

Making  
Decisions  
Count for  
Children  
The  
Kansas  
School  
Readiness  
Data  
Initiative

July 30  
2010

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Report on the  
July 9th  
Meeting

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# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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### INTRODUCTION

As a state, Kansas is focusing on students' preparation for college and career and on developing a longitudinal data system that connects the early learning years, from birth to the start of kindergarten, with later school and college learning. Knowing that children's learning experiences prior to the start of kindergarten are crucial to their success in school and beyond makes it clear that progress must be tracked beginning at birth.

Towards this end, on July 9, 2010, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) launched the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative (Initiative) with a meeting held at the Holiday Inn Express at the Legends in Kansas City, Kansas. *Report on the July 9th Meeting* describes the Initiative, provides an overview of the meeting and its results, and details next steps. This report will be widely distributed and all meeting documents are being placed on the KSDE website (<http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4295>).

Under development for over six months, this Initiative anticipated the onset of the federally supported Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council and the KSDE's receipt of a federal grant to strengthen the State's K-12 longitudinal data system, including intentional linkages with early childhood data collection efforts. To support the Initiative's ambitious agenda, the KSDE engaged an outside consultant, Stacie Goffin of the Goffin Strategy Group (See Appendix A), to assist with planning efforts and facilitate the day-long meeting on July 9<sup>th</sup>.

The vision for this Initiative is informed decision making on behalf of young children's healthy development and school readiness. Focused on young children from birth to the start of kindergarten, this Initiative will lead to increased availability of valid and reliable data that can inform effective state and community policy decisions on children's behalf.

The KSDE is committed to this Initiative being inclusive, collaborative, and comprehensive. The leadership being exercised on behalf of this work is not for the sole benefit of the KSDE. The overarching goal is a coordinated, comprehensive early childhood data system that is connected to the K-12 data system, permitting everyone who is engaged in promoting children's school readiness and tracking their school success to make evidence based decisions on behalf of policy and practice.

The Initiative is focused on building a coordinated data system that collects and tracks school readiness data capable of responding to key questions of policy and practice. It is framed by the State's comprehensive school readiness framework (See Appendix B); KSDE's commitment to this framework demands that the School Readiness Data Initiative be structured as a collaborative venture. Ultimately, the intent is to develop a functional system that will be useful to end-users, technically sound, practical to administer at the state level, not unduly burdensome to local providers, and compliant with all appropriate privacy laws.

## MAKING DECISIONS COUNT FOR CHILDREN JULY 9 MEETING PURPOSE

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, 30 individuals from a range of backgrounds (See Appendix C) covering research, information technology, advocacy, higher education, state agencies, early childhood organizations, and public and private early learning programs came together to identify key questions of policy and practice. Invited participants reflected the end users for the data system being constructed. Consequently, they were uniquely qualified to identify priority questions of policy and practice that could serve as the organizing framework for answering questions about children, programs, and the early childhood workforce. As a sign of stakeholders' high interest in the availability of a statewide comprehensive and coordinated school readiness data system, only three invitees were absent, and in each instance their absence was due to a prior commitment.

Two overarching purposes organized participants' work on July 9<sup>th</sup>:

1. Prioritize options in response to the question of *“What are key policy and practice questions to be answered about how young children are doing related to school readiness, birth to the start of kindergarten?”* This Initiative is based on the premise that priority policy questions must first be selected in order to identify the data that need to be collected and/or coordinated and to determine the data infrastructure required, both in terms of capacity and technology.
2. Identify the short- and long-term actions steps necessary for creating a data system that is capable of documenting the State's school readiness efforts. These action steps provide a platform for organizing the work going forward.

A number of steps were implemented so participants could arrive on July 9<sup>th</sup> prepared to engage with this work. Of particular relevance were (1) individual interviews, conducted by the Consultant, with each of the meeting participants and (2) the School Readiness Listening Tour, conducted by the KSDE staff. The School Readiness Listening Tour involved on-site sessions with direct service providers and parents across the State and an on-line survey sent to program administrators and directors of a wide range of child development and early learning programs.

Both of these activities involved asking key stakeholders of the State's future school readiness data system to identify priority questions related to (1) children's school readiness, (2) families' support of their children's school readiness, and (3) early learning programs. The findings were organized into two briefing documents (See Appendices D and E) and provided to meeting participants prior to the meeting day. Additional briefing documents, including the Meeting Agenda, can be found in Appendix F. (A complete presentation of the over 1000 questions generated by the School Readiness Listening Tour, including the Administrator Electronic Survey Results is available at <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4295>)

I appreciated the richness of the information – its depth. I now have a much broader understanding.

—Meeting Participant

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*Making Decisions Count for Children* was a highly successful meeting. All of the meeting's results were achieved. Participants left feeling better informed, pleased with their accomplishments, eager for the work that lies ahead, and keen to stay informed about the Initiative as it moves forward. As expressed by one participant, "The listening tour and other activities were effective. Everyone is going to walk away feeling like they have been heard. Even though some compromise was required, our opinions have been valued and heard."

### MEETING RESULTS

Meeting participants began their work by responding to the following question: *As you look to the future, why/how will data be essential to your work?* Eight broad themes regarding the role of data, presented below in alphabetical order, emerged from this exchange, adding another plank to the foundation for the day's activities.

- Documenting outcomes for children
- Facilitating communication & collaboration
- Funding decisions
- Identifying programs and services that work
- Informing continuous program improvement
- Informing policy deliberations
- Responding to needs and interests of a broad base of stakeholders
- Strengthening professional preparation and development of the early childhood workforce

We learned about one another, including each other's passions.

—Meeting Participant

The most significant meeting outcome was the identification by participants of eight policy questions to drive the State's development of a statewide comprehensive and coordinated school readiness data system. Informed by the findings from participant interviews and the School Readiness Listening Tour, these eight policy questions were developed through a highly interactive process that actively engaged all participants in deliberating and prioritizing the possibilities.

The group's final decision making was informed by eight selection criteria:

- Communication power of the question(s) to decision makers
- Criticality to evidence based practices
- Criticality to funding decisions
- Investment orientation/demonstrates return on investment
- Relevance of the question to policy planning & development
- Relevance to program improvement
- Short term impact on children's school readiness (defined as 2 to 4 years) embedded in a context of long term thinking
- Statewide relevance

Addressing each of the four elements of the State's school readiness framework (ready families, ready communities, ready schools, ready children), the eight policy questions selected to drive

development of a longitudinal school readiness data system are listed below. The eight questions are sequenced in order of priority. Appendix G presents the full list of questions deliberated by participants.

1. How prepared are all of our children for kindergarten, as a whole and by subgroups?
2. What are the most critical health, safety, and community factors that contribute to children’s school readiness?
3. What is the impact of family education, involvement, engagement, and support services on children’s school readiness?
4. What are best practices for engaging families?
5. How prepared are the State’s schools for meeting the needs of entering kindergartners?
6. Who are children not being served and where are they?
7. What combination of early childhood experiences has the best return on investment?
8. What defines program effectiveness?

“We found out through this process what was important.”

—Meeting Participant

In contemplating which of these policy questions to tackle first, the group agreed that these eight policy questions would, as part of next steps, be tiered in terms of their “readiness” to be answered as defined below.

