

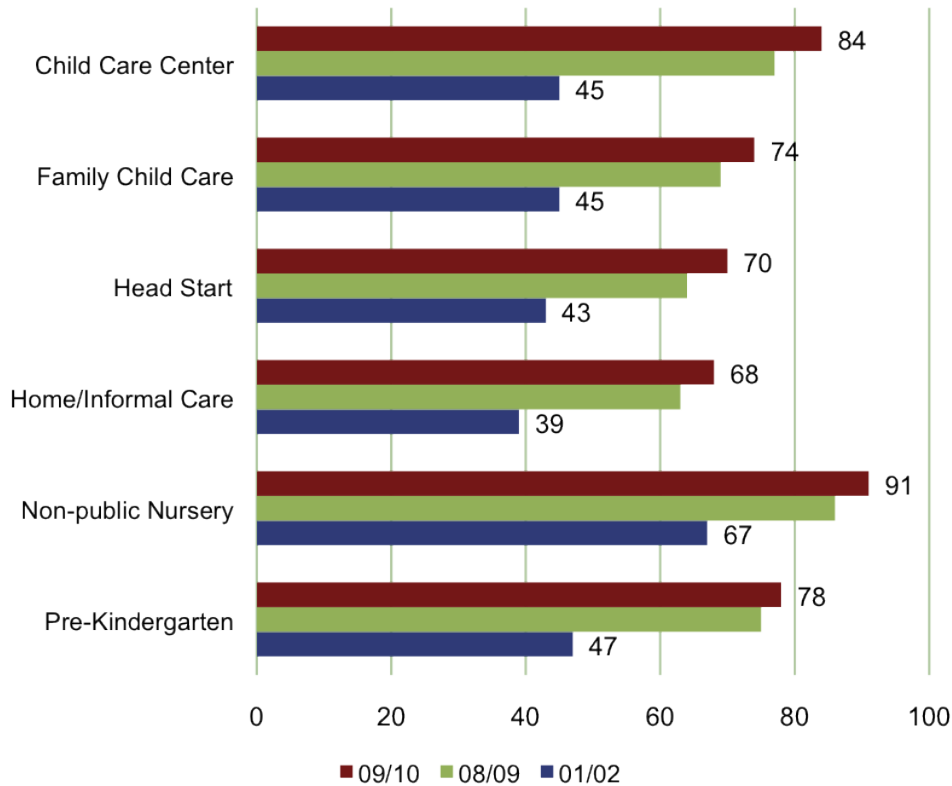
# MARYLAND AEYC TIDE, LATE MARCH 2010

## **2010 School Readiness Results Announced: Big Improvements Lead toward Redesign of Process**

(March 23, 2010) The final results of the 2009-2010 School Readiness observations were announced to the State School Board this morning. Overall, 78 percent of this year's Kindergarteners were deemed "fully ready" for school, compared with 73 percent last year and only 52 percent when the system started in 2002/03. This result exceeded projections, including big gains in 18 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, significant gains in the cognitive domains of learning, a reduction in the Kindergarten achievement gap for students at risk of school failure, and an improvement of the quality of early learning environments throughout the State. The domains of biggest improvement were in scientific thinking, which is still behind other categories; mathematical thinking; and language and literacy. School readiness at the beginning of Kindergarten has been shown to change into school success by grade 3. The State School Board was delighted.

In the prior care categories, children who had attended primarily child care centers made the biggest gains, to 84 percent fully ready, with Head Start children not far behind in one-year gains, to 70 percent fully ready.

Maryland School Readiness by Prior Care Setting



The areas shown by this year's figures to warrant remedial attention include social and personal development, which has a very slow rate of improvement and is vital to later school success, and in education for children with special needs generally, where the achievement gap has widened over the years. Although school readiness has been improving for all children, the gap between children who don't have the risk factors of English language learning or low income, and those who do has remained relatively constant over the years. More high quality, community-based child care and public school programs are needed in low income areas.

A number of strategies have made a noticeable impact on school readiness since the assessments began. The Early Childhood Mental Health project, which helps families and child care providers to avoid expulsions from child care, has shown great success in saving challenging children from lives of failure, and the State Board of Education praised it. Daily, focused attention on language learning for children whose native language is not English makes a significant difference in school readiness for them. Judy Centers have succeeded changing children (and even their families) from failures into successes. School/child care/family consultations and partnerships to align curricula and assure quality have resulted in major increases in school readiness in Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, and Frederick Counties. Similar consultations between grade teachers on the articulation of teaching strategies from grade to grade have succeeded. Training of child care providers and others in the MMSR assessment system, including the use of the assessment exemplars and consultations between assessing teachers to aid in the assessment process, have made that process work more smoothly, as has the use of computer-assisted assessments. Collaborative work to align State and local standards has helped. MSDE has a Federal grant to develop and implement a random-number universal student identifier, to facilitate longitudinal, student-by-student comparisons, so that the prior care comparisons won't have to rely on parental memories any more, and the analysis of the outcomes of particular practices and experiences can be identified with much greater precision. All of these steps help children feel that there is a team out there, working closely together to help them to succeed.

Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant Superintendent of MSDE for the Early Childhood Division, said after the presentation that his office is now looking for revisions to the basic MMSR assessment model, to take into account the increasing proportion of children who "max out" now at fully ready, and could be put into an "advanced" category (Sort of like Garrison Kiellor's statement that in Lake Wobegon, "all children are above average"). With the assessment system going online in the near future, other changes may also be instituted. Stay tuned!

Copies of the report itself, far more background statistics, and a detailed report on each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, please go to [www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org).

## **NAEYC ELECTIONS YIELD NEW NATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS**

NAEYC recently announced the results of its election for the new members of its Governing Board, entering office in July along with new NAEYC Executive Director Jerlean Daniel.

- The Vice President will be Roberta Schaumberg, Associate Dean, School of Education, Carlow University, Pittsburgh, PA;
- The Secretary will be Susan DeVenney, State Director of South Carolina's First Steps to School Readiness, from Columbia, SC;
- The new Governing Board Affiliate Liaison will be Anna Mercer-McLean, Director, Community School for People Under Six, Chapel Hill, NC;
- The two new at-large members of the Governing Board will be Sharon Richie, Senior Scientist, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC; and
- Dennis Sykes, Director, Center for Special Needs Populations, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

### **Late March Public Policy News**

**Federal:** When the House of Representatives passed its Health Care Reconciliation Bill, to fix some problems it perceived in the Senate's Health Care Bill, the House left out the Early Learning Challenge Grant provisions that had been in the Student Loan Bill that was incorporated into the Reconciliation Bill. So we have to wait for another legislative vehicle to get our money for the Early Learning Challenge Grant. The project is not dead; it's just delayed.

The Senate's Health Care Bill that the President signed on March 23 included an authorization for a home visiting program for low-income first time mothers that was part of the President's package. Now that the health care issue has stopped dominating everything else in Congress, there may be progress on many of our early childhood issues.

**Maryland:** The crunch is on in Maryland's General Assembly, with less than 3 weeks remaining to get legislation, including the budget, passed. So far the numbers for early childhood matters are as reported earlier, and the Bills on the Early Learning Challenge Fund application and the MSDE/ECD annual reports are on track for passage. Several amendments have been attached to the collective bargaining for child care subsidies Bill in both Senate and House, but both are working to pass some form of that Bill.

### **LOCATE™ Centralizing**

Starting May 1, due to funding cuts, the Child Care Resource & Referral Network's LOCATE™ services are going to be consolidated into one office in Baltimore, although parents who call in are unlikely to know the difference. Providers are reminded to keep their information on LOCATE™ complete and updated, as parents depend on that. In addition, the annual cost surveys generate data about the child care market that is used for a variety of purposes such as subsidy levels, that influence providers themselves.

### **Getting Help from Businesses**

Maryland AEYC is delving into new opportunities to advocate for young children. On March 10th and 11th, Flora Gee and Shannon Dungan attended The National Economic Forum on Early Childhood Investment hosted by the Partnership for America's Economic Success. The forum focused on collaboration between businesses, economists, funders, government leaders and advocates to support young children and families. The goal is to improve the economy through investments in early childhood development. Most of the conversations revolved around how business leaders can be powerful voices for young children. They provide employment to adults and income to governments, so both state and federal leaders have to listen carefully to their requests. Furthermore, business leaders can speak to the idea of "return on investment," and make it clear that increased funds directed toward young children and their families produce big returns for everyone for generations. Those of us who work for young children and their families need to provide information and support to those who can use their economic clout for the benefit of our clients.

To that end, MDAEYC and Ready at Five are beginning to work together to create a business advocacy "tool kit." We will create a presentation and materials that can be used by our members and other advocates to encourage business and government leaders to collaborate with us in the effort to improve the lives of young children. If you would like to be involved with this effort or have the need for these materials once they are complete, please contact Shannon Dungan at [creolasd@hotmail.com](mailto:creolasd@hotmail.com) .