

# **School Readiness Webinar Series–**

## **#1 – Strategies That Work & Data on Children’s Readiness to Learn**

Webinar for Grade-Level Reading National Community Network  
August 2, 2012



### **Agenda**

- The challenge
- Underlying issues
- Evidence-based strategies
- Resources
- Zoom lens on Early Development Instrument, population measure of children’s readiness to succeed

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## Poll Question

In terms of the school readiness pillar of your Community Solutions Action Plan, where would you put your community on this scale?

- Working well & need to scale up
- Pilot effort that needs replicating
- Just beginning to execute strategies
- Still developing strategies for our community

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## The First Few Years

Early learning experiences hard-wire the brain for future learning, especially in the first few years

- Infants' brains are twice as active as adults'

Building brains is like building houses

- "Architecture" matters

Stress in early years weakens brain architecture



## Relationships Key To Learning

Children are born learning

Loving, nurturing relationships foster learning

Everyday moments are learning moments

**Einstein's parents didn't use flashcards (or Baby Einstein videos)**



## Learning Happens Everywhere, Every Day

Learning is always happening, wherever the child is

- Home
- Grandma's house
- Child care center
- Neighborhood play group
- Mother's Morning Out at nearby church or synagogue
- Preschool



## The School Readiness Challenge

**Headline: 46% of kindergarteners start school behind**  
**Disadvantaged children are another 1-2 years behind**

The barriers behind the headline:

- Socioeconomic disparities
- Access to affordable, stimulating early learning opportunities
- Reaching families who are disconnected from traditional supports & services
- Availability of data about children's strengths & vulnerabilities before and at kindergarten entrance
- Awareness about the importance of investments in the early years

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## Poll Question #2

Which of these 5 barriers are present in your community? (check the biggest 2 barriers)

- Socioeconomic disparities
- Access to affordable, stimulating early learning opportunities
- Reaching families who are disconnected from traditional supports & services
- Availability of data about children's strengths & vulnerabilities before and at kindergarten entrance
- Awareness about the importance of investments in the early years

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## The Achievement Gap Starts Before School

Of 50 children who are having trouble learning to read in kindergarten, 44 of them will still have trouble in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

-- Dr. Craig Ramey

Center for Health & Education, Georgetown University



## The Barriers to School Readiness: Socioeconomic Disparities

Children in low-income families get less literacy language support at home

- Children in higher-income families hear 2x words per hour
  - Poor kids hear 30 million fewer words by age 4)
- 61% of low-income families have no children's books at home
- Children from low-income families enter kindergarten with listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, compared to 20,000 words for middle-income children
- The average middle-income 5-year-old recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, compared to 9 words for poor children



## The Barriers to School Readiness: Access to Quality Early Care

- High cost of programs
- Uneven quality
- Access to quality programs for all families
- Lack of continuity of care



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## The Barriers to School Readiness: Reaching Disconnected Families

- Lack of supports for informal caregivers  
- especially grandparents
- Lack of supports for children from immigrant families



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## Parents Are Teachers ... And They Need Support

Parents and caregivers dramatically undervalue their role in school readiness

- 1 in 3 incorrectly believe their loving interaction has little impact on their child's learning capacity.

**Parents know the early years matter, but don't know exactly what to do to promote early learning – and don't think they have time to do what it takes.**



## It's Not Just A Socioeconomic Gap

- 80% of preschool teachers say parents' lack of understanding about their child's development is one of the biggest issues at school
- Teachers rank social and emotional skills as the most important school readiness skills – higher than cognitive or computer skills
- But parents ranked as most important for school their child's ability to name colors & count to 10



### Poll Question #3

What is the most urgent school readiness topic that your community is dealing with?

- Child health
- Access to books
- Well-trained early education teachers
- Parents understanding the skills entering kindergarten students need
- Language barriers and cultural differences

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### The Barriers to School Readiness: Data About Children's Capabilities



- Lack of national school readiness measurement
- Data that is used is not measuring all 5 areas of child development proven to affect school readiness:
  - physical health & well-being
  - social competence
  - emotional maturity
  - language & cognitive development
  - communication skills & general knowledge

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## The Barriers to School Readiness: Awareness About the Importance of Investing

- The time when children's brains are developing the fastest is when public focus & investment in early learning is at its lowest
- Parents need information & support
- Policymakers need the facts (prevention vs. remediation, data to make sure limited resources are distributed strategically)



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## Evidence-Based Strategies to Boost School Readiness

1. Provide resources & supports for families & caregivers
2. Improve the quality of early learning opportunities
3. Provide quality, age-appropriate books to kids
- 4. Build awareness of reliable population-based measure of school readiness**
5. Engage the public & educate policymakers about early learning