- Short term – within 3 years
- Long term – up to 5 years
- Longer term

## KANSAS SCHOOL READINESS DATA INITIATIVE NEXT STEPS

The convening on July 9<sup>th</sup> was the start of a long-term Initiative. The joint work of identifying next steps was initiated to ensure that the collaborative intent of this effort materializes.

This section begins with identifying next steps recommended by meeting participants. Additionally, informed by the pre-meeting interviews with meeting participants and findings from the School Readiness Listening Tour, the KSDE came prepared to identify steps it will initiate immediately to ensure that the Initiative moves forward. Their next steps conclude this section.

But first, several next steps had broad general agreement from all involved in this effort:

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## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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- Vetting/affirming the validity of the chosen eight policy questions with stakeholders and building broad buy-in for them;
- Ensuring dedicated leadership and funding is available to the Initiative;
- Committing to on-going communication with stakeholders;
- Identifying currently available data, plus the data that need to be collected, to respond to the priority questions that have been identified; and, finally,
- Building the necessary infrastructure – both in terms of capacity and technology – that can be responsive to the selected policy questions and can be linked to the KSDE’s emerging K-12 and beyond longitudinal data system.

### MEETING PARTICIPANTS’ RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

The next steps recommended by meeting participants revolved around three overarching areas: (1) Creating a plan for responding to each of the eight priority policy questions, (2) Implementing the steps needed to build a comprehensive and coordinated longitudinal data system, and (3) Building Public Support and Use of the Data System. These suggestions now need to be organized into a sequenced action plan that can guide the Initiative’s work, including clear delineation of those actions steps that should be initiated within the next fiscal year and those steps that must await the completion of these initial actions.

#### Create a Plan to Answer Each of the 8 Priority Policy Questions

1. Assess what is needed to respond to each priority policy question, including common data elements
  - Identify the data already available and locate the gaps
  - Identify data sources
  - Identify data collection methods, both current and potential
  - Identify responsible parties
  - Develop timelines
  - Identify measures/resources to complete action steps
2. Define terms, such as *program effectiveness*; cross-walk key terms across programs (for example, “home visiting”) to promote consistent terminology; identify common measures and tools across early childhood programs
3. Define “community readiness” in the context of the School Readiness Framework
4. Work with the Kansas Educational Data Users Consortium (KEDUC) to implement necessary research

## Implement Steps to Build a Comprehensive, Coordinated Longitudinal Data System

1. Coordinate existing data-related initiatives
2. Create a master data collection process that includes:
  - Documenting where data (qualitative and quantitative) resides and who owns it;
  - Identifying opportunities and barriers to data sharing across data repositories
  - Identifying funding sources for the data system development work
  - Creating shared data standards, including common data identifiers and collection definitions, so data can be coordinated across programs, organizations, and agencies
  - Creating/updating Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) for early learning data sharing across state agencies
  - Developing data-related confidentiality agreements
3. Develop a data warehouse/repository and management system
4. Link school readiness data to the K-12 longitudinal data system with a focus on longitudinal impact
5. Develop a system of data collection that includes the private sector
6. Institutionalize ongoing data collection and analysis
7. Determine how shared data will be accessed and used

## Build Public Support and Use of the Data System

1. Develop on-going communications with stakeholders
2. Expand the number of individuals actively engaged with the work going forward
3. Build public will within the early childhood community, including parents, in support of the school readiness longitudinal data system
4. Analyze, synthesize, and publicize data/results
5. Design a data reporting format and process

## KSDE'S PLANNED NEXT STEPS

Informed by participant interviews and findings from the School Readiness Listening Tour, KSDE anticipated a convergence of thinking would take place. To ensure that the day's momentum was sustained, prior to the meeting's close it pledged to do the following:

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1. In light of the clear need that emerged from participant interviews, the KSDE will convene a short-term work group to craft a definition of school readiness and develop a process for wide acceptance of the group's recommendations. Building on the State's present framework, this work will strengthen the platform for the work ahead.
2. The Children's Cabinet and the KSDE have committed to working together to map the State's existing data banks so this Initiative can build on existing work and forge ahead without duplicating efforts.
3. The KSDE is developing an action plan to work with the Children's Cabinet and other state agencies and organizations, including the Early Childhood Advisory Council, to maximize related efforts and initiatives. The goal is to ensure that all stakeholders can access data that will strengthen decision making on behalf of children's well being, including their school readiness.
4. A process for vetting the policy questions that have been identified will be developed to affirm them as the priority questions that should drive next steps in constructing a comprehensive and coordinated longitudinal school readiness data system.

Having the priority questions identified will make our future data-related work easier.

—Meeting participant

### CONCLUSION

The KSDE spokespeople stressed that their convening role in this effort is in service to more than the KSDE's interests. Rather, *KSDE's belief in the State's School Readiness Framework demands that the School Readiness Data Initiative be organized as a collaborative effort.* The KSDE has appointed Early Childhood Coordinator Gayle Stuber to steer this Initiative and to represent its early childhood interests on the KSDE Longitudinal Data System workgroup and to serve as the agency's liaison with the Early Childhood Advisory Council, P-20 Council, and other agencies and organizations without whom the Initiative's ultimate outcome cannot be achieved.

It will be recalled that the launch of this Initiative anticipated not only receipt by the KSDE of a U.S. Department of Education longitudinal data system grant but also creation of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. The first meeting of this group is planned for the fall. Given that the Council's mission includes development of a comprehensive early childhood data base, the KSDE intends to explore how this Initiative can help facilitate the Council's efforts.

All agree that much work lies ahead; yet the energy in the room was palpable. *Making Decisions Count for Children* provided just the start desired for the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative.

# APPENDICES

# Appendix A: Consultant Bio

BIO  
STACIE G. GOFFIN, ED.D.

Stacie Goffin is recognized for her conceptual leadership in early care and education and her strategic oversight and management of significant change initiatives resulting in changes for policy and practice.

Prior to establishing the Goffin Strategy Group, Stacie led the five year effort to reinvent the National Association for the Education of Young Children's [NAEYC] early childhood program accreditation system. This effort resulted in a newly designed delivery system, updated accreditation criteria, and first ever national program standards for early childhood programs serving children from birth through kindergarten.

Well-known for her analytical insights, big-picture thinking, and organizational capacity Stacie's current work revolves around the design, facilitation, and implementation of field-building initiatives. Most recently, she has become engaged with the field's leadership issues.

She led the founding – and served as founding chair - of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, Kansas City's Metropolitan Council on Early Learning, and the West Virginia Network for Young Children. A former senior program officer at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, she began her career as a preschool and primary grade teacher of children with special needs. She also has taught extensively at the undergraduate and graduate levels. A member of numerous organizational and editorial boards, she has authored or edited over 60 publications, many of which are recognized for challenging conventional thinking. Her most recent publication, Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education (written with Valora Washington) is published by Teachers College Press (TCP). She presently is working on Leading for the Future of Early Care and Education also to be published by Teachers College Press.

