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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*  
**DATE:** March 23, 2010  
**SUBJECT:** Update on Early Learning  
• 2009-2010 School Readiness Report

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide information from the report, *Children Entering School Ready to Learn: School Readiness Information for School Year 2009-2010*.

**BACKGROUND:**

***2009-10 School Readiness Report***

Since school year 2001-02, Maryland's kindergarten students have been evaluated by their teachers to provide school readiness information to policymakers and practitioners of what children know and are able to do when they start formal education in public schools. This school year's data informs the public about the trend of how kindergartners' school readiness skills have improved since 2001. As in previous years, the report provides state and local school system information.

Maryland students entering kindergarten this school year were better prepared than those in the past. The cohort of Maryland's students entering kindergarten in school year 2009-2010 improved its overall school readiness skills by five (5) percent compared to students who entered kindergarten in the 2008-2009 school year. The percentage of incoming kindergartners considered by their teachers as "fully ready" went from seventy-three (73) percent last year to seventy-eight (78) percent this year. The increase from the baseline year of 2001-02 is twenty-nine (29) percent.

The upward trend is a statistically significant shift from school year 2008-09 and reflects the statewide efforts to improve the early learning opportunities for young children as they begin their school career. The results for the domain *Language and Literacy* and *Mathematical Thinking* are even more pronounced. According to the teachers' assessment of emergent reading and writing skills, thirty-one (31) percent more children were rated "fully ready" compared to youngsters who entered kindergarten in 2001-02. Thirty-two (32) percent more children were rated "fully ready" in early mathematical thinking skills compared to youngsters who entered kindergarten in 2001-02.



The overall improvements from school year 2001-02 appear for all subgroups. For instance, the school readiness levels for African American kindergarteners have improved by thirty-four (34) percent for the composite score from school year 2001-02. The increase for Hispanic children was twenty-seven (27) percent for the composite score and twenty-five (25) percent in the domain of *Language and Literacy*. The improvement among low-income children and children with disabilities was significant with thirty-four (34) and twenty-one (21) percent respectively for the composite score for each group. The increase for English Language Learners (ELL) from 2001-02 is thirty (30) percent for the composite and twenty-seven (27) percent in the domain of *Language and Literacy*. English Language Learners showed the largest increase (5 percent) from last year for the domain *Language and Literacy*.

### ***Use of the information***

Since the beginning of this project, teachers have received professional development in the use of the assessment information, including how it informs instruction. Based on a survey conducted in 2002, the information helps teachers to learn more about their students' individual learning needs, helps in grouping children, and is invaluable in reporting student profiles to parents or to school-based interdisciplinary teams. Twenty-three local school systems have adopted an electronic format of collecting and reporting data. This format allows for immediate feedback on the learner profiles of individual students and the teachers' group of students. The information is also being used by early care and education providers to learn more about the curricular expectations in kindergarten and to adjust their programs to meet these expectations for all domains of learning. For instance, more than 225 child care centers have implemented either the local school system or the state-recommended preschool curricula. This represents an increase of 67 percent from 2008. The following examples illustrate efforts made by jurisdictions to impact the school readiness outcomes:

- Carroll County provided Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR) professional development which included public kindergarten and prekindergarten, Head Start, nursery school, and special education teachers who work with prekindergarten and Kindergarten students.
- Cecil County focused on scientific thinking by using a PNC Bank grant to purchase materials and by offering MMSR professional development in scientific thinking for child care teachers which was facilitated by the Judy Center. In addition, the Cecil County public schools implemented the Primary Talent Development in prekindergarten and kindergarten. They also were working specifically once a month with preschool special education teachers and their Head Start partners to align the three year old program to the pre-school assessment guidelines with funds provided by MSDE's Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services.

- Allegany County reports that prekindergarten is available in 13 of 14 elementary schools and that all four year olds whose parents want to enroll them in prekindergarten have access. In addition, privately owned and operated child care programs are available in three elementary schools. These child care centers are pursuing MSDE accreditation and all prekindergarten classrooms have gone through the accreditation process successfully. The school system also has an excellent relationship with Head Start in terms of joint staff development and coordinated registration process in March for prekindergarten, Kindergarten, and Grade 1.

Similar efforts are underway in all of the jurisdictions, supported by local early childhood councils, Judy Center steering committees, and MSDE's quality improvement initiatives.

**SUMMARY:**

Administered in the fall of 2009, results of this school year's school readiness report indicate a significant increase in the number of children who have the skills, abilities, and behaviors to successfully engage in kindergarten work. Kindergarten teachers and early care and education providers are using the information to adjust instruction or programs for young children.

**ACTION:**

For information only. No action required.

NSG/rg

Attachments