

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The North Carolina Ready Schools Initiative is a joint project of The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – Office of Early Learning (OEL). Over the years, North Carolina Ready Schools has had many champions, contributors, and supporters too numerous to mention individually who have shared their ideas, inspiration, and dedication to the Ready Schools effort. This toolkit is a reflection of their collective efforts and expertise. A special thank you to Kimberly Sparling Meunier for her management of this project.

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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





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Welcome Letter</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Why Ready Schools?</i>	7
<i>What is a Ready School?</i>	8
<i>About the North Carolina Ready Schools Initiative</i>	8
<b>Getting Started</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Where to Begin?</i>	9
<i>Ready Schools Implementation Process At-A-Glance</i>	10
<i>Community-District Team Process</i>	11
<i>Pathways At-A-Glance</i>	14
<i>Overview of Toolkit, Part 2</i>	16
<i>Now What?</i>	16
<b>Ready School Pathways</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Pathway One: Leaders and Leadership</i>	17
<i>Pathway Two: Family, School, and Community Partnerships</i>	25
<i>Pathway Three: Transitions</i>	35
<i>Pathway Four: Respecting Diversity</i>	43
<i>Pathway Five: Engaging Environments</i>	55
<i>Pathway Six: Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment</i>	63
<i>Pathway Seven: Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities</i>	69
<i>Pathway Eight: Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality</i>	75
<i>Pathway Nine: Grassroots Community Building</i>	83
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>91</b>
<i>Appendix A, Resources for Getting Started</i>	91
<i>Appendix B, Resources for Leaders and Leadership</i>	97
<i>Appendix C, Resources for Family, School, and Community Partnerships</i>	99
<i>Appendix D, Resources for Transitions</i>	103
<i>Appendix E, Resources for Respecting Diversity</i>	107
<i>Appendix F, Resources for Engaging Environments</i>	113
<i>Appendix G, Resources for Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment</i>	115
<i>Appendix H, Resources for Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities</i>	119
<i>Appendix I, Resources for Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality</i>	121
<i>Appendix J, Resources for Grassroots Community Building</i>	123
<i>Appendix K, Action Plan Template</i>	127



# INTRODUCTION

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## Why Ready Schools?

Over the past two decades, research has shown that learning begins early, that brains are impacted most in the earliest years, and that early learning experiences are critical for the long-term success of children both educationally and economically. Research on the effectiveness of high-quality preschool experiences also reinforces the need for quality early learning experiences to provide a good start to formal learning.

However, we also know that even high-quality one-time interventions like Pre-Kindergarten (PreK), while helpful, cannot alone eliminate the achievement gap or maximize learning for our most vulnerable students. While benefits do not disappear, they begin to fade by third or fourth grade without sustained enhancements and quality instruction through the primary grades. Multiple interventions across these years yield the best results for sustained, successful achievement and the likelihood that children will exit third grade with grade level skills.

### *Defining a PreK-3 or "Ready Schools" Approach*

In the last ten years, a new approach to educating young children has taken shape and gained momentum among researchers, policymakers, and educators. We have moved to thinking about "school readiness" as both children's condition at Kindergarten entry and schools' capacity to meet each of their unique needs. In turn, the "school readiness" framework has been stretched to encompass a continuum of learning across the PreK through third grade continuum – consistent with our knowledge of young children's generally predictable, sequenced development from birth through age eight (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

The "PreK-3" or "Ready Schools" approach includes the intentional and rigorous alignment of standards, curriculum, and assessment across grades. Effective PreK-3 efforts are grounded in teacher and leader professional development that promotes coordination and alignment and supports knowledge of "children's developmental capacities and having appropriate expectations for both cognitive and social outcomes, which are consistent with what is learned in the classroom" (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005).

## What is a Ready School?

Moving from a more traditional framework to a Ready Schools framework is an evolutionary, intentional process of shifting the way that teachers and administrators think and believe.

Becoming a Ready School is not just "another thing to do." Done well, a Ready School is able to make changes in school practices and structure that are impeding success. Ready Schools engage teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to strengthen existing efforts and reach shared goals.

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**A** ready school provides an inviting atmosphere, values and respects all children and their families, and is a place where all children succeed. It is committed to high quality in all domains of learning and teaching and has deep connections with parents and the community. It prepares children for success in work and life in the 21st century.

– North Carolina State Board of Education, 2007

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## About the North Carolina Ready Schools Initiative

The Ready Schools Initiative, led by the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – Office of Early Learning (OEL), has set an ambitious long-term goal of building a statewide infrastructure that fully realizes the vision of school readiness established by the North Carolina Ready for School Goal Team in 2000: 1) all children enter school "ready," and 2) schools are "ready" for all children.

The Ready Schools Initiative launched in 2006 with a W. K. Kellogg Foundation Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) grant to NCPC. The grant leveraged considerable interest in and support for building a statewide Ready Schools effort. Ready Schools has achieved many significant accomplishments since 2006, including: 1) the establishment of a statewide Ready School Taskforce with broad-based representation from more than 50 groups representing public school, early care and education, business, and community organizations; 2) the implementation of six regional forums with nearly 800 participants from 100 of the 115 school systems across the state; and 3) the State Board of Education's adoption of a definition of a "ready" school and identification of "pathways" that would lead to ready elementary schools. They identified nine pathways that were subsequently reduced to eight: 1) Leaders and Leadership; 2) Family, School, and Community Partnerships; 3) Transitions; 4) Respecting Diversity; 5) Engaging Environments; 6) Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment; 7) Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities; and 8) Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality.

In November 2008, NCPC received a second grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop, vet, and evaluate a Ready Schools Toolkit based on pathways identified by the State Board of Education, and to support the development of local Ready Schools' efforts in communities and schools across the state. As a result, an estimated 18,535 children (PreK through 3rd grade) in 53 elementary schools and 20 school districts were impacted by Ready Schools technical assistance and implementation grants. These children benefited from communities and school districts working together to improve educational outcomes for all children age 3 to 8.

During 2010 and 2011, the Ready Schools Toolkit, Part 1 (for School-Based Teams) was finalized and rolled out. Seven local Smart Start partnerships and 12 school districts, including 47 schools, took part in a Ready Schools Community-District pilot project. Over the course of this project a Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment was developed and tested and this Ready Schools Toolkit, Part 2 was created for use by Community-District Teams. Both of these tools, along with Part 1 of the Toolkit, are a part of the new NC Ready Schools website, <http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools/>.

The Ready Schools process is a continual process of assessment, action, reflection, and revision of practices and policies to best meet the needs of children and families across the PreK through 3rd grade continuum and beyond. Done well, the Ready Schools Initiative influences and engages all the people involved in a young child's life – families, teachers, doctors, caregivers, social workers, and many others – in Ready Schools' efforts. Our goal is clear: to ensure every child is supported, learning, and progressing across the PreK-3 continuum.

NCPC and OEL continue to work together to strengthen and evolve the North Carolina Ready Schools Initiative

# GETTING STARTED

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## Where to Begin

To be successful in launching a local Ready Schools Initiative, it takes a team approach that includes both schools and the larger community. It takes careful planning, leadership, and an ongoing commitment to building and sustaining partnerships to develop both a Community-District Team and a School-Based Team(s) that support the overall school district initiative. To meet your goals, you must take a broad-based and multi-layered approach that involves diverse representation from across your community and school(s).

Do you develop a Community-District Team or a School-Based Team first? Do you get central office staff involved first or a principal? Do you first develop a community-wide plan or an individual school plan? There is no right answer – it depends on what best fits your community and environment. The most successful Ready School efforts take both approaches.

If you start at the school district-community level, be sure to include principals and teachers from schools with a strong interest in implementing a Ready Schools approach. If you start with the development of a School-Based Team, make sure you quickly integrate participants from the community. Involve families, early education providers, civic organizations, and community leaders in your planning and implementation process.

When a Ready Schools effort starts at the school level, it is more likely to be sustained if there is a district-wide and community commitment to building a strong research-based educational foundation for young children ages 3-8. The Community-District Team is essential to the ultimate success of high quality PreK-3 education. However, it is equally important that Community-District Teams be informed by the Ready Schools efforts at the school level. Community-District Team work is grounded in the real issues and needs of schools and early care and education providers.

Most important is that you get started! Begin where you have your strongest advocates and build from there to create a shared vision for your local Ready Schools Initiative.

### ***Ready School Teams – Roles and Responsibilities***

The Community-District Team is typically comprised of representatives from the school district, individual schools, the local Smart Start partnership, early childhood providers, parents, community agencies, business leaders, and other stakeholders. The Community-District Team conducts assessments and surveys, including the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment; compiles and analyzes the data; and then creates an action plan. The Team is responsible for providing resources and supports to schools, addressing transition issues between the early childhood community and schools/district, promoting collaboration across the community to serve PreK-3rd grade children and families, and advocating for Ready Schools across schools and community.

The School-Based Team typically includes the school principal and/or assistant principal, PreK-3rd grade teachers, parents, early childhood providers, and other community stakeholders. The School-Based Team conducts an assessment using the High Scope Ready Schools Assessment instrument, analyzes data, and develops an action plan based on priorities and areas for strengthening. For more information on and guidance for School-Based Teams, please refer to the Ready Schools Toolkit, Part 1 available on the NC Ready Schools website: [www.smartstart.org/readyschools](http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools)

## Ready Schools Implementation Process At-A-Glance

### **Collaborative Team Development**

The Ready Schools Initiative begins with the development of the collaborative teams: the Community-District Team and the School-Based Team(s). While a community's Ready Schools process may start at either the school or community-district level, both are ultimately critical for sustaining a successful Ready Schools effort and the expectation is for continuous communication across the teams.

### **Needs Assessment**

Community-District Teams use the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment Tool to start conversations among Team members regarding Team areas of strength and growth related to the Pathways. Each Community-District Team member completes the assessment and a profile of the Team results is generated (an online version is available on the Ready Schools website: [www.smartstart.org/readyschools](http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools)). The results of the Self-Assessment can be used to guide visions, missions, goals, and action plans. Individual schools use the High Scope Ready Schools Assessment as a tool to identify areas of need. This assessment is a planning tool designed to provide School-Based Teams with a profile of readiness features in their school.

### **Action Planning**

The Community-District Team takes responsibility for developing a Ready Schools Community-District Action Plan that builds on Team strengths and includes goals based on data. Action plans are intended to guide the Team's work in educating the community about a PreK-3 continuum that serves all children and families. Teams advocate and provide resources and support for early childcare professionals and teachers at the district level so schools are prepared to educate all children who enter their doors for the first time. Team Action Plans should guide the Ready Schools Initiative across schools and communities. The School-Based Team takes responsibility for conducting the school needs and resource assessment, developing an Action Plan to be integrated with the school improvement plan, and implementing the plan. The expectation is for each school to focus on one or more Pathway, based on the priorities identified in the assessment.

### **Implementation**

Once the Action Plans have been created for the Community-District and School-Based Teams, the Teams work on implementing their plans. This process has typically occurred over a seven month period.

### **Evaluation**

The Ready Schools Community-District and School-Based plans should be living documents. It is essential to regularly assess progress and if necessary, change direction. To that end, Ready Schools plans should include measurable benchmarks of success and be reviewed and revised annually.



## Community-District Team Process

The saying "*it takes a village to raise a child*" is an essential philosophy of the Ready Schools movement.

Effective Community-District Teams:

- ▶ Create a community- and district-wide vision for Ready Schools that assures the success of all children in all schools.
- ▶ Target changes that need to occur in every school such as a district-wide transition plan, Kindergarten orientation program, and PreK-3 curriculum approaches.
- ▶ Create a district-wide professional development program for school leaders that emphasizes Ready Schools concepts.
- ▶ Conduct community forums to solicit broader community input into and involvement in a district-wide Ready Schools approach.
- ▶ Build bridges to greater understanding and cooperation between families, early education, and K-3 teachers.
- ▶ Generate increased resources as well as greater integration and use of community assets into schools.
- ▶ Serve as an advocate at the local, state, and national level for the resources and support necessary for Ready Schools.



## Who should be on a Ready Schools Community-District Team?

The composition of this team will vary by community. It should be customized to fit each community's needs, resources, and realities. Participants might include:

- Central office staff, including superintendents, school board members, curriculum specialists, and support services staff;
- School personnel, including administrative and support staff and teachers working in an elementary school;
- Early education professionals, including teachers and program directors;
- Early childhood service providers and advocates;
- Families with children ages 3-8;
- Social service providers;
- Medical professionals;
- Community, business, and faith leaders; and
- Higher education representatives.

Note that school system personnel are at the top of the list of members for the Community-District Team. School leaders at all levels are critical for the success of Community-District and School-Based Teams. Evaluation results from the NC Ready Schools Initiative showed that principals' participation on both the Community-District and School-Based Teams were instrumental to the overall success of the Ready Schools efforts in communities.

## ***Steps to Success for a Ready Schools Community-District Team***

1. Create a vision for what you want Ready Schools to look like in your schools and community. This vision should be comprehensive for what the district, schools, and communities need to do both independently and in partnership to support Ready Schools efforts.
2. Use the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment to examine your Team's capacity, strengths, and barriers to; as well as potential areas of focus for; achieving your Ready Schools vision.
3. Determine the role of the Community-District Team in advocating for and guiding Ready Schools efforts. Building leadership, public engagement, and political will is essential. Leadership for the Ready Schools Initiative should be shared by the community (e.g., local Smart Start partnership) and the schools.
4. Conduct forums to get broad input into how the community can best support the Ready Schools Initiative. Hear what families, teachers, school administrators, early care professionals, and community members have to say. Have them talk with each other to build greater understanding about the challenges as well as the potential resources and assets that may be available. Participants can engage in conversations about the nature of preschool and elementary school, how to support effective transitions, what families dream about for their children, where schools are strongest in their response to families, and how to set priorities for the future.
5. Conduct an inventory of community and school assets, resources, and needs.
6. Integrate input from any forums held by the School-Based Teams.
7. Use the data and input gathered to develop a Community-District Action Plan that includes strategies for integration of Ready Schools concepts across the community and schools. Consider ideas such as:
  - » Community-wide school transition plan;
  - » Kindergarten orientation process that links with early education and supports both children and families;
  - » District-wide professional development program that is for families, early educators, and PreK-3 teachers and staff; and
  - » Alignment of the curriculum in the district's elementary schools across early education and PreK through 3rd grade.
8. Integrate existing and new community resources into this Community-District Action Plan.
9. Use a variety of tools to measure the progress in individual schools. Use the data from these tools to update your Community-District Action Plan.



10. Develop the infrastructure and communication plans necessary to ensure regular communication among the Community-District Team, the individual School-Based Teams, and the broader community. Consider taking a few minutes at each meeting to highlight a program or agency or issue that impacts children (ages 3-8), schools, or families.
11. Talk with community and business leaders, sometimes the value of high quality early education is not realized until the topic greatly impacts the workforce. There are two key points to mention related to the workforce issue:
  - » First, the early childhood field represents thousands of workers, a significant part of the labor force. Their contributions to the overall workforce are tremendous. Without early care and education professionals it would be difficult for other businesses to operate because their workers would not have adequate, quality child care.
  - » The other issue is the development of our next generation of workers. Without high quality child care, the next generation of workers may not be up to the tasks that will be in demand. See Appendix A Resource for Getting Started for more information and resources to support your Team in this effort.

The Community-District Team should serve as an ongoing resource to individual schools and district-wide efforts. Ongoing communication and regular updates to the Action Plan are essential for continued progress. Toolkit, Part 2 provides information, strategies, and resources for Community-District Teams to support implementation of the Ready Schools Initiative. The Ready Schools Toolkit, Part 2 is divided into nine Pathways.



## Pathways At-A-Glance

Part 2 of the Ready Schools Toolkit addresses the specific and unique roles and efforts of Community-District Teams in each of the Pathways. In addition to the eight Pathways in Toolkit, Part 1 there is a ninth Pathway entitled Grassroots Community Building in Part 2 of the Toolkit.

### 1. Leaders and Leadership

Community-District Teams have leaders who are charged with engaging a diverse cross-section of the community to develop a shared vision, mission, and set of goals to guide the district-wide implementation of the Ready Schools Initiative. The leadership establishes a safe environment for the sharing of diverse perspectives. The Community-District Team leader(s) recruit and involve stakeholders in the work of Ready Schools.

### 2. Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Community-District Teams communicate that families serve as their children's first teachers. Members of the Team advocate for schools and communities to actively work together to address academic, social, and cultural needs of their students and families. Community-District Teams partner with families, schools, and the community to provide opportunities, services, and information to children and families district-wide.

### 3. Transitions

Community-District Teams support the development and implementation of effective district-wide transition plans that address the needs of the school, family, child, and community. Teams facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration among elementary schools, early care and education programs, and families to ensure smooth transitions from the Infant-Toddler Program (IDEA, Part C) to preschool, from preschool and home to school, and across grade levels within and between schools.

### 4. Respecting Diversity

Community-District Teams are representative of the community they serve and provide active voice to all participants as they work to meet the needs of children from all circumstances and backgrounds. Members of the Team are essential in meeting the needs of families in the communities in which they live and making school a relevant and meaningful venture for children.



## **5. Engaging Environments**

Community-District Teams advocate and provide resources for providing a safe, welcoming atmosphere and using developmentally appropriate practices. Active learning environments that engage children in a variety of learning activities both inside and out of the school walls are a crucial component of Engaging Environments. Teams reinforce the notion that all students should be immersed in environments that encourage them to explore, create, manipulate, change, question, imagine, respond, and reflect.

## **6. Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment**

Community-District Teams are essential in advocating for the use of research-based and data-driven educational methods and materials shown to be effective in helping a diverse population of children, including those with special needs. Diversity is inclusive of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, physical, and cognitive characteristics. There is alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment from preschool through elementary grades and beyond. The goal is that all children achieve appropriate academic growth to reach essential standards.

## **7. Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities**

Community-District Teams support the learning of adults as essential to children's well-being and achievement. District-wide goals include high-quality sustained professional development of school personnel, as well as intentional parent and family participation in the planning and evaluation of children's learning.

## **8. Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality**

Community-District Teams systematically use both formal and informal assessments to assess their progress in identified areas for focus in order to improve outcomes for all children. The Team monitors progress and redirects focus to new goals as needed.

## **9. Grassroots Community Building**

Community-District Teams reach out to individuals and organizations to serve as advocates who either have a shared interest in PreK-3 educational environments or whose work could be mutually beneficial to both parties. Team members take time to develop and maintain meaningful, long-lasting relationships with individuals from other organizations and attend their meetings and events to communicate and share the work of Ready Schools. A critical role of the Community-District Team is to gather a variety of sustainable funding sources.

## Overview of Toolkit, Part 2

Information in each Pathway in Toolkit, Part 2 is organized in several main sections. First, **Key Understandings** of the Pathway are presented in order to communicate the essential elements of the Pathway, and thus, provide the foundation upon which the Community-District Teams operate.

Next, **The Work** of the Community-District Team is clarified. Suggestions are then given for those who might serve on the Team, thereby providing a starting point for **Who** might be involved with the Team, and outlining possible **Roles** they may play and **Responsibilities** they might undertake. As with much of the information provided in Toolkit, Part 2, the information is provided to generate ideas. Each Community-District Team should use the information as a starting point, not as a model to be replicated exactly. Each Team will bring its own uniqueness to the process and will serve best when it responds appropriately to the many variables of its community.

Because Community-District Teams are most effective when they are long-lasting, suggestions to promote **Sustainability** are provided. This section addresses the need for member buy-in, who the key stakeholders are, and recruitment efforts of the Team. Readers who are interested in conducting self-assessments of their Community-District Team will find questions related to **Assessing the Pathway**.

In the **Taking Action** section, **Key Strategies** for success are listed. These strategies most often resulted from conversations with successful Community-District Team members and are provided as suggestions for others who seek ways to address the Pathway. In an effort to prepare readers for working in their settings, we have listed some **Issues, Challenges, Barriers** that they are likely to face in the process, as well as suggestions for **Strategies for Overcoming the Challenges**. Finally, a **Ready Schools in Action** example is given, where applicable, to inspire Teams to achieve the goals they have set out to accomplish. The Appendices contain lists of **Resources** for further reference.

## Now What?

- ▶ Build momentum and success. Beginning with Pathways that are already emerging in your schools and community helps jumpstart progress and garner support;
- ▶ Target strategies that build on current practices or efforts already showing success in achieving common goals;
- ▶ Introduce Ready Schools language to school and district improvement planning processes so that personnel see the Initiative as a way to achieve common goals rather than as one more thing to do;
- ▶ Identify the strengths and successes of each of the partners and share them between and among the Team members, participating organizations, and the larger community to energize support; and
- ▶ Take every opportunity to share the successes of the Community-District Team at meetings of business and civic organizations, faith-based organizations, agency boards, and school and district events. Helping community leaders understand the benefit to the community and the lasting effects of a strong Ready Schools Initiative builds broad support and commitment.

*For more resources see Appendix A, Resources for Getting Started at the end of the Toolkit.*



# PATHWAY ONE: LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

Collaborative leadership is the key to the Ready Schools Initiative success. The Ready Schools Community-District Team (Team) brings together school, district, early childhood, business, and community leaders as well as families to guide the development and communication of a clear vision, mission, and goals of a Community-District Action Plan. The action plan must address the needs of schools/district to help support the transition from home and the early childhood community to the schools/district, recruitment of diverse stakeholders in collaborative efforts to serve PreK-3 children and their families, and education of the community about issues related to early childhood education and what it means to teach all children effectively.

**T**he task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.

-Henry Kissinger,  
Former Secretary of State



## Key Understandings

To build a successful team and work toward creating Ready Schools, the members of the committee should have the following key understandings:

- ▶ The Team should share a clear and consistent understanding of the Ready Schools Principles and Pathways;
- ▶ The Team should have a vision of what schools and communities can do together to support student and teacher success;
- ▶ The Team should work as a cohesive Team that engages in honest dialogue built on trust and shared commitment;
- ▶ The Team should include a broad representation of stakeholders who represent the views of families, school personnel, early childhood service providers, and community leaders;
- ▶ The Team should develop, engage, and support the work of all partners;
- ▶ The Team should engage in strategic short- and long-term planning and identify resources to achieve its goals;
- ▶ The Team should use an effective and systematic communication infrastructure;
- ▶ The Team should educate the broader community and advocate for support; and
- ▶ The Team should lead efforts to engage families and communities in children's learning and transitions through school.