# Appendix B: Kansas School Readiness Framework



## The Kansas Vision for School Readiness

Kansas children will be ready to succeed in school when—

1. Each child has a safe, healthy, nurturing learning environment from birth to school age.

- Parents have the skills, knowledge and abilities to make well-informed choices and assist children in reaching their potential.
- Professionals have the training, skills, and knowledge to encourage and enhance children's learning.

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2. Kansas has an integrated, comprehensive system of programs for families and children.

- Agencies and providers work together to support families and children.
- Measures of success for the system are clearly identified, tracked, and used to make modifications in programs.
- Kansas is nationally known for quality child care and education, thus attracting businesses and families.

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3. Kansans strongly support programs that ensure school readiness.

- Adequate financial and human resources are available statewide.
  - Public-private collaborations ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed.
  - Early education is promoted as a profession by training and compensating personnel appropriately.
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### Guiding Principles for School Readiness

1. Children are born ready to learn and their families and caregivers are their first teachers.
2. Learning is a lifelong activity and every environment is a learning environment. Positive early experiences support school readiness.
3. Children's success in school and in life is everyone's responsibility. Children, families, schools, and communities all need to be prepared to support success.
4. School readiness involves the whole child in the context of the family and the community. This includes the child's health and development in the following areas: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and language.
5. Integrated services must be available to all children, appropriate to the age, abilities, and culture of each child.
6. Children enter school ready to learn regardless of a wide range of cultural backgrounds, learning experiences and differences in abilities. Such differences may require adaptations of traditional education.
7. There is a strong, direct connection between the early years and later success in school and life. Public policy and resource allocation must demonstrate that children are a high priority to Kansans.

**School Readiness occurs when families, schools, and communities support and serve children effectively so that all children have the ability to succeed in various learning environments.**

**FAMILY GOAL: Children live in safe and stable families that support learning.**

Indicator: Mothers receive adequate prenatal care.

Indicator: Mothers are high school graduates.

Indicator: Children live in homes free of violence.

Indicator: Children live in families that can afford basic necessities.

Indicator: Children receive health care services.

**COMMUNITY GOAL: Children live in safe and stable communities that support learning, health, and family services.**

Indicator: Early childhood programs are high quality.

Indicator: Early childhood programs are available.

Indicator: Early childhood programs are affordable.

Indicator: Children live in safe and stable communities.

**SCHOOL GOAL: Children attend schools that support learning.**

Indicator: Schools provide high quality learning environments.

Indicator: Teachers provide high quality classroom learning environments.

Indicator: Schools have strong relationships with families and communities.

**INDICATIONS OF READINESS**

**CHILD GOAL: Children are prepared to succeed in school.**

Indicator: Children are physically healthy.

Indicator: Children have the social/emotional competencies to succeed in school.

Indicator: Children are eager to participate in the learning process.

Indicator: Children have an understanding of symbolic development.

Indicator: Children have the communication and literacy skills to succeed in school.

Indicator: Children have mathematical knowledge to succeed in school.

# Appendix C: July 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting Participants

## July 9 Meeting Participants

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# Appendix D: Summary of Participant Interviews

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### Introduction

#### OVERVIEW

*The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative* is a strategic and collaborative effort to collect and track school readiness data in the context of the State's broad and comprehensive school readiness framework. As a forward thinking initiative, it anticipates the onset of the federally supported Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council as well as the Kansas State Department of Education's efforts to strengthen its K-12 longitudinal data system, including connection with early childhood data collection activities. The Initiative aspires to creating a data system that makes valid and reliable information available on children's school readiness from birth to the start of kindergarten -- information that can inform evidence-based decision making in the service of children's healthy development and learning.

*Making Decisions Count* is the first meeting of this Kansas Department of Education convened Initiative. Building on a results orientation, interviews were conducted with meeting participants prior to the meeting date to gather information on their priority questions in relation to children's school readiness, families' readiness to support their children's learning and development, and the readiness of communities and early learning programs to prepare children for success in school and beyond.

Specifically, participants were asked to identify their questions related to (1) children's school readiness, (2) about families' support of their children's school readiness, and (3) about early learning programs. Asking these questions in advance makes it possible on July 9<sup>th</sup> for participants to move beyond identifying questions of interest to focusing on the identification of a finite number of priority questions as a collective body.

Of the 30 meeting participants, 27 provided 30 minutes of their time to converse with the meeting facilitator and share their responses to the 3 data-related questions. This document summarizes the findings from these conversations and then shares the actual questions asked by meeting participants. Questions are organized by 3 topical headings:

- Children's School Readiness
- Supporting Families Abilities to Promote School Readiness
- Program and Community Readiness

Additionally, questions arose regarding current programs, services, and practices in the State. These are presented in this document, as well, under the heading of Questions about Current Kansas Programs and Services.

## FINDINGS

A total of 161 data-related policy questions were asked. (Many questions are comprised of multiple questions that, if counted separately, would increase this number.) It was possible to group these questions under 17 overarching, “super ordinate” questions. *Participants might wish to consider these super ordinate questions as the starting point for their morning deliberations on the 7 questions for policy and practice of highest priority to the State of Kansas.*

The pages that follow identify the sub-questions – and their number – that fall under each of the super ordinate questions. *These sub-questions reflect the range of individual interests represented by meeting participants and are important to review to ensure that the final list of priority questions attend to the nuances and particulars masked by the identification of super ordinate questions.*

These super ordinate questions are listed below, organized by the three topical headings identified above.

### CHILDREN’S SCHOOL READINESS

1. How will Children’s School Readiness Be Assessed?
2. How Do Children With Dissimilar Early Learning Experiences Differ?
3. What is the Definition of School Readiness?
4. What are the Early Learning Experiences of Children in Kansas?
5. How Prepared are Our Children for Kindergarten?

### SUPPORTING FAMILIES’ ABILITIES TO PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS

6. What are Best Practices for Engaging Families?
7. What are Effective Parent Education and Support Practices?
8. How do Families Contribute to Children’s School Readiness?
9. What is the Impact of Family Involvement on Children’s School Readiness?
10. How can Parents be Made More Aware of Available Support Services?

### PROGRAM & COMMUNITY READINESS

11. What Defines Program Effectiveness?
12. Where are the State’s Early Learning Programs?
13. How Can Early Learning Programs Be Made More Effective?
14. How effective are Kansas Early Learning Programs?
15. What is the Status of the Early Learning Work Force?
16. What are the Best Investment Strategies for Promoting School Readiness?
17. What Information/Data Is Effective in Building Public Support?

# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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### Children's School Readiness

#### How Will Children's School Readiness Be Assessed? [6 related questions]

- How do we determine and who decides that a child is school ready?
- What child assessments are nationally normed for determining the school readiness of four year-olds?
- If standard assessment is used, what happens to children who do not meet the level set for school readiness?
- What are the key risk factors, key protective factors, and relative contributions of each to children's school readiness?
- What school readiness indicators tell us whether children can successfully acclimate to school settings/transition into school?
- What is the best measure of children's school readiness as it relates to the State's objectives?

