

A Publication from the Maryland State Department of Education

# Maryland Classroom

## Early Care and Education: An Action Plan

### Achieving School Readiness

In December 2001, Maryland formalized its commitment to high-quality early education by establishing the Early Care and Education Committee (formerly the Leadership in Action Program). The Committee, chaired by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick, brings together all those with a role to play in children's physical, emotional, and academic development: state and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, public libraries, advocacy groups, and colleges and universities.

The Committee's five-year action agenda, *Achieving School Readiness* ([www.MdK12.org/instruction/ensure/readiness/lap\\_report.pdf](http://www.MdK12.org/instruction/ensure/readiness/lap_report.pdf)), identifies six goals for providing incoming kindergarteners essential school readiness skills (see box).

The agenda emphasizes universal access to high-quality early care and education; family literacy and support services; sound child health; and well-trained early childhood staff, and it relies on the close coordination of programs and services available to young children and their families.

### Child Care Moves to MSDE

That coordination was helped considerably in July 2005, when the Maryland General Assembly transferred all child care responsibilities to the Maryland State Department of Education. The move was designed to help MSDE better align early childhood programs with K-12 education and equip more children with the skills they need to enter school ready to learn.

The transfer of child care programs begat MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development, which was charged with creating a strategic plan to improve the quality of Maryland's early care and education programs and to enhance families' access to them.

The 3-year plan, accepted by the State Board of Education in December 2006, was drafted by a coalition of early childhood educators and advocates, providers, parents, and state and local agency staff. It outlines program, policy, and administrative goals concerning child care, before- and after-school care, Head Start, prekindergarten, and nursery programs.



### The Consolidation of Early Care and Education

In July 2005, the Maryland General Assembly transferred responsibilities residing with the Department of Human Resources' Child Care Administration to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and created within MSDE the Division of Early Childhood Development. [HB 932/SB 759]

Housed in this Division is the Office of Child Care, which licenses and monitors child care centers and family child care providers, issues contracts and grants to providers to improve early-care quality, and administers the state's Child Care Credentialing System.

The move is designed to help MSDE provide a single governance structure for early education programs, better coordinate programs and resources, and offer more training and support for child care providers.

Maryland remains the only state in the nation to locate all of its early care and education programs at the state department of education.

### Achieving School Readiness A Five-Year Action Agenda

- All children, birth through age 5, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families, including full-day options.
- Parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.
- Children, birth through age 5, and their families will receive necessary income-support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.
- All early care and education staff will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.
- All Maryland citizens will understand the value of quality early care and education as the means to achieve school readiness.
- Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.

—Maryland Early Care and Education Committee

The Maryland Early Care and Education Committee was convened by the Sub-cabinet for Children, Youth, and Families, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Council for Excellence in Government.

To read the Committee's March 2006 progress report, go to [www.aecf.org/publications/data/maryland\\_ece\\_progress\\_report.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/maryland_ece_progress_report.pdf).

Among the plan's major goals are to:

- Consolidate licensure for early care and education programs, which transfers to MSDE the responsibility for issuing nursery program certificates.
- Expand child care program accreditation and provider credentialing.
- Develop state-endorsed early childhood curricula for use in nonpublic early childhood programs (see page 4).
- Establish the Maryland Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Fund, providing scholarships and tuition reimbursement to prospective and current early childhood providers.
- Improve the rigor of preservice and continuing education for child care providers.
- Ensure statewide child care accessibility for children with disabilities.
- Improve the quality and capacity of care programs for school-aged children.
- Expand Judy Center services to more Title I elementary schools.
- Improve collaboration between early care and education programs and public schools.

For the full text of the Strategic Plan of the Division of Early Childhood Development, go to: [www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/).

Consolidating early care and education with K-to-12 education is a move supported by research, logic, and economics, creating a continuum of development from birth through high school. It remains to be seen whether other states will muster [Maryland's] political will.