## The Work

The Community-District Team leads efforts to develop collective leadership with teachers, administrators, family members, and community partners and facilitate partnerships with the early childhood community to improve educational continuity from preschool through the early grades. The Team also coordinates or supports community forums as well as district-wide professional development for school leaders emphasizing Ready Schools concepts. First, the Team collects data using the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment tool, assessments of school and community needs, and the input of diverse stakeholders. Then, the Team develops and communicates a clear vision, mission, and set of goals and facilitates implementation of an action plan that addresses achieving these goals and securing the resources needed to support schools and their communities in smoothing the transition for children and families between the early childhood community and school district. The composition of the Team ensures regular communication between and among the Community-District Team, the individual Ready Schools School-Based Teams, and the broader community.

Steps that lead to success include the following:

1. The Team should create and communicate a clear vision for what you want Ready Schools to look like in your schools and community. This vision should be comprehensive for what the district, schools, and communities need to do both independently and in partnership to support Ready Schools efforts.
2. The Team should use the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment Tool to examine your Team's and community's level of interest, strengths, and barriers to achieving your Ready Schools vision.
3. The Team should determine the role of the Community-District Team in advocating for and guiding Ready Schools efforts. Building leadership, public engagement, and political will is essential.
4. Leadership for this initiative should be shared by the community (e.g., local Smart Start partnership) and the school district. Sustaining Ready Schools initiatives depends upon the involvement of knowledgeable civic, business, and community leaders who understand the value of support for this critical work and can provide leadership to build and sustain momentum.
5. The Team should conduct forums to get broad input into how the community can best support the initiative. Hear what families, teachers, school administrators, early care professionals, and community members have to say. Have them talk with each other to build greater understanding about challenges as well as the potential resources and assets that may be available.
6. The Team should conduct an inventory of community and school assets, resources, and needs.

7. The Team should use the data and input gathered to develop a Community-District Action Plan that includes strategies for integration of Ready Schools concepts across the community and district. Consider including strategies such as:
  - » A community-wide school transition plan;
  - » A Kindergarten orientation process that links with early education and supports both children and families;
  - » A district-wide professional development program that is for families, early educators, and PreK-3 teachers and staff; and
  - » The alignment of the curriculum in the district's early childhood settings across early education and PreK through 3rd grade.
8. The Team should integrate existing and new community resources into this Community-District Action Plan.
9. The Team should use a variety of tools, including the Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment, to measure Team progress. Use the data from these tools to update your Community-District Action Plan.
10. The Team should develop the infrastructure and communication plans necessary to ensure regular communication between the Community-District Team, the individual School-Based Teams, and the broader community.
11. The Team should ensure on-going recruitment and outreach by Team members and local advocates and leaders.



## Effective Action Plans

- ◇ Align with Ready Schools Pathways and with school and school district missions, visions, and goals;
- ◇ Reflect the views of school personnel, families, early childhood providers, and community members;
- ◇ Include measurable short- and long-term goals and strategies that are consistent with school and district improvement plans;
- ◇ Are driven by continuous gathering and analyzing of data;
- ◇ Clearly identify responsibilities of stakeholders;
- ◇ Include a process for evaluating activities and measuring progress; and
- ◇ Are driven by a well-planned, realistic timeline.

(See Pathway Eight: Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality)



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

The composition of each Ready Schools Community-District Team will be unique to the community it serves. It must include a broad and diverse representation of key stakeholders, in leadership positions, with access to resources to help it achieve its goals. The composition of the Team must be tailored to community needs and available resources, but participants might include:



### Finding Funding

A consistent concern for Community-District Teams is the increasing scarcity of funds to support initiatives. As state, district, and agency funding becomes scarcer, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain even the practices and strategies that have shown success. Ideas for increasing resources include:

- ◆ Partner with local businesses;
  - ◆ Look outside traditional funding streams to local donors, local businesses, local community foundations, civic groups, and service organizations for financial or in-kind donations;
  - ◆ Pool resources between and/or among partner schools, districts, and agencies;
  - ◆ Identify low cost alternatives and cost saving means of producing materials and planning events; and
  - ◆ Use technology tools to provide and archive professional development opportunities to reduce costs and time away from the classroom for teachers and child care providers.
- ▶ School district-level personnel including superintendents, school board members, curriculum specialists, program directors, and support services staff whose support will be needed and who can help ensure that initiatives align with district improvement planning and resources;
  - ▶ School personnel including principals, teachers, and support staff who work with elementary and early childhood programs and who will inform plans to ensure that they address individual school needs and provide knowledge of the curriculum, learning environment, and effective instructional practice;
  - ▶ Early childhood education professionals and service providers who bring knowledge about early education and the implementation of best practices for young children in school and community settings;
  - ▶ Families of children ages 3-8 who represent critical stakeholders and provide links to other families and insight into their views and needs;
  - ▶ Social service and healthcare providers who work with and support families and children and provide specialized knowledge about the community and resources;
  - ▶ Community, business, and faith leaders who are critical connections to the needs of the community and the resources it can provide;
  - ▶ Local Smart Start and Partnership for Children personnel; and
  - ▶ Higher education representatives who can assist with training and professional development and who have knowledge of research-based practices that support the work of the Team.

Each of these stakeholders serves as a leader among his or her constituencies and helps the Team, the district, and the community know how they can best support the Ready Schools Initiative, identify needs and resources, and provide communication links to enable collaborative efforts.





## Sustainability

A successful Community-District Team will plan for continued success by conducting ongoing assessment of needs, developing action plans with clearly defined goals and strategies, educating their stakeholders, implementing activities and effective practices, and monitoring and evaluating the results of their partnership efforts to ensure that they can fulfill their role as a resource for the district, individual schools, community agencies, services providers, and families.

The Community-District Team has in place a plan of succession for the members so that leadership is continuous. Members rotate off the Team in a purposeful manner with new members, in similar leadership roles, taking their place. The plan for replacing members includes the length of time to serve and a staggered rotation plan so few members end their term as new members join the Team. Current members accept the responsibility of locating and securing new members to sustain the work of the Team. Job descriptions are in place so that new Team members are aware of their role and responsibilities, and the Ready Schools effort is sustained through transitions.



## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

A successful Community-District Team must engage in reflection and honest assessment of its successes and areas for growth. In addition to utilizing data from formal assessment tools and continued conversations about ways of work, challenges and opportunities, and new possibilities for collaboration; having stakeholders who are engaged and empowered in the decision making processes is critical for continued growth and improvement. Questions that may facilitate some of these conversations are:

1. Does our model of Team leadership support collaboration between the community and school district?
  - » If the goal is developing collaborative leadership, it is important to examine the extent to which leadership is provided by both district and community representatives. A Team whose leadership roles are dominated by representatives of one group may lose valuable insight and buy-in from the other.
2. Are our Community-District Team members representative of the community and in leadership positions within their area of influence? (e.g., early childhood community, business, families, faith leaders, etc.)
  - » Often critical stakeholders are missing from the table, are not the people who can make decisions, or do not function well in a leadership role. Ensuring that the views and voices of a diverse community are heard, even those who may seem disengaged or difficult to engage, is critical to the success of the Ready Schools Initiative. Making sure acknowledged leaders in the community are on the Team is also crucial to success. Active, on-going strategic recruitment of new members is often necessary to ensure broad-based community engagement and support.

3. How do we recruit and attract Team members who are representative of the community in terms of role as well as racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically?
  - » Successful Teams ask themselves what groups need to be at the table to influence the work of the group. Sometimes this means moving outside the usual circle of people who participate or beyond the people who are personal or professional friends of the Team. To establish a diverse, representative group of leaders, it may mean taking a chance to invite someone new into the group.
4. Do we have clear roles and job descriptions for members to help us focus and organize our work, and is there a succession plan in place that ensures smooth leadership transitions?
  - » Focus and continuity are critical issues for most leadership Teams. If Teams are to operate efficiently and protect against the disruption that can occur when a leader moves on to other opportunities, it is important to define roles and responsibilities and ensure that knowledge of the organization and its operations remains with the position rather than departing with the individual.
5. How can we identify and train future leaders to carry on the work of the Team?
  - » The strength and sustainability of the work of the Team relies upon a continuity of informed and committed leadership. Recruiting, developing, and engaging the next generation of leadership is the job of the current Team. It is important to have a rotation plan that allows leaders to move on and off the committee at intervals, allowing the work to continue as a limited number of new members learn what needs to be done.
6. How do we develop the infrastructure and communication plans necessary to ensure regular communication among the Community-District Team, the individual Ready Schools School-Based Teams, and the broader community?
  - » Collaborative efforts and effective partnerships depend upon clear and reliable lines of communications. A Team must examine its internal and external communications and the means it uses to operate to raise awareness within the community. Identifying the appropriate processes and tools is key. A regular, consistent plan for communication will help the committee maintain its momentum.
7. How do we ensure open, honest dialogue built on trust?
  - » True collaboration requires safe space and an open invitation for all participants to voice their values, views, and opinions. Team members should expect to be treated with dignity and respect. Honest and sometimes deep disagreements are inevitable when passionate and committed individuals seek to work together to address difficult challenges. The successful Team identifies strategies to establish the necessary processes, relationships, and environment in which conflict can be addressed and consensus achieved without disrupting the work of the group or marginalizing any of its members.



## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

**Plan for change** - A focused multi-year work plan helps a Community-District Team build momentum and provide continuity as leaders, budgets, and other factors change. Like the Ready Schools School-Based Teams, the Community-District Team should:

- ▶ Continuously assess school, district, and community factors that frame the needs and the directions for activities and practices;
- ▶ Use data from a variety of sources including Team, school, and district assessments; data gathered from community forums and surveys; and input from stakeholders to identify and prioritize areas that will drive action planning and link to school improvement efforts;
- ▶ Raise awareness of Ready Schools concepts in the communities and schools by communicating regularly and building ownership of the initiatives;
- ▶ Create work plans that outline responsibilities, resources, timelines, and tools for assessing the success of activities and practices implemented; and
- ▶ Monitor, evaluate, report progress, and use the data collected to refine action plans as needed.

**Develop leadership at every level and across partnerships** - When leadership is systematically developed and knowledge rests with the position, not the person, it is easier to prevent false starts and loss of momentum during leadership transitions.

- ▶ Identify potential leaders and give them increasing opportunities to lead projects, committees, and activities to develop their knowledge and leadership skills within the Team;
- ▶ Charge each member with helping to identify his or her eventual replacement at least a year before they intend to leave the Team;
- ▶ Go outside the circle of personal and professional acquaintances of the current Team and ask other constituents to recommend potential Team members;
- ▶ Create a leader's handbook and leadership training program to archive the information that will enable a new leader to step in and continue the work uninterrupted;
- ▶ Consider taking a few minutes at each meeting to highlight a program, agency, or issue that impacts children (ages 3-8), schools, or families; and
- ▶ Collaborate with other local agencies to hold leadership workshops.





## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Community-District Team leadership sometimes appears to be dominated either by representatives of the community or representatives of the district. When the chair is a district representative (i.e. Assistant Superintendent, Director of Elementary Education, or other central office administrator), the community involvement may be more heavily influenced or dictated by the school district. Likewise, when the chair is from the community (i.e. Director of a community agency, partnership group, or early childhood program), the Team may have difficulty gaining buy-in and support from the district and individual schools.

- ▶ Selecting co-chairs who represent the district and the community results in greater support from both groups, and provides clearer lines of communication, greater participation in decision-making, and stronger continuity of leadership.
- ▶ Having co-chairs and/or representatives attend appropriate district or community meetings (i.e. reporting at regular Principal meetings or community agency board meetings) increases visibility, awareness, and common understandings.

For more resources see Appendix B, Resources for Pathway One: Leaders and Leadership at the end of the Toolkit.



### *Ready Schools in Action*

#### ***Co-chairs as Leaders of the Community-District Team***

In Carteret County, the Community-District Team is led by co-chairs: the Director of the Carteret County Partnership for Children (CCPC) and the Director of Elementary Education for Carteret County Public Schools System. The Director of the CCPC is able to engage community members such as Carteret County Resource and Referral personnel and childcare directors and providers. The Director of Elementary Education engages school district members such as PreK and Kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals, and school district leaders.

Additionally, when the CCPC suggested universal Kindergarten registration, the school system was very open to the effort. In turn, the school district has taken on several Ready Schools Initiatives beyond universal registration including housing two model classrooms in a Ready Schools demonstration school site. The collective buy-in that the co-chairs have established results in the continuity of the Ready School Initiative in Carteret County even in light of transition in leadership.

# PATHWAY TWO: FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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The Family, School, and Community Partnerships Pathway can simultaneously seem like the easiest Pathway for a Community-District Team (Team) to address and the most challenging. It seems obvious that a Team centered in the community and district would be well-situated to connect families, schools, and communities. However, it is often challenging to gain buy-in and support for educational improvements from those who do not work in education on a daily basis. This Pathway is key to successful Ready Schools initiatives that require the support of families and communities to make a difference in the lives of all of the children in the community.



## Key Understandings

- ▶ There should be a shared understanding among family, school, and community entities that families are children's first teachers.
- ▶ Families, schools, and communities should actively partner to address academic needs of and support for families and students.
- ▶ General public awareness of the critical nature of early years is key to gaining support from a wide population of stakeholders in the community.
- ▶ The Community-District Team's vision and mission must be understood by all community stakeholders.
- ▶ It is important that the school board and superintendent are educated on the Ready Schools Initiative and supportive of the action plan.
- ▶ Families, schools, communities, and service providers need to have a common readiness language.







## The Work

The work of the Community-District Team includes the following major tasks:

The Team should develop and use a common language to discuss Ready Schools topics.

- ▶ Brochures, newsletters, and websites provide a visual means of sharing the language while trainings, meetings, and events can also provide an auditory means. It is important to make the language as family-friendly as possible so that education jargon does not present a barrier.

The Team should communicate the premise that families are children's first teachers.

- ▶ Families teach their children every day through conversations (questioning and answering), outings (grocery shopping), and daily tasks (sorting the laundry). While these activities present powerful teaching opportunities, they are often overlooked as educational. Demonstrating how families teach their children on a daily basis gives more prestige and recognition to this important piece of the Ready Schools puzzle.

The Team should identify and meet the needs of families in the community.

- ▶ Asking families about their needs and providing the support requested builds trust and encourages the collaboration needed to do the work of Ready Schools.
- ▶ Respecting the cultural diversity in the community will require involving families in the discussion of ideas and planning of activities that meet the needs of all families.

The Team should identify and obtain resources to sustain the Ready Schools Initiative.

- ▶ Families and communities provide a wealth of resources outside of financial support. Tapping into the interests and abilities of families and communities enables the Community-District Team to increase their capacity to do the work of Ready Schools.



The Team should communicate the Team's vision, mission, and goals through words and actions.

- ▶ One way to determine if families, schools, and the community are aware of the vision, mission, and goals of the Community-District Team is to ask stakeholders. Basic questions can reveal the community's perception of the Team's vision, mission, and goals. Questions might include: "What does the Team do to engage in the work of Ready Schools?" and "At what events are Team members present?" To move beyond collaboratively developed documents, the Community-District Team must follow through with actions.

The Team should engage community leaders (civic, faith, and business) in Ready Schools work.

- ▶ Community-District Teams must find creative ways to engage community leaders especially in tough economic times when resources are sparse.



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

Ideally, a significant number of the members of the Community-District Team should be individuals who are not primarily associated with the schools or school district. It is important, however, for there to be several key members on the Team who are school personnel, to ensure connections and collaboration with the Ready Schools School-Based Teams and district and school buy-in. Community, religious, and cultural organizations can provide valuable information to the Team, district, and schools about communicating, planning, and responding to the needs and preferences of families and children.

Examples of Team members include:

School personnel; family members of children aged 3 to 8; early education professionals; community organization representatives; community, faith, and business leaders; higher education professionals from local institutions; city council members; and directors of a community social services group. Team membership should reflect the diversity present in the community.

It is important that, to the extent possible, the non-school members, such as family members and community organization professionals, are not also teachers in the schools. Although teachers are important members of the group, making sure others are also in the group provides a variety of perspectives to extend the work of the Team to the whole community, not just those already well-versed in the educational processes.



## Sustainability

One challenge many Community-District Teams note is developing relationships and maintaining connections with Team members whose busy professional and personal lives often mean they cannot attend meetings regularly. Barriers to Team participation include childcare, transportation, and work schedules. Some community and family members that would be desirable on the Team may not feel comfortable attending meetings. One way to address this challenge is to ask more than one family representative or more than one early care and education professional to participate. Another way to encourage a variety of community members to participate is to have Level One members and Level Two members. Level One members would be those who can attend regular meetings and Level Two members could be those who are involved in specific projects on an intermittent basis. This strategy has had success in the districts served by the Down East Partnership for Children (Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools and Edgecombe County Public Schools). It is also very important to have flexible and varied Team meeting times, schedules, and locations.

One example of creatively engaging community partners comes from Carteret County. The Carteret County Partnership for Children held a Family Fun Quest and engaged the community by having business sponsors participate in the event. Sponsors had booths with approved educational activities and giveaways. A dentist participated in the event and said that he was happily surprised to not only advertise his business but also learn about initiatives that advocate for early childhood education. This type of activity spurs sustainability. Flyers and templates for organizing such an event are included in Appendix C, Resources for Pathway Two: Family, School, and Community Partnerships at the end of the Toolkit.

### *The Importance of the School within the Community*

**Y**ou need to understand, in a rural community like this, the school is the community and the people at the school are trusted. So, if anything is going to happen, it will have to be connected to the school.

–Chatham Ready Schools Team Member



## **Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look**

### *Focus on Families*

1. Are a wide range of families involved in Ready Schools work?
  - » If one Team concern is increasing family involvement, take a step back, look at the big picture from the perspectives of families, and make sure the Team work aligns with their needs and is explained in terms of how it does so.
  - » Are activities sensitive to the diversity of families?
2. Can you identify the greatest need of families in your community? How well do you address that need?
  - » The Team can consider conducting family surveys in various modes (paper, web-based, phone conversations, surveys, or focus groups at community events) to gather information from families about their needs. See Appendix C, Resources for Pathway Two: Family, School, and Community Partnerships for an example of a family survey from the Down East Partnership for Children.



### ***Thinking Beyond Families***

3. In what ways does the Community-District Team support school-business partnerships?
  - » Teams can provide information to business leaders regarding school and business partnerships including benefits, expectations, and resources needed and available.
  - » Local non-profits can adopt schools and provide money and/or resources to support school-business partnerships.
  - » Teams can involve the Chamber of Commerce in supporting the school district (e.g., providing sponsorships, tutors, speakers, in-kind donations, internships, etc.).
4. Have you collected an inventory of community and district/school assets, resources, and needs?
  - » Businesses may be hesitant or unable to provide funding for events, but they may be able to provide food for a family night dinner or volunteers to provide activity centers for children so their families can attend Community-District Team events.
  - » Teams should consider holding a community forum to discuss challenges and the resources and assets available to help meet those challenges.

### ***Evaluating District Responsibilities***

5. Does the district value authentic family and community involvement in school decision-making?
  - » See The Citizen's Handbook ([http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/2\\_16\\_visioning.html](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/2_16_visioning.html)) for examples of ways to engage all stakeholders guiding change in schools, districts, and communities.
6. Does the district promote an open door policy for family involvement?
  - » Is it clear to all families that they are welcome, their ideas are appreciated, and they are members of the team?
  - » Does the district show understanding of the value of the varied perspectives of families and community groups through their policies and practices?
7. Does the district offer professional development on effectively engaging families and communities?
  - » Consider offering workshops that bring families, early childhood professionals, and school personnel together to address the topic collaboratively.
  - » Use information gathered through a focus group on families and engagement with community organizations and businesses to guide conversations.



## Taking Action

### Support Families as Teachers

Provide resources (strategies, ideas, training) for families that support them in teaching their children.

- ▶ One elementary school served by the Down East Partnership for Children created a family resource center designed to help families feel they were welcome at the school. This space was available for parent-teacher conferences; held a library of additional resources available for families, such as Rosetta Stone for English as a Second Language; and provided other items to support families.
- ▶ The above idea could be expanded to be more of a community resource center. Consider housing it outside of a school, at a community center, a faith-based facility, or a local library.
- ▶ Members of social services organizations and health organizations could also hold "office hours" in the space to encourage more families to access their services and help them see the benefit of the family, school, and community connections.
- ▶ Consider holding or sponsoring community events (story time at libraries, free days at museums, etc.) that support children and families.

### Develop a Community Resource Guide

Support the development of a community resource guide available in appropriate languages for families depicting community support providers.

- ▶ Developing a guide that addresses social needs, as well as educational resources, helps families know that educational supports are available in their communities.
- ▶ Including community organizations, social services, and health providers in this guide is an easy way to encourage buy-in from community groups that might not otherwise consider themselves explicitly connected to the schools or district.
- ▶ See the Community Resource Guide provided with permission from Davidson County in Appendix C, Resources for Pathway Two: Family, School, and Community Partnerships for a detailed example.

### Make Data-Driven Decisions

Track data regarding the type of events that are well attended by families.

- ▶ For example, are there families from certain groups that attend school performances but do not attend PTO meetings? If so, consider offering PTO information booths at the school performances and sending materials home with families after the show.
- ▶ Consider holding high-profile, well-publicized events at the beginning of the school year in order to build relationships and community earlier in the school year. For example, The Wayne County Community-District Team shared a story of a principal who scheduled Field Day during the first semester of school. The principal set up an information booth near the entrance of the Field Day festivities and had individual conversations with families who attended. The principal handed each family a packet of materials, including any forms that needed to be completed to start the school year successfully.



## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Some families may seem less involved and more difficult to contact.

- ▶ If your communities include immigrant groups or ethnic populations, consider engaging other agencies to act as a cultural liaison. If the challenge is contacting families by phone, for example, a visit to a local community center or cultural organization with a liaison may bring more success.
- ▶ Some districts representatives have gone door-to-door with a liaison in communities where families have been known to not attend many school-based functions to meet and greet them and gather information vital to a successful school experience. See the Transitions Pathway for concrete examples of how these visits work and the successes that some districts have had with them.
- ▶ A school served by the Down East Partnership for Children conducted a "Meet Me at the Bus Stop" activity. The principal and assistant principal drove a bus to school communities to host a conversational session with families who might not otherwise come to visit school. They found that families and children flocked to the bus when it was in the neighborhood and that the school personnel were able to make valuable, positive first impressions with the families.