#### How Do Children With Dissimilar Early Learning Experiences Differ? [8 related questions]

- What is the difference between children who have had preschool opportunities vs. those who have not?
- Do at-risk children need two years vs. one year of preschool to prepare them for Kindergarten?
- Do school readiness differences exist for children who live in rural versus urban areas?
- In preparing children for the classroom setting, how does program class size prior to Kindergarten affect school readiness?
- Who are the children who are not school ready? Where do they reside? What are the services that these children are accessing or are not accessing?
- What is the difference between and the importance of social-emotional development and academic skills? What role does preschool play in this regard? Which readiness attribute is most important?
- How important is physical fitness – fine and gross motor - in preparing a child for school?
- How is the gap addressed between a child who has not attended a preschool program and one who has?

## What is the Definition of School Readiness? [9 related questions]

- What is it/school readiness?
- How do different constituencies define school readiness? How do stakeholders in Kansas define school readiness, and to what extent do they vary?
- How does the State’s framework for school readiness and that of different constituencies link with life-long outcomes?
- a) How do we agree to measure school readiness? b) Is the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework our basis for measuring school readiness? Are the indicators in the RBA proxy measures for school readiness? c) If not, what set of agreed-upon indicators are? d) What is missing?
- What does school readiness mean for children with special needs, and how do we embrace them as part of our state school readiness agenda -- especially children with severe disabilities?
- Are we moving toward identifying criteria that define school readiness for all children? How is school readiness quantified so that it is inclusive of all children, including those with severe disabilities? How is it defined regardless of intellectual capacity or level?
- Should we promote physical activity as a readiness indicator?
- Is it helpful to have a common definition of school readiness? What is our definition? Is it a definition accepted by everyone? Are local folks aware of and using it?
- Will there be a “centralized” definition of school readiness or will school districts continue having their own definitions?

## What are the Early Learning Experiences of Children in Kansas? [4 related questions]

- What early childhood programs have children attended, for how long, and to what effect? (This is intended as a dosage question, as well as a question regarding child “turnover” in and out of programs.)
- Which children have access to high quality programs that promote school success?
- How many children are accessing early learning programs (child care, Head Start, preschool)? How many are in a school-based pre-k program (3/4 year olds)?
- Where are children who participate in a formal half day program for the remainder of their parents’ work day?

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### How Prepared Are Our Children for Kindergarten? [17 related questions]

- What is the status of each young child in Kansas relative to health and development?
- Where are children in their school readiness in terms of status on a state-wide mastery school readiness check list?
- Do children come to school less prepared to succeed when (1) they do not experience an early learning setting, (2) have a first language other than English or (3) come from low income families? If so, do early learning settings help them overcome this gap?
- What are the basic needs of young children (e.g., family characteristics/demographics, screening results, status on State’s 4-Year--Old at Risk criteria) that, once known, can inform the kinds of services and resources that are needed to support their school readiness?
- What skills and abilities do children, overall and by subgroups, have when they come to Kindergarten?
- How are our children doing as a whole? Are they coming to school “ready to go” across all domains? If not, what are the areas in which they are less prepared?
- What is the status of Kansas children upon entry to Kindergarten?
- What do children know who have participated in early learning programs? How prepared are they to succeed in Kindergarten?
- Which children are school ready and which are not? Where does the school readiness gap reside?
- What do children know? How does this differ from what should they know?
- How can we better identify and overcome barriers to children’s success in Kindergarten?
- Is there a difference between the school success of children in pre-k programs versus in care-based preschool experiences?
- What needs to happen to promote collaboration between early learning programs and K-12? What will be the impact of this alignment in considering children’s school readiness?
- What is the role of health and nutrition in preparing children for school success? What policy changes are needed to align with this evidence?
- Are children healthy enough to learn effectively: e.g., oral health, social emotional development, mental and physical health, and nutrition?

- Do children have the necessary social and emotional skills to be successful in group settings? Is a foundation being built to be successful later in life as well as in school?
- Do children have the developmentally appropriate cognitive skills necessary for school success?

## Supporting Families' Abilities to Promote School Readiness

### What are Best Practices for Engaging Families? [16 related questions]

- How do families conceptualize parent involvement?
- What strategies are most effective for engaging parents in their children's education during early childhood and beyond?
- How do we define and measure exemplary parent involvement?
- For programs with exemplary parental involvement, what strategies were used to sustain engagement?
- What practices or programs encourage parent involvement in their child's schooling?
- How do Kansas early childhood programs support parents in preparing their children for school?
- How can families help their children come to school prepared to succeed, for example, in the areas of: emerging literacy, emotional-social development, and peer interactions?
- In light of findings about the long-term impact of quality child care, how can parents be assisted in locating programs that will support their children's school readiness?
- What are best practices for parents to help their children be school ready?
- What aspects of parent education need to be addressed?
- How do school systems replicate the best of good, early learning programs in regards to parent involvement? How do schools maintain relations with at-risk families?
- What practices in the home support school readiness?
- How involved have families been in the programs their children attend? What ways are families involved?
- What strategies can families use to assess the quality of their children's early learning programs – and then to support their children while in an early learning program?

## Making Decisions Count for Children The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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- Are families, especially homeless, immigrant, non English speakers, and others who don't typically have access to resources, taught how to help their children? Do they know they should be preparing their children for kindergarten?
- Do public/private investments match the level of need for parent education and support?

### What Are Effective Parent Education & Support Practices? [12 related questions]

- How do we meaningfully define “family” in light of diverse family structures?
- How do parents conceptualize/think about school involvement? What do they think constitutes school involvement?
- What are family support practices that can be provided by early learning programs to enhance families' quality of life and, in turn, promote children's school readiness?
- Are there successful family support models that show a direct relationship to children's readiness for school?
- What are the most effective curriculum and delivery system for family support?
- How can we help parents to identify critical developmental milestones?
- What parent education programs have the most positive impact of child outcomes?
- What parent education programs have families accessed prior to their child beginning Kindergarten? From their perspective, what difference did these programs make to them?
- From a family's perspective, how well are their community-based family support services coordinated and/or integrated in response to their needs?
- Are some coordination elements of community-based family support services more effective than others? If so, which ones?
- Are there outlets for at-risk parents to learn how to support their children's school readiness via support services, such as health clinics?
- What is the impact of reduced public funding on the quality of parent education programs?

## How Do Families Contribute to Children's School Readiness? [16 related questions]

- What are the key family risk factors, key protective factors, and relative contributions of each to children's school readiness?
- How do these family variables impact children's school readiness:
  - Sustained parent employment,
  - Parent's increased education level, and
  - Parent engagement in a child's learning experience?
- What characteristics of families – regarding of family structure – contribute to children's school readiness?
- Do families know what school readiness means? Are they aware of the State's definition of school readiness? Do they accept social-emotional criteria as part of school readiness?
- What do families need or want to support their children's school readiness?
- Are families involved with their children's early learning programs? If not, what can be done to encourage their involvement?
- How satisfied are parents with their children's level of school readiness?
- Are families receiving appropriate services based on their needs? Are family support services matched to needs?
- Do parent education/home visitation programs increase protective factors and lead to increased parenting skills and positive child outcomes?
- What is the relationship between participation in family support programs and school readiness?
- What frequency of home visits is needed to have an impact on children's school readiness?
- How does a family's connectedness to a community relate to a child's school readiness? What ways are communities responding to this issue if, in fact, these programs are important to children's school readiness?
- It is very obvious in rural areas who is not typical -- and there are growing numbers of these instances in our communities. What could help us make greater in-roads with these families?
- What are the differences between home and school in terms of the match/mismatch of school readiness expectations and supports that children need?
- What do children and families need to know to stay engaged with their children and be good at the social and academic sides of school readiness?

