

Dear Ready Schools Toolkit Reader:

The early years of a child's life set the foundation for all future learning. They are a critical component of the cradle to career continuum. To ensure that children have the experiences they need to succeed later in life, we must broaden the definition of "school readiness." In North Carolina, "school readiness" is defined as both: 1) children's developmental stage when they enter school; and 2) the capacity of schools to educate all children, whatever each child's situation may be.

Building a cradle to career continuum is hard work. It is more than the individual capacities of children, families, schools, preschools, and communities. It is the collective supports and efforts of all these entities. It begins with community collaboration and ends with the adoption of the Ready Schools philosophy:

*"That all schools and communities will provide an inviting atmosphere which values and respects all children and their families. It will be a community where children can succeed. The community is committed to supporting schools in their quest to provide high quality educational experiences which focus on all domains to children. The community and schools seek partnerships to address the needs of children, ensuring future success in school, work, and life in the 21st century."*

This Ready Schools Toolkit is based on research, best practice, and core values for creating a community-wide Ready Schools Initiative. It is intended to assist communities, school districts, schools, and individuals in strengthening the foundation of learning for children PreK to third grade. While there is no single "best" starting place, this guide outlines components of the overall process and examples implemented at the community level.

Your interest and contribution to the adoption of Ready Schools in your community or school can help ensure that every child in North Carolina succeeds in third grade and beyond.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Fanjul  
President, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.



John Pruet  
Director, Office of Early Learning – North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