Often teachers are the ones who ask for more family involvement or who dream of all their families being active participants in schools. Down East Partnership for Children stresses that sometimes the Community-District Team needs to ask teachers to be honest. For example, Teams can ask teachers, "What do you mean by family involvement?" A more challenging question is: "What if what you want is not how families want to be involved?"





## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

### Conduct a Book Study

Consider conducting a book study at the Community-District Team level, or as a community, to collaboratively seek ways to engage all stakeholders. The following books are ones mentioned by various Community-District Teams in North Carolina as ones that spur conversation and action to meet the goals of Teams:

- ▶ Davis, C. & Yang, A. (2005). *Parents and teachers working together*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- ▶ Henderson, A. T., Johnson, V., Mapp, K. L., & Davies, D. (2006). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family/school partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- ▶ Jacobs, G. & Crowley, K. (2010). *Reaching standards and beyond in Kindergarten: Nurturing children's sense of wonder and joy in learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

### Remember Families Can Be Involved in Many Ways

Remember that families do not have to come to schools to be engaged. For example, consider using a strategy described by the Down East Partnership for Children called Home Helpers. Schools provide families with activities or things that they can do from home to help.

See Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships ([http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/family\\_tools/index.html](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/family_tools/index.html)) for specific tools and resources about family and community involvement around six specific themes: improving communication; promoting positive parenting; enhancing student learning; increasing volunteerism; supporting decision-making and advocacy; and collaborating with the community.

Families can also make a difference by helping connect local organizations and businesses with the district or by being involved with the larger community (not just with the school).

### Conduct Home Visits

#### A Guide to Home Visits

The Michigan Department of Education's division of Early Childhood Programs produced this thorough guide. Sample forms included. [Archived copy found on docstoc.com]  
<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/7257956/2-A-Guide-to-Home-Visits>

#### A Guide to Team Home Visits

This guide from the San Francisco Unified School District provides rationale, preparation tips, protocols, timelines, and other suggestions.  
<http://www.healthiersf.org/Forms/parentFamily/A%20Guide%20to%20Team%20Home%20Visits.pdf>

### Connect with Businesses to Provide Incentives

If you feel your families need incentives to volunteer at school, after clearly defining what types of volunteerism you would like, ask local businesses to donate gift cards. When a family member volunteers, s/he has a chance to win a gift card. This strategy is one used successfully in the districts served by the Down East Partnership for Children. We are all aware of budget challenges (staff, materials, food, and personnel), and connecting with businesses is one strategy for overcoming this barrier.

For more resources see Appendix C, Resources for Pathway Two: Family, School, and Community Partnerships at the end of the Toolkit.



**Ready Schools in Action:  
Redefining Parent Involvement,  
Bogue Sound Elementary School in Carteret County**

The administrators, faculty, and staff revised parental involvement strategies in order to engage more families in meaningful activities. Specific examples of their activities follow.

1. They asked families when was the best time for them to attend school events.
  - ◇ While school personnel expected families to request after school events, they found that families preferred to come to school during the work day.
2. The administrators scheduled Field Day at the beginning of the year to provide an opportunity for early relationship building.
3. The teachers designed class parties and seasonal events to include embedded educational activities.
4. They conducted a survey of families. One finding was that the families did not want to attend lectures on Family Night or Open House at school. Instead, they wanted fun activities that they could do with their children at home.
  - ◇ Teachers set up centers with educational games and activities for parents to lead.
  - ◇ At the end of the program, parents were given take-home activities to do with their children.
5. The school selected a few model classrooms to be able to provide concrete information to families about the activities their children would engage in at school.
  - ◇ The administrator bought the model classrooms a digital camera and photo printer.
  - ◇ These devices allow teachers to capture teachable moments (i.e. a student's block tower that depicts an interesting design) and discuss them with children and families.
6. The school found that most children and their families enjoy seeing pictures of themselves at the events, and seeing the pictures encouraged other children and their families to attend future events.
  - ◇ Teachers include pictures of children in their newsletters to gain parents' attention.
  - ◇ Pictures are taken at family events throughout the school year and included in a slideshow that runs continually in the front of the building.
7. Teachers post educational objectives beside artwork in the hallways.
  - ◇ This practice increases awareness of the relationship between standards and activities/lessons.





# PATHWAY THREE: TRANSITIONS

There are reasons why the Ready Schools program is not called Ready Children. Part of the main focus of the Transitions Pathway is to work on changing the mindset from getting children ready for school to getting the school ready for all children. This includes connecting with early childhood professionals, discovering the needs of families in the community (as discussed in the Family, School, and Community Partnerships Pathway), and collaborating to ensure successful transitions for all children, to PreK, from PreK to K, grade to grade, school to school, and in and out of services. Inherent in this Pathway is the importance of aligning environments, curriculum, standards, programs, and practices across settings.



## Key Understandings

There are several principles that underlie the transition-focused work of the Ready Schools Community-District Teams:

- ▶ All children come to school with the ability and readiness to learn.
- ▶ Equal focus should be placed on transitioning children and transitioning schools and services to meet the needs of children and families.
- ▶ Transitions occur at several levels for children. The first transition occurs from home to a care setting, PreK, or K. However, plans need to be in place for transitions as children move between grades, schools, and services.
- ▶ A seamless continuum of learning experiences for children across ages, settings, programs, and grades helps make transitions smoother.
- ▶ Families, schools, and communities need to work together to facilitate the transition to school.
- ▶ Schools should be engaging environments where families and community members feel welcome. (See the Engaging Environments Pathway.)
- ▶ Engaged community members are key to facilitating transitions and enhancing connections between families and schools. (See the Family, School, and Community Partnerships Pathway.)





## The Work

The work of the Transitions Pathway for the Community-District Team is to a) advocate for early childhood programs and initiatives in the community, b) educate stakeholders on the importance of early care and education, c) support the voices of early childhood professionals around how to best transition their children to school, d) help schools identify all children in the community who need to be registered for Kindergarten, e) provide schools with information on how best to engage the families and community organizations in the transition processes of schools, and f) foster increased community-school/district collaboration and shared leadership. Remember that transitions are not simply from PreK to K, but also include transitions between all grade levels at the elementary school level. It is important to promote a shared understanding and definition of successful transition: what it looks like, prerequisite school characteristics, and community and family involvement and roles.



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

Members of the Community-District Team involved in the transitions process should include representatives from all stakeholder groups. Some possible members are early childhood professionals (private and public), directors of early childhood centers, family members of children birth to 8, K-3 teachers, higher level school and district administrators, business and community organization representatives, and health and social services personnel.





## Sustainability

Wayne County Schools found that if the principal has a background in early childhood education, then there is a better chance of getting support for transitions work at the elementary school level. If the principal does not have this background, the Community-District Team tries to get him/her early childhood education training. Consider connecting with local higher education professionals in early childhood, when available, to provide that key training for district and school leaders. A district-wide professional development program for school leaders provides support for sustainability. An additional resource for principals that districts have found helpful is the following book:

Kostelink, M. J. & Grady, M. L. (2009) *Getting it right from the start: The principal's guide to early childhood education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Ensuring that early childhood professionals feel valued is key to sustaining their participation. There are several steps the Community-District Team can put into place to help with this sustainability.

- ▶ Encourage Kindergarten teachers and principals of elementary schools to visit early childhood care centers to see the actual work of PreK teachers to help overcome the prejudices that early childhood is only about play and, therefore, the rising Kindergarteners are not ready for the academic demands of elementary school.
- ▶ Additionally, early childhood program directors and staff should have opportunities to visit elementary schools so they can see where their children will be going and what they will be doing.
- ▶ Work to find funding for qualified substitutes in the early childhood centers so teachers have the opportunity to participate in professional development and make connections with their counterparts in other centers.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for K and PreK teachers and administrators to meet and discuss the transition process, concerns, and ideas.
- ▶ The Carteret County Community-District Team detailed the importance of making sure there is not too much time lapse between professional development opportunities for early childhood providers. They noted that ideas and initiatives often got lost if there was not follow-up regarding implementation.
- ▶ Another suggestion is to have separate training for child care directors and teachers. If the directors are in attendance, then the teachers may not participate as much.



## **Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look**

### ***Connecting with Early Childhood Programs***

1. Are there opportunities for Kindergarten teachers and early care and education providers to visit each other's settings?
2. Is there an understanding between Kindergarten teachers and early child care providers that both settings are equally valid and important in the lives of children?
  - » Are both voices equally represented in the transitions conversations?
3. Do early childhood providers feel valued in the roles they play for setting the stage for successful school entry?
4. Do Kindergarten and elementary teachers understand the importance of play for development and learning of very young children?

### ***Collaborating Across the District***

5. Is there a transition plan for students entering Kindergarten that includes the early childhood community?
6. Are there district-wide tools for the transfer of agreed-upon information from early childhood to Kindergarten settings? What types of information are shared?
7. Are there K orientation/induction processes that link with early education and support children and families?
8. Is there a process or procedure for aligning curricula, instruction, and assessment across PreK-3? (See the Effective Curricula Pathway for more on this.)

### ***Recognizing the Role Families Play***

9. Is there a policy demonstrating district buy-in of seamless transitions PreK-3?
10. Is there a plan in place to connect with and include as many families as possible in the transition plan?
11. Are transition and Kindergarten enrollment materials available in all the languages represented in the community?
12. Are translators available during Kindergarten enrollment and transition activities?
13. Are transition activities held in places across the community so all families can participate?



## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

#### Share Information

Many Community-District Teams have a communication tool to share information pertaining to children and their families from early childhood providers to PreK and Kindergarten teachers, but we caution against a generic tool for use by all districts. For this reason, we have provided you with several examples of these tools in Appendix D, Resources for Pathway Three: Transitions. We strongly suggest that your Team spends a considerable amount of time making sure that the tool you use is suitable for your context and community.

- ▶ If academic information (knowledge of letters and numbers) is included, it may send the message to early childhood education providers and families that early education settings should focus on academics and that children should know this information prior to Kindergarten.
- ▶ You may want to include information on children's likes and dislikes, what they enjoy doing at home, who they regularly play with, and whether or not they have attended preschool, in order to help the Kindergarten teacher know more about his/her incoming students.
- ▶ Other benefits to a communication form are that families can sign the form and indicate where their child is registered or plans to register for the upcoming year. This can potentially increase the number of students who register, helping schools more accurately plan for the number of children who will enter Kindergarten. Also, early childhood providers can share information about families with Kindergarten teachers, thus helping to increase the sensitivity among Kindergarten teachers and public school staff.

#### Build Connections

As mentioned earlier, encouraging conversations and connections between families, early childhood professionals, elementary school teachers, and administrators is key to the Transitions Pathway.

Community-District Teams across North Carolina have found ways to build these connections in their districts. For example, Community-District Teams are:

- ▶ Having Kindergarten teachers visit early childhood care centers.
- ▶ Setting up roundtable dialogues where big ideas for improving education for all children are discussed, instead of simply focusing on what early childhood care needs to encompass to "prepare" students for Kindergarten.
- ▶ Having PreK classrooms visit the elementary schools to familiarize them with the school and help them feel more comfortable with their transitions.
- ▶ Starting joint Adult Learning Communities (ALCs) that are collaborations between early childhood care centers and the elementary schools. The ALCs could focus on the big ideas as mentioned above or a book study of a resource around early childhood preparation. One possible book is:
  - » Jacobs, G. & Crowley, K. (2010). *Reaching standards and beyond in Kindergarten: Nurturing children's sense of wonder and joy in learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- ▶ Providing parents with activities that they can do to foster their child's learning and help their child prepare for school.

## Streamline Transition Activities

Schools often have several different transition activities scheduled to introduce families to the school and Kindergarten. Schools will also be the first to tell you that some events are frequented more than others and that there are almost always some children who are not registered for Kindergarten as quickly as they could be. Effective Community-District Teams can serve in an advisory capacity to schools as they are planning transition activities, informing the schools of the best ways to reach the populations of new families and which types of activities (and locations for them) would most appeal to specific audiences. See the Ready Schools in Action box to the right for specific examples from Davidson County and visit Appendix D, Resources for Pathway Three: Transitions for additional Transition resources.



## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Other issues related to effective transitions are centered on awareness-building and knowledge-gathering. Many can be successfully address with a strong Community-District Team that includes leaders from all the important stakeholder groups. See the Leaders and Leadership Pathway for strategies to strengthen leadership in your Community-District Teams. Some awareness and knowledge issues that may exist in some districts are listed below.

- ▶ Often it is a challenge when PreK programs are not physically located in an elementary school setting because families do not get very involved in the program due to the short duration (often only 1 year) that their children are there.
- ▶ More education is needed for stakeholders about the different early childhood programs that may be operating in the community, such as Smart Start, Head Start, Parents As Teachers, and More at Four.
- ▶ There may be a need to increase understanding of all stakeholders of how cultural diversity and poverty can affect families, schools, and communities.
- ▶ There may be a need for translators for families and teachers in schools and at Kindergarten registration and orientation, as well as the ability to provide all forms, information, and media materials in all languages spoken by members of the community.



### Ready Schools in Action:

#### Connecting with Kindergarten students & families: Davidson County

School and district personnel in Davidson County have redesigned transition activities to provide more opportunities for families and schools to connect. Specific examples of their activities follow.

- 1. Kindergarten Orientation Evening (Spring)** – Families tour the school their child will be attending, participate in child activities, receive information about Kindergarten, and participate in a Q&A session. It is key to invite administration and PreK teachers from feeder preschools.
- 2. Family Education Sessions (Spring or Summer)** – Teachers share basic tools, toys, and ideas to help families prepare children for Kindergarten.
- 3. Eat Lunch at School and Ride the Bus (Spring or Summer)** – The bus ride can be a quick trip around the block and the event can include a brief information session for families who haven't been able to participate in other events.
- 4. Open Playground Event (Summer)** – This is an opportunity for children to meet peers and Kindergarten teachers. It can include brief information sharing for late registering families.

Consider working with local businesses or non-profit organizations to provide food, learning tools, and stipends for staff to participate in these events.



## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

### Family Fun Day

Hold Family Fun Days with the help of vendors, private organizations, and non-profits. Organize the event to include activities that support attendance, such as story read-alouds, craft activities, and/or door prize drawings. One idea is to have a scavenger hunt to encourage all families visit each of the vendors. Stops on the scavenger hunt can also include Kindergarten registration and "Meet Your Teacher" or "Meet Your Principal." This successful idea from Carteret County is a great way to build community and encourage good family turnout. See Appendix C for Family Fun Day sample documents and visit the Family, School, and Community Partnerships Pathway for more examples of ways to connect with families, local businesses, and community organizations.

### Collaborate with Local Libraries

Chatham County's Community-District Team has found the children's librarian to be an invaluable resource. Together, they have compiled a bibliography of transitions books and encouraged families to explore themes in the books with their children. This idea can be expanded to have local PreK centers checkout the transitions books to read in their centers. The local library could also become an "off-campus" Kindergarten registration site.

### Support Services

Student transportation support services can be provided by a number of individuals including counselors, psychologists, social workers, therapists (e.g., speech, occupational, physical), health care professionals, special educators, remedial educators, classroom teachers, and itinerant teachers. Support service providers should have the knowledge, skills, and cultural competence to work with preschool and school-age children within a culturally sensitive environment. Support services providers should include the perspectives and values of family members and support teachers in helping children make transitions.

**For more resources see Appendix D, Resources for Pathway Three: Transitions at the end of the Toolkit.**







# PATHWAY FOUR: RESPECTING DIVERSITY

Respecting diversity is vital to creating rich learning experiences and welcoming environments in which all children and their families are valued and supported. Awareness of diversity and developing appropriate responses to the various types of diversity is needed to successfully identify and connect to the resources that exist in the communities, families, and schools served by Community-District Teams (Team). This Pathway is key to developing a foundation of informed and sustainable responses to diversity and is important in building inclusive, involved, and caring Ready Schools and communities.



## Key Understandings

The demographic composition of the U.S. is changing rapidly. By 2050, researchers predict that nearly half of the population will be comprised of people reflecting a host of cultural, linguistic, racial, religious, and ethnic diversity.

Diversity in schools and communities encompasses all of the ways that we human beings are both similar and different from each other across a range of dimensions. To be respectful of the diversity present in a community, Ready Schools efforts should incorporate the following key understandings and actions:

- ▶ Define diversity as extending beyond race: it is for all students, not just students of color (Nieto, 1996).
- ▶ Possess a working knowledge of the kind of diversity that exists in local communities and schools.
- ▶ Believe that everyone needs to share information, be recognized, valued, and understood. This will increase participation as well as strengthen schools and the community.
- ▶ Communicate that bringing people together will increase communication and understandings.
- ▶ Understand that diversity is enriching and frame diversity as an asset.
- ▶ Celebrate both commonalities and differences.
- ▶ Increase teacher, administrator, peer, family, and community sensitivity to diversity.
- ▶ Facilitate schools, families, and communities working as collaborators and co-learners on the topic of diversity.
- ▶ Incorporate insights from research on the "cultural learning style" of children and families.
- ▶ Address the needs of all children across a range of learning styles and physical and cognitive abilities.

**If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.**

**-Margaret Mead,  
Cultural Anthropologist**

## Dimensions of Diversity

- Class
- Language
- Ability
- Race
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Education Background





## The Work

Eileen Kugler, author of *Debunking the Middle Class Myth*, describes the benefits and crucial nature of promoting, creating, and sustaining diverse, inclusive schools for students, communities, and the work force.

Students who go to diverse, inclusive schools learn 21st Century Skills:

- ✓ They think more deeply and question more.
- ✓ They are better problem solvers.
- ✓ They know how to work in diverse teams.
- ✓ They recognize different strengths in their peers.

Our diverse communities are vibrant and strong:

- ✓ Diverse neighbors bring new insights and perspectives.
- ✓ We all benefit from a broader range of skills.
- ✓ We can grow beyond our own experiences.

Our diverse workplaces are dynamic and forward-thinking:

- ✓ Different skills lead to a stronger whole.
- ✓ Wide-ranging insights solve problems rapidly.
- ✓ Ideas from different cultures, different generations, different races increase opportunities.

The objective for Community-District Teams is to develop inclusive environments that demonstrate a respect for and deep understanding of family, school, and community stakeholder diversity. A welcoming learning environment is achieved when instructional practices, displays, curricula, materials (books, toys, etc.), celebrations, and assessments are reflective of a community's diversity.

Community-District Teams nurture sustainable community-home-school connections by engaging community-based early education programs, PreK centers, schools, district, families, and communities in preparing children for lives in a complex, multicultural society. This work involves several key elements:

Community-District Teams gain knowledge about the kinds of diversity that exists in the schools and communities they serve and use it to develop engaged, inclusive communities, districts, and schools.

- Efforts are regularly made to engage and accommodate diverse family structures (for example, low income, non-native English speakers, immigrant, single-parent, same-sex parents, or families with cognitive or physical challenges) in activities, meetings, and decision-making in places and ways that demonstrate awareness and respect.

Community-District Teams model the creation of welcoming environments in schools and communities by reflecting the cultural makeup and other diversity of the community in Team membership.

- Develop a system for recruiting and retaining members that are widely representative of the entire community, not just the dominant community.
- Recruit members that are culturally competent and conscious of diversity issues. They are able to understand the experiences of the groups they communicate with and serve.
- Community-District Teams should be respectful and responsive in their words and actions. One Team member reminds us that creating a welcoming environment is more than just a head count.

Community-District Teams create regular opportunities for dialogue, professional development, and resource-sharing held at various, accessible community and school sites.





## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

As with other Pathways, the success of a Team's efforts is dependent upon those involved. Ideally, Community-District Teams should include teachers, administrators, early childhood professionals, teacher assistants, and a wide range of members of the community (e.g., family members, business members, service providers for families and children, healthcare professionals, homeless services representatives, faith-based and community group leaders, etc.).

**Families:** Families provide information to Teams and share feedback on Team progress as it is perceived by families and the larger community. Families may serve as liaisons, community ambassadors, and advocates for their children and other, less vocal families and community members. As trust is built, families become an important source of information on community matters and important resources in creating inclusive schools. Families can share their own experiences and knowledge to assist in planning events to attract and include diverse families.

**Educators:** From early childhood professionals to K-3 teachers and teaching assistants to principals and district personnel, all educators are vital to developing a sustainable framework for respecting diversity through awareness and acknowledgement of diversity and working to build trust within the community. Educators can serve as curriculum and policy advocates for inclusive schools, but they must be willing to examine their instructional practices and materials for bias, and work to build resources that reflect the cultural backgrounds of their students and families. Educators must also work to build a respectful relationship with parents and caregivers. There is no substitute for simply reaching out to families and being accessible to increase family and community involvement in the learning environment. While the aforementioned roles are crucial to creating and sustaining inclusive schools, the role of educators as it relates to the Community-District Team is to engage in two-way communication informing the Team of areas related to respecting diversity that require additional support district-wide and providing the Team with feedback as to how their Ready Schools work impacts educators district-wide.

**Community:** Community is a broad category that may include community and service organizations (i.e., social services, healthcare, substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, mental health, immigrant services, disability services, homeless services, etc.), local businesses, and the faith community. These parties can serve as bridge-builders and community ambassadors who provide support and services to children and their families. Thanks to their direct connections to and work with various parts of the community, they possess valuable information about specific interests, needs, and concerns of different segments of the community. This information will be very helpful to the Community-District Team as they plan and carry out their Ready Schools efforts.

**University Liaisons:** University faculty in Social Work and Education, for example, can help Community-District Teams develop effective assessments, provide professional development and materials to facilitate work with diverse groups, and build cultural competence strategies for creating authentic relationships with and welcoming environments for children and their families.



## Sustainability

In order to create sustainable, inclusive environments respecting and affirming diversity, we must go beyond simply celebrating "heroes and holidays" (Lee et al., 1998). In general, we need to study ourselves and our society to understand how we truly define differences and include or exclude groups and individuals according to those differences. Planning for sustainability requires collaboration with families, faith, business, education, service, commerce, and nonprofit organizations and stepping outside of our comfort zone and home community. A true sense of belonging and membership must be shared among group members and all members should have a voice in decision making.

