability and brought valuable perspectives to the process

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,500,064**

Children under age 6: **480,422**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **12%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Maintained momentum through the change in State administration in 2003 by informing a new group of high-level administrators about school readiness
- Partnering with respected non-governmental organizations helps spread the word, foster credibility, and leverage resources
- Indicators must be reported in context if they are to be interpreted accurately or easily understood
- We are providing our first reports on the measurable indicators – this is sometimes misinterpreted to mean that these indicators have been given higher priority
- School readiness indicators must describe both children's characteristics and those of the families, schools, and communities that support them
- Connecting local school readiness initiatives into a coherent statewide approach
- Shifting policy from a reactive approach to a prevention model focused on timely intervention
- Increasing policymakers' understanding of the comprehensive nature of school readiness and indicators
- Children do not grow in the fragmented way our service delivery systems are designed



Missouri

School Readiness Indicators

Family Environment

- % of children under age 6 living in poverty
- % of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education

Community Conditions

- % of communities with reductions in crime from prior year
- % of children screened for lead

Ready Schools

- % of students with unidentified special needs at kindergarten entry
- % of school districts increasing participation in Parents as Teachers for high-risk families

Effective Services

- # of accredited child care facilities
- # of early childhood education/child development degrees conferred
- % of subsidized children in licensed child care
- % of young children on MC+ that access mental health services
- % of victims with repeated substantiated child abuse/neglect within 6 months
- Average number of children's division out-of-home placements per child
- % of children without health insurance
- % of births with inadequate prenatal care

Ready Child

- % of births in which mother smoked during pregnancy
- % of children under age 5 enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start, living in poverty
- % of children with age-appropriate fine motor skills at kindergarten entry
- % of children with age-appropriate gross motor skills at kindergarten entry
- % of children almost always coping with failure and frustration at kindergarten entry
- % of children almost always showing curiosity and interest at kindergarten entry
- % of children almost always recognizing the relationship between letters and sounds at kindergarten entry
- % of children almost always using language to communicate ideas, feelings, questions and to solve problems at kindergarten entry
- % of children almost always determining “same”, “more than”, and “less than” by using comparisons at kindergarten entry
- % of children recognizing basic shapes at kindergarten entry

For more information on Missouri's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- The Governor and First Lady released *Ready or Not Here We Grow!* on January 27, 2004 in the Capitol Rotunda on Child Advocacy Day
- All legislators received a copy of *Ready or Not Here We Grow!* along with a personal letter from the School Readiness Team
- The Missouri Children's Services Commission voted in February of 2003 to make early childhood one of three priorities for the next two years
- Bills filed to establish a Coordinating Board for Early Childhood in state statute
- A website has been established at www.ReadyKidsMO.org
- The Missouri School Readiness team sponsored a thirty day radio campaign on the Missouri Net, which aired ads on 65 stations across the state

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,427,692**

Children under age 6: **445,566**

% of children under age 6 living
below the federal poverty line: **17%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Social and emotional indicators require significant development in Missouri
- Coordinating the various early childhood initiatives from the state and federal level
- A long-term, multi-media campaign will be important in educating the citizenry and policy makers
- Public education regarding the critical nature of the early years and wisdom of investing is needed



New Hampshire

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Children

- % births to women who received late or no prenatal care
- Immunization rates at age 2

Ready Early Learning Systems

- % of child care centers accredited by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- % of family child care homes accredited by National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- % of early educators with early childhood credentials serving children birth to school entry
- # of school districts offering public kindergarten
- % of school districts screening for phonological awareness in kindergarten or 1st grade
- % of children at or above basic level in reading and math by end of 3rd grade

Ready Families

- Rate of substantiated child abuse or neglect

Ready Communities

- % school districts offering before and after school programs
- % children under age 6 without health insurance
- % children under age 6 below the federal poverty level

For more information on New Hampshire's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Two Greenwood Avenue, Concord, NH 03301
Phone: 603-225-2264 Fax: 603-225-8264 Email: eshemitz@childrennh.org

Progress and Highlights

- 2003 Kids Count New Hampshire data book included request for better data collection on key school readiness indicators
- New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network set priority goal of promoting high quality early learning in both 2003 and 2004 Children's Agendas
- Release event at the Legislative Office Building drew bipartisan crowd of legislators, community leaders, early childhood experts and advocates
- Presentation by Children's Alliance President to all members of State Board of Education on the importance of school readiness
- Children's Alliance held policy forum on strategic child-friendly investments as part of 2003 Kids Count release
- Bipartisan panel of state leaders identified early learning as a key issue
- During the presidential primaries, Children's Alliance partnered with the Every Child Matters Education Fund to highlight early care and education issues