# Making Decisions Count for Children

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- Does parent participation with their child’s education differ prior to and after the start of Kindergarten?

### What is the Impact of Family Involvement on Children’s School Readiness?

[7 related questions]

- How does family involvement in early learning programs affect their child’s school readiness?
- Have parents’ participation made a difference in outcomes for their children? Do parents see a connection between their involvement and their children’s outcomes?
- How does the home-school connection impact school readiness? What frequency of this involvement is required to have an impact?
- What interventions with families and parents have the greatest impact on children and their school readiness?
- What is the difference in the school readiness of Kansas children whose parents have participated in PAT versus those who have not, organized by school district?
- What is the difference in children’s overall health if they have or have not had parents participating in PAT?
- What is the impact of parent education on teen parenting?

### How Can Parents Be Made More Aware of Available Support Services? [6 related questions]

- How do we best support and get the word out about parent-related programs, especially to families most at-risk and in rural areas?
- How do we get parents involved?
- How can we best inform parents about the impact on children of too much TV and video games?
- How aware are families of the support services available to them in their community?
- Do families know that there are resources available to them to help their children? If not, how can this information be made available to them?
- How can we get more family participation in readiness data collection?

## Program & Community Readiness

### What Defines Program Effectiveness? [9 related questions]

- What constitutes program effectiveness?
- What is the State's common definition for program quality in early learning programs that promote school readiness?
- What is the pre-readiness framework that should drive the State's front end work to ensure children's success in school and beyond?
- What indicators define an effective program?
- What is used to define quality in early learning programs in Kansas?
- What curricula are used by early learning programs in Kansas? Is there a correlation between curricula and quality?
- Are early learning programs aware of and using the States' school readiness definition? How are they using this definition to prepare children for school?
- What are the essential elements of a high quality early learning program? How do we come to agreement about the most important components?

### Where are the State's Early Learning Programs? [3 related questions]

- What early learning programs are being offered at the local/community levels? What is the relationship of these programs to those offered by state agencies? What coordination, if any, takes place between local and state-funded programs?
- Who is providing a formal school readiness program to children in Kansas?
- How is community readiness determined?

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### How Can Early Learning Programs Be Made More Effective? [7 related questions]

- How do we go about choosing developmentally appropriate curricula to improve programs, guide practice, and inform preparation for kindergarten?
- What is an effective evidence-based quality rating system?
- Why aren't we seeing sustainable gains from our early learning programs, such as Head Start? What pieces are we missing?
- How is the range of early childhood programs (e.g., nutrition, fitness, health, and so forth) being integrated with early learning programs?
- What programs provide the strongest level of school readiness support to children?
- How do we use data to appropriately choose a developmentally appropriate curriculum? What kind of data is needed for this selection process?
- What are ways for school districts to gain information about the level of parents' involvement with their children's development and learning prior to the start of Kindergarten?

### How Effective are Kansas Early Learning Programs? [23 related questions]

- What are current strengths and weaknesses as far as availability, affordability and quality of early learning programs that promote school readiness?
- What program practices are associated with children's progress in school readiness- i.e., what elements make a difference?
- What programs/strategies work for which children in terms of achieving what we are defining as success?
- What classroom practices best support children's school readiness, as it relates to subgroups of children, as well as overall?
- What is the efficacy of programs in communities serving various child populations? In other words, what programs have the best outcomes in what communities?
- What combination of services and programs at the community level lead to the best outcomes for children and families?
- What impact does a program or combination of early childhood programs (beyond only early learning programs) have on children's school readiness?

- What are the differences in the State’s early learning programs, across sectors, in terms of effectiveness in promoting school readiness outcomes for children?
- What early learning programs are effective for specific child populations?
- What curricula, across developmental domains/content areas, have evidence to support their facilitation of low income children’s school readiness?
- Given the importance of accountability to the state’s policy makers, what evidence exists about programs’ continued improvement, programs that should be replicated, and existing gaps?
- Are Kansas Kindergarten programs prepared to meet the needs of the children who come to them?
- Do Kansas preschools over emphasize academics over children’s developmental needs?
- What does State data say about children’s early learning experiences, by sector, and their school readiness? How does this compares to other states? What needs to be done from a policy perspective to enhance children’s experiences and school readiness?
- What are the strengths of Kansas early learning programs – regardless of program auspice or funding source -- in terms of promoting children’s school readiness and where do they need to be strengthened?
- What are efficient and cost effective ways of measuring the degree to which a program is implemented as intended?
- Do early learning programs have transition plans involving communication with previous and forthcoming program staff to facilitate children and families’ transitions?
- What is the level of effectiveness of individual programs in promoting/ensuring children’s school readiness?
- What are the characteristics of early learning programs that contribute to children’s school readiness relative to different child populations and family needs?
- How can local expectations of school readiness be modified to reflect what is known about best practices in early childhood education?
- What practices are in place to ease and facilitate the transition of children and families both within a program and from one program to another? Of these practices, which have been found to be more effective?
- What is happening inside early learning classrooms? How is the curriculum selected? Which parts actually affect educational vs. social outcomes? What parts of the curriculum are targeted to educational, academic, and social development?
- What is the financial impact of a half day preschool program on full-day child care center-based programs?

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### What is the Status of the State’s Early Learning Work Force? [5 related questions]

- How prepared is the early learning workforce by preschool type (setting, funding, and so worth)?
- What impact does workforce preparation have on school readiness outcomes?
- What practitioner skill sets are most crucial to promoting children’s school readiness?
- How can teachers be prepared to respond to the range of local school district expectations regarding children’s school readiness?
- What is level of teacher preparation in early learning programs in Kansas?

### What Information/Data Will Help Build Public Support? [8 related questions]

- How does the general public understand and think about school readiness?
- Are we effectively communicating the impact of early learning programs to the general public?
- Are we providing the information needed to encourage families to enroll their children and motivate the general public to invest in programs and their quality?
- Are we (the ECE community and institutions that represent them) moving in a positive direction to promote early learning programs and create a positive impression of the work in Kansas?
- There’s a general perception that we don’t communicate clearly or present sufficient data on program impact. What else do we, as an early childhood community, need to do in this regard?
- How do we demonstrate to legislators the importance of early learning programs in light of growing awareness of the importance of early brain development?
- What is the impact of reduced public funding on PAT’s availability and the existence of sufficient presence to effect school readiness of a particular school district population?
- How do we better communicate to others in the K-12 system the important contribution of early childhood programs to children’s success in kindergarten and beyond?

### What are the Best Investment Strategies for Promoting School Readiness? [6 related questions]

- Are we funding things that are effective, especially for at-risk children? Are we making the right investments for children, especially those most at risk? What really works for at-risk kids? So what programs or parental skills are going to be able to make at-risk children school ready?
- If we could do one thing for preschool children, what would it be? What is the “best hit” for our money?