### Recruitment and Retention

A Team member recruitment and retention plan is essential to sustainability. The goal of this plan should be to recruit members who are representative of the whole community. (Refer to Family, School, Community Partnerships and Engaging Environments Pathways for more information.) Embedded in recruitment is a plan for retention. Some retention strategies might be flexibility in meeting times and locations to bolster diverse representation at meetings, ground rules for ensuring that all have a voice at the table, and creating welcoming environments by making sure minority/underrepresented members interact with others with similar experiences. Avoid tokenism; having one member of a particular group does not necessarily mean diverse representation. Develop strategies that take turnover into account, while maintaining diverse representation.

### Shared Vision and Shared Language

Developing a shared vision is different than having the same vision. A shared vision is more complex and reflective of the diverse voices that shape it. It is supported and sustained by a shared language and understanding for what diversity means and why it is important. There should be a plan in place for communicating to stakeholders how advocating for and respecting diversity is beneficial to all. A shared language is developed through training, interaction with diverse constituencies, and on-going dialogue and communication. Creating a shared vision and language is an important step in creating a welcoming atmosphere for families and children and building trust among stakeholders. Make use of parent liaisons; ESL professionals; and local social, recreational, health, and government agencies to communicate this vision and ensure that it is inclusive and able to sustain itself beyond the Community-District Team.

### Training and Professional Development

A foundation of open dialogue and a willingness to take part in honest conversations about difficult topics is essential in this Pathway. Issues of racism and discrimination of any kind must be addressed in ways that honor where people are in the conversation. Some introductory diversity and cross-cultural communication training may be needed to enhance individual comfort and knowledge levels as well as to provide strategies for engaging in open, meaningful dialogue. Hands-on, participatory learning activities are useful for diversity training. Workshops might include ice-breakers in cross-cultural communication and simulation games like poverty simulations (see the Missouri Community Action

Coalition in Appendix E, Resources for Pathway Four: Respecting Diversity). Additional strategies include disability simulations and a variety of role-plays, lessons, activities, and discussions that explore other diversity dimensions (e.g., culture, class, race, languages, etc.), biases, and stereotypes.

Coaching, mentoring, community volunteering, inquiry teams, and visitations to other schools and PreK centers are great sources for diversity training and application. Adult Learning Communities (ALCs) that include representation from families, community organizations and services, schools, and PreK and early childhood professionals offer opportunities to share ideas, hear different perspectives, and nurture a culture of dialogue and problem-solving while cultivating leadership through shared power. It is best to host ALCs in multiple sites that allow for greater representation and convenience for stakeholders.

### On-Going Assessment and Data Collection

Assessment and data collection are essential for planning and sustainability. Using assessment and data collection as a learning tool promotes informed risk-taking and the perspective that failure presents an opportunity for growth. Reflection on data helps build capacity; is useful in gauging the Team's effectiveness in addressing the needs and preferences of diverse groups; assists in strategic planning for developing short- and long-term goals, events, and policies and practices; and is invaluable in determining individual and organizational strengths and areas in need of growth. Teams might collect data using the following tools: self-assessments for cultural competence and diversity awareness, organizational and school assessments, and on-going school and community mapping surveys of children and families to understand resources, diversity, and needs of families and communities.

### Building Community

Develop partnerships with community members, organizations, and businesses to provide time, materials, and social and emotional support for students, families, and teachers. Community-District Teams also plan or participate in events with local community groups that serve diverse populations.

Community-District Teams conduct on-going asset mapping and surveying processes that focus on both the resources and diversity present in the community and that involve faith, business, education, commerce, and nonprofit groups. Asset mapping is based on the principle that a community can be built by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens and associations that call a neighborhood or community home (see Appendix E, Resources for Pathway Four: Respecting Diversity). As described by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), there are three levels of assets to be considered. The first is the "gifts, skills, and capacities" of the individuals living in the community. The second level of assets includes "citizen associations" through which local people come together to pursue common goals. The third level of assets is those institutions present in community, such as local government, hospitals, education, and human service agencies.





## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

A first step for Community-District Teams is to determine what challenges the Team faces in addressing diversity as part of their work. Additional questions might examine the ways the Team supports various aspects of advocating for and respecting diversity and include:

1. Do the Team members reflect the racial, ethnic, economic, linguistic, cultural, ability, and sexual orientation diversity present in the community?
2. Are translators available in schools, early childhood, and community settings as needed?
3. Are there professional development opportunities related to working with children from economically, racially, and linguistically and academically diverse populations?
4. Does the Team have members who are culturally competent and knowledgeable about diversity issues in the community?
5. Does the Team establish relationships with organizations that serve diverse populations?
6. Does the Team advocate for curriculum that integrates the knowledge and traditions of diverse cultures and families and that is not stereotypical?
7. Does the Team advocate for materials (i.e., books, displays, activities) representative of the community's diversity in terms of class, ethnicity, language, ability, race, etc.?
8. Are there opportunities for open and honest dialogue about diversity in your community?







## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

- ▶ Teams can share understandings, definitions, language, and frameworks for discussing and celebrating diversity.
- ▶ Teams can engage in community-based outreach to diverse groups.
- ▶ Teams can develop collaborative relationships with community organizations and businesses to create and provide resources and technical assistance to support inclusive practices.
- ▶ Teams can advocate for meaningful professional development focusing on key aspects of diversity—socioeconomic status (poverty), language, ability, culture, race, and sexual orientation—along with on-going and supportive follow-up.
- ▶ Teams can conduct community forums to promote on-going dialogue and exchange between the Community-District Team and stakeholders.
- ▶ Teams can partner with local organizations that serve children and their families.
- ▶ Teams can develop a framework for creating inclusive school districts where families feel welcomed, valued, and acknowledged.
- ▶ Teams can address community beliefs and actions that unintentionally segregate schools.
- ▶ Teams can evaluate materials for their inclusiveness and cultural relevance.
- ▶ Teams can help students, families, teachers, and administrators understand and relate to the histories, cultures, and languages of people different from themselves (Sleeter & Grant, 1994).
- ▶ Team members can attend community-based events held by various organizations serving different groups.
- ▶ Teams can invite community and business members to facilitate a discussion on a diversity-related topic and/or host informal book clubs.
- ▶ Teams can hold or facilitate a cultural celebration inviting family members and/or community organizations to a family-community heritage event where participants bring food and share (or listen to) stories about unique family and cultural traditions.

## Beginning Steps in Respecting Diversity

**T**here is only one child in the world  
and that child's name is ALL  
children

—Carl Sandburg

### Get Yourself Out There

- Attend Events/Meetings for and by Diverse Groups

### Ensure You Represent Diversity

- Invite Diverse Representatives to the Table

### Assess Your Beliefs/Biases

- Take a Self-Assessment, Read, Build a Critical Friends Group



## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

While trends in communities are unintentionally (and sometimes intentionally) creating segregated schools; families, districts, and communities are missing out on the benefits of inclusive, diverse school settings. One challenge for the Community-District Team is to advocate for the development and/or maintenance of inclusive, diverse schools by tackling deeply held beliefs that can undermine Team efforts.

One Community-District Team described a trend occurring in their school district that they referred to as "white flight." The situation was described by the Team member:

There was a school that had a student population that was about half African American and half Caucasian and then experienced a population influx of Latino families. As the student population increased in diversity, a high percentage of the Caucasian students and a moderate percentage of the African American students left the school and enrolled in a newly formed charter school in the community. Subsequently, the original schools' population went from being half African American and half Caucasian to being half African American and half Latino. In addition, student achievement on accountability tests decreased and family involvement declined.

If your Community-District Team encounters barriers to respecting diversity, you are not alone. Several sites across North Carolina requested professional development and technical support in order to address diversity with Community-District Team members, School-Based Teams, families, schools, and the community. Poverty as a barrier was frequently mentioned. One site stated that schools from different ends of the socioeconomic status spectrum do not want to collaborate with each other. Another reported a need for professional development to increase an understanding of poverty. A third reported that generational poverty creates a barrier to reaching some parents. And, a fourth was interested in including a poverty simulation during their professional development initiative dedicated to early childhood education. However, addressing poverty alone will not remove all barriers to respecting diversity; it is important to explore underlying beliefs related to all dimensions of diversity. Ignoring barriers to respecting diversity will make it even more difficult to Explore the following possible barriers to determine ways in which Teams can address the Respecting Diversity Pathway to make real improvements resulting in positive outcomes for children, families, schools, and the community.

► **Historical or emerging cultural divisions within the community:**

- » Understand the contexts. Why do these divisions exist? What is the history? Where are areas of difference? Where are points of connection and shared experience?
- » Collaborate with other community agencies and organizations that serve various parts of the community (e.g., one that works with students with special needs or non-native English speakers) as a way to make connections as well as expand and share resources, ideas, and information.
- » There is no substitute for getting into the community and meeting people through churches, markets, and local gathering places and activities.

- ▶ **Lack of meaningful professional development and follow-up:**
  - » ALCs can serve not only as a source of professional development but also as a vehicle for dialogue between community, school, and business partners.
  - » Plan poverty or disability simulations in communities that foster discussion and exchange of information.
  - » Utilize free resources in diversity training and awareness-building and conduct your own informal workshop.
- ▶ **Lack of opportunities for meaningful contact and exchange among culturally different groups.**  
Resistance and/or fear of engaging in difficult discussions and issues:
  - » Participate in or develop open forums in schools and communities for dialogue, learning, and exchange (e.g., simulations, facilitated dialogues around specific themes, diversity activities and icebreakers, etc.).
  - » Celebrate diversity! Once you know the diversity in the community, find ways to acknowledge and celebrate it. Carteret County held a successful Family Fun Quest that connected families and the business community. Personalize invitations to families—a kind word can make all the difference.



***Ready Schools in Action:  
Respecting Diversity:  
Carteret County & Bogue Sound Elementary***

In Carteret County, one school hosted an informal make-and-take lesson at the trailer park where many of their students lived. Teachers set up a few tables on the grounds and invited families to join them.

The Bogue Sound Elementary model classrooms used a variety of instructional practices such as accessible materials and seat selection designed to engage students with varying cognitive and physical abilities. For example, classroom displays were reflective of diverse racial and ethnic cultures and languages and teachers maintained high expectations for learning for all children while providing accommodations as needed. Additionally, students were encouraged to select a seating arrangement to meet their needs. Students could chose to sit in a laundry basket, use a carpet square, or sit directly on the carpet.



## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

According to Barbara Bowman (North Central Regional Educational Library, 1994), there are several strategies that can bring families, schools, and communities closer to reaching this goal. The Community-District Team can affect positive change in the Respecting Diversity Pathway by doing and advocating for the following:

- ▶ Listen to the voices of excluded minorities. It is essential that minority communities feel a greater sense of ownership regarding school standards if they are to cooperate in preparing their children. Involvement by parents and community members from these minority groups in setting nationwide readiness criteria can help diffuse this issue.
- ▶ Change how schools interact with other community institutions. Collaboration with social service and health delivery systems is just the beginning. Establishing cooperative relationships with parks, districts, libraries, day care centers, and homes is equally important.
- ▶ Prepare teachers and schools to educate a greater range of children. Early childhood personnel need to be better prepared to help children for whom school represents a major challenge. When the match between children's prior experience and the expectations of schools is too great, children are less likely to succeed. Mismatches occur when developmental criteria, expectations for individual performance, and definitions for members of various culture groups are overly narrow or rigid.

Unless we speak out about the relationship between culture, development, and education, we cannot hope to provide the kind of schooling needed to carry us safely into the 21st century. The Community-District Team must advocate for broader approaches to teaching that are more consistent with what is known about child development.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadshp/le0bow.htm>



## ***Diversity Training and Awareness Resources***

### **Dimensions of Diversity**

<http://diversityeducation.cas.psu.edu/>

The goal of this site is to provide resources to help all of us increase our awareness, understanding, and value of diversity. This site contains a quarterly newsletter, diversity program materials, publications, curricula, and links to other diversity-related resources and sites. Many materials may be downloaded and printed.

### **Ed Change**

<http://www.edchange.org/>

Offers professional development, research, and resources for diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competence.

### **Teaching Tolerance**

<http://www.tolerance.org/professional-development>

Provides educational materials from articles that make you think to presentations you can share. These resources are designed to help teachers improve their practice and turn K-12 schools into strong communities that welcome diversity, giving all students an opportunity to learn.

### **The W. K. Kellogg Foundation**

<http://ww2.wkkf.org/Pubs/CustomPubs/CPtoolkit/cptoolkit/Sec3-Including.htm>

Provides information regarding diversity training, cultural competence, cultural celebrations, and issues of power.

**For more resources see  
Appendix E, Resources  
for Pathway Four:  
Respecting Diversity  
at the end of the Toolkit.**





# PATHWAY FIVE: ENGAGING ENVIRONMENTS

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Effective curricula, instruction, and child assessment are essential for enhancing development and learning in young children, especially those at risk for academic failure due to poverty, disability, or other factors. Learning is most meaningful when integrated across domains. Using high quality, appropriate, and effective curriculum and instruction can stimulate children's motivation and enthusiasm as well as support development in all domains and foster academic growth.



## Key Understandings

- ▶ An environment is more than "physical" aspects and includes climate, interactions, and developmentally appropriate practices.
- ▶ Engaging environments are essential to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of young children as they learn through playing, discovering, and creating.
- ▶ Engaging environments should promote active exploration and relationships.
- ▶ Environments should be appropriate for children's ages and level/stage of development.
- ▶ Community resources such as parks, libraries, and local establishments (e.g., monuments, cemeteries, places of business, etc.) are environments where learning can flourish and add depth to the daily curriculum.



## The Work

The Community-District Team can be instrumental in the following ways:

- ▶ Advocating for a common definition of engaging environments that will direct attention, particularly when resources are limited;
- ▶ Providing a needed common public meeting space for families (e.g., community centers, churches, etc.);
- ▶ Assuring common resources are distributed across the district and community;
- ▶ Creating and/or supporting indoor and outdoor places of learning where children learn by using their environment to explore, create, manipulate, change, question, imagine, respond, and reflect;
- ▶ Informing educators, administrators, and community members about places of learning in the community and how they can support curriculum; and
- ▶ Recruiting local business leaders and experts (e.g., outdoor designers or landscapers, college faculty, seller of playground materials or other early childhood materials, etc.) to make presentations or provide professional development on developmentally appropriate, engaging environments.

**L**earning is not so much an additive process, with new learning simply piling up on top of existing knowledge, as it is an active, dynamic process in which the connections are constantly changing and the structure reformatted.

– K. Patricia Cross, Education Scholar



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

The key players in creating and maintaining engaging environments are:

**Families:** Families should communicate with early childhood professionals and public school personnel about their expectations for engaging environments. They need to be willing to advocate for appropriate environments for their children. With the support of the Community-District Team, they should examine the spaces, identify needs, and seek community involvement to contribute needed resources for all early childhood settings and classrooms. For example, if you want to improve the classroom library, talk to local book stores, libraries, and swap shops about donating unwanted books. Families must also communicate their expectations for outdoor learning environments that promote welcoming, respectful interactions. Families can participate in the process using their time, talents, and resources to assist their children in extending their learning at home and in the community.

**Educators:** Early childhood professionals, teachers, and teacher assistants are essential to advocating for, creating, and maintaining engaging indoor and outdoor environments. In order for the community to be effectively involved, the early childhood professionals must be willing to discuss the curriculum connections they see and initiate conversations with community members to seek their involvement. The Community-District Team can facilitate these interactions and establish open communications among early childhood professionals, teachers, families, and the community at large leading to the implementation of new modes of engaging environments.

**Early Childhood Directors and Elementary School and District Administrators:** The role of directors and administrators is to support both educators and families in their work toward the construction of engaging environments for children by creating and implementing district-wide policies for engaging environments. Directors and administrators must also advocate for and implement district-wide professional development for creating and sustaining engaging environments. Additionally, they can provide school-based support in this area. This may mean finding spaces to create outdoor learning centers and gardens, recruiting staff members to solicit donations and financial support from local businesses (e.g., home improvement stores), and committing financially and philosophically to obtaining needed resources for rich environments. Educational leaders are fundamental in connecting educators and community members and can lead Teams to action in the assessment and improvement of engaging environments.



**Children:** Children play a key role in the creation and maintenance of engaging environments. They must be willing to care for their environment, share materials and ideas effectively, and assist in the establishment and reinforcement of a positive community. Environments across settings should change and adapt based on children's needs and interests.

**Community Members:** It is essential for members of the community to be actively involved as they are charged with providing assistance in linking the school-based learning settings to those of the community. By opening the walls of the school to include the whole community, everyone benefits: students, teachers, schools, families, and communities. Having a variety of community representatives on Community-District Teams will provide needed additional perspectives. Suggested community members include (but are not limited to): faith-based leaders, museum employees, parks and recreation directors, local history buffs, retired educators, business owners, and athletic and sports enthusiasts.

**University/College Liaisons:** University personnel can be helpful in assisting Community-District Teams begin conversations about how to assess and improve opportunities for engaging environments. They may have access to instruments and evaluation plans that can assist communities and districts in this process. University/college faculty may also be able to provide professional development on engaging environments. Keeping abreast of current early childhood literature is another avenue for gaining effective strategies.



## Sustainability

A successful Community-District Team will likely contain a diverse group of people who represent all aspects of the community. One way to encourage community member buy-in is to use resources already available by soliciting help from families and taking advantage of the community connections that they have. Once connections are established with places within the community, relationships can be continually nurtured, eventually resulting in a wealth of resources. Districts and communities who are just beginning to explore these possibilities should start slowly and think about layering on new resources each year so that the process will not become burdensome, but instead will be enjoyable and sustainable. Engaging environments are typically fluid and malleable.

Working with local volunteers is another way to increase the role of the community in establishing active learning environments. For example, one university education student worked with a local botanical garden to design a scavenger hunt for children to provide meaningful, age-appropriate ways for them to interact with and learn about the environment. The scavenger hunt was then published in a pamphlet and became a permanent offering for children visiting the botanical garden.

Stakeholders can be recruited and encouraged by simply recognizing those who have constructed successful strategies and made significant contributions. Recognition may take the form of a school or community sign that expresses thanks, a certificate of appreciation that is prominently displayed, or even media coverage in the newspaper or on the local television channel.



## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

1. What do environments look like across early childhood classrooms (e.g., public, parochial, family, church) in the community? Are they engaging and age-appropriate? Are environments welcoming and safe for all children and families? Do they promote learning, interaction, and relationships?
  - » A common first step in examining environments is surveying current conditions. Observations can lead to questions, revelations, and considerations that would not otherwise be possible.
2. On what criteria for engaging environments can the Community-District Team focus and agree?
  - » An essential next step to the improvement of current environments is to bring the Community-District Team together to decide what environmental elements should be emphasized. By sharing ideas and reaching consensus, the Team members can then address the necessary elements for establishing, maintaining, or extending these environments.
3. Are there ideal environments that the school district has identified and supports for grades Kindergarten–3rd?
  - » It can be helpful to identify environments the district has upheld as models of engaging environments. Visiting, exploring, and understanding the why and how behind the creation of these model environments can provide useful information.
4. Does the school district's philosophy and support for teachers include helping teachers learn about and create engaging environments through professional development, curriculum liaisons, etc.?
  - » Examine the professional development that has been offered to teachers. Identify those offerings which focus on or include engaging environments. This can help identify holes or redundancies in professional development.
5. Do PreK–3 classroom environments reflect best practices for young children and include spaces for individual, small, and large group learning?
  - » A close examination of the physical surroundings can reveal much about a philosophy of learning. Whether this information is collected by teachers on their own classroom or by their peers or an outside evaluator, it can be a useful to determine what the classroom says about the type of learning and interaction that is valued in that space.



6. What local community resources could the Community-District Team tap into to support the development and maintenance of engaging environments?
  - » Providing a list of resources in the community can be an effective way to campaign for increased community involvement. Ask families to review and contribute to the list, thereby inviting their participation in the establishment of community relationships.
  
7. What outdoor learning spaces are available or needed for children?
  - » Often outdoor learning spaces are overlooked as resources for engaging environments. Assess current access for your students to the natural environment. If such spaces are currently unavailable, how can Community-District Teams assist in providing outdoor gardens, learning communities, or courtyards? What about accessibility? Can all children access and benefit from the outdoor environment regardless of ability?



## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

#### Observations

Encourage districts and schools to invite PreK teachers to visit the classrooms of Kindergarten teachers, and likewise to allow Kindergarten teachers to visit classrooms of PreK teachers. Seeing the two environments can promote better communication and understanding as well as ideas for creating engaging environments. Encouraging positive, constructive feedback between both parties can result in even stronger environments. Educators can ask questions and observe how other teachers work with children to develop skills.

Catawba County has used this observation strategy and noted many benefits. For example, the reciprocal observations helped both parties (i.e., PreK teachers and Kindergarten teachers) understand what students experienced prior to or after the school year. For PreK teachers, the observations helped them understand what knowledge the children would need, what experiences the teachers could provide to help prepare them, and the relationship between PreK and Kindergarten experiences. For Kindergarten teachers, the observations helped them understand the prior experiences of their students, the importance of play in learning, and the relationship between PreK and Kindergarten environments and experiences. Overall, both parties were reminded of the developmental continuum as contrasted to a fixed point during the year in which the teachers worked with students. The observations facilitated communication between the parties and fostered a common language for the sharing of information. The observations lessen the divide that can sometimes exist between PreK and elementary grades.

## Professional Development

Teacher assistants spend significant time with children. Often, these educators are not provided the same opportunities for professional development as the teachers in their districts. Many Community-District Teams believe that by increasing the amount of training provided to teacher assistants, the quality of the environments may improve. Teachers, administrators, and early care providers and directors can benefit, too, especially if they have not had this type of training before.

## Data Collection to Assess and Improve Environments

Many Community-District Teams conduct regular assessments of school and community environments to see what areas need to be specifically addressed. Using the data to inform changes is an effective way to improve environments. There are many instruments available. The ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised) is one that is commonly used in early childhood settings (see <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/early-childhood-environment-rating-scale-ecers-r>) and the SACERS (School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale) is designed for use in programs for children from age 5 to 12 (see <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers>). Data collection is just the first step. An equally, if not more important, step in the process is to use the data collected to inform action plans and improve environments. Teams can also promote the development of Adult Learning Communities (ALCs); these professional development groups can review the data, discuss next steps, and make recommendations for action. While some ALCs are considered "vertical," or having members from a range of grade levels, other ALCs are considered "horizontal," or having members of a specific grade level.

