

Research on Quality and School Readiness

Description

This session examined different state experiences with measures of child outcomes for school readiness, professional development standards, and their intersection with program quality across the various programs serving pre-school children. Participants examined how states are defining and measuring school readiness, how state early care and education (ECE) systems include school readiness, and whether aspects of program quality can be linked to children's improvement in school readiness skills.

Facilitator

Rod Southwick, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Discussants

- Beth Rous, University of Kentucky
- Deborah Nelson, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
- Barbara Metzruk, California Department of Education
- Craig Ramey, Georgetown University

Scribes

- Shannon Lipscomb, University of California
- Bridget Lavelle, Child Trends

Issues

- What are the interrelationships between state capacity and school readiness (e.g., Massachusetts Cost Study)?
- How is school readiness being defined within different programs and perspectives?
- What are the key measurement issues and how do these play out in different contexts?
- What sorts of policy and research partnerships are needed?

Documents in the Session Folder:

- Research on Quality and School Readiness
- California Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Infant Toddler Instruments
- California DRDP Preschool Instruments
- California DRDP School-Age Instruments
- Kentucky KidsNow Program
- Kentucky KidsNow Program (Short Version)
- Louisiana Four-Year-Old Preschool Program
- North Carolina Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) Plan

- North Carolina ECCS Draft Indicator Data

Discussion Notes

I. Key Points from the Presentations

Beth Rous, University of Kentucky

- KY's system for measuring school readiness "Building a Strong Foundation for School Success" is based on a larger interagency program for children and families to leverage efforts across agencies.
- Four Key Dimensions:
 - * State indicators
 - * Environmental standards
 - * Personnel standards
 - * Child standards and continuous assessment process
- State Indicators (developed with RI Kids Count):
 - * Children possess the foundation to succeed in school
 - * Schools ensure children's continuous progress
 - * Families and communities support life-long learning
- Environmental Standards:
 - * The Kentucky Early Childhood Quality Self-Study program is used by all types of center-based care programs in the state to self-assess their quality.
 - * STARS for KIDS NOW Quality Rating System is used by licensed and certified child care programs.
 - * Classrooms of Excellence are established in the public schools to highlight quality preschool programs.
- Personnel Outcomes:
 - * Quality of personnel affects quality and school readiness.
 - * Core content contains seven substantive areas of training.
 - * Core content spans 5 levels: Entry-level and Commonwealth Child Care Credential, CDA, AA, BA/BS, MA plus additional hours.
 - * All levels are fully articulated.

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- * All training and coursework is aligned with the Early Childhood Core Content.
- * Credentials are available for caregivers, trainers and directors.
- * The Core Content is used to support and track professional development.
- * This system helps with articulation at 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Child Standards:
 - * Early childhood standards for Birth-to-Age 5 are to be used by all programs for all children.
 - * The standards document includes standards, benchmarks, developmental continuum, and examples.
 - * 12 different approved classroom and instructional assessment tools can be used to assess children's progress on the child standards.

Deborah Nelson, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Deborah Nelson was unable to participate in this session. Her Power Point presentation and handout on North Carolina indicators for Ready Children, Ready Families, Ready Communities, and Ready Schools are included in the session folder.

Barbara Metzruk, California Department of Education

- I am reporting on California's Early Care and Education program called "Desired Results for Children and Families" (DRDP)
- In 1996 California established an advisory group of practitioners and researchers in infant/toddler, preschool, and school-age care to support the development of Desired Results for Children and Families, based on a developmental continuum.
- Child Development Division and Special Education Division work together to promote inclusion throughout program.
- Program standards are on the website.
- DRDP incorporates measurement, research and evaluation:
 - * Desired Results for Children & Families Developmental Profile (children)
 - * DR Family Survey
 - * Environmental rating scales

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- * Program self-evaluation
- * Special Education Division developed adaptations to DRDP and rating scale (birth – 5; available Fall 2006)
- Desired Results for Children (based on discussions of how to measure school readiness):
 - * Physical and motor competence
 - * Safe and healthy
 - * Personally and socially competent
 - * Effective learners
- Initial plan was to enable accountability reporting:
 - * Programs were unhappy and the focus was changed to getting the data and using it for program improvement (it's a different *kind* of accountability).
 - * We provide a set of tools for helping administrators and staff systematically review, evaluate, and reflect on their program practices.
- Key desired results for families:
 - * Parents support children's learning and development.
 - * Families achieve their goals.
- Next Steps:
 - * Preschool learning standards in language and literacy and in mathematics are currently being developed (these will be added to DRDP).
 - * Curriculum guides will be developed after standards are completed.
 - * Berkeley is working on the instrument:
 - Validity & reliability
 - Scaling to a population
 - Aligning to preschool learning standards
 - * A users guide will be finalized over the next year.
 - * A computer program is being developed (DRDPtech) to help users input data at end of year.
 - * Implementation is being streamlined over time:
 - A decreased number of instruments are being used.
 - There is only 1 instrument for each age group now.
 - There is a 4-year phase-in for statewide training & implementation.