- What early learning programs are effective for different child populations?
- What are efficient and cost effective ways of measuring the degree to which a program is implemented as intended?
- What is the most effectiveness use of resources and at what time? What dose is appropriate at which time, for which families and for which children?
- How can the State improve early learning programs that are not KSDE-sponsored?

## **Background Information Questions about Current Programs & Services**

### Children's School Readiness

- What grants presently are available to support children's school readiness?
- Are statistics available regarding the effectiveness of Head Start and pre-k for promoting children's school readiness?
- Are there assessments of children school readiness when they start Kindergarten?
- What is the state incidence of child abuse and neglect? Does it vary by county or school district?
- How are children participating in a formalized school based program being tracked? How are we tracking children in a licensed preschool program (KDHE)? Do children participating in Head Start also receive an identifying number?
- What is the representativeness of the sample of children who are part of the readiness data that has been collected? What is the best way to get a representative sample? Can a system be built so data is representative of the children throughout the State?
- What are common assessment tools used to measure school readiness?
- Will all programs that serve 4-year olds in Kansas be required to use a common assessment to measure children's school readiness?

### Early Learning Programs

- What states fully fund pre-k and all-day kindergarten?
- Does Kansas public fund school readiness programs that are not tied to family income? What early learning programs are available regardless of funding source or family income?
- What presently exists related to transition MOUs between and among early learning programs?

## Making Decisions Count for Children The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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- What data is available to show that the state’s pre-k programs are working?
- What connections exist between early learning programs (e.g. Head Start, child care, pre-k), and school districts?
- What exists to support the transition of data from parent education to kindergarten teachers?
- What technical assistance is available to early learning programs?
- Are programs like *My Babies Can Read* effective?

### Family Support for Children’s School Readiness

- Are there programs other than PAT to assist parents at the time of their child’s birth? What funds are available to support programs for young families?
- What is currently being done to help parents, especially young and underserved parents, understand children’s early brain development?
- What are we currently doing as a State in terms of outreach to families to promote family involvement and to support transition between programs?
- Are there “cultural rules” about families and teen parents that would help schools reach out to them more effectively?
- How does the Strengthening Families initiative fit into Birth to 5 and K-12 education? Will there be a state-wide initiative in follow-up to the recommendations from this initiative?
- What are we doing as a State to create ‘ready families’ in terms of addressing issues like developmentally appropriate activities, immunization, lead poisoning, health insurance, prenatal care and so forth?
- Based on indexing risk factors, what is the service reach of the State’s available programs? (i.e., Have we mapped risk factors and connected this information with an overlay of services?)

### Other

- What ability do we have to compare and use information already available?
- How can data be translated into improving birth to 5 programs?



# Appendix E:

## Summary of the School Readiness Listening Tour

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# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

### INTRODUCTION

The School Readiness Listening Tour included two elements: distribution of an electronic survey and four on-site listening sessions. The survey was distributed to:

Public Schools (Superintendents and Elementary Principals)  
Special Education Directors  
4 Year Old At-Risk  
Pre-K Pilot  
Parents as Teachers  
Part C Infant-Toddler Early Intervention  
State Interagency Coordination Council  
Head Start/Early Head Start  
Head Start Collaboration Office  
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies through Child Care Aware Kansas  
Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children  
Kansas Division of Early Childhood  
Kansas Association of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health  
Child Care Licensing and Registration  
State and Local Public Health Departments  
State and Regional Offices of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services  
Kansas Parent Information Center  
Families Together, Inc.  
Children's Cabinet  
Early Learning Coordinating Council  
Strengthening Families  
Early Childhood Staff in Institutes of Higher Education through ECHO and EQIP

Recipients were encouraged to share the information with others, expanding our reach.

#### OVERVIEW

*Making Decisions Count for Children: The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative* is a strategic and collaborative effort to collect and track school readiness data in the context of the State's broad and comprehensive school readiness framework. As a forward thinking initiative, it anticipates the onset of the federally supported Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Kansas State Department of Education's (KSDE) efforts to strengthen its K-12 longitudinal data system, including linkage of this system with early childhood data collection efforts. The Initiative aspires to creating a coordinated system that makes valid and reliable data available on children from birth to the start of kindergarten, data that can be used to inform evidence-based decision making in the service of their healthy development and learning.

To inform the Initiative's work, its initial phase includes collection of policy-related questions from individuals in programs providing direct early learning services to children ages birth to Kindergarten and their families, as well from individuals involved with supporting children's and families' healthy development and well-being—components central to our State's school readiness framework. Labeled a School Readiness Listening Tour, KSDE personnel distributed an electronic survey in May 2010 (see sidebar) and organized on-site listening sessions in Topeka, Salina, Maize, and Garden City between June 14 -17, 2010.

This document summarizes the vast number of questions collected through this process. It is provided to support the process of prioritizing policy questions that should drive development of the State's school readiness data system.

Over 200 individuals, representing all of the programs listed in the box above, responded to the electronic survey and on-site listening sessions. Distribution was not scientific; it was an invitation to all persons interested in participating. To our disappointment, participation by parents with young children and by Kindergarten teachers was low; consequently, their responses are not represented in this summary.

Participants were asked 5 questions:

- What are the questions you have about the children in your programs that you would like to have answered?
- What are the questions you have about the families who use your programs that you would like to have answered?
- What are the questions you have about your program that you would like to have answered?
- What are the questions about the effectiveness of your practice that you would like to have answered?
- What information do you think is needed to answer your questions?

More than 1,000 questions were collected! Our findings from an initial analysis of these questions follow. The full set of questions will be available on the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Early Learning Website ([www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org)) in late July 2010.

This summary follows a format similar to the one used for the Participant Interview Summary. This is possible because the questions brought forward during the Listening Tour correspond in striking ways to the 17 super ordinate questions identified during the pre-July 9<sup>th</sup> meeting interviews – with one exception. In addition to the three topic areas used for the Meeting Participant Interview, an additional topic area was identified: Schools’ Readiness, resulting in a total of four topic areas:

1. Children’s School Readiness
2. Supporting Families’ Abilities to Promote School Readiness
3. Program and Community Readiness
4. Schools’ Readiness

The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative is based on the State’s school readiness framework that includes Child, Family, School and Community Readiness, which may help explain the addition of Schools’ Readiness as a topic area.

There is still another difference with the Participant Interview Summary. While similar in what they want a school readiness data system to be able to answer, Listening Tour participants’ questions have a different orientation. They tend to be more personal and tilt toward seeking information that can improve practitioner and program performance. Additionally, questions often related to the program and service delivery.

# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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This summary is organized as follows:

1. Identification of the Topic Area
2. Listing of the pertinent super ordinate questions
3. A summary of the findings
4. A sample of the questions raised by Listening Tour participants

### CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS

#### Super Ordinate Questions

- How will Children's School Readiness Be Assessed?
- How Do Children with Dissimilar Early Learning Experiences Differ?
- What is the Definition of School Readiness?
- What are the Early Learning Experiences of Children in Kansas?
- How Prepared are Our Children for Kindergarten?

#### Summary Findings

Listening Tour participants want to know what children bring with them when they enter an early learning program, where they are when they exit that program, what other early learning experiences they have had, and how those experiences have affected their readiness for Kindergarten.