## Family Education Night

In order to educate families about the child's environment, some Community-District Teams hold an evening session in which they talk about common resources in the classroom and how each contribute to the child's learning. The importance of play is discussed and academic connections are made so that

families understand how play contributes to learning. In this way, families know more about how their children learn and are encouraged to continue that learning in the home environment as well.

In Bogue Sound Elementary in Carteret County, one PreK teacher posts learning standards next to displays of students' work. In this manner, she communicates to colleagues, families, and community members what her students are learning through various activities and play.





## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Many challenges exist to sustaining engaging environments. By sharing success stories in multiple venues, other individuals, schools, or communities are likely to become interested and replicate these efforts.

As with many other issues surrounding quality education, school and community leaders face issues, challenges, and barriers to providing engaging environments including providing adequate indoor and outdoor physical space and safe environments. Gaining stakeholder and buy-in constitutes another challenge. Historically there has been a division among educational professionals regarding the crucial role of play and interaction in young children's learning.

One overarching challenge to providing engaging environments is adequate funding for appropriate resources and opportunities to view model programs with strong engaging environments. Educators and communities are encouraged to seek resources from a wide array of sources. The resources below may assist in efforts to increase funding for materials and transportation for teachers and school administrators to visit programs with outstanding environments that support young children and their families.



## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Awareness of where and how to obtain additional funding is an essential first step in obtaining resources. The websites below provide information in this process.

### Tips for Legislative Program Visits

This article provides tips for inviting legislators to see, first-hand, the need for increased funding.  
<http://www.dvaeyc.org/images/cms/file/LegislativeProgramVisits.pdf>

### Grants for Teachers

The websites below are resources for K-12 teachers who are interested in writing grants to obtain funding:

- ▶ Fund for Teachers Grants: K-12 teachers with a minimum of three years experience.  
[www.teacherscount.org/teacher/grants.shtml](http://www.teacherscount.org/teacher/grants.shtml)
- ▶ NEA Foundation: Teachers apply with students for grants of up to \$10,000.  
[www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org)
- ▶ Grant Wrangler: Free grant listing service offered by Nimble Press. Helps teachers find classroom grants for school funding.  
[www.grantwrangler.com](http://www.grantwrangler.com)
- ▶ Grants for Teachers. Online resource for information related to K- 12 grants.  
[www.grants4teachers.com](http://www.grants4teachers.com)

For more resources see Appendix F, Resources for Pathway Five: Engaging Environments at the end of the Toolkit.



### ***Ready Schools in Action: An Ideal Setting***

In the school setting, engaging environments are fairly easy to imagine: children focused on meaningful, active learning experiences and teachers facilitating learning opportunities to actively engage the learners. The role of the Community-District Team is to promote this learning in the classroom environment by providing resources and support and extend it beyond the scope of the school walls by enabling children to use their wider surroundings for learning as well.

Imagine this:

1. Children's classrooms, activities, and events are welcoming, inclusive, and reflective of a range of diversity. Environments are adapted for children with special needs and various learning styles and are filled with resources that bring the world to children through multiple modalities (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic).
2. Families serve important roles in this endeavor by offering their own expertise to the school or classroom in whatever way they are able to contribute (e.g., lead small groups, read a story, get kids moving with brain gym activities). Capitalizing on the diversity of experiences and backgrounds of families is a great way to engage students in learning about the world around them and connects easily to the goals of early childhood education.
3. Each school, community center, preschool, and family center (whether urban, suburban, or rural) is equipped with an outdoor learning space where children are encouraged to interact with nature and ask questions of their world. Teachers use these surroundings as tools for teaching and learning.
4. Community members take ownership in providing other learning resources. Museums, historical landmarks, gardens, zoos, attractions, and natural areas that typically charge for admittance might offer one free day per month for children and their families. They also work with educators to arrange for field trips and classroom visits.

# PATHWAY SIX: EFFECTIVE CURRICULA, INSTRUCTION, AND CHILD ASSESSMENT

Effective curricula, instruction, and child assessment are essential for enhancing development and learning in young children, especially those at risk for academic failure due to poverty, disability, or other factors. Learning is most meaningful when integrated across domains. Using high quality, appropriate, and effective curriculum and instruction can stimulate children's motivation and enthusiasm as well as support development in all domains and foster academic growth.



## Key Understandings

There are many definitions of curriculum. Goodlad and Su (1992) define curriculum as a plan that consists of learning opportunities for a specific time frame and place. The authors explain that curriculum is a tool that aims to bring about behavior changes in students as a result of planned activities, and it includes all learning experiences received by students with the guidance of the school. It is important to note that educators typically use a combination of curricula to meet the range of student abilities in their classrooms.

A special focus on curricula, standards, teaching, and assessment can enhance development and learning so children enter the next level with appropriate skills and knowledge, potentially narrowing the achievement gap. Curricula should include:

- ▶ Solid evidence-base;
- ▶ Effective instruction;
- ▶ Strong focus on meeting state learning standards;
- ▶ Horizontal and vertical alignment within the standards;
- ▶ Intentional interactions and teacher supports;
- ▶ Responsiveness to individual interests, needs, and learning styles;
- ▶ Strategies for meeting the needs of ethnically diverse and low-income children; and
- ▶ Alignment and planning within and across programs and grade levels.



## The Work

Community-District Teams should examine ways to increase achievement in schools and explore how administrators and policymakers can best integrate this knowledge into their decision-making. Specifically, Community-District Teams advocate for and facilitate strategies to improve academic achievement by enhancing the connections and alignment between PreK-3 curricula, state standards, instruction, and assessment using data to inform their efforts. This can be accomplished by researching effective curricula, materials, and programs that address the needs of diverse populations of children (e.g., ELLs, learning disabilities, etc.); involving stakeholders from the community in the process; and encouraging effective training and professional development on appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Effective curricula allow for instruction, on-going assessment, and child achievement among diverse populations of students (Barnett, 2008; Galinsky, 2006). Understanding where kids came from, where they currently need to be, as well as where they are going in terms of state standards is crucial. The challenge for Community-District Teams is to try to influence decision-making at the district-level based on data.

**Implement curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children.**

**– NAEYC Position Statement**





## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

Curriculum, instruction, standards, and assessment discussions can involve stakeholders from both the district and the community such as district-level administrators, principals, and teachers; business partners; families; early childhood educators and program directors; service providers; and others. Community-District Teams can encourage collaborative decision-making in regards to curriculum, assessment, and instruction by making presentations to the district and groups representative of the community. By advocating for collaborative decision-making, Community-District Teams can enhance communication, encourage buy-in, and gain additional support within the community and district.

**District and School Administrators:** Administrators lead advocacy efforts to ensure that families and community leaders have a voice in improving early learning outcomes and implementing intentional curriculum and effective teaching strategies. Administrators provide release time, substitute teachers, and subsidies so teachers have adequate planning time, collaboration time, and can take advantage of professional development that helps them understand how young children learn and develop and to help them implement specific curricula and assessments used by the district. District personnel also align PreK-3 curricula, teaching strategies, and assessment with state standards to increase student achievement and state level outcomes.

**Schools:** School personnel research and implement with fidelity high quality instructional programs with a strong evidence base and alignment with state standards. They are responsive to families and communities when presented with input for decision-making. School leaders implement and sustain over time a whole school model of professional development involving principals, teachers, staff, early childhood professionals, and families.

**Teachers and Early Childhood Professionals:** Teachers and early childhood professionals join together to explore how schools and other early childhood education settings are selecting and implementing curricula, instruction, and assessment for all young children, including those at risk for academic failure. They collaborate to make sure children are learning what they need to be successful as they smoothly transition out of preschool and into Kindergarten and other grades. They use appropriate interactive instructional methods and materials tailored to individual needs and interest, and they conduct regular assessments to inform practice and gauge achievement and progress.



## Sustainability

Effective teachers implement the selected curriculum so as to align effective instructional strategies, educational goals/state standards, and children's needs in an effort to enhance academic achievement (Curriculum Collaboration Toolkit, 2011). Using a curriculum over a period of time can allow stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of and expertise in the chosen curriculum so they can make connections about how to best utilize the tools and strategies to enhance learning and meet state standards. By collaborating with community stakeholders, the Community-District Team may increase buy-in and offer professional development and other supports to educators which will in turn encourage effective instruction and active learning.

In order to sustain appropriate efforts in the Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment Pathway, the Community-District Team must watch for changes in legislation and policy impacting

curricula (e.g., the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and the Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers). For example, as of June of 2011, North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in K-12 Mathematics and English Language Arts, with full implementation expected for the 2012-2013 school year. One responsibility of the Community-District Team is to make sure this change is communicated to stakeholders, educate stakeholders about the change, and revisit alignment of the curricula, instruction, and assessments currently in use with the new standards or policies and make recommendations for revisions or changes where appropriate.

Adult Learning Communities (ALCs) or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), are small teams of teachers who can discuss student data and educational research to inform their instructional strategies and decisions. Teacher mentors provide scaffolds and additional support for district-wide implementation and sustainability of specific curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Another idea is to have early childhood, PreK, and Kindergarten-3rd grade teachers and educators visit and share professional development nights with one another to build effective connections. For example, PreK teachers could explain play-based learning at a professional gathering while Kindergarten staff could share how play skills developed in PreK support the achievement of Kindergarten objectives and state standards.

The Community-District Team can further facilitate sustainability by educating the community about what appropriate, effective, and research-based curricula and early instruction should look like. There are very common misunderstandings and misperceptions of what should be happening in early learning settings, especially those for children from birth to age 5.



## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

1. Does your Community-District Team support effective, appropriate, evidence-based curricula that align from early childhood through grade three?
2. Does your Community-District Team use assessment results to formulate a district-wide Team action plan for improving and aligning curriculum, standards, instruction, and assessment?
3. Does your Community-District Team advocate for the communication of assessment results in a family-friendly manner?
4. Does your Community-District Team support accommodations and inclusion for children with disabilities and English Language Learners to access the curriculum?
5. How does the Community-District Team ensure that stakeholders are involved in decisions about the curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
6. Does the curriculum allow for responsiveness to individual interests, needs, and learning styles?
7. Are district and early learning policies, standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned horizontally and vertically to create a learning continuum within which all children can develop and learn at their own pace?





## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

1. **Effective Research:** Research effective curricula and instruction methods for preparing diverse learners for active, engaged, and appropriate learning.
2. **Advocacy:** Advocate for effective and useful professional development on curriculum, standards, instruction, and assessment to encourage success of implementation.
3. **Community Stakeholders:** Involve community stakeholders in curricular discussions and conversations in efforts to enhance knowledge, buy-in, and sustainability.



### Issues/Challenges/Barriers

The U. S. Department of Human and Health Services (2011) suggest several critical components for effective curriculum implementation:

- ▶ **Fidelity of implementation:** Fidelity of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered including using appropriate materials, sequencing, and instructional methods (Gresham, MacMillan, Boebe-Fran-kenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Research has shown the important role of fidelity of implementation in increasing program effectiveness (see Foorman & Moats, 2004; Vaughn, Hughes, Scham, & Klinger, 1998).
- ▶ **Professional development support:** Professional development supports staff by effectively training them to implement the curriculum by understanding the goals, procedures, and tools for instruction (Barnett, 2008).
- ▶ **On-going assessment of child learning:** The Community-District Team can promote the analysis of district-wide data on a consistent basis to ensure children's progress is monitored and encouraged.

**Influence:** The Community-District Team must have enough influence to make a difference at the district level where most curriculum decisions are made. Teams must be representative of the roles and diversity of the community. Teams should also ask themselves, "Do the members on the Team have influence in their respective groups?"

**Alignment:** Alignment between standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction across PreK-3rd grade is very important. Bridging the philosophical and communication divide between preschool programs and Kindergarten can be especially challenging.



### **Ready Schools in Action:**

### **Effective Curriculum Efforts in Catawba and Carteret Counties**

The Catawba Community-District Team highlighted the relevance of involving the business community in curricular decisions. The Team reported that engaging in discussions with local business leaders was one successful strategy. During these discussions, Team members communicated benefits of participation for businesses. One major benefit for businesses of participation in curricular decision-making is the opportunity to influence curriculum and embed desired technical knowledge, workforce skills, and dispositional characteristics in curriculum design and content. Early childhood provides a foundation for which all subsequent knowledge and skills are based and must be included in the discussions for true alignment to occur.

Carteret County educates families regarding curriculum and involves families in instruction by embedding curricula and instruction in family-friendly activities during classroom events. For example, teachers ask families to lead activities in centers. In this manner, families learn how to implement the activities so that they can replicate them at home. Also, teachers design center activities to include make-and-take games for families to bring home to use and play with their children. There are many ways in which families can support the curriculum if they are knowledgeable about the objectives: sorting laundry, buying groceries, and interacting with friends and family can all provide important learning opportunities for children.



## **Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers**

Community-District Teams can support schools in delivering the curriculum with a high level of fidelity by advocating for educational professionals who are knowledgeable about the programs they deliver. Professional development should emphasize using consistent and on-going assessment to ensure children are gaining the needed skills. Research (NRCLD, 2006) recommends that trainings on implementation fidelity include effective connections between instruction and outcomes, clear responsibilities for educational providers, data analysis for measuring fidelity, systems for providing training, and mechanisms for providing feedback on effectiveness. The Community-District Team is responsible for promoting and facilitating this professional development.

Another strategy recommended by current Community-District Team members is to bring together curriculum specialists (maybe one from the school or district level, one specializing in early care and education, and one from a university or college). These specialists could communicate with and educate each other about their knowledge and experiences in their specific domain. These conversations can help improve communication and understanding among educators.

For additional resources (from other Pathways) to support the Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment Pathway, please see the following appendices:

1. Appendix A, Resources for Getting Started
  - » A variety of instruments and websites are highlighted to support this Pathway.
2. Appendix D, Resources for Pathway Three: Transitions
  - » Resources for understanding connections between PreK through 3rd grade.
3. Appendix E, Resources for Pathway Four: Respecting Diversity
  - » Resources for understanding culturally competent curricula and how to meet the needs of diverse learners.

**For more resources see Appendix G, Resources for Pathway Six: Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment at the end of the Toolkit.**

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# PATHWAY SEVEN: TEACHER SUPPORTS AND ADULT LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Critical to student and school success is the commitment of time and resources to support the on-going professional development and learning of administrators, teachers, and staff. The Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities Pathway helps to connect district, school, and community based efforts to support and develop the knowledge and skills of adults who are essential in the early learning process: early childhood professionals, service providers, family and community members, teachers, administrators, and staff. The Ready Schools Community-District Team addresses this challenge by providing advocacy, linkages, and resources to facilitate the professional development of key adults working across settings to prepare young children for early and on-going success.



## Key Understandings

- ▶ There should be a shared vision of teachers as leaders and learners.
- ▶ The work of early childhood professionals and of PreK-3rd grade teachers and staff is joined by common goals and must be linked by common understandings of child development and effective teaching and learning.
- ▶ Teacher support is a top district priority. Recruiting, developing, and retaining well-prepared educators is essential to develop, implement, and sustain the Ready Schools Initiative.
- ▶ Early childhood professionals and elementary educators must engage in shared professional development to address issues of curriculum alignment, assessment, planning, and transition practices.
- ▶ Family and community members are involved in intentional and meaningful ways. They are a regular part of collective inquiry and problem solving by joining teachers and other educators as part of Adult Learning Communities (ALCs) or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that support student success.



## The Work

The Community-District Team works to identify resources and facilitate communication and linkages to enable families, communities, early childhood educators, and elementary school and district staff to develop common understandings of ways in which they can work collaboratively and individually to support adult learning that enhances student learning and development.

A reciprocal process for shared learning and support among PreK-3rd grade teachers and other early care and education providers is ideal for alignment of curriculum and instruction across school and community educational settings. However, education professionals on the front lines often wear multiple hats and have limited time and resources to implement this type of comprehensive effort. In order to bridge the PreK-3rd grade divide, Community-District Team members must advocate for, initiate, and facilitate collaborative opportunities for PreK-3rd grade and early care and education professionals to develop the knowledge and skills to effectively support all children. The overall effort includes district and school administrator buy-in and support to allow for sufficient resources and time to make this vision a reality.



## Sign of the Times

Districts, schools, and communities that support each other by pooling resources and eliminating redundancy will have a better chance of sustaining initiatives.

Faced with severe budget cuts, many districts have been forced to cut teacher assistant positions. Teacher assistants are valuable school personnel as they lead small group instruction, help teachers with daily tasks, and support the overall operation of the school. Without teacher assistants, teachers are finding it difficult to leave their classes even for a brief restroom break. The Down East Partnership for Children has turned to community volunteers to fill this gap and help support teachers.



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

**Early Childhood Professionals:** Early childhood professionals play an essential role in educating and learning from families, communities, and Pre-K-3rd grade teachers and staff. Early childhood professionals benefit from identifying their own professional development needs, and seeking ways to improve these targeted areas. They should also participate in ALCs when possible. By creating a common language, early childhood and elementary teachers can better analyze and discuss situations surrounding core academic and social issues.

**Elementary Teachers:** Elementary teachers, administrators, and staff must collaborate within and across grade levels and with early childhood professionals to align curriculum, standards, and instruction across family, school, and community settings. Teachers spend time in other classrooms to provide feedback and support. They analyze their own classroom practices and identify areas for improvement. They participate in ALCs and take advantage of professional development offerings.

**Administrators:** Administrators make teacher support a top priority and allocate enough time, money, and human resources for this purpose. They encourage and facilitate ALCs, high quality professional development, and teacher participation in professional organizations.

**Families and the Community:** Families and community workers who can come in the classroom to provide support and contribute the resources of their time, experience, and expertise are critical partners. Their firsthand knowledge of child needs and interests can be used to influence and support teacher goals and practices. The "adopt a grandparent" model is a popular one where a retired community member helps in the classroom for a year.

**Higher Education Professionals:** Higher education professionals provide expertise and access to research-based effective practices, continued professional development, training, and technical assistance.





## Sustainability

District administrators, particularly superintendents, need to provide support both financially and philosophically to create a group of education professionals, with similar priorities and goals, to meet the needs of children and families from birth through 3rd grade and beyond. Systemic support is critical to sustainable success.

Families and communities can provide valuable resources beyond monetary contributions to sustain the Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities Pathway. For example, in Brunswick County Schools, the Communities in Schools Initiative has a strong presence. Communities in Schools communicates pertinent information to stakeholders, engages community members in educational work, and supports teachers and schools in their efforts to assure student success and family involvement. Community-District Team members should tap into agencies and organizations that are already engaged in work aligning with Ready Schools to increase the positive impact on early education.

Families and communities can provide tutoring and mentoring for students, especially those at-risk for school failure, which in turn helps teachers. Both Carteret County and the Down East Partnership for Children redefined family involvement to reflect work in the schools beyond simply attending end-of-year performances. Area businesses in Nash and Edgecombe counties provided gift cards in large denominations. The Community-District Team broke these large gifts up into \$25 and \$50 increments. When families volunteered in schools, as defined by the new definition of family involvement, their names were entered into a drawing for a gift card. This strategy helps recruit and involve stakeholders in order to gain buy-in and sustain efforts to support teachers.

Local institutions of higher education can provide on-going technical support and professional development. The University of North Carolina Wilmington, like several other universities and community colleges, is developing an online professional development model to serve teachers of children birth through 12th grade. Similar public school-university partnerships might also support the early childhood education community.



## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

1. In what ways can the Community-District Team help support teachers and schools in educating their children?
2. Are there consistent, common district-wide professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals and PreK-3rd grade teachers, administrators, and staff?
3. How are teaching assistants and other paraprofessionals prepared to meet the needs of students?
4. What community resources are used to support the professional development and learning of the adults who teach and care for children?
5. To what extent does our Team focus on efforts and resources to improve compensation and reduce turnover among the early childhood and PreK-3 workforce?
6. Are there opportunities and resources to enable early childhood professionals to collaborate with and participate in training with elementary teachers and staff?



## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

#### Adult Learning Communities (ALCs)

Providing time, space, resources, and structure for continued professional growth is key to supporting the adults who support the children. Approaching adult learning and training in a shared, collaborative manner helps communicate that professional development opportunities are a part of everyday work rather than an unconnected activity. Shared professional development provides families, teachers, and early childhood professionals with an opportunity to learn together and exchange knowledge that comes from their own area of expertise.

Adult Learning Communities (ALCs) focus on what Astuto and colleagues (1993) label the professional community of learners, in which the teachers in a school and its administrators (or any other group of professionals) continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit. In ALCs, educators can share evidence of student learning and engage in inquiry, reflection, and dialogue that build shared understandings and experiences.

ALCs have proven to be a powerful tool for staff development and an effective means for school change and improvement. By participating in an ALC, teachers can become more effective and thus, student outcomes improve.

#### Mentoring and Coaching

In order to be meaningful, professional development opportunities should be long-term and reinforced by coaching or mentoring. These two strategies are key for strengthening learning as well as sustained, accurate implementation of new strategies and materials. Additionally, leaders must prioritize time for professional development and ALCs.

#### Job-Embedded Learning

Advocate for and/or provide resources to support other job-embedded learning such as book study groups where interested educators can meet to share and study professional literature or explore issues and factors that affect their students and their classrooms. The Community-District Team can help increase educator and early childhood professionals' participation by going through the process of securing continuing education units (CEUs) for successful completion of various professional development events and learning programs.

#### Technology and Online Learning

Advocate for the utilization of technology to support adult learning. It can be costly to take educators out of their workplace for additional training and professional development. Archiving videos and recordings of professional development and creating electronic resources for teachers can be a cost effective supplement to traditional training sessions and provide opportunities to reach individuals with limited flexibility in their schedules.



## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

The recurring barriers of limited time and money can affect Community-District Teams' progress in the Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities Pathway. For example, education and compensation levels for early childhood professionals and teacher paraprofessionals have been historically low, making it difficult to attract and retain highly qualified staff. Additionally, teachers and early childhood professionals have heavy workloads and many responsibilities. Finding time for teachers to participate in trainings, money for teachers to attend or develop trainings, and substitutes to cover classes so that teachers can leave the building can be very difficult. Consequently, there can be a lack of vision and programming for systemic, district-wide professional development.



### **Ready Schools in Action: The Effective Community-District Team**

#### **Acknowledges the Causes of Teachers' Stress**

Ask teachers to identify things that cause them daily stress. By categorizing responses into school stressors and personal stressors and reporting results to teachers and administrators, the Community-District Team can help identify root causes and work to ameliorate teacher stressors.