—Sandra J. Skolnik  
Executive Director, Maryland Committee for Children

# The Judy Center Effect

In 2001, Maryland established Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers (Judy Centers) in low-income areas to house a number of early care and education programs, such as public preK and kindergarten; child care; Head Start; college-linked early childhood programs; and family health, literacy, and support services. The point of locating all these services under one roof wasn't just to make access convenient for the families served, but also to promote a close working relationship among the Centers' agencies and specialists.

Twenty-four Judy Centers in 21 school systems now offer integrated full-day, full-year programs serving about 13,000 children, birth–6, and their families. A 2004 evaluation of the first 13 Judy Centers found they achieved many of their goals: Parents' access to early childhood, health, and family-support services increased, as did professional credentials among preK and kindergarten teachers and early childhood staff. Plus, the Centers enjoyed a 98-percent satisfaction rate among parents.

Now a study being conducting by Research, Assessment, and Measurement, Inc., is proving the Centers' success in their most important goal: improving young children's school readiness, especially among those at risk of falling behind (children in poverty, children learning English, and children with disabilities).

In the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005, researchers collected school readiness data from 1,581 kindergarteners enrolled in a Judy Center—a little more than half of whom had received Judy Center services prior to entering kindergarten.<sup>1</sup>

Examining fall readiness levels, researchers found that students with prior Judy Center experience were consistently more ready for the kindergarten curriculum than those without—significantly so in the Composite and in Mathematical Thinking (see graph 1). By the spring of their kindergarten year, the two groups had reached similarly high readiness levels (about 87 percent).

Among students needing special services, the Judy Center effect is even more pronounced—and it's sustained. In fact, English language learners with prior Judy Center experience actually began their kindergarten year at the same readiness level as all Judy Center students (native English-speakers included), and, by spring, had slightly surpassed the all-student average (see graph 2).

While they continue to perform well below the all-student average, children with disabilities who have a history of Judy Center services begin their kindergarten year nearly 9 percentage points higher on the readiness scale than those

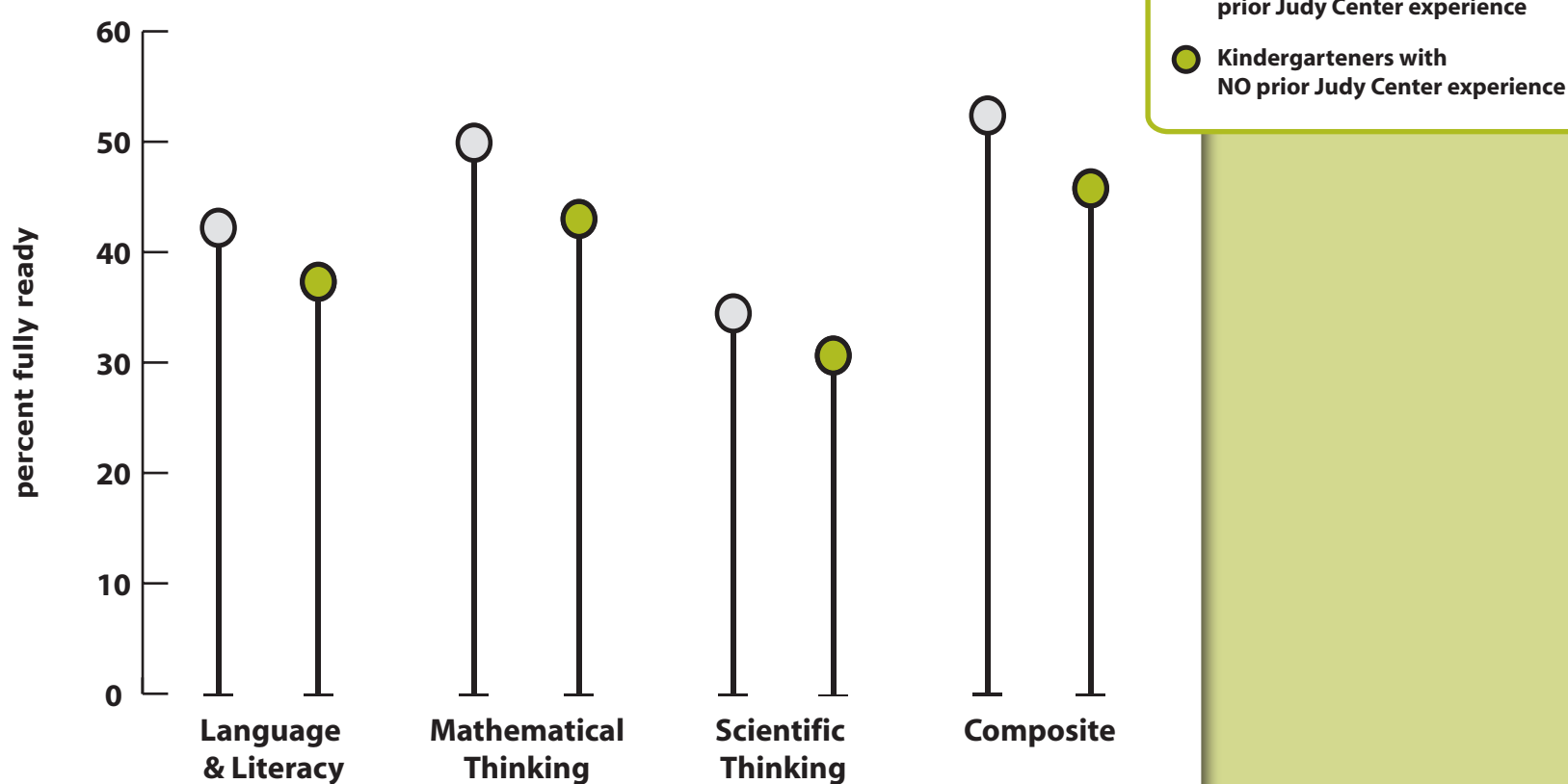
who don't. And the gap is closing by the end of their first year of kindergarten.