Listening Tour questions included the desire to have knowledge about children's well-being throughout the early learning years (birth to five) in addition to their status at kindergarten entry and beyond, including success in future grade levels and high school completion. Participants also wanted to know whether children varied in their level of readiness based on different demographic backgrounds and individual needs.

#### Sample Questions

- How do individual programs follow up on the children in their programs to see if the children learned the skills they needed?
- What do children know? What is expected of them? Are children ready for kindergarten?
- How do we get consistency in expectations for children entering Kindergarten across the state?
- How are children doing in third grade academically, socially and emotionally? (Health, also at Preschool entry from B-3, and then K, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, high school graduation, teen pregnancy)
- How do children with different demographics compare? Demographic information should include date of birth, gender, ethnicity, immunizations, parent history, developmental delays, NICU (birth info), age of parents. Who are the child's parents?

- Are children coming to school ready to learn? Did they receive intervention? Were they screened and what were the results? What are they bringing with them as they come through the doors? What are their other early learning experiences?
- Are children's basic needs being met? (i.e. food, housing, parenting)
- How many transitions has a child experienced? What was the impact of these transitions on their development? Is information about the child shared/coordinated?
- What is the best way to assess the children new to our program?
- How do Kansas children "measure up" to the Kansas Early Learning standards and to the Kindergarten standards?
- What is the number (percent) of children who receive infant toddler services, (Part C) and then Preschool Special Education (Part B) and then exit and no longer need services?
- How many of our children are not getting the developmental help they need to be prepared for Kindergarten?

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES' ABILITIES TO PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS

### Super Ordinate Questions

- What are Best Practices for Engaging Families?
- What are Effective Parent Education and Support Practices?
- How do Families Contribute to Children's School Readiness?
- What is the Impact of Family Involvement on Children's School Readiness?
- How can Parents be Made More Aware of Available Support Services?

### Summary Findings

Participants want to know how to effectively engage families in their programs and how families engage with their child outside the program. They want to know the services used by families as well as the services not accessed -- and why. Listening Tour participants wanted to know more about family goals and their impact on children's school readiness. Initial review suggests that this topic area includes the largest number of Listening Tour questions.

### Sample Questions

- How does a parent's involvement in their child's program affect the child socially, emotionally, and academically?
- How actively involved are parents with their children's extra-curricular activities, e.g., sports, going to museums?
- How does parent knowledge about child development impact school readiness?
- Do the behaviors of families change as a result of program services? Do their children come to school better prepared?
- Do parents apply positive parenting techniques? What is the impact on school readiness?
- What do families value about school readiness?
- What holds parents back from enrolling in a program that might be of benefit to them and/or their children?

# Making Decisions Count for Children

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- What do parents see as their role in their child's education?
- What kinds of support networks do families have?
- What can be done to help parents to understand the importance of early childhood development and education?
- How can parents become better informed about services provided by early childhood programs?

### Program and Community Readiness

#### Super Ordinate Questions

- What Defines Program Effectiveness?
- Where are the State's Early Learning Programs?
- How Can Early Learning Programs Be Made More Effective?
- How Effective are Kansas Early Learning Programs?
- What is the Status of the Early Learning Work Force?
- What are the Best Investment Strategies for Promoting School Readiness?
- What Information/Data Is Effective in Building Public Support?

#### Summary Findings

Participants want to know how to define program effectiveness and how to measure it. They want to know how educational credentials influence staff's ability to prepare children for school, how program services can be located, and service gaps that may exist in their communities.

#### Sample Questions

- What should an effective early learning program look like for children with disabilities?
- Which early childhood programs are cost effective?
- How can program data be collected to inform state level funding decisions?
- How do we function as a county in the absence of Birth to Three programs?
- How can we measure "quality" for all of our funders when everyone defines it differently?
- What is the impact of programs with varying duration and intensity?
- What defines program quality? Are programs evidence or research based?
- How can data help prevent duplication and eliminate gaps?
- What are effective ways to transition from one program to the next?
- Which services effectively meet the needs of children and families?
- Do programs and services use father friendly practices?
- What are the factors that distinguish effective programs? How can they be replicated?
- Which programs reduce risk factors and increase protective factors?

## Schools' Readiness

### Super Ordinate Questions

- How effective are Kindergarten to Grade 3 programs?
- How do Kindergarten teachers define school readiness?
- How developmentally appropriate are Kindergarten to Grade 3 programs?

### Summary Findings

Listening Tour Participants raised questions about schools' readiness to provide developmentally appropriate learning environments and practices. They asked about staff preparation, and communication between community early learning programs and public schools.

### Sample Questions

- As children leave early learning programs and enter Kindergarten, will they be met by teachers and administrators actively implementing developmentally appropriate classroom activities?
- How prepared are elementary school principals to provide early childhood instructional leadership?
- What is the level of communication between 0-5 programs and the public schools?
- What level of understanding do school districts have regarding the importance of children's development and learning during early childhood to their school readiness and success in school?

# Appendix F:

## Additional July 9 Briefing Documents

- Meeting Agenda
- Q & A

# Making Decisions Count for Children

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## *The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative*

July 9, 2010

### Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 9:15 a.m.

### Meeting Schedule

9:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: Holiday Inn Express at the Legends at Village West  
1931 Prairie Crossing/Parallel  
Kansas City, KS  
913.328.1024

## INTRODUCTION

As a state, Kansas increasingly is focused on students' preparation for college and career and a longitudinal data system that connects the early learning years with later school and college learning. We know that children's learning experiences prior to the start of kindergarten are crucial to their success in school and beyond.

Thus, it is clear that tracking students' progress must begin well before kindergarten. With this in mind, the KSDE is excited to be launching the *School Readiness Data Initiative*. The School Readiness Data Initiative vision is for decision making on behalf of young children's healthy development and school readiness to be informed by valid and reliable data. Focused on young children from birth to the start of Kindergarten, this collaborative Initiative will lead to increased availability of valid and reliable data that can inform effective state and community policy and practice decisions on behalf of children's healthy development and success in school.

This strategic and collaborative Initiative is focused on building a coordinated data system that collects and tracks school readiness information that responds to key questions of policy and practice. It anticipates the onset of the federally supported Kansas Early Childhood Advisory Council and efforts to strengthen the State's K-12 longitudinal data system, including intentional linkages with early childhood data collection efforts.

By the conclusion of *Making Decisions Count for Children*, the following results will have been achieved:

1. Options in response to the question of "*What are key policy questions to be answered about how young children are doing related to school readiness, birth to the start of kindergarten?*" will have been prioritized for State and the KSDE data planning efforts.

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2. Short -and long-term action steps will be identified for creating coordinated data system that is capable of documenting the State’s school readiness efforts and serving the needs of the Kansas State Department of Education, Early Childhood Advisory Council, Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems plan, and P-20 Council.

