




Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick 
DATE: March 24, 2009
SUBJECT: 2008-2009 School Readiness Report

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an overview of the findings contained in the report, *Children Entering School Ready to Learn: School Readiness Information for School Year 2008-2009*.

BACKGROUND:

2008-09 School Readiness Report

Since the 2001-02 school year, Maryland's kindergarten students have been evaluated by their teachers using the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) to determine what the children know and are able to do when they start formal education in public schools. Each year since 2001, the data collected from these evaluations has been compiled into a large, technical data report, which is shared with policymakers and practitioners to show how well kindergarten students are doing in terms of school readiness.

This year we have produced a smaller report that provides an overview of early learning research and how Maryland uses the research to help develop programs for early child care. The report also provides a profile of the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) and has a section dedicated to what kindergarten teachers are looking for when evaluating students as well as activities to do with children to help them learn the skills and knowledge needed to succeed not only in kindergarten but throughout their education. We feel strongly that by sharing this information with families, the education community, and policymakers, we can all continue to help our youngest students build a strong foundation for future learning.

Maryland's kindergarten class of 2008-2009 was better prepared than previous classes. The cohort of students entering kindergarten this school year improved in overall school readiness skills by five percent (5%) compared to students who entered kindergarten in the 2007-2008 school year. The percentage of incoming kindergarteners considered by their teachers as "fully ready" went from sixty-eight percent (68%) last year to seventy-three percent (73%) this year. The increase from the baseline year of 2001-02 is twenty-four percent (24%).



The upward trend is a statistically significant shift from school year 2001-02 and reflects the statewide efforts of improving 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, twenty-six percent (26%) more children were rated "fully ready" compared to youngsters who entered kindergarten in 2001-02. Twenty-seven percent (27%) more children were rated "fully ready" in the domain of Mathematical Thinking 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-two percent (32%) for the composite score from school year 2001-02. The increase for Hispanic children was twenty-four percent (24%) for the Composite and twenty-one percent (21%) in the domain of *Language and Literacy*. The improvement among low-income children and children with disabilities was significant with thirty-one percent (31%) and seventeen percent (17%) respectively for the Composite for each group. The increase for English Language Learners from 2001-02 is twenty-five percent (25%) for the composite and twenty-two percent (22%) in the domain of *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 and 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 176 family child care centers have completed national program accreditation as a result of MSDE's Early Childhood Accreditation Project. Family child care providers can use the information to support the early learning needs of the young children in their care by using the school readiness information for their programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Administered in the fall of 2008, 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/hb:jt