Low-income students with prior Judy Center experience begin their kindergarten year at a readiness level 10 percentage points lower than those with no prior Judy Center experience.

<sup>1</sup> The sample size of students with disabilities enrolled in a Judy Center was small, but the Judy Center effect was significant.

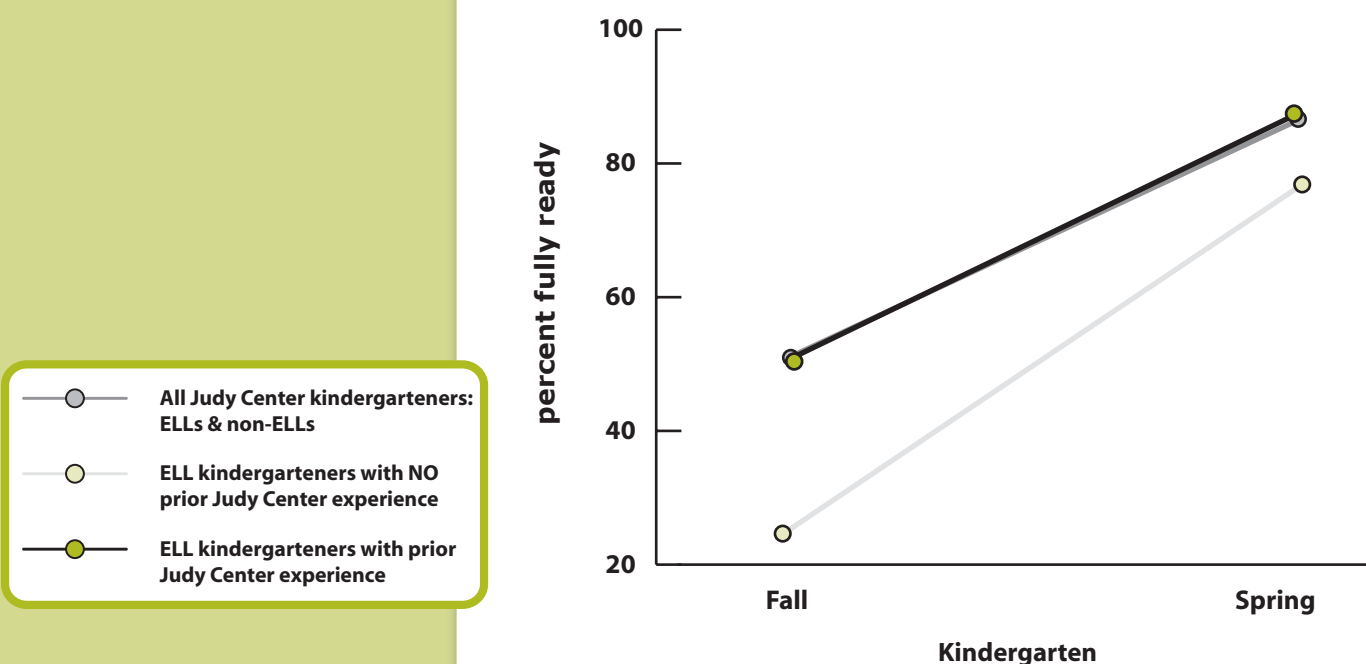
graph 1

## The Judy Center Effect: Fall 2004



graph 2

## The Judy Center Effect Among English Language Learners (ELLs)



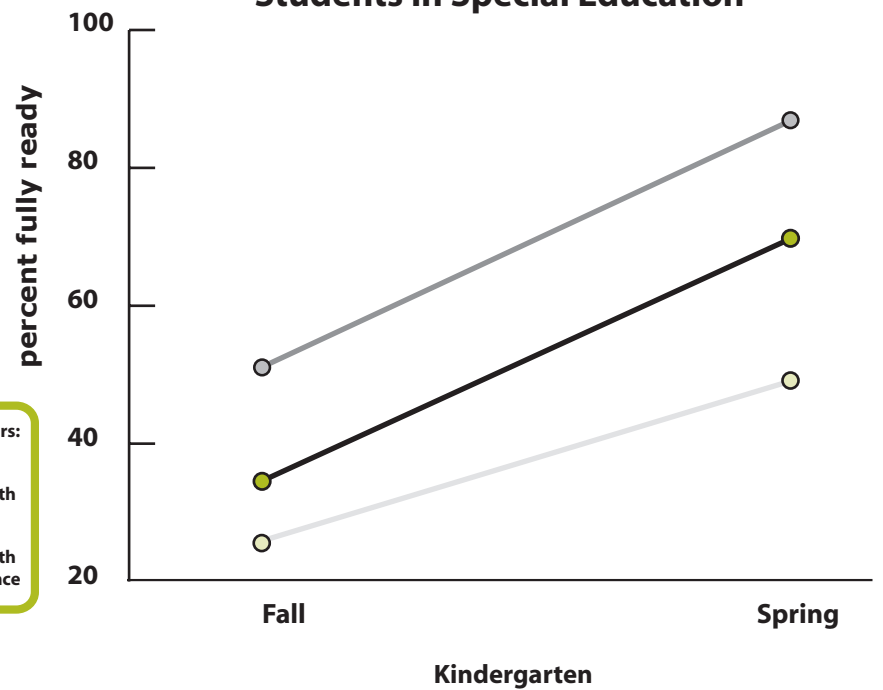
They actually gain momentum throughout the year, ending 20 percentage points higher than classmates in Judy Center services (see graph 3).

Students with prior Judy Center experience begin their kindergarten year 10 percentage points higher on the readiness scale than those with no prior experience—and end it just 4½ percentage points higher than the all-student average (see graph 4).

Of the 1,581 students who received Judy Center services in kindergarten, 1,151 (73%) had received services prior to their kindergarten year; 44 percent hadn't.