#### **Encourages Teacher Leaders**

Frequently survey teachers to determine their needs and interests and create trainings on the basis of their responses. Identify teachers' strengths, challenging them to serve as leaders in their groups.

#### **Embraces Differing Opinions**

With seemingly growing criticism of schools and educators, it is crucial that Community-District Teams listen, engage, and become part of the dialogue. Including naysayers on committees and engaging teachers in meaningful discussions and decisions on school policies, practices, and procedures is one way to encourage and embrace differing perspectives.

Adapted from: ASCD. (2001). How can we support the whole teacher? *Educational Leadership*, 68(8), p. 96.





## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

Few districts have provided a systemic district-wide professional development plan for early childhood educators and PreK-3 teachers. Some ways to increase support for and implementation of this type of plan and target professional development opportunities include:

- ▶ Raise awareness of the importance of early learning and education experiences;
- ▶ Raise awareness in the community of the importance of providing early childhood educator and teacher training and raising salaries;
- ▶ Articulate a PreK-3 vision and goals for professional development and teacher support;
- ▶ Create a district-level teacher professional development and support planning team;
- ▶ Provide sufficient resources so all teachers, regardless of where they work, can attend professional development opportunities offered across the district; and
- ▶ Provide mentors and/or coaches for early childhood professionals and teachers to enhance the implementation of best practices and lessons learned during training sessions.

Strategies for addressing limited time and financial resources include the following:

- ▶ Identify and secure community resources to facilitate professional development opportunities;
- ▶ Partner with higher education institutions for the development and delivery of focused trainings; and
- ▶ Locate resources to provide stipends for continuing education.

Early childhood professionals and PreK-3 educators often have limited knowledge about what happens in other settings. By removing barriers created by lack of common language and misunderstandings of effective practice at different developmental levels, Community-District Teams can enhance cross-setting communication and promote smooth transitions for students. Strategies include:

- ▶ Provide opportunities for PreK and Kindergarten teachers to have reciprocal classroom visits;
- ▶ Support ALCs that cross levels yet promote examination of similar issues; and
- ▶ Encourage curriculum alignment and facilitate a common PreK-3 language about learning.

Low literacy and educational levels are often barriers to families' willingness or ability to help with homework or provide other learning supports outside of school. They are often unaware of school and community resources that are available to assist them. Possible solutions include:

- ▶ Partner with civic, faith-based, or other community organizations, area employers, or community colleges to provide GED, adult basic literacy, or computer literacy classes for families;
- ▶ Provide parenting classes emphasizing developmental stages and child abilities; and
- ▶ Provide fun, educational activities for parents to do at home with their children.

**For more resources see Appendix H, Resources for the Pathway Seven: Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities at the end of the Toolkit.**

# PATHWAY EIGHT: ASSESSING PROGRESS AND ASSURING QUALITY

The Ready Schools School-Based Teams assess the progress of students, classroom practices, and school improvement efforts, and the Ready Schools Community-District Teams (Team) assess progress on the Team's Action Plan, short- and long-term goals, and district-wide improvement efforts.



## Key Understandings

In order to accomplish its goals, the Community-District Team must have the following key components in place:

- ▶ A concise, agreed-upon vision, mission, and set of goals (see Leaders and Leadership Pathway).
- ▶ A collaboratively developed Action Plan based on data (see Leaders and Leadership Pathway).
  - » Use multiple sources of data to identify community needs and resources, develop comprehensive Action Plans, and assess progress towards short- and long-term goals.
    - One important source of data comes from aggregating, analyzing, and synthesizing individual schools' Ready Schools Assessment results in order to identify district-wide trends and Pathways for future focus.
    - Another key source of data is the Team results from the Community-District Team Self-Assessment Tool.
    - Examples of additional data sources include community, school, and family needs assessments and resource inventories; parent and teacher perception surveys; and attendance records from school events and Community-District Team meetings.
- ▶ A continual cycle of development, monitoring, assessment, and revision of the Action Plan as it relates to a well-defined set of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound) goals.



**If done properly, evaluation results should actually help sustain and renew the community initiative. The information gathered in evaluation can be used to obtain resources such as grant money, show how to improve, and offer an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments.**

**– From the Community Toolbox (University of Kansas, 2011)**



## The Work

The work of the Community-District Team as it relates to the full cycle of assessing progress includes the following steps:

### Complete the Community-District Team Self-Assessment

The Ready Schools Community-District Team Self-Assessment was designed for Community-District Teams at all levels of Ready Schools implementation. Whether the Team is just beginning or fully implementing Ready Schools, the self-assessment helps identify Team beliefs, strengths, areas of growth, and next steps. The results of the self-assessment can be used to complete the logic model and build an Action Plan as well as provide a baseline for measuring Team progress.

### Conduct Needs Assessments for Families, Schools, the District, and the Community

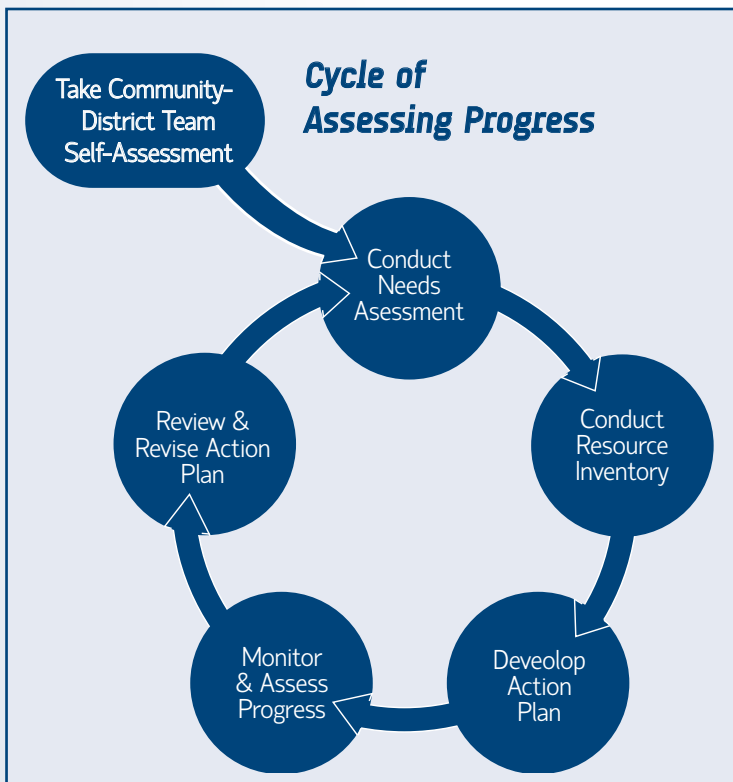
It is important to conduct needs assessments for families, schools, the district and the community. The purpose of a these needs assessments is to inform the vision, mission, and goals of the Community-District Team which, in turn, inform the Action Plan.

### Conduct Resource Inventories for Families, Schools, the District, and the Community

It is important to inventory available resources from families, schools, the district and the community that can support and enhance the work of Ready Schools, especially during tough economic times. Today's leaders face difficult decisions and must look outside appropriations to identify other resources and additional financial support.

### Develop an Action Plan

There is an inspirational adage that says, "People don't plan to fail. Instead they fail to plan." To begin the action planning process, it is helpful to view your Community-District Team's approach to implementing a Ready Schools Initiative through the lens of a logic model (see the Taking Action section of this Pathway for more information on the logic model). This logic model shows the logical relationships among the resources that are invested, the activities that transpire, and the benefits or changes that result (University of Wisconsin-Extension, 2003). Working through the logic model helps Teams develop a comprehensive Action Plan that lends credibility to the Team; makes sure details are not overlooked; saves time, energy, and resources; and increases the chance that people will do what needs to be done (University of Kansas, 2011). A Community-District Team Action Plan Template is included in Appendix K of this Toolkit.



## Monitor and Assess Progress

Monitoring and assessing the Ready Schools Initiative helps the Community-District Team weigh actions against results to determine the amount of progress towards identified goals. Through monitoring and assessment, Teams can understand how well the initiative is functioning and pinpoint where the actions are not producing the desired results. When teams monitor and assess their progress, they are better able to promote awareness of accomplishments, recruit support, and secure funding (University of Kansas, 2011). Assessment should be done on a regular basis throughout the life of the initiative.

## Review and Revise the Action Plan

To complete the cycle of assessing progress, the Community-District Team must review and revise their Action Plan in light of the information and data obtained through monitoring progress. This process ensures that the Action Plan is a living document that guides purposeful work.



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

**Community-District Team Leader(s):** The Community-District Team leader(s) must initiate needs assessments and resource inventories for families, schools, the district, and communities. Informed by the data, the Community-District Team leader(s) recruits a cross-section of the Team that reflects the diversity of the community (see Respecting Diversity Pathway) in the exploration of the logic model and the development of the Action Plan. The Community-District Team leader(s) should facilitate frequent and ongoing review and revision of the Action Plan to monitor progress towards the goals.

**Families:** Individuals representing families must join and participate on the Community-District Team. As a key stakeholder group, families ought to communicate their needs to schools and community organizations and participate in decision-making in schools and community forums to the greatest extent possible.

**District and School Leaders:** The involvement and support of district and school leaders on the Community-District Team enhances the likelihood that Team efforts will align with district and school needs and goals. Additionally, when these leaders work with the Community-District Team (e.g., administering needs assessments and resource inventories on behalf of the school district), it communicates a collaborative effort that yields increased feedback and higher response rates.

**Community Organizations:** Members and leaders of community organizations can engage with the Community-District Team by sharing their perspectives, knowledge, and experiences. Furthermore, to eliminate redundant efforts, other community organizations engaged in similar work can be asked to share the results of their own data collection when appropriate.

**Business Leaders:** As Level 1 members of the Community-District Team (individuals who attend regular meetings) or as Level 2 members (individuals who are involved in specific, intermittent projects), business leaders must share their experience and expertise in the private and public sector with the Community-District Team. Business leaders have important information and knowledge to share regarding gathering data, using data to inform decisions, and monitoring the progress of initiatives.



## Sustainability

### Conduct Periodic Needs Assessments and Resource Inventories for Families, Schools, the District, and the Community

The following components are required for sustaining needs assessments and resource inventories: development and deployment of the instruments, participation of the target population, analysis of the results, meaningful use of the data, and on-going monitoring for revision as needed.

Surveys are one of the best ways for organizations to collect quantitative data. They can be written, face-to-face, online, or done by telephone. The Down East Partnership for Children developed several survey tools that assess stakeholders' perceptions of key Ready Schools topics (see Appendix C, Resources for Pathway Two: Family, Schools, and Community Partnerships).

The Community-District Team collaboratively decides what populations to assess and when. There are several ways to increase participant response rate. The following list provides some recommended strategies for increasing the number of responses:

- ▶ schedule the timing strategically (avoid school breaks, holidays, and weekends),
- ▶ send out an advance notice of the assessment,
- ▶ provide online and hardcopies of the assessment,
- ▶ send out at least three reminders, and
- ▶ offer an incentive for completion.

### Develop, Monitor, Review, and Revise Action Plans

Once data has been collected, the next step is to organize and analyze the data in a meaningful way, and then summarize the findings and share the results with stakeholders (University of Kansas, 2011). The data should drive the creation of the Team's Action Plan. Here are several strategies that the Community-District Team can use to sustain a data-based, collaboratively developed, well-timed Action Plan:

- ▶ Start by viewing your Ready School Initiative through the lens of the logic model.
- ▶ Identify gaps in your Initiative logic and clarify assumptions so success may be more likely.
- ▶ Clarify what is appropriate to evaluate, and when, so that evaluation resources are used wisely.
- ▶ Develop your Action Plan based on the information generated through the logic model and data analysis.
- ▶ Include responsibilities for developing, implementing, monitoring, reviewing, and revising the Action Plan in job descriptions for specific Community-District Team members.
- ▶ Design the Action Plan so that more than one person is responsible for the actions to promote shared accountability.



- Discuss and acknowledge potential barriers for each action included in the plan and brainstorm strategies for overcoming the barriers prior to implementing the plan.
- Discuss and assign the resources needed to accomplish each action item.
- Include a timeline and completion date for each action.
- Send out periodic reminders to motivate individuals who are responsible for specific actions.
- Schedule a time to review the Action Plan and write it on a shared calendar. This should be done at least once a year if not more often.
- Make revisions to the Action Plan based on data, not assumptions.

Teams should take the time to celebrate short-term wins and communicate progress with families, schools, the district, and the community to garner ongoing support of the Ready Schools Initiative.

**A**fter climbing a great hill, one finds there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk has not yet ended

– Nelson Mandela





## **Ready Schools in Action: Data-Based Decision Making In Carteret County**

The Down East Partnership and Carteret County Schools both initially thought that family events should be held in the evening. But after surveying families, they learned that both families and staff preferred to attend events during the school day.

Armed with the data, the school administrators made the decision to plan family events during the school day. As a result, they experienced an increase in family involvement and staff attendance.

The Down East Partnership for Children and Carteret County Schools also stressed the need to determine which type of school events have the highest attendance rate by certain target populations.

For example, a school might host a Reading Night designed to communicate the importance of families reading with their children each day and provide strategies for reading at home. However, after the event, when the school leaders collect the attendance data, they might learn that the families who already read with their children daily were the only attendees. Thus, their intended positive impact did not reach the population of families for which it was intended. By tracking family attendance rates by type of family at school functions, schools can tailor events to attract and meet the needs of targeted family types.



## **Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look**

1. How does the Community-District Team assess the needs and resources of families, schools, the district, and the community?
2. How are the goals of the Community-District Team developed to meet the needs and use the resources of families, schools, the district, and the community?
3. What aspects of the Ready Schools Initiative are currently implemented successfully? How do you know?
4. What Pathway(s) should the Community-District Team focus on next to build on strengths and have the greatest impact?
5. What Pathway(s) presents a challenge for your Community-District Team?
6. How does the Community-District Team monitor progress towards achieving goals?
  - » Does the Community-District Team use relevant, district-wide data to make informed decisions?
  - » Does the Community-District Team use a variety of tools to measure progress?
  - » Are data and results presented in concise, user friendly-language?
7. How does the Community-District Team plan for sustainability of the Ready Schools Initiative? Are there opportunities to celebrate accomplishments?
8. What is the availability of resources (e.g., time, expertise, funding) for conducting the work of Ready Schools?
9. How does the Community-District Team respond to feedback and shifting conditions?



## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

#### Employ the Logic Model

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has developed a comprehensive website devoted to a logic model. This logic model helps teams identify inputs, outputs, and outcomes/impact while taking into consideration the situation, priorities, assumptions, and external forces. In other words, the logic model provides a framework for teams to use their existing resources in order to accomplish their goals in their specific context. The logic model provides an opportunity to brainstorm prior to developing the Action Plan. Community-District Teams can find templates and trainings for how to complete templates at the following address:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>

#### Transition from the Logic Model to the Action Plan

After completing the logic model process, use the following address to make the jump from the logic model to the Action Plan: [http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action\\_plan.pdf](http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action_plan.pdf)

#### Develop an Action Plan

This informational section, "Section 5. Developing an Action Plan," is part of the Community Toolbox developed by the University of Kansas as a vehicle for promoting community health and development by connecting people, ideas, and resources. Use the following address to access pertinent information, examples, and training materials for developing Action Plans:

[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/section\\_1089.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/section_1089.aspx)



### Issues/Challenges/Barriers

A lack of personnel, time, and money are barriers faced by most initiatives. Related to assessing progress, Community-District Teams may have difficulty engaging stakeholders in order to access and collect data to use for decision-making. Additionally, Teams may not have the capacity to analyze and use the data to make informed decisions.

### The Importance of Assessing Progress

On Administrator Resistance:

**I**f we [the Community-District Team] could somehow give him [a resistant principal] some hard data...then we could show him... and we don't have that as a group...we haven't collected any...and that's part of the resistance.

- A Community-District Team Leader



## Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers

### Using Event Logs

The event log form is designed to help Teams collect data and record major activities of the Ready Schools Initiative. An event log can also be used to record any changes in the community facilitated by the initiative. In this manner, participants who are already attending events collect data for the Team to analyze. A sample template for an event log can be found at:

[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_tools\\_1364.aspx#tool1](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_tools_1364.aspx#tool1)

### Collaboration

Before conducting needs assessments (community, district, schools, families), the Community-District Team should check with community organizations, the district, and the individual schools to see if they have already conducted their own needs assessment(s) and would be willing to share the information with the Team. Always be sure to check if assessment results are up-to-date.

When Teams do not have the capacity to analyze and use data to make decisions, they may be able to reach out to local universities, community colleges, research organizations, and/or professionals for help with these tasks.

For more resources see Appendix I, Resources for Pathway Eight: Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality at the end of the Toolkit.

## Pathway References

University of Kansas. (2011). **The Community Toolbox**. Retrieved from [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1089.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1089.aspx)

University of Wisconsin-Extension. (2003). **Program Development and Evaluation**. Retrieved from <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>

# PATHWAY NINE: GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY BUILDING

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The Ready Schools Community-District Team actively seeks individuals and organizations within the local community to partner and collaborate with on Ready Schools Initiatives. In order for these partnerships to be successful, Grassroots Community Building is vital in gaining buy-in and sustaining interest in Ready Schools. Grassroots Community Building is not the same as social networking on the internet (although many groups use social networking sites to communicate news and events and to recruit members). Rather, Grassroots Community Building requires face-to-face contact with individuals who are considered leaders in the community and with those who have an interest in PreK-3 education.

Team members can assist by helping to identify people and resources from other organizations to support the Ready Schools Initiative. Look for opportunities to pool resources with other organizations doing similar work. Ask around in groups you belong to (church, civic, professional) to see if there are any business leaders or retirees who would appreciate an opportunity to serve the children in his or her community. Additionally, someone from the Team should be responsible for communicating with other "grassroots leaders" or "target" individuals and organizations to keep them informed of the Community-District Team's Ready Schools goals, work, and achievements.

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**W**e cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

– Cesar Chavez,  
Civil Rights Activist

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## Key Understandings

- ▶ Grassroots Community Building is fundamental in creating an effective Ready Schools Initiative and Community-District Team.
- ▶ Grassroots Community Building requires a give and take interaction between Ready Schools Community-District Teams and local businesses, civic organizations, and community leaders and stakeholders.
- ▶ While social networking sites such as FaceBook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are useful in generating interest and keeping communities aware of what is happening with your Ready Schools Community-District Team, true Grassroots Community Building is accomplished through face-to-face, personal interaction with other individuals.
- ▶ Grassroots Community Building is an on-going process; it takes time to establish and maintain long-lasting, meaningful relationships with key individuals and organizations.





## The Work

A successful Grassroots Community Building initiative requires that members of the Community-District Team reach out to individuals and organizations who either have a shared interest in PreK-3 education or whose work and involvement could be mutually beneficial to both parties. The Community-District Team also needs to recruit individuals and organizations that are not typically associated with PreK-3 education. The Team must communicate to all stakeholders that Ready Schools is not just about preparing schools to help children be successful in their early education but also to be successful members of the workforce when they become adults, thus enhancing the future of the entire community.



## Who is Involved: Why and What are Their Roles?

All members of the Community-District Team should be involved in Grassroots Community Building. Each individual contributor on the Community-District Team has contacts in the larger community in which they live and work. For example, is there a retired teacher or school board member at your church who might be interested in getting involved with your programs as a volunteer? Other individuals you may want to consider making contact with are community center directors, military personnel, pastors, police officers, art outreach personnel, local NAACP members, etc.

**Community-District Team Leader(s):** Community-District Team leaders may already have relationships with leaders in the business community and in civic organizations. As a leader in your community, you may want to consider hosting a "Meeting of the Minds" with other local leaders. By bringing together a diverse group of leaders from your community for a round-table discussion, you may be able to create vocal, influential advocates for Ready Schools.



**Early Childhood Professionals:** Early childhood professionals are uniquely positioned to know and interact with the various services and organizations that support young children. Families who they work with, vendors who come through their doors, and contacts that they have developed through professional engagements all provide opportunities for Grassroots Community Building.

**School District Leaders:** One of the major responsibilities of school district leaders is to use their professional influence to improve educational decision making internally and externally. Effective school district leaders have built relationships with board members, state-level leaders, policy makers, community and faith-based leaders, and families and communities. School district leaders are charged with using their professional influence and relationships to bring about positive change for children.



## Sustainability

### Time

As mentioned earlier, it can take a substantial amount of time to build and maintain meaningful, enduring relationships with key individuals. Since many of the targeted people are already pressed for time and resources and may not be able to attend a Ready Schools Community-District Team meeting, it may be beneficial to occasionally attend their meetings. For example, if you have made a contact within the Boys and Girls Club, find out when their next committee meeting is and come prepared to talk about how Ready Schools can help support the Boys and Girls Club. If you give your time to others, others will be more likely to give their time to you.

### Presence

Look for children's events in your community and plan to attend, even if you are not participating in the event. Your presence will speak volumes to other individuals and organizations; it shows that you care about children, their success, and their well-being. By attending other organizations' events, you have the opportunity to meet with and talk to like-minded individuals; remember, Grassroots Community Building requires face-to-face contact and personal connections. While you are there, exchange contact information and ask some of the leaders and members of that organization to come to one of your events.

### Inclusion

Another way to plan for sustainability is to look around the table at your next Community-District Team meeting and ask the question, "Who is missing from this table?" Are there certain groups or demographics that are not involved in planning for and implementation of Ready Schools efforts in your community? A diverse Team has the ability to pull from many different resources in your community and it provides a representative voice for all groups (See the Respecting Diversity Pathway). Adding new members can provide a fresh outlook for everyone. Sustainability can be a difficult part of Ready Schools work. Ready Schools Community-District Teams must make a concerted, on-going effort to build and re-build relationships not only in the community but also on the Team.

**A**nytime there is anything going on with children in our community, our Ready Schools Community-District Team has a presence. Without continued efforts on our part to reach out to our community, we would not be able to sustain our momentum and accomplish our mission

**– Community-District Team Leader**



## Assessing the Pathway: A Closer Look

1. Does your Community-District Team send Ready Schools' emissaries/ambassadors to meet face-to-face with other people and organizations doing similar work in the community?
2. Does the Community-District Team have a strategy for engaging stakeholders and gaining buy-in from champions? Does the Team identify target individuals to approach?
3. Do you have a continuous plan for recruitment and development of your Community-District Team?
4. Do you create opportunities for individuals to participate without coming to a meeting?
5. Are there organizations or individuals who organize child-oriented events, fundraisers, or seminars and who would consider allowing the Community-District Team to participate by giving a presentation or setting up an information table?
6. Does your Community-District Team have a multi-media plan in place to educate stakeholders, citizens, community leaders, and policy makers?
7. Has your Community-District Team identified additional sources of funding (e.g., grants, private donors, in-kind donations, civic groups, local community foundations)?
8. Does your Community-District Team tie the Ready Schools Initiative to other relevant, established initiatives in the community?
9. Does your Community-District Team have an interagency coalition to guard against duplication of work?
10. Does your Community-District Team pool resources with other agencies in order to fill in gaps in regards to funding, manpower, and resources?