Demographics

Children under age 18: **309,562**

Children under age 6: **92,378**

% of children under age 6 living below the federal poverty line: **9%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Framing arguments in terms of strategic investments for the state creates broader-based interest and support
- A "rolling release" can be even more effective than a big one-day media event
- The need to support local efforts led to our team focus on an "advocate's toolbox" type brochure
- Important to regularly link the data to the policy to the desired child, family, and community outcomes
- Hard to build support for proactive agenda in current fiscal climate (versus defensive work to deflect budget cuts)
- Acknowledge and work to bridge the divide between child care community and early education community
- Child advocates wary of undue child assessment in an already test-focused environment



New Jersey

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Early Care and Education

- # of state-licensed child care centers
- # of available slots for children in state-licensed child care centers
- # of licensed providers offering child care in their homes

Ready Children

- # of child deaths, ages 1-14
- # of babies born with low birthweight
- # of 2 year olds receiving the 4:3:1 series of immunizations.
(The 4:3:1 series includes 4 doses of the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccine; 3 doses of the poliovirus vaccine; and 1 dose of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine.)

Ready Families

- # of children under age 18 living below the federal poverty line
- # of births to teens ages 15-19
- # of children who are food insecure and food insecure with hunger
- # of children receiving food stamps

Ready Schools

- # of 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in Department of Education approved preschool programs
- # of 4th graders failing the language arts and math sections of the state test
- # of children ages 6-21 enrolled in public special education

Ready Communities

- # of live births for which the mother received late (second or third trimester onset) or no prenatal care
- # of child abuse/neglect referrals
- # of children without health insurance

Progress and Highlights

- Consulted with John Love of Mathematica, Inc. to select the 15 most relevant indicators
- Data collection on indicators without previously available data is underway
- Hosted two widely-attended forums – one on Readiness for School Success featuring U.S. Senator Jon Corzine and Dr. Steven Barnett and one on Transition Practices featuring Dr. Robert Pianta
- Developed an early learning policy brief format
- Publishing a series of briefs ranging from data collection needs to highly qualified teachers to the benefits of preschool
- Planning a legislative hearing in the fall
- Secured a \$15 million initiative in the FY 2005 state budget to expand preschool to 20,000 more children
- Launched a campaign called “Build the Future” to support the expansion initiative and lay the groundwork for a broader school readiness campaign
- Kicked off the campaign with a brochure, 11 billboards on major roads leading to the state capitol, and a new website, www.EarlyLearningNJ.info

Demographics

Children under age 18: **2,087,558**

Children under age 6: **681,609**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **11%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- It is challenging to organize a very complex and ambitious policy agenda
- Developing a shared understanding of the science of indicators and measures
- Policy desires are not always easily turned into indicators
- “School readiness” is used to mean various things and does not have a clear message
- “Readiness for school success” is more meaningful, but not as catchy
- We needed to have more policy discussions and an understanding of the research before brainstorming indicators and honing our selection
- Helpful to see how other states were communicating their projects and indicators
- Although we discussed either expanding the working group or folding it into another early learning project (Build) the timing was never right for either



Ohio

School Readiness Indicators

The Ready Family

- % of mothers using tobacco, alcohol and drugs while pregnant
- % of mothers not experiencing maternal depression
- % of infants and toddlers living in families with the occurrence of abuse/neglect

The Ready Child

- % of children receiving complete immunization series by age 2
- Rate of infants and toddlers screened for developmental delays
- % of children with injuries requiring hospitalization

The Ready Community

- % of children exposed to crime/violence
- % of infants and children with health insurance
- % of children in high-quality center-based early learning settings
- % of children in licensed/registered family home settings
- % of parent education and support services available

The Ready School

- % of children screened for vision, hearing and oral health
- % of school districts providing full-day kindergarten
- % of formal transition agreements between schools and early childhood community

For more information on Ohio's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Connected initiative to Governor's *Ohio Family & Children First Initiative*
- Unified effort with other state projects and initiatives
- Heightened awareness on multiple levels – research and what it means to be “ready”
- Regional community forums have been important
- Raising the level of awareness at the community level by engaging community stakeholders in dialogue