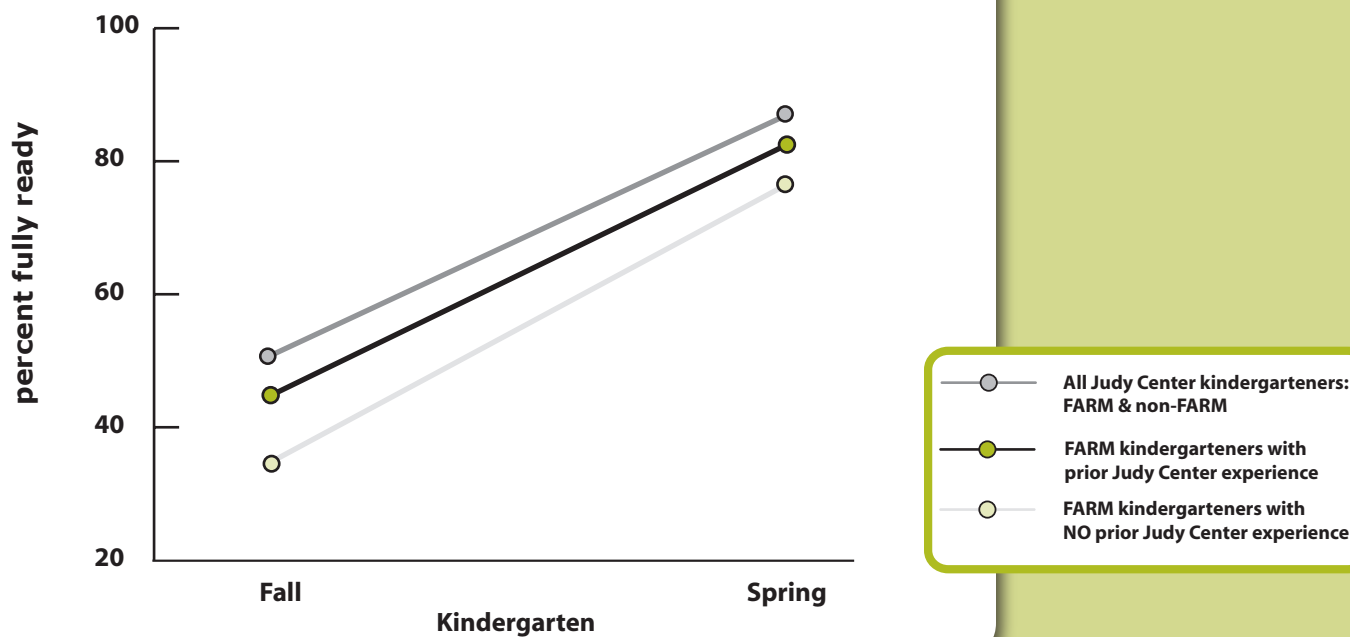
graph 3

### The Judy Center Effect Among Students in Special Education



graph 4

### The Judy Center Effect Among Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARM)



## Regional Child Care Offices

Region	Manager	Address	Phone
Region 1 Anne Arundel County	Frances Feldman	100 Community Pl. Rm. 2.500 Crownsville, MD 21032	410.514.7850
Region 2 Baltimore City	Michael Morrison	2700 N. Charles St. Suite 203 Baltimore, MD 21218	410.554.8316
Region 3 Baltimore County	Rose Marie Hayes	409 Washington Ave. Suite LL8 Towson, MD 21204	410.583.6204
Region 4 Prince George's County	Evelyn Adebisi	807 Brightseat Rd. Landover, MD 20785	301.333.6961
Region 5 Montgomery County	Carl Eggleston	51 Monroe Pl. Suite 204 Rockville, MD 20850	240.314.1400
Region 6 Howard County	Louis Valenti	3300 North Ridge Rd. Suite 190 Ellicott City, MD 21043	410.750.8779
Region 7 Western Maryland	Dolores Harmon	6 W. Washington St. Hagerstown, MD 21740	301.791.4585
Region 8 Upper Shore	Price Shuler	301 Bay St. Suite 305 Easton, MD 21601	410.819.5801
Region 9 Lower Shore	Suzanne Ruark	201 Baptist St. Suite 32 Multi-Service Bldg., 2nd Fl. Salisbury, MD 21801	410.543.6731
Region 10 Southern Maryland	Susan Copsey	41670 Courthouse Dr. P.O. Box 1709 Leonardtown, MD 20650	301.475.3770
Region 11 North Central	Gary Kosyjana	413 W. Bel Air Ave. Aberdeen, MD 21001	410.273.7656
Region 12 Frederick County	Suzanne Tresselt	5303 Spectrum Dr. Suite G Frederick, MD 21703	301.696.9766
Region 13 Carroll County	Carolyn Joyner	1004 Littlestown Pike Westminster, MD 21157	410.751.5133