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## Poll Question #4

Which of these strategies is your community pursuing now? (pick the top 2)

- Provide resources & supports for families & caregivers
- Improve the quality of early learning opportunities
- Provide quality, age-appropriate books to kids
- Build awareness of reliable population-based measure of school readiness
- Engage the public & educate policymakers about early learning

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## Evidence-Based Strategies: Support Families & Caregivers



- Connect parents & families to information, resources & support
  - Best practices include:
    - Nurse Family Partnership ([www.nursefamilypartnership.org](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org))
    - Parents As Teachers ([www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org))
    - Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) ([www.hippyusa.org](http://www.hippyusa.org))
  - Leverage resources like 2-1-1 & Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) agencies
- Provide support for family, friend & neighbor caregivers

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## Evidence-Based Strategies: Improve Quality of Care



- Improve early learning environments
  - Review state early learning guidelines <http://www.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/ebsites.html>
- Improve training & qualifications of early learning providers
  - Professional development support ([www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/family/part/childcare\\_part\\_nccic.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/family/part/childcare_part_nccic.html))
  - TEACH scholarship programs ([www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html](http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html))
- Support the development & implementation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) ([www.qrisnetwork.org/](http://www.qrisnetwork.org/))

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## Evidence-Based Strategies: Provide quality, age-appropriate books



- Partners with organizations that can help low-income
  - First Book ([www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org))
  - Dolly Parton's Imagination Library ([www.imaginationlibrary.com](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com))
  - Raising a Reader ([www.raisingareader.org](http://www.raisingareader.org))
  - Reach out and Read ([www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org))
  - Reading Is Fundamental ([www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org))
  - Family Place Libraries ([ww.family-place.libraries](http://ww.family-place.libraries))
  - Jumpstart's Read For the Record ([www.jstart.org/campaigns-read-record](http://www.jstart.org/campaigns-read-record))
- Build out partnerships with libraries, literacy councils & book stores

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## Evidence-Based Strategies: Engage the public & educate policymakers



- Conduct public education campaign
  - Elevate the issue
  - Build coalition
  - Invite individuals & organizations to action
- Implement system building efforts
  - Birth to Five Policy Alliance ([www.birthtofivepolicy.org](http://www.birthtofivepolicy.org))
  - BUILD Initiative ([www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org))
  - Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative ([www.state-eccs.org](http://www.state-eccs.org))
  - ZERO TO THREE ([www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org))

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## Poll Question #5

Which of these strategies is your community least equipped to tackle?  
(pick 1 )

- Provide resources & supports for families & caregivers
- Improve the quality of early learning opportunities
- Provide quality, age-appropriate books to kids
- Build awareness of reliable population-based measure of school readiness
- Engage the public & educate policymakers about early learning

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## Resources and Tools

### Videos, statistics, fact sheets from the experts

- Nobel Laureate Heckman Equation [www.heckmanequation.org](http://www.heckmanequation.org)
- Center for the Developing Child ([wwwdevelopingchild.harvard.edu](http://wwwdevelopingchild.harvard.edu))

### Messaging & materials for national policymakers

- First Five Years Fund [www.ffyf.org](http://www.ffyf.org)

### Enlisting & enrolling business leaders

- Making The Business Case – Adaptable PowerPoint, brochure, flash video, champion action tips & more to enroll business leaders into early learning ([www.bornlearning.org/default.aspx?id=253](http://www.bornlearning.org/default.aspx?id=253))
- Business Champion Toolkit – Communications tools, including YouTube video & Speaker's Bureau toolkit, to help business champions recruit their peers ([www.bornlearning.org/default.aspx?id=278](http://www.bornlearning.org/default.aspx?id=278))



## Resources and Tools

### Research

- Kids Count– data on your community's kids ([www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org))
- Birth to Five Policy Alliance -- policy, research, advocacy ([www.birthtofivepolicy.org](http://www.birthtofivepolicy.org))
- *Education Research Overview*, United Way's 2011 overview of national research, "the case," research- and evidence-based strategies & best practices in school readiness, early grade reading, middle school success, high school graduation, and post-secondary success.

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p2bfj4zdhwbm25c/Ap\\_HIHrklA/Education%20Research%20Overview%202011.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p2bfj4zdhwbm25c/Ap_HIHrklA/Education%20Research%20Overview%202011.pdf)

### Public Engagement

*Born Learning*, United Ways public engagement campaign to help parents, families and communities support early learning, with parent website ([www.Bornlearning.org](http://www.Bornlearning.org)), and 400+ public awareness, parent education and community mobilization tools for 1,500 local *Born Learning* campaigns