Demographics

Children under age 18: **2,888,339**
Children under age 6: **911,072**

% of children under age 6 living
below the federal poverty line: **17%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Challenging to make sure that all state agencies arrive at an agreement or consensus on what is important
- Need to partner at both the state and local levels – there are many local initiatives underway to learn from
- Need an understanding of competing state level agendas
- This is time consuming work – must have an entity to own it and push forward
- Need solid funding for K-12 – challenge of preschool vs. higher education
- Universal access to early childhood vs. targeted assistance
- Defining readiness so that we are all coming from the same place – state vs. local
- Keeping the different initiatives informed of the work and trying not to work in vacuum
- Changing policy is always a struggle when resources are limited



Rhode Island

School Readiness Indicators

Family Economic Security

- # of homeless children under age 6
- % of total births to women with less than a high school diploma

Quality, Affordable Health Care

- % of children under age 6 who have health insurance
- % of children ages 19-35 months with up-to-date immunizations

Family Environment

- # of births to teens ages 15-17 per 1,000 teen girls
- Child abuse and neglect rate per 1,000 children under age 6

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers

- % of all children birth to age 3 enrolled in Early Intervention
- % of income-eligible children enrolled in Early Head Start

Quality Early Care and Education

- % of child care centers with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation
- % of family child care homes with National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation
- # of children under age 6 receiving child care subsidies

Ready Schools

- % of kindergarten children enrolled in a full-day program
- % of 4th grade students who scored at or above the proficiency level for reading

Progress and Highlights

- The Governor continues to support health care with no rollbacks despite tough budget times
- State agency partners provide policy and data expertise to the School Readiness Indicators Project
- Child well-being data presented by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is seen as non-partisan and credible, making it a tool for policymakers, advocates and community leaders
- Strong coalitions among advocacy groups seem to be preventing major cutbacks in child care and health care
- There is increasing consensus around next steps in an early childhood policy agenda
- Rhode Island is making progress in children's dental health and lead poisoning prevention and is a national leader in children's health care
- Rhode Island is disseminating a set of Early Learning Standards through a process involving many state and local stakeholders

Demographics

Children under age 18: **274,822**

Children under age 6: **77,648**

% of children under age 6 living below the federal poverty line: **19%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- There is power in crafting an early childhood message and setting benchmarks to track progress over time
- Partnerships between people inside state government and people outside state government can create lasting change
- There are many existing resources within state government that can be leveraged to obtain school readiness data
- Strong, positive working relationships are critical to obtain and effectively use data to inform policy decisions
- Trend data can influence policy discussions
- Assessment of children at kindergarten entry is most helpful when accompanied by data on family and community conditions and the capacity of the service system to meet needs
- It is very difficult to select a small, focused set of indicators because there are so many critical issues that have different priorities among various constituencies



Vermont

School Readiness Indicators

Kindergarten Readiness as Reported by Teachers

- Approaches to learning
- Cognitive development and general knowledge
- Communication
- Social-emotional development

Schools Ready for Children as Reported by Principals

Children's Health Indicators

- Early prenatal care
- Full weight / full term births
- Immunization rates

Family Well-Being Indicators

- Per capita income levels
- Rate of adolescent pregnancy
- Rate of child abuse and neglect

Community Capacity

- Availability of child care
- Availability of affordable housing
- Crime rates
- Civic engagement

For more information on Vermont's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- School Readiness Survey has been adopted by the State Board of Education
- Parent Survey is in the process of being pilot tested
- Community Level Indicators are collected and reported annually
- Progress in learning about social and emotional development
- Support for professional development and licensure of early education teachers
- Adoption of the Vermont Early Learning Standards
- School funds available for child care setting preschool
- Autumn Program Tours and Legislative Teas
- *Story of A Child* e-newsletter

Demographics

Children under age 18: **147,523**

Children under age 6: **41,709**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **13%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Get the school boards “on board” early
- Need unusual and credible spokespeople with good information
- Messages need to be repeated many, many times
- Remember that social and emotional well-being indicators are as important as health and cognitive development indicators
- Personal invitations from peers are the best way to get people involved
- When many people are involved it takes time for the work to coalesce
- Business leaders are looking for short, clear, but meaty and relevant content
- Process of “building the brand name” is important
- Cost of survey and finding a “home” for it
- People want hard copies and want more timely information
- Community fears of mandated services and increased taxes
- Initially, the work was seen as a slight attack on kindergarten – 12th grade education