# Curricular Resources for Early Care and Education

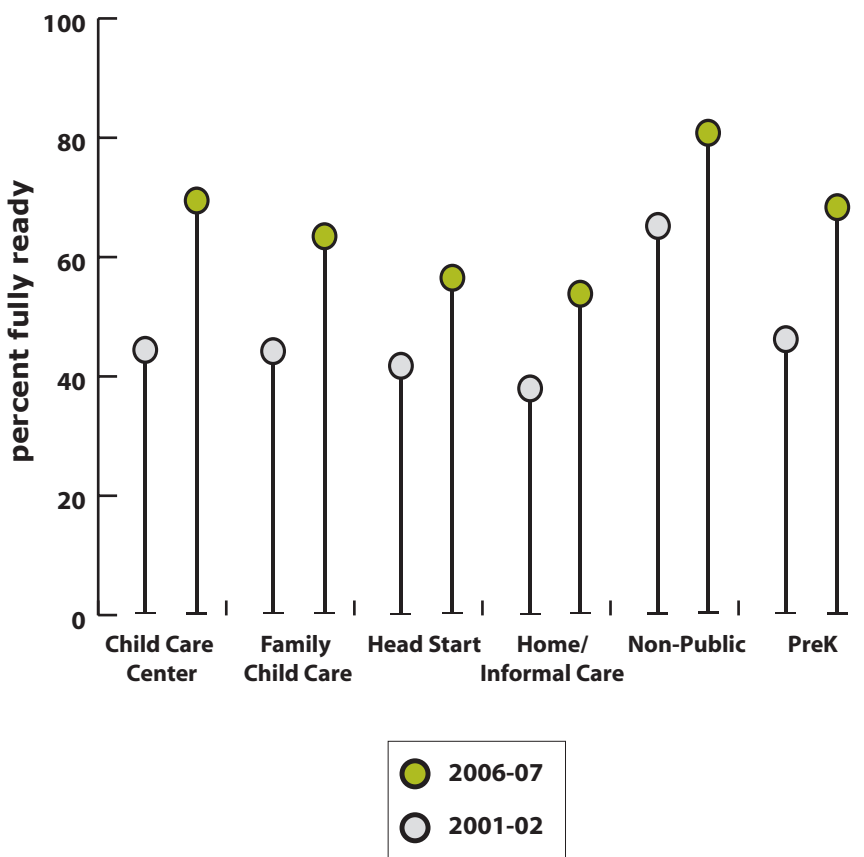
Following recommendations from the National Research Council and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, MSDE is providing curricular support to early care and education programs. Last August, MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development convened a committee to identify curricula for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds that could be endorsed by MSDE for use in nonpublic early childhood programs.

While local boards of education are responsible for public school programs, nonpublic programs—such as child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, and nonpublic preK and kindergarten—do not consistently benefit from local leadership. The Judith P. Hoyer Early Childhood Curriculum Project will help maintain the quality of these programs.

Under the project, representatives from the early care and education community, higher education, and nonpublic and public schools are reviewing curricula for children aged 3–5 and identifying those that most closely align with the Maryland Model for School Readiness Framework and Maryland's prekindergarten and kindergarten curricula. The committee will then review content-specific resources for use as curricular supplements. Later this year, MSDE will begin identifying curricular resources for infants and toddlers that support the state's guidelines for the care and development of children, birth to age 3.