### MEETING AGENDA

- 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 9:15 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**  
Diane M. DeBacker, ED.D.  
Interim Kansas Commissioner of Education
- 9:20 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**  
Gayle Stuber  
KSDE Early Childhood Coordinator
- 9:25 a.m. **Agenda Overview**  
Stacie Goffin, Facilitator
- 9:30 a.m. **As You Look to the Future, Why/How Will Data Be Essential to your Work?**
- Result: Initial understanding of participants’ data needs and interests and how these might fit together to inform a comprehensive plan for a statewide data system
- 10:00 a.m. **Identifying Key Policy Questions Related to School Readiness**
- Small and Whole Group Work
- Review of Meeting Participants’ Input
  - Review of Input from the School Readiness Listening Tour
  - Identifying Missing Policy Questions
- Result: Initial thinking on key policy questions to be answered about children’s school readiness
- 10:25 p.m. BREAK
- 10:35 p.m. **Prioritizing Policy Questions Related to School Readiness**
- Small and Whole Group Work
- Result: Policy questions prioritized for driving development of early childhood data system

- 12:15 p.m. LUNCH
- 1:00 p.m. **What Are the Elements of a Comprehensive, Coordinated Data System?**  
Small and Whole Group Work  
Result: Emerging elements for a coordinated school readiness data system
- 1:30 p.m. **What Are the Necessary Action Steps for Constructing a Comprehensive, Coordinated School Readiness Data System?**  
Small and Whole Group Work  
Result: Action steps identified for implementing a comprehensive, coordinated school readiness data system
- 2:15 p.m. **Distinguishing Between Short- and Long-Term Action Steps**  
Whole Group Work  
Result: Short- and long-term action steps identified for implementing a coordinated school readiness data system
- 3:05 p.m. **Closing Comments**
- 3:20 p.m. **Next Steps: School Readiness Data Initiative**  
Colleen Riley  
Director, Special Education Services Team  
Result: Knowledge of immediate next steps related to the School Readiness Data Initiative
- 3:30 p.m. **Adjournment**

# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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### Purpose and Process

1. What is the overall purpose of the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative? What will it accomplish?
  - a. Why did the KSDE decide to launch the data initiative?
  - b. Is this Initiative only about the KSDE's data needs and interests?

The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative is intended for the purpose of creating a coordinated and comprehensive data system that will allow state- and community-level decision making on behalf of young children's healthy development and school readiness to be informed by valid and reliable data. The Initiative is a long term school readiness data project under the auspices of the Kansas State Department of Education in collaboration with state agencies, organizations, and other data initiatives. The Initiative will lead to the availability of valid and reliable data on children birth through Kindergarten that can inform effective state and community policy decisions on behalf of children's healthy development and success in school. "School readiness" is defined by the State framework that emphasizes ready children, ready families, ready communities, and ready schools. The effort to create a coordinated data system in the service of school readiness speaks to the growing interest in a ready system, as well.

Frequently Asked  
Questions:  
The Kansas School  
Readiness Data Initiative  
July 2010

2. Why is the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative starting its work by identifying priority policy questions?

Many times organizations, agencies, and other groups collect data without a clear idea of the questions that the data is being collected to answer. Beginning this Initiative by identifying priority questions of importance to policy and practice is intended to address this issue. The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative is gathering these questions from those who will be expected to use data to inform their decision making on behalf of young children's school readiness.

### 3. Who will use the data being collected?

Although the convener for the School Readiness Data Initiative, KSDE is only one of the agencies and organizations that will provide and use data to make decisions on behalf of young children's healthy development and school readiness. Other groups that will contribute and/or be able to use the data collected are policy makers, county health departments, child care providers and organizations, school districts, other state agencies, institutes of higher education. As stressed by our State's School Readiness Framework, school readiness involves much more than child outcomes. Together, families, communities, and schools provide the conditions that promote young healthy development and success in school.

## School Readiness in Kansas

### 4. What is the State's definition of school readiness? What is the school readiness definition being used for the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative?

In 2003, the Kansas early childhood community approved the following to be the framework for school readiness: School readiness occurs when families, schools and communities support and serve children effectively so that all children have the ability to succeed in various learning environments. There are four domains, each with measurable indicators: Family, Community, School, and Child. The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative will rely on this framework as well.

In 2006, the Kansas Early Learning Standards were developed through a collaborative process involving all of the State's relevant agencies as well as stakeholders from across the State. These standards serve as the State's operational definition of school readiness and are aligned with K-3<sup>rd</sup> learning standards, thereby providing a continuum from birth through third grade. It will also be used to inform the work of the Kansas School Readiness Initiative.

### 5. How will children's school readiness be assessed?

An exact answer to this question has yet to be determined and is part of the work that lies ahead. It is anticipated that the answer to this question will be consensually answered through a deliberate process that considers a wide range of viewpoints and builds on the work that has been done by the Early Learning Coordinating Council via the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive System (KECCS) plan, and the Results Based Accountability Framework.

# Making Decisions Count for Children

## The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative

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### 6. How does the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative build upon previous early childhood data work in the State?

The State's focus on school readiness began in 1999 when a small group of interested parties began to collaborate around collecting data to enhance the school success of children as they entered kindergarten. An ever growing group of interested individuals and groups have continued building on each other's work, creating a strong foundation for the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative.

Thus, the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative stands on the shoulders of a decade of hard work by multiple individuals, early childhood organizations and agencies. The Initiative will build from that work as it strives toward the creation of a comprehensive and coordinated data system that can help bring evidence-based decision making to the State's policy making process.

## Future Plans and State Connections

### 7. What is the relationship between the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative and other data-related efforts currently underway in the state?

The importance of data for informing policy decisions has finally gotten traction at the federal and state levels. The Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative emerged in anticipation of two new State developments: (1) the Early Childhood Advisory Council, a group convened to advance the State's efforts to align programs and services in support of children healthy development, and (2) the Kansas State Department of Education's stepped-up efforts to create a K-12 longitudinal data system. Those of us involved with the many data-related efforts presently underway are seeking to ensure that our efforts work in concert with one another and strengthen our shared intentions to make credible data available for decision makers at all levels.

### 8. What is the future use of the data being collected? How will it be collected? How accessible will the data be to stakeholders? How does the data collected for the School Readiness Data Initiative relate to other data that programs already collect?

These are good questions—and answering them is part of the work that lies ahead. The School Readiness Data Initiative will develop a state level and statewide coordinated process to provide data that answers priority questions that have implications for policy and practice. The efforts of the Kansas School Readiness Data Initiative will not preclude data collection efforts by individual programs and organizations to investigate questions of particular interest to their missions and priorities.



Appendix G:  
Complete Question Set  
Deliberated by July 9 Meeting  
Participants

Full List  
July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010

How prepared are all children for kindergarten and sub-groups in all settings? (26)

What are the most critical health, safety and community factors that contribute to school readiness? (25).

What is the impact of family education, involvement, engagement, and support services on children's school readiness? ( 22)

What are best practices for engaging families? (20)

How prepared are our K-12 schools for children? (18)

What and where are the children not being served? (16)

What combination of EC experiences has the best return on investment? (15)

What is the effectiveness of professional development and preparation on school readiness? (15)

What defines program effectiveness? (15)

What is the status of the early learning work force? (13)

What are the best investment strategies in promoting school readiness? (13)

How effective are early childhood programs and what are the factors that make them effective? (12)

What is the impact of family involvement on child school readiness? (11)

What are early learning experiences of KS children? (7)

What are the most critical community factors that contribute to school readiness? (4)

What defines program effectiveness and the factors involved? (2)