

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR BRIGHT FUTURES
Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness
National Governors Association, 2005

Overview

Children are our nation's greatest resource, and there is no more important task than building the foundation for bright futures in school and in life. Learning begins at birth, so efforts to prepare children for school success must start early. Over a decade of research has identified what children need to be ready for schools. More recently researchers have been concerned with what schools must do to be ready for students, particularly when children are transitioning from preschool to kindergarten and what the school can do to ease the transition.

Ready Schools

- a. Although research and thinking is still emerging around the concept of ready schools there is preliminary agreements that such schools share certain characteristics.
 1. Ready schools work with families, early care and education providers to facilitate the transition of young children into the school environment
 2. Encourage continuity between children's prior experiences and the expectations awaiting them in kindergarten
 3. Are committed to the success of every child.
- b. Often what children learn in preschool and what they are expected to know and be able to do in kindergarten are at most loosely connected. Many times, initial gains from early intervention programs fade as children move through early elementary grades, and some experts attribute this in part to the dramatic differences between prior experiences and the expectations and learning environment of kindergarten. Efforts to encourage greater continuity between preschool and kindergarten can help ease the adjustment.
- c. States are currently focused on developing early learning standards, which are statements that describe expectations for the learning and development of young children. Many developments and initiatives are encouraging states the enhancement and alignment of standards from early childhood throughout a child's education career.

Conclusion

Ready schools take responsibility for results, engage in demonstrated best practices, and revise practices that do not benefit children. These schools also serve children in their communities, connecting children and families to resources and services and taking an active role in community. Finally, ready schools are supported by strong leadership from school administrators who provide instructional focus and coherence to the programs they oversee. Schools should work together to align learning goals and curriculum across grades – pre-kindergarten through grade three – and across classrooms in the same grade.

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