Virginia

School Readiness Indicators

Benchmarks

- % of kindergarten students identified as needing additional intervention under the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI)
- % of children passing 3rd grade Standard of Learning Assessments

Child, Family and Community Indicators

- Rate of births to teens ages 15-17
- % of births to mothers with less than 12th grade education
- % of women receiving early prenatal care
- % of births that are low birthweight
- % of children under age 6 living in poverty
- # of founded and unfounded cases of child abuse and neglect
- Prevalence of elevated blood lead levels and proportion tested under age 6

Early Childhood Support Services

- # of children eligible and enrolled in Medicaid and FAMIS
- # and rate of children under age 6 entering and exiting foster care
- Average # of children receiving child care subsidies
- # of birth -3 year olds in community Early Intervention programs
- # and rates of 0-6 year olds in public school special education programs
- # of children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start
- # of at-risk 4 year olds enrolled in Virginia's Preschool Initiative

Progress and Highlights

- The initiative provided a context for gathering representatives from a wide variety of state agencies and advocacy organizations around a common goal – to identify indicators of school readiness
- Work by the state team for the initiative added support to the need for better cross-agency coordination of early childhood programs
- The analysis of available data sets (and unavailable data) at the state level provided insight into what we do and do not know about the readiness of children in Virginia
- The publication *No Time to Waste* compiled data on young children and their families and programs at the state and local level in a comprehensive way that had not been done before
- Some data were presented for the first time (e.g., PALS-K scores)
- Releasing the report from the Governor's Office added credibility to the data
- Having a research-based context for talking about school readiness and data on the indicators at the local level provided a springboard for local discussion and strategic planning

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,738,262**

Children under age 6: **557,736**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **13%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- School readiness is a complex concept, not easily understood or universally agreed upon
- Use of the concept of school readiness and research-based indicators provided a useful tool for bringing a diverse group of professionals together to discuss programs for young children and policy implications
- State team members were not able to participate in the national meetings at a level that would have been most helpful. These meetings provided an opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states and from national experts
- For a variety of reasons, many data that would have been useful are not available in Virginia
- Moving from a focus on directly assessing children to a focus on assessing various factors about children, families, and communities was difficult for some team members
- Working across state agencies and across two secretariats was challenging
- Coordinating the work of the state team with the work of the staff in the Governor's Office was challenging
- Leadership is critical to the success of an initiative like this one



Wisconsin

School Readiness Indicators

Ready Kids

- Physical well-being
- Social and emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language development and communication
- % of children ages 0-17 that live below the federal poverty line

Ready Schools

- % of children that are enrolled in 4 year old kindergarten
- % of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade that participate in the SAGE (Small Class-Size) Program.

Ready Communities

- % of children living in severely stressed neighborhoods
- % of children living in high poverty neighborhoods
- % of children who are lead poisoned
- % of children covered by health insurance
- % of mothers who receive prenatal care in their first trimester of pregnancy
- Educational attainment of early care and education providers (% high school education, % Associate Degree, % BA/BS)
- % of childcare workforce earning less than \$9 an hour (\$18,720 annually)
- Annual turnover rates for child care center teachers
- Annual turnover rate for family child care providers
- # and % of child care centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children
- # of children served by accredited child care centers

For more information on Wisconsin's School Readiness Project, contact:
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Progress and Highlights

- Advocate's work with state agencies helped to influence the Governor's Children's Agenda
- Presented project progress to Governor's staff, cabinet secretaries, and Governor's Task Force on Education Excellence
- Indicators and definition of school readiness adopted by the Early Education Subcommittee of the Governor's Task Force on Education Excellence
- State early childhood advocates and coalitions are working to develop a joint agenda on early childhood and a joint response to the Governor's Children's Agenda
- Presented findings and recommendations to key stakeholders across the state
- Developed an issue brief highlighting findings regarding early childhood settings

Demographics

Children under age 18: **1,368,756**

Children under age 6: **414,337**

% of children under age 6 living

below the federal poverty line: **13%**

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Trying to work within an existing early childhood public relations campaign has been challenging
- Lack of firm commitment for future data collection at state level
- Absence of data on some indicators, especially social and emotional domain indicators
- A broader group on the project steering committee may have been useful – may have been beneficial to include legislators, legislative staff and business leaders to get buy-in and assistance with our policy agenda





kids
count

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