



## School Readiness Strategies April 2009

School Readiness means making sure that all young children enter school cognitively, physically, and emotionally healthy and ready to succeed. It also means that elementary schools are prepared for the children they are receiving, being aware of their unique needs and experiences, and that the early care and education settings that the children are coming from are of high quality and equally aware of the expectations that children are faced with when entering Kindergarten.

The National Education Goals Panel defines School Readiness as:

### **1) Children Ready for School**

- Physical well-being and motor development
- Positive Social and emotional development
- Strong approaches to learning
- Language development
- Cognitive development and general knowledge

### **2) Schools Ready for Children**

- Smooth Transitions between home/preschool and school
- Continuity between Early Care and Education and Kindergarten through grade 3
- Student self-centered environments
- Use of research-based strategies that support early childhood to raise achievement
- Assuring students/families have access to supportive services

### **3) Family and Community support and services that foster success**

- Access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate early care and education experiences
- Parent education and training
- Access to prenatal, nutrition, and health care

## **First 5 Santa Barbara County School Readiness Programs & Strategies**

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First 5 Santa Barbara supports several programs and strategies that relate to these goals amongst several of our initiatives.

### **Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Camps:**

*Summer Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Transition Camps*, also known as *Kindergarten Transition Camps*, are a School Readiness Strategy targeting those children registering for Kindergarten for the upcoming school year. Children that meet the following criteria have priority in enrollment: 1) have no prior preschool experience, 2) been identified as having special needs, 3) could greatly benefit from an additional block of time to prepare for formal school due to at-risk factors. At risk factors would include the following:

- Children with older siblings that are struggling at grade level
- Children who are English Language Learners (ELL)
- Foster placed or CWS placed children
- Children that scored low on Kindergarten Assessment Screenings
- Children that will attend a low API School (API 1-3)
- Children with Challenging Behaviors that need additional social and emotional development support

The California State First 5 Commission categorizes Pre-K camps as Kindergarten Transition Services that are designed to “help children be more comfortable and accustomed to the learning environment, expectations, activities, and personnel of school when they enter Kindergarten.” Our local Commission agrees that this strategy develops an important bridge for those children entering formal education for the first time.

Funding for this strategy is available through an application process in April of each year. Please click on Funding opportunities for more information and the application.

### Articulation Bridge:

The adjustment to entering formal school will be easier for children if there is an integrated and coordinated system of transition between early care settings and the elementary school. There are several elements to the continuation of developmentally appropriate practices between home and preschool and the K-3 system. Strategies should ensure the smooth placement of children, provide continuity through activities to bridge the transition gap, and keep the child and family connected to services that support health and social services.

Providing planned transition activities can be achieved in the following ways:

- 1) **Parents are Supported** – Often times children and families enter Kindergarten already working closely with a social service, healthcare, or special needs service. By providing parents with a *Consent to Share Information* form, those service notes and case files can be transported quicker to their new caseworkers ensuring that services are not interrupted. Parents can feel overwhelmed when registering their children for school, yet want their children to succeed. Parents need strategies to assist them in working with their children in preparing for the rigors of formal schooling. Providing *Preschool Parent & Caregiver Workshops* on Kindergarten Readiness and Expectations will increase knowledge on what is needed to support children in getting ready for school.
- 2) **Schools are Ready** – In a National Study, 30% of those Kindergarten Teachers surveyed reported that at least half of the children in their classes lacked academic, social, and listening skills needed to be successful during their first year of school. Early Childhood Educators have valuable knowledge on individual children and many times have been a part of that child’s life for several years. Kindergarten teachers benefit greatly when provided an opportunity to meet with the child’s first teachers and are provided with a *Transition Plan* and *Kindergarten School Entrance Profile*. In doing so, both the early care and education staff and the Kindergarten staff can share strategies that support the incoming children, align curriculum in the last months of preschool and early months of

Kindergarten, and discuss the clearly identify those children that might be at higher risk for starting school behind.

School Districts can also provide *Kindergarten Roundups* or *Enrollment Fairs* in which schools enroll children early in Kindergarten, provide workshops for parents and children, link families to needed services, provide health, vision, and hearing screenings for children, and allow entering Kindergarteners to tour the school and meet their teachers and new friends.