MSDE will announce the endorsed curricula later this spring. An advisory committee is now determining how to provide financial assistance to early care programs so they may purchase the curricula and related training. ■

## School Readiness, by Prior Care



For the full 2006–07 school readiness report (*Children Entering School Ready to Learn*), go to [www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/school\\_readiness.htm](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/school_readiness.htm).

**In 2005–06, Maryland sponsored the most family child care providers to earn national accreditation. Maryland now ranks #3 in the country for nationally accredited family providers, trailing only California and Florida.**

—National Association for Family Child Care

## Readiness for All

### The Skill Gap

Every year, more children enter kindergarten better prepared for school. And yet they're not all prepared equally. Skill differences between children in poverty and their wealthier classmates remain huge. And these differences typically persist throughout their school careers.

However, several national studies show that children from low-income homes who are enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs are more apt to overcome the skill gap than those who aren't. And that's why access to these programs is so important.

### The Access Gap

Nearly one-fifth of all Maryland 4-year-olds have no preschool or child care experience. A disproportionate number of them are Hispanic and African-American children from low-income homes. Low-income Hispanic children in child care or preK are half as likely as those in informal care arrangements to require intervention in kindergarten and beyond. And African-American boys in child care or preK are three times more likely to be ready for kindergarten than those in unregulated programs.

There are a number of reasons families have trouble accessing high-quality early care and education, primarily a lack of high-quality programs in their neighborhoods, a lack of awareness of early education's benefits, and prohibitive expense associated with good programs. Maryland's accredited child care or preschool programs cost, on average, \$7,000–\$9,000 a year. While this is a significant financial commitment for families making Maryland's median income, it's an unaffordable luxury to the approximately 11 percent of families with children under age 5 who are living below the poverty line. Additionally, early childhood programs serving low-income families are typically part-day, 10-month programs, creating logistical problems for working parents.

### With an Eye on Results

The answer to this problem is, in part, encouraging all of Maryland's early care and education partners to coordinate their services. For instance, Head Start and public preK programs should coordinate enrollment and transition and offer a common set of curricular resources. Health and parenting services should be offered as a part of all early care and education programs, not just model programs. And families who receive child care subsidies should be guaranteed the long-term stability of high-quality programs, so they may rely less on temporary care.

In 2007, Maryland's Early Care and Education Committee will be developing another five-year action agenda on behalf of Maryland's young children (see page 1). Guaranteeing all families access to high-quality early education should be among its top priorities. ■

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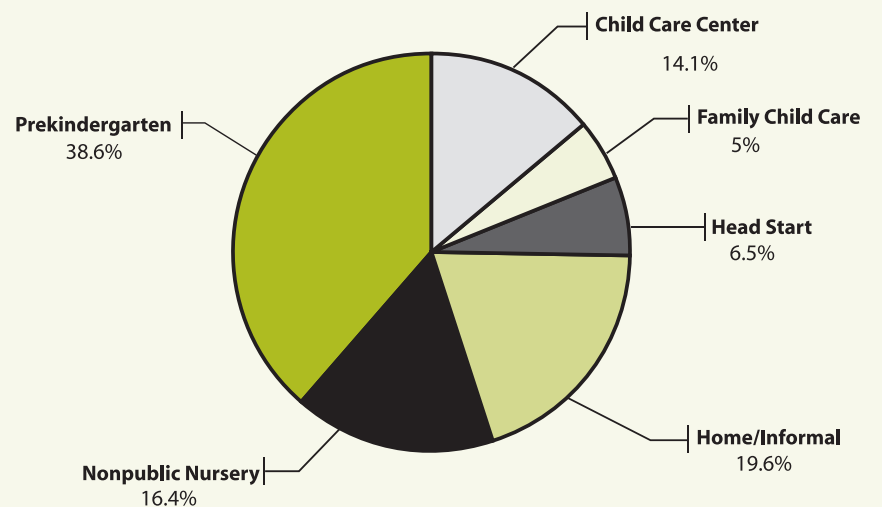
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## Public School Kindergarteners, by Prior Care\*



\* Defined as one year prior to enrollment in kindergarten