## Taking Action

### Key Strategies

#### Ready Schools Ambassadors

Ask community leaders and other stakeholders to consider being a "Ready Schools Ambassador." This person could be a retired schoolteacher, a pastor, a Kiwanis Club member, or military personnel whom you engage to represent your Community-District Team within that individual's sphere of influence. Oftentimes, influential individuals within your community can assist with asking local businesses for support, recruiting volunteers, and providing much needed manpower to complete Ready Schools work. Having several "Ready Schools Ambassadors" in your community can also help ensure that common goals are communicated through common language.

#### Change Meeting Times and Locations

Contact organizations that are already working with children and ask if your Ready Schools Community-District Team can hold a meeting at their location. Examples of possible organizations to approach are literacy councils, Boys and Girls Clubs, Optimist Clubs, Rotary Clubs, faith-based groups, libraries, Communities in Schools, non-profit arts centers, Latino/Hispanic Outreach organizations, and community centers. Changing the meeting location and/or time accomplishes several goals: 1) it allows more individuals from across your community to participate in meetings because the change in location may be closer to their home or work and/or the change in time make it more convenient for them; 2) it engages individuals from other organizations in Ready Schools work through face-to-face contact and opens up dialogue; and 3) it allows your Community-District Team to find out what other organizations are doing, thus providing future opportunities for collaboration.

#### Leadership Training

One way that the Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC) has engaged its local community is to offer Grassroots Leadership Training to leaders in local organizations. While the training is intended to help grassroots organizations build and sustain effective leaders for their own work, DEPC has experienced success in that some of those leaders have joined the Ready Schools Community-District Team. Also through the training, local community leaders learned about the Ready Schools Initiative and some decided that a collaborative effort between DEPC and their own organizations would be mutually beneficial.



#### Action at a Glance

- Recruit community members to represent your Team as Ready Schools Ambassadors.
- Change meeting times and locations so that a greater number of individuals can be engaged and involved.
- Consider hosting Leadership Trainings or a Leadership Roundtable Discussions in your community.



## Issues/Challenges/Barriers

### Funding

Funding can always be a challenge. When other organizations are strapped for resources, it may be difficult to gain buy-in from those groups with whom you wish to engage and/or collaborate.

- » Stress the benefits of collaboration. While it may seem overwhelming at first for some groups to join your efforts, point out how the partnership can be mutually beneficial. For example, if your local Hispanic Outreach organization is having a family fun night, you could offer to set up a Ready Schools table with a craft activity and assist with providing some light snacks.

### The "One More Thing Syndrome"

Oftentimes, individuals and organizations feel that they simply cannot put one more thing on their plates, especially during tight economic times. There may be some resistance at first, but keep in mind that Grassroots Community Building takes time and relationship building is key.

- Once you have made contact with target individuals in your community, consider inviting them to meet you for a cup of coffee. A quiet talk between two people can often reveal what barriers/challenges someone is facing within their own organization and provides an opportunity to build trust, respect, and potential solutions.

### Recruiting and Sustaining a Diverse, Representative Team

One of the biggest challenges in Grassroots Community Building is recruiting diverse individuals and organizations who are not typically associated with PreK-3 education.

- » Teams should be representative of a range of diversity found in the community such as race, culture, language, gender, ability, and socioeconomic status. In addition, they should include individuals and organizations from both the public and the private sector. The key in getting individuals and organizations from the private sector involved is to communicate that Ready Schools work is about not only preparing schools to help children be successful in their education but also preparing students to be successful in the workforce when they become adults.

### Language and Seeking Common Ground

Since most organizations have their own "language," it may take time to find a common ground.

- » It is helpful to have a solid understanding of all Ready Schools Pathways and to have some conversation starters, or an "elevator speech," readily available. Working as a Team on this very short speech (that could be delivered in the time that it takes to ride an elevator) promotes consistency in Team Ready Schools language.
- » Here's an example of an outreach opportunity, imagine you meet a local NAACP representative at a friend's cookout, he or she may not immediately see the connection between what the local chapter of the NAACP is working on and the mission, vision, and goals of Ready Schools. However, if you mention that an important part of the Ready Schools Initiative is Respecting Diversity, then you are establishing common ground on which to connect and share ideas. Once you have made a connection, don't hesitate to exchange contact information. You may find that inviting your new friend to a Ready Schools meeting to talk about diversity in the community will open up dialogue within your own Team and possibly lead to future collaborative efforts.

For more resources see Appendix J, Resources for Pathway Nine: Grassroots Community Building at the end of the Toolkit.





## Ready Schools in Action:

### The Down East Partnership for Children and “Ready Communities”

The Down East Partnership for Children has created an outreach program called Ready Communities designed to build the capacity of a diverse group of engaged community leaders around early care and education.

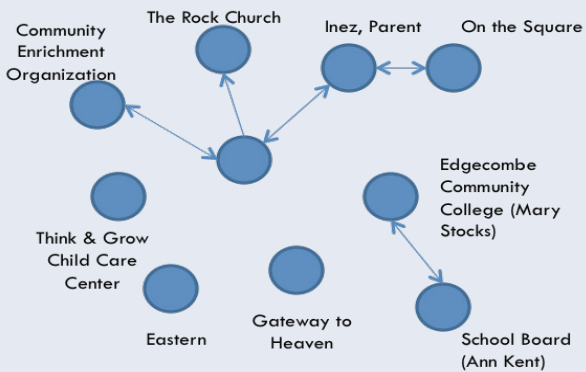
The Ready Communities Initiative includes strategies that help to identify and recruit community leaders, provide training and technical assistance in order to build the skills and knowledge needed in a strong leader, and connect leaders with opportunities to serve in their community. Visit <http://www.depc.org/Pages/Comm-ReadyCommunities.html> for more information.

Paired with Ready Schools, these efforts are known as Ready<sup>2</sup>. Within the context of Ready<sup>2</sup>, the Down East Partnership for Children encourages leaders to engage private citizens, parents, early childcare providers, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, and businesses. The initial goal for the Ready<sup>2</sup> process was that by the end of the school year, the participating schools would have made contact with at least one individual from each of the following groups:

- ☑ Business,
- ☑ Faith-based organization,
- ☑ Civic organization,
- ☑ Early care provider,
- ☑ Higher education institution, and
- ☑ Parent.

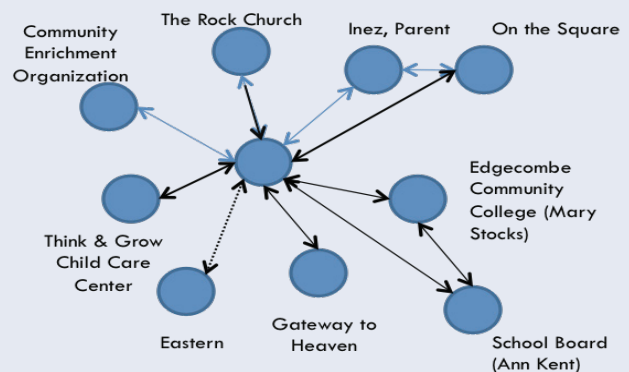
Through the contact, the schools could share information about the Ready Schools Initiative and involve individuals in the efforts. The graphics below are an example of how the Ready<sup>2</sup> process changed the grassroots networking opportunities for Princeville Montessori School.

#### Before Participating in Ready<sup>2</sup>



Princeville Montessori

#### After Year One



Princeville Montessori

Graphics created by the Down East Partnership for Children.

Key:

The light lines indicate relationships before the implementation of Ready<sup>2</sup>.

The dark lines indicate the relationships in place after the implementation of Ready<sup>2</sup>.

For more information regarding Ready<sup>2</sup>, contact the Down East Partnership for Children: website: [www.depc.org](http://www.depc.org) phone: (252) 985-4300



# APPENDIX A, RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

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## Resources for the Content

North Carolina Department of Instruction approved the use of the Common Core Curriculum in 2010. All school districts must implement the curriculum by Fall 2012. Access Common Core Curriculum and support materials at the following websites:

**NC-DPI Standards:** <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/new-standards/>

**Common Core Standards:** <http://www.corestandards.org/>

**Common Core Mapping Project:** <http://www.commoncore.org/>

### *Childcare Background Information:*

**North Carolina Child Care Coalition:** <http://www.ncearlychildhoodassoc.com>

A project of the N.C. Early Childhood Association (NCECA) a statewide advocacy initiative dedicated to promoting high quality, accessible, affordable child care and early childhood services in North Carolina on this website, you can find material to answer your questions and contact information for your legislators.

Dodge, K. A. & Ladd, H. F. (June 7, 2011). **The worth of children's programs.** News & Observer. <http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/06/07/1253644/the-worth-of-childrens-programs.html> This article is a study conducted by researchers at Duke University noting the value of high quality preschool and the impact Smart Start has had on North Carolina's youngest citizens.

**National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center** <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/>

This website provides tools, instruments, and reports of studies that focus on a variety of topics on quality ratings for licenses, workforce issues, and more.

### *PreK Resources*

**Pre[k]Now** <http://www.preknow.org/resource/index.cfm>

A comprehensive website providing myriad resources regarding PreK

**"What Children Learn in Pre-K"** <http://www.preknow.org/resource/whatchildrenlearn.cfm>

This short video (less than 10 minutes) entitled tells the stories of five young children who had an opportunity to attend a high-quality pre-kindergarten program. This video depicts how quality pre-k helps all children prepare for success in school and in life.

**PreK Resources** <http://www.preknow.org/resource/prekresources/index.cfm>

This website provides a list of websites, books, and videos for general information about pre-k and why it is so important.

**Harvard University Center on the Developing Child**

[http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/multimedia/brain\\_hero](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/multimedia/brain_hero)

Brain Hero is a short film (3 minutes) that discusses the connection between learning, policy, and legislation.

## ***Kindergarten Resources***

**Power of K** [http://prim.ncwiseowl.org/the\\_power\\_of\\_k/](http://prim.ncwiseowl.org/the_power_of_k/)

**Presentation on Power of K** <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/program-monitoring/resources/ncace-power-k.pdf>

**North Carolina's Position Statement on Power of K**

<http://elearnnc.sharpschool.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=4501308&pageId=4833216>

**Top 10 Signs of a Good Kindergarten Classroom** [http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Top\\_10\\_Signs\\_Good/](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Top_10_Signs_Good/)  
Developed by NAEYC, this list discusses what family and community members should see is a high quality Kindergarten classroom.

## ***Effective Practices in Early Care and Education***

**Learning Through the Eyes of a Child (2002)**

[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED472193&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED472193](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED472193&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED472193)

This document was developed as a guide for North Carolina teachers to focus on how play-based center activities in kindergarten teach core curriculum skills.

**Partnership for Inclusion** <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi/>

Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI) is a statewide technical assistance project affiliated with the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**North Carolina Parents as Teachers** <http://www.ncpat.org>

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a voluntary family education and support program for parents of young children. The program is based on the beliefs that parents are their children's first and most influential teachers and that the early years lay the foundation for children's success in school and in life.

## ***Early Childhood Education as a Foundation for a Strong Workforce***

**The Economic Impact of Early Childhood Investment** <http://youtu.be/gnDCxBVCPT>

A news segment from Pennsylvania.

**The Center for the Child Care Workforce** <http://www.ccw.org/>

CCW works on behalf of the workforce and the web site is designed to help you with your work with children by developing your own leadership and advocacy skills. You can find resources and publications as well as information on federal, state and local policy and initiatives.

**The Economic Case for Investments in Young Children**

[http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications\\_papers/studies/earlychild/](http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/studies/earlychild/)

From the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis, this study showed the need to invest in early childhood education to prepare the next generation of workers.

**Partnership for America's Economic Success** <http://www.partnershipforsuccess.org/index.php?id=52>

Results from the National Economic Forum on Early Childhood Investment (March 10-11, 2010) are reported.

## Resources for the Process

### **The Community-District Team Self-Assessment**

This tool is available in an online format on the NC Ready Schools website, <http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools>. See the Documents section of this appendix for a printed draft form.

### **Conducting a Community Assessment** <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/css/ppt/chap2.htm>

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory provided an informative chapter on how to conduct a community assessment. A community assessment is an exercise by which a collaborative partnership gathers information on the current strengths, concerns, and conditions of children, families, and the community.

### **Assessing Community Needs and Resources** [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter\\_1003.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1003.aspx)

This informational chapter is part of the Community Toolbox developed by the University of Kansas. It details 20 different approaches for assessing community needs and resources.

### **Baltimore Community School Initiative: Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory**

<http://www.baltimoreconnections.org/sctools/NeedsAssess.pdf>

Use this form to assist with a Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory. It has sample questions for stakeholders including students, parents, school staff, and community partners.

### **Community School Assessment Checklist** <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/csassessment.pdf>

This tool contains a series of checklists to assist school and community leaders in creating and/or strengthening community school partnerships.

### **Community Literacy Resource Inventory**

<http://www.kitimatcommunityservices.ca/files/Download/Cmty%20Literacy%20Resources%20Inventory%20-%20March%202011.pdf>

This document provides an example of a resource inventory for Kitimat, British Columbia, Canada.

### **Creating a Logic Model** <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>

Creating a logic model shows the logical relationships among the resources that are invested, the activities that transpire, and the benefits or changes that result. This website (University of Wisconsin-Extension, 2003) provides templates and on-line, self-study materials for creating a logic model to inform your action plan.

### **Transition from the Logic Model to the Action Plan** [http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action\\_plan.pdf](http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action_plan.pdf)

After completing the logic model process, use this link to inform the action plan process.

### **Developing an Action Plan** [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1089.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1089.aspx)

This informational chapter is part of the Community Toolbox (University of Kansas); it contains pertinent information, examples, and training materials for developing action plans.

### **Action Planning: Developing a Plan**

<https://files.pbworks.com/download/nr1D3cWu9k/bonnernetwork/13113652/BonCurActionPlanning.pdf>

This informational chapter provides a step-by-step guide to developing an action plan.

### **SMART Goal Setting Guide** <http://www.ndgrowingfutures.org/files/pdf/SMARTGoalGuide.pdf>

This website provides steps, tips, and a template for setting SMART goals.

### **SMART Goal Resources** <http://www.aea11.k12.ia.us/ldr/processresultspd.html>

This link provides several resources (PowerPoint, guides, templates, and examples) for writing and monitoring SMART goals.



## Books and Articles

- Curby, T. W., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Konold, T. R., Pianta, R. C., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., & ... Barbarin, O. (2009). **The Relations of Observed Pre-K Classroom Quality Profiles to Children's Achievement and Social Competence.** *Early Education and Development, 20*(2), 346-372. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Maryland State Department of, E. (2009). **Children Entering School Ready to Learn: 2009-2010 Maryland Model for School Readiness.** *Maryland State Department of Education*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Pianta, R. C. (2007). **Preschool Is School, Sometimes: Making Early Childhood Education Matter.** *Education Next, 7*(1), 44-49. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Pianta, R. C., & Howes, C. (2009). **The Promise of Pre-K.** Brookes Publishing Company. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Koralek, D., Colker, L., & Dodge, D. (2002). **The What, Why and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Education: A Guide for On-Site Supervision (Rev. Ed.)**. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## Documents Included in Appendix A

### Making Connections

#### 1. Alignment of Ready Schools with Other NCDPI Reporting Requirements

This tool uses the following documents to align with Ready School principles. This tool can be used to show school district personnel how Ready Schools principles support reporting in North Carolina schools.

- » North Carolina Title I Comprehensive Needs Assessment Instrument,
- » North Carolina School Improvement Plan (includes Title I CNA),
- » North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process,
- » North Carolina Principal Evaluation Process,
- » North Carolina Superintendent and District Personnel Evaluation Process, and
- » North Carolina Transition Planning

#### 2. What do they learn in PreK that helps them in 3rd Grade, 5th Grade, and High School?

This document follows learning development from key concepts learned in PreK through elementary and high school. Use this document to explain the value of high quality PreK as it follows learners throughout their PreK-12th grade career.

### Public Relations

#### 3. Brochure

This generic brochure about Ready Schools can be modified to include information specific to individual Ready School partnerships or Teams.

#### 4. Press Release

This generic press release provides basic information about Ready Schools. Drop in information about specific events or initiatives to customize it.

## Monitoring and Assessing Progress

### 5. Asset Mapping

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research developed this informational chapter on asset mapping. Asset mapping provides information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. Finally, asset mapping promotes community involvement, ownership, and empowerment.

### 6. Activity: Core Beliefs for Ready Schools

This assessment is intended to be completed by Community/District Teams to determine their collective level of Ready Schools thinking.

### 7. Community-District Team Action Plan Template

Teams can use this template to develop their action plan.

### 8. The Community-District Team Self-Assessment

The print version of this tool is in draft form. The online version can be found on the NC Ready Schools website, <http://www.smartstart.org/readyschools>.



# APPENDIX B, RESOURCES FOR LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

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## Websites

**Annie E. Casey Foundation** <http://www.aecf.org/Home/MajorInitiatives/LeadershipDevelopment/LdrshpResources.aspx>  
This site includes leadership development resources.

**Build Strong Foundations for our Youngest Children** <http://www.buildinitiative.org/>  
Build works to develop comprehensive early childhood development systems by working with states, agencies, and organizations to develop a system of programs, policies and services that respond to the needs of young children and their families.

**Early Childhood Learning and Policy Network** <http://www.eclpn.org/>  
This network represents a collaboration between the faculty at UNC Greensboro, North Carolina A&T, UNC Charlotte, and Wake Technical Community College. They provide resources and policy papers to support the development of a network of university and community leaders that work together to facilitate leadership and affect policy development that promotes high quality early childhood education for all children.

**Early Childhood Partnerships** <http://www.earlychildhoodpartnerships.org/who-we-are.cfm>  
A community-based consultation, mentoring, direct service, and applied research collaborative within and among the University of Pittsburgh Schools of Medicine and Education, and affiliated with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and other community partners.

**Guidelines for Achieving Staff and Board Diversity**  
<http://www.buildinitiative.org/files/GuidelinesAchievingStaffBoardDiversity.pdf>  
This guide to diversifying leadership boards and staff is part of the Race Matters Toolkit available from the Annie E. Casey Foundation 701 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202 or [racesmatters@aecf.org](mailto:racesmatters@aecf.org)

**Mapping Fiscal Resources in South Hampton Roads Virginia to Support School Readiness.**  
<http://www.financeproject.org/publications/RegionalSummary.pdf>  
The Finance Project (TFP) conducted fiscal mapping studies of the resources supporting an early childhood system in five cities.

**National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)** <http://nieer.org/>  
NIEER engages in and disseminates research about physical, cognitive, and social development impact of early childhood education on children.

**Pre[K] Now** <http://www.preknow.org/community/connectingleaders.cfm>  
Pre[K] Now is a campaign of the Pew Center on the States provides strategies for engaging community leaders as well as policy and Pre-K advocacy resources.

## Articles

- Brown, E. G., Scott-Little, C., & SERVE: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, G. C. (2003). *Evaluations of School Readiness Initiatives: What Are We Learning?* SERVE's Expanded Learning Opportunities National Leadership Area Research Report. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- North Carolina University Greensboro & South Eastern Regional Vision for Education (1993). *Leadership for Collaboration: Participant's Workbook*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- O'Donnell, N., McJunkin, C., & Families and Work Inst., N. Y. (2001). *Ten Tips for Getting and Keeping Business Involved: An Illustrated Guide for Early Childhood Leaders*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Rice, C., Costanza, V., & Advocates for Children of NJ. (2011). Building Early Learning Leaders: New Jersey's PreK-3rd Leadership Training. A Case Study. *Advocates for Children of New Jersey*, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Smith, B. J., & Colorado Univ., D. p. (2002). *The Collaborative Planning Outreach Project: Building Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems*. Final Report. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

## Books

- Collins, J. C. (2005). *Good to great and the social sectors: Why business thinking is not the answer*. JimCollins. ISBN 0977326403
- Goffin, S. G. & Washington, V. (2007). *Ready or not: Leadership choices in early care and education*. New York: Teacher's College Press. ISBN 978-0-8077-4793-3
- Houston, P. D., Blankstein, A. M., & Cole, R. C. (2010). *Leadership for family and community involvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. ISBN: 9781412981279

## Documents Included in Appendix B

1. **Vision, Mission, and Goals** from Catawba County Ready Schools
2. **Action Plan** from Davidson County Community Ready Schools Team



# APPENDIX C, RESOURCES FOR FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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## Websites

**50 Ways Parents can Help Schools** <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa1lk20.htm>  
50 ways that parents can become involved in schools.

### The Citizen's Handbook:

- ▶ **Fundraising:** [http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/1\\_11\\_fundraise.html](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/1_11_fundraise.html)  
Methods and descriptions for fundraising activities.
- ▶ **Visioning Exercises:** [http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/2\\_16\\_visioning.html](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/2_16_visioning.html)  
Examples of ways to engage all stakeholders in creating a vision and mission for the Team.

### Concept to Classroom: A Series of Workshops

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/familycommunity/index.html>

In this workshop session you will examine ways to create partnerships among schools, parents, and members of the local community.

**Connecting Families and Schools to Help Our Children Succeed** <http://www2.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-1994/parent.html>  
List of concrete actions that parents, schools, and communities can take to help all children learn.

**Early Childhood Today** <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/ect/>

The site offers tips and strategies using articles, books, curriculum, and video on behavior and development, community, leadership, and school-home connections.

**Family-School Compact for Learning** <http://www2.ed.gov/Family/BTS/pt12.html>

Template for developing family-school partnerships known as "compacts." Family-school compacts affirm the importance of family involvement in students' learning.

**Grow a Child** <http://www.growachild.org>

Supports a collaborative effort between a number of North Carolina community agencies. Created to help families find local community resources and other simple ideas to turn good parents into extraordinary parents.