- 3) **Children are Ready** – the more children are provided with learning opportunities and high quality environments in which to explore, create, and polish their skills, the better prepared they will be for Kindergarten. Activities can be provided by parents and early care and education professionals to support a child’s foundation for successful learning in Kindergarten. The California Department of Education, Child Development Division website lists the *Preschool Learning Foundations* and the state *Kindergarten Grade Level Standards*. Knowing these criteria will help in organizing activities and experiences. Information can be found on the following websites:

Kindergarten Standards:

<http://www2.cde.ca.gov/scripts/texis.exe/webinator/search?query=Kindergarten%20Standards&submit=GO>

Preschool Foundations: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>

Getting Ready to Read: [www.getreadytoread.org](http://www.getreadytoread.org)

Supporting Early Literacy in Natural Environments: [www.wri-edu.org/literacy](http://www.wri-edu.org/literacy)

## Funding Strategies:

Because investments in quality school readiness strategies can assist school districts in decreasing the amount they spend on special education services down the line, one option to finance school readiness strategies is the redeployment of existing streams of dollars that are more flexible. The idea is to shift funding from higher-cost, more remedial services to lower-cost, more preventative services.

**Title I** – For the purpose of Title I, a preschool program is any program of educational services for eligible children below the age at which the LEA provides elementary education and is focused on raising the academic achievement of children once they reach school age (*Section 115(b)(1)(A) (ii), ESEA*). This includes children birth through age 5 in the state of California. Several states in the nation use these dollars to fund preschools, school readiness programs, parent education workshops, and many more.

For more information on how to use Title I dollars to fund School Readiness Strategies, visit: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.doc>

**The Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET)** Program is for local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide free or subsidized programs of adult English language instruction to parents or other members of the community who pledge to provide personal English language tutoring to English learners. In accordance with *Education Code* Section 315 and Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations* Section 11315, LEAs may use these funds for **direct program services**, community notification processes, **transportation services**, and background checks required of the tutors who volunteer in public school settings. Direct program services can include

intentional school readiness programs for children whose parents are attending English classes. Transportation services can be used to bus children to district run preschool programs.

**Title III** - Title III funds must provide educational services to limited English proficient (LEP) children and educational personnel. For programs under Title III funds, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/edpicks.jhtml?src=qc>

**Foundation Support** - Several local Foundations partner with First 5 in the Santa Barbara County area to promote Early Care and Education and School Readiness Strategies. You can contact the individual foundations directly for funding requirements and focus areas:

- Orfalea Foundations - <http://www.orfaleafoundations.org>
- JS Bower Foundation - <http://www.jsbowerfoundation.org>
- Hutton Foundation – website - <http://www.huttonfoundation.org>
- Santa Barbara Foundation - <http://www.sbfoundation.org>

### ***First 5 Santa Barbara County***

Funding for the following strategies are available through First 5 Santa Barbara:

- 1) Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Camps
- 2) Regional Preschool Parent and Caregiver Expo

### **Policy Development:**

School entry is a critical transition point that sets the stage for long-term learning patterns and achievement. Research in brain development proves that the experiences that children have in their first five years of life directly correlate with future academic outcomes and social confidence. School Readiness strategies and Kindergarten transition programs support early identification of special needs, lay the foundation needed for future learning, and relieve the anxiousness some families feel when entering a new bureaucratic system.

The first step to implementing school readiness strategies is to include 0-5 year olds within the definition of student populations. The next is to update board policies and regulations to include early care and education programs as a strategy to raising achievement scores, have programs be included in site councils, be a part of the Facility Master Plan for Development, and to access categorical funding to serve at-risk children and families.

One local School District has been successful in including their child development programs into the board policies on Mission, Goals, and Plans. You can visit Santa Barbara School District at:

[http://www.sbsdk12.org/board/attachments/2007/0119/Series\\_0000\\_agenda\\_attachment.pdf](http://www.sbsdk12.org/board/attachments/2007/0119/Series_0000_agenda_attachment.pdf)

### **Partnerships:**

Santa Barbara County currently works with programs serving several school districts throughout the county. Five programs have 4-year contracts funded through the State First 5 School Readiness Initiative, which is aimed at communities with low-performing schools as measured

by the Academic Performance Index. For more information on how their School Readiness Programs are implemented, contact is as follows:

- Guadalupe Unified School District (served by Community Action Commission), (805)343-1194
- Santa Maria-Bonita Unified School District, (805) 361-8221
- Santa Barbara Unified School District, (805) 965-4633 ext 266
- Lompoc Unified School District (served by County Office of Education), (805) 964-4710 ext 4409
- Goleta Union School District (served by Isla Vista Youth Projects), (805) 968-0488

Other partners that have implemented School Readiness Strategies into their plans with local and matched dollars are:

Carpinteria Unified School District: Early Childhood Center, Community Preschool, and Parent & Caregiver Expo.

Cuyama Unified School District: Summer Transition Camps & K Articulation Plan

Orcutt Unified School District: Summer Transition Camps & Community Preschool

Santa Ynez Unified School District: Summer Transition Camps & Preschool for All Plan

Community Action Commission - Children Services: NAEYC Accreditation