- Head Start uses DRDP +, which is DRDP plus Head Start indicators required by federal government (now they only have to do this one reporting).
- * Many programs without any state funding also use the instruments, demonstrating how important they are.
- DRDP Instrument:
 - * Definitions and examples accompany each indicator in DRDP.
 - * There are 4 levels: Exploring, Developing, Building, Integrating – select child’s highest developmental achieved.
 - * Laying out the 3 age-level instruments side-by-side, you’d see evidence of the developmental continuum.

Craig Ramey, Georgetown University

- I will be discussing “The Louisiana 4-Year-Old Pre-K Program”
- LA is a poor state and education has huge impact on the economy. Economic conditions provided the incentive for creating a universal pre-k (UPK) program.
- The UPK program is available for all families. It is free for families below the poverty line with a fee schedule above the poverty line. Most children in the program are low-income.
- 12 programs were started in 12 different counties.
- Initially, funding came primarily from TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families); now there is quite a bit of state funding.
- 1300 children were initially enrolled; now more than 8,000 are enrolled.
- Key principles in the program:
 - * All teachers certified ECE +BA/MA
 - * Fewer than 20 students per class
 - * 10:1 student-to-adult ratio
 - * Research-based and developmentally appropriate curriculum, aligned with K-12 standards
 - * Full-day program (6 hours); wrap-around also available
 - * Extension services (health)
 - * Professional development (pre-service & in-service)

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- * Evaluation (ECERS, curriculum alignment, etc)
- Child Assessments:
 - * Fall and Spring
 - * Developing Skills Checklist (fairly simple language, print, math)
 - * Portfolio assessment
 - * Longitudinal assessment
 - Background information, entry and exit from Pre-K program
 - Children tracked through Louisiana elementary school system with a unique identifier (attendance, grades, standardized tests, etc.)
- Collaboration with other agencies such as extension services (e.g. health)
- Results:
 - * Programs have relatively high scores on the ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised Edition) compared to other programs.
 - * Kids entered with very low percentiles on DSC, but exited with higher percentiles (similar for “Starting Points” sites);
 - * When the length of the program was extended, children’s scores improved proportionally;
 - * Improvement over time is most substantial for children from families of low socioeconomic status, and for children who started with the lowest scores;
 - * When Louisiana’s LA-4 Program was paired with the Reading First Program, children who got both were less likely to show developmental risk compared with those who received Reading First only.
- Teachers in Montgomery County receive coaching (none vs. monthly vs. weekly); the TERA reading quotient grows more when teachers are engaged in consultation.
- Expectations for children participating in Louisiana’s LA-4 program:
 - * Increased attendance;
 - * Completion of Head Start;
 - * Reduction in need for special education;
 - * Reduction in grade retention;
 - * Reduction in unintended pregnancy;
 - * Reduction in juvenile incarceration;
 - * Reduction in suspensions and expulsion;

- Even programs starting children as late as four years old make big differences in developmental effects! This may make legislators see that the problem may be addressed more efficiently.

II. Key Points from Discussion

Question concerning Louisiana sampling and program design:

Craig: Catchment areas from the Louisiana study were designed so that the program could serve all eligible children, which meant greater emphasis on poor and low-income areas.

Questions concerning health and social-emotional factors:

Craig: Health and social-emotional outcomes were included in child assessments. Louisiana and Montgomery County are expanding to health outcomes. Social outcomes are very problematic, because they're intensive, difficult to use, and often pathologize children. But we're encouraging the development of better social instruments to use with these programs. The more comprehensive the system the better, but it's better to start incrementally so that it can build momentum that can help in legislature, and help build program in time. We take a pragmatic view of program development.

Barbara: All of the social indicators for California are based on positive outcomes, so we're definitely not pathologizing. It was very important for us to include the whole spectrum of developmental outcomes.

Question concerning assessments as tools for improving quality vs. program accountability or satisfying legislatures:

Barbara: California's new computer program will allow aggregation of data, so we can look across the whole state. Program people were worried that children would be retained, jobs would be lost, etc. So we had to make people comfortable with the tools. But they are required to report with group summary forms annually.

Question concerning the psychometrics of the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP): Is this instrument valid to be used as *both* an accountability measure and a classroom-improvement measure?

Barbara: Not sure. We must talk with statisticians. A technical manual will be coming out in Fall 2006. Validity information can be obtained by request earlier.

End of Session

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Breakout session notes are brief summaries of issues, findings and ideas discussed by participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Child Care Bureau or other members of the Child Care Policy Research Consortium.