**Minority Parent and Community Engagement: Best Practices and Policy Recommendations for Closing the Gaps in Student Achievement** [http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/MCO\\_MALDEF%20Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/MCO_MALDEF%20Report_final.pdf)

Programs are based in California, but offer solid advice for anyone wanting to improve parent and community engagement

**The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools** <http://www.sedl.org/connections/>

Links people with research-based information to connect schools, families, and communities. Includes resources, webinars, annotated bibliography database, policy briefs, and handouts.

**School, Community, Family Connections** [http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/5Connections\\_r10.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/5Connections_r10.pdf)

This publication provides an in-depth look at Annie. E. Casey's support of community schools, including selected results and lessons learned.

**A School-Family-Community Partnership Toolkit for New Mexico** <http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/index.html>

Toolkit designed to support the development of school, family, and community partnerships with the ultimate goal of helping all children and youth succeed in school and in life. It is divided into the following three categories: teacher tools, family tools, and professional development tools.

**Six Types of Parent Involvement in Schools** <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa1lk4.htm>  
Links for six types of parent involvement in schools: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

**Strategies for Every Employer** <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/EmpFamEd/strategy.html>  
Several strategies for businesses to promote family involvement in the education of children.

**Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships** [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/family\\_tools/index.html](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/family_tools/index.html)  
Specific tools and resources around family and community involvement around six specific themes: improving communication; promoting positive parenting; enhancing student learning; increasing volunteerism; supporting decision-making and advocacy; and collaborating with the community.

## Articles

Dotson-Blake, K. P. (2010). **Learning from each other: A portrait of family-school-community partnerships in the United States and Mexico.** *Professional School Counseling*, 14(1), 101-114. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

This article presents the findings from a study exploring family-school-community partnership experiences of Mexican nationalists in Veracruz and Mexican immigrants in North Carolina.

Kim, Y. (2009). **Minority parental involvement and school barriers: Moving the focus away from the deficiencies of parents.** *Educational Research Review*, 4(2), 80-102. Retrieved from Web of Science.

This literature review provides available research findings on the school barriers that prevent minority parents' participation in their children's school in the United States.

Vogel, C. (2006). **Building a STRONG community partnership.** (Cover story). *District Administration*, 42(6), 66-72. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

This article discusses how parents and community members can best impact student performance at schools through effective school-family-community partnerships.

## Books

Any of these books would be good choices for a book study, either at the Team, school, district, or community level.

Davis, C. & Yang, A. (2005). *Parents and Teachers Working Together.* Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Epstein, J. L. et al. (2009). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, third edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. ISBN: 9781412959025

Henderson, A. T., Johnson, V., Mapp, K. L., & Davies, D. (2006). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family/School Partnerships.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Jacobs, G. & Crowley, K. (2010). *Reaching Standards and Beyond in Kindergarten: Nurturing Children's Sense of Wonder and Joy in Learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Neighborhood Innovations Network, Northwestern University, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL.

Olender, R. A., Elias, J., & Mastroleo, R. D. (2010). *The School-Home Connection: Forging Positive Relationships with Parents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. ISBN: 9781412968645

Sheldon, S. B., & Sanders, M. G. *Principals Matter: A Guide to School, Family, and Community Partnerships*. Examines the principal's essential role in developing equitable and sustainable school community partnerships.

Smyth, T. & Dewar, T. (2009). *Raising the Village: How Individuals and Communities Can Work Together to Give Our Children a Stronger Start in Life*. BPS Books.

This book shows policy-makers, managers, and front-line service providers how the fields of early childhood work and community development can unify their concerns, expertise, and vision.

Wright, K. & Stegelin, D. *Building School and Community Partnerships Through Parent Involvement*. PrenticeHall. Provides strategies for involving parents and other family members in a child's education.

## Documents Included in Appendix C

1. **Family Fun Quest layout** from Carteret County Partnership for Children
2. **Family Fun Quest vendor invitation** from Carteret County Partnership for Children
3. **Family Fun Quest vendor application** from Carteret County Partnership for Children
4. **Family Fun Quest flyer** from Carteret County Partnership for Children
5. **Elementary Family Survey** from The Down East Partnership for Children  
A survey providing parents an opportunity to voice what schools are doing well to support family, school, and community partnerships and what schools can improve upon.
6. **Early Childhood Parent Survey**  
This parent survey assesses perceptions of community services and community needs. It was developed and shared with permission from Catawba County Ready Schools.
7. **Community Resource Brochure** from Smart Start of Davidson County (page one)  
A resource guide for parents with young children providing information pertaining to community resources.
8. **Community Resource Brochure** from Smart Start of Davidson County (page two)  
A resource guide for parents with young children providing information pertaining to community resources.
9. **Power of Partnerships Family Survey (English Version)** from the National Parent Teacher Association  
A family survey designed to gather information about the needs of families in the community and their connections to schools.
10. **Power of Partnerships Family Survey (Spanish Version)** from the National Parent Teacher Association
11. **Ready Schools Initiative: All Schools Ready for All Children** from Wayne County Public Schools  
A PowerPoint introducing the Ready Schools Initiative to stakeholders.
12. **Family Engagement Survey**  
This survey assesses parents' prior and current beliefs and involvement in schools. It was shared by the Down East Partnership for Children.
13. **Survey on Family and Community Partnerships**  
This survey is completed by a school employee for a school to assess the nature of family, school, and community partnership. It was shared by the Down East Partnership for Children.



# APPENDIX D, RESOURCES FOR TRANSITIONS

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## Websites

**5 Kindergarten Transition Resources: For families, community members, teachers, caregivers, and policymakers**  
<http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EarlyLearning/documents/Instruction/008965.pdf>  
Document from the Minnesota Department of Education outlining strategies and resources for all stakeholder groups.

**National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC)** <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/SF/NECTC/home.aspx>  
NECTC is funded by OSEP to investigate and validate practices and strategies that enhance the early childhood transition process and support positive school outcomes for children with disabilities.

**Promoting Smooth Transitions to Kindergarten** <http://www.recognitionandresponse.org/content/view/22/108/>  
Includes a transition toolkit for early childhood educators as well as research and resources. Part of the Recognition and Response website developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

**Ready, Set, Go! Your go-to guide to Kindergarten transition** <http://www.readysetk.org/>  
Media Toolkit designed to support families, caregivers, and schools. Developed by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Child Care Resources, Inc., and NC Department of Public Instruction.

**The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools** <http://www.sedl.org/connections/>  
Links people with research-based information to connect schools, families, and communities. Includes resources, webinars, annotated bibliography database, policy briefs, and handouts.

**Terrific Transitions: Supporting children's transition to Kindergarten** <http://www.terrifictransitions.org/TT>  
A collaboration between SERVE Regional Educational Laboratory and the National Head Start Association. Includes an annotated bibliography with resources for transitions across five specific topics: Transition Overview, Program Design, Cross Program/Agency Activities, Families, Policies and Supports, and Evaluating the Process.

**The Transition to Kindergarten: A Review of Current Research and Promising Practices to Involve Families.**  
<http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/the-transition-to-kindergarten-a-review-of-current-research-and-promising-practices-to-involve-families>  
A resource from the Harvard Family Research Project.

## Articles

Denkyirah, A., & Agbeke, W. (2010). **Strategies for Transitioning Preschoolers with Autism Spectrum Disorders to Kindergarten.** *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(4), 265-270. doi:10.1007/s10643-010-0407-z

Giallo, R., Treyvaud, K., Matthews, J., & Kienhuis, M. (2010). **Making the Transition to Primary School: An Evaluation of a Transition Program for Parents.** *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*, 101-17. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). **Pre-Kindergarten Teachers' Use of Transition Practices and Children's Adjustment to Kindergarten.** *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 124-139. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Love, J. M., RMC Research Corp., H. H., & And, O. (1992). **Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools.** Final Report of the National Transition Study. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Malsch, A. M., Green, B. L., & Kothari, B. H. (2011). **Understanding Parents' Perspectives on the Transition to Kindergarten: What Early Childhood Settings and Schools Can Do for At-Risk Families.** *Best Practice in Mental Health*, 7(1), 47-66. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.



Pang, Y. (2010). **Facilitating Family Involvement in Early Intervention to Preschool Transition**. *School Community Journal*, 20(2), 183-198. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Pianta, R. C., Cox, M. J., & Snow, K. L. (2007). ***School Readiness and the Transition to Kindergarten in the Era of Accountability***. Brookes Publishing Company. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Rous, B., Hallam, R., McCormick, K., & Cox, M. (2010). **Practices that Support the Transition to Public Preschool Programs: Results from a National Survey**. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 17-32. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

## Books

Jacobs, G. & Crowley, K. (2010). ***Reaching Standards and Beyond in Kindergarten: Nurturing Children's Sense of Wonder and Joy in Learning***. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kagan, S. L., & Tarrant, K. (2010). ***Transitions in the Early Years: Creating a System of Continuity***. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Kostelink, M. J. & Grady, M. L. (2009). ***Getting it Right from the Start: The Principal's Guide to Early Childhood Education***. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## Documents Included in Appendix D

1. **Core Beliefs for Ready Schools** from Catawba County Ready Schools  
A document that shows the difference between traditional thinking and Ready Schools thinking.
2. **I'm Going to Kindergarten** book from Catawba County Ready Schools  
A parent booklet that provides information pertaining to transitioning children to Kindergarten and building family, school, and community partnerships.
3. **Kindergarten is Something to Smile About** from Catawba County Ready Schools  
A parent brochure answering frequently asked questions about transitioning to Kindergarten including important dates for screenings, orientations, and beginning days.
4. **Kindergarten Transition Action Plan Template** from Smart Start of Davidson County  
Facilitates the development of school-based action plans for the transition of students to Kindergarten.
5. **Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten: An Activity Guide for Families** from Smart Start of Buncombe County  
Activities for children to prepare for Kindergarten and detailed information about how adults can help children build necessary skills
6. **Ready Schools: Supporting Pre-K transitions using a community approach** from The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.  
Document with list of effective Pre-K transition activities, linking Child-School, Family-School, Peer, and Communities.
7. **Rising Kindergartner Form** from Smart Start of Davidson County  
Intended to be filled out by early childhood education providers and delivered to public schools in order to provide the contact information for rising Kindergarteners.
8. **Tips and Ideas to Help Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten** from Smart Start of Davidson County  
A tip sheet offering helpful tips for parents about how to help their children get ready for Kindergarten.
9. **Transition Intensity Scale** from Catawba County Ready Schools  
A document that provides a scale of transition activities ranging from low to high intensity.

10. **Transition to Kindergarten Communication Form** from Smart Start of Davidson County  
Intended to be filled out by preschool families and teachers and delivered to public schools in order to provide information regarding individual students' personal characteristics and readiness skills.
11. **Kindergarten Family Survey**  
A survey assessing Kindergarten parents' perceptions on educational activities, health and community support services, transition to Kindergarten, and relationships with educational personnel (developed and shared by the Down East Partnership for Children).
12. **Elementary Family Survey**  
A survey assessing elementary school parents' perceptions of educational activities, health and community support services, school supports, and relationships with school personnel (developed and shared by the Down East Partnership for Children).
13. **Kindergarten Teacher Survey**  
A survey assessing Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of transition activities and family and community involvement in schools (developed and shared by the Down East Partnership for Children).
14. **Elementary Teacher Survey**  
A survey assessing elementary teachers' perceptions of transition activities and family and community involvement in schools (developed and shared by the Down East Partnership for Children).



# APPENDIX E, RESOURCES RESPECTING DIVERSITY

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## Websites

### **A Compact for Reading and School-Home Links: Connecting Schools and Homes to Help Children Read**

<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/index.html>

A written agreement among families, teachers, principals, and students to work together to help improve the reading skills of Kindergarten through third grade children—available in Spanish.

### **AntiDefamation League (ADL)** [http://www.adl.org/education/default\\_anti\\_bias.asp](http://www.adl.org/education/default_anti_bias.asp)

Provides information and checklists.

### **Anti-Poverty Week** <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/index.html>

Information used in Australia seeking ways to deepen understanding about poverty and its consequences.

### **Asset Mapping Resource** <http://extension.missouri.edu/about/fy00-03/assetmapping.htm>

Asset mapping is an approach to community development; it is based on the principle that a community can be built only by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens and associations that call a neighborhood or community home. (University of Missouri System and Lincoln University, 1999)

### **Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Issues in Counseling** <http://www.algbtic.org/resources/>

This link provides several resources and bibliographies for professionals working with families and children who have gay or lesbian parents.

### **Building Bridges: Respecting Diversity within our Community** <http://www.buildingbridges-asheville.org/>

The mission of Building Bridges is to enable the Asheville, NC community to confront and overcome racism through a continuing process of changing attitudes and hearts through education, consciousness-raising, nurturing, and on-going support.

### **Critical Issue: Meeting the Diverse Needs of Young Children**

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/earlycld/ea400.htm>

Offers key concepts for educators and families along with illustrative cases and national organizations for additional information.

### **DEC Recommended Practice: Parent Checklist for Special Needs**

[http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Parent\\_Checklist/](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Parent_Checklist/)

### **Dimensions of Diversity: Online Diversity Resource Guide**

<http://diversityeducation.cas.psu.edu/OnLineResources.html#Families>

This guide provides information on diversity-related curriculum, guides, and papers for youth and adults.

### **Early Childhood Today** <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/ect/>

Offers tips and strategies using articles, books, curriculum, and video on behavior and development, community, leadership, and school-home connections.

Articles include:

1. **Teaching Diversity: A Place to Begin** <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3499>
2. **Preserving Language and Culture** <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/subarticle.jsp?id=4398>
3. **Developmentally Speaking: Snapshot of cultural identity development in children 2-5**  
<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/subarticle.jsp?id=4400>
4. **Suggested Multicultural Books for Young Children** <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/subarticle.jsp?id=4396>

**EdChange** <http://www.edchange.org/>

Professional development, research, and resources for diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competence.

1. <http://www.edchange.org/handouts/class-resources.pdf>  
Beyond the "Culture of Poverty" Resources on Class, Poverty, and Equity in Education, by Paul Gorski, offers books, research and web sites that challenge us to a deeper understanding of poverty and its impact beyond Ruby Payne's framework.
2. <http://www.edchange.org/handouts/25-web-sites.pdf>  
25 Sites Web Sites for Educational Equity
3. <http://www.edchange.org/publications.html>  
Includes easy access to keynotes, essays, articles, and working papers, interviews and books on diversity and multicultural education

**Improving the School-Home Connection for Low-Income Urban Parents.** <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-928/low.htm>  
ERIC/CUE Digest Number 41

**The Institute on Race & Poverty (IRP)** <http://www.irpumn.org/>

Investigates the ways that policies and practices disproportionately affect people of color and the disadvantaged.

**KidslkeUs.org** <http://www.kidslkeus.org>

Purchase a wide range of multicultural children's literature, from story books to young adult novels.

**Kids' Picture Books that Teach Reality of Family Diversity**

<http://www.amazon.com/Picture-Books-Reality-Family-Diversity/lm/35J7SO98JEZIV>

A list created by children's author, Lori L. Lake, on the Amazon.com website.

**Minority Parent and Community Engagement: Best Practices and Policy Recommendations for Closing the Gaps in Student Achievement** [http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/MCO\\_MALDEF%20Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/MCO_MALDEF%20Report_final.pdf)

Programs are based in California, but offer sage advice for anyone wanting to improve parent and community engagement.

**NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)** <http://www.naeyc.org/>

Position Statements include:

1. Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education.  
<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDIV98.PDF>
2. Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) Implementation: Cultural Competence  
<http://www.naeyc.org/policy/statetrends/qrisculturalcompetence>

**National Association for Multicultural Educators (NAME)** <http://nameorg.org/resources/>

An organization that brings together individuals and groups with an interest in multicultural education from all levels of education, academic disciplines, institutions, and occupations.

**National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)** <http://nbcdi.org/>

The NBCDI's mission is to improve and advance the lives of Black children and their families through advocacy and education.

**The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems** <http://www.nccrest.org/>

Supports state and local school systems to assure a quality, culturally responsive education for all students.

**National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan** <http://npc.umich.edu/>

This center conducts and promotes multidisciplinary, policy-relevant research on the causes and consequences of poverty.



**An Overview of Diversity Awareness** <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/ui362.pdf>

This publication provides an overview of the concept of cultural diversity and can help you become more aware of the various dimensions of diversity as well as your own cultural identity, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about various aspects of diversity.

**Precious Children: Diversity in the Classroom.** [http://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read\\_activities.html](http://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_activities.html)

Short, easy to read article in which author talks about the stages of racial awareness in children and gives ideas for activities that will help children accept themselves and others.

**Report and Recommendations from the North Carolina Family/School/Community Engagement Summit**

<http://www.ncpta.org/advocacy/Files/NC%20Summit%20Report%20Final.pdf>

This report examines the barriers to parent, family, and caregiver engagement in schools and offers recommendations for the people who have the power to make changes to policy and practice.

**Strategies for Overcoming Issues/Challenges/Barriers** <http://www.nccrest.org/>

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems supports state and local school systems to assure a quality, culturally responsive education for all students.

**Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center** <http://www.tolerance.org/>

A place to find thought-provoking news, conversation, and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity, and respect for differences in schools and communities. This site includes professional development resources, kits, lessons and activities, and a magazine.

**teAchnology: The Online Teacher Resource** <http://www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/poverty/>

Features a Teacher Helpers article on the Effects of Poverty on Teaching, Learning, and Relationships.

**The W. K. Kellogg Foundation** <http://ww2.wkkf.org/Pubs/CustomPubs/CPtoolkit/cptoolkit/Sec3-Including.htm>

Provides information regarding diversity training, cultural competence, cultural celebrations, and issues of power.

**World Food Programme** <http://www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers/classroom-activities>

Offers a host of classroom and community activities focused on poverty.

## Articles

DLee, S., Butler, M. B., & Tippins, D. J. (2007). **A Case Study of an Early Childhood Teacher's Perspective on Working with English Language Learners.** *Multicultural Education*, 15(1), 43-49. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

McCrary, D. E., Sennette, J., & Brown, D. L. (2011). **Preparing Early Childhood Teachers for English Language Learners.** *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 32(2), 107-117. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

## Books

Castro, D. C., Anyakoya, & B., Kasprzak, C. (2010). *The New Voices: Nuevas Voces Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood*. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

As early childhood programs and schools become more culturally and linguistically diverse, professionals need to create settings that welcome new voices and help all children succeed. This comprehensive professional development course gives them the in-depth practical guidance they need.

Cartledge, G., Gardner, R., & Ford-Pearson, D. Y. (2008). *Diverse Learners with Exceptionalities: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom*.

This text focuses on the special needs of culturally and racially diverse learners with exceptionalities.

Jensen, E. (1999). *Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids' Brains and What Schools Can Do about It*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109074.aspx>

Johnson, M. (2006). *Disability Awareness - Do It Right! Your All-In-One How-to Guide: Tips, Techniques & Handouts for a Successful Awareness Day from the Ragged Edge Online Community*. Advocado Press.

An all-in-one how-to guide from the Ragged Edge Online community, with tips, techniques and handouts for a successful awareness activity.

Landsman, J., & Lewis, C. W. (2006). *White Teachers, Diverse Classrooms: A Guide to Building Inclusive Schools, Promoting High Expectations, and Eliminating Racism*. Stylus Publishers.

This book encourages reflection and self-examination, calls for understanding how students can achieve and expecting the most from them.

Martin, D. (2009). *Language Disabilities in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*. Multilingual Matters.

Obiakor, F. E. (2001). *It Even Happens in "Good" Schools: Responding to Cultural Diversity in Today's Classrooms*. Corwin Press.

Stretch, J. J., Bartlett, M. C., & Hutchison, W. J. (1999). *Raising Our Children Out of Poverty*. Haworth Pastoral Press.

Shows what can be done at the national and local community levels to raise children out of poverty by strengthening families, communities, and social services.

## Film

### **With a Little help from my Friends: The Classic Inclusion Video**

This one hour video describes the basics of creating schools where all kids belong and learn together.

### **That's a Family: A Film for Kids About Family Diversity**

Publisher: Women's Educational Media

Length: 35 minutes Audience: Elementary youth

Description: This video recognizes the wide range of family structures that form the fabric of communities today. A discussion/teaching guide is available.

### **Valuing Diversity: Multicultural Communication**

Publisher: Learning Seed (1995)

Length: 19 minutes

Audience: Older youth & adults

Description: This video gives viewers practical suggestions on how to decrease their discomfort when communicating with diverse people.

## Activities

**The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS)** <http://www.communityaction.org/Poverty%20Simulation.aspx>

A unique tool that community action agencies are able to use to educate everyone, from policy makers to local community leaders, about the day to day realities of life with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress.

**YouTube Videos of Different Poverty Simulations** [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

1. Community Action Association of Pennsylvania
2. Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners
3. Westmoreland Human Opportunities

## Workshops

**Breaking the Silence: Ushering in Courageous Conversations About Race**

[http://www.nccrest.org/disproportionality/glenn\\_singleton.pdf](http://www.nccrest.org/disproportionality/glenn_singleton.pdf)

A workshop manual from the Pacific Educational Group.

**Confronting Racism in communities: Guidelines and Resources for Antiracism Workshops**

[http://www.thechangeagency.org/\\_dbase\\_up/Anti-Racism%20Training.pdf](http://www.thechangeagency.org/_dbase_up/Anti-Racism%20Training.pdf)

**Dimensions of Diversity** <http://diversityeducation.cas.psu.edu/>

This site contains a quarterly newsletter, diversity program materials, publications, curricula, and links to other diversity-related resources and sites. Many materials may be downloaded and printed.

1. **Diversity Jeopardy Game**  
<http://diversityeducation.cas.psu.edu/PDFs/Jeopardy-Styled.ppsx>  
Use to increase knowledge of diversity or as a vehicle for deeper discussion for teenagers, parents, educators.
2. **Diversity Discussion Starters: A Collection of Ice Breakers Designed to Start Conversation About Diversity**  
<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ui377.pdf>  
This publication is designed to help facilitate discussion about diversity among youth and adults.
3. **Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults**  
<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ui335.pdf>  
This 12-page publication features six different activities that can be used to help youth and adults understand and appreciate diversity.



# APPENDIX F, RESOURCES FOR ENGAGING ENVIRONMENTS

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## Websites

**Childhood Education Journal** <http://acei.org/knowledge/publications/childhood-education/current/>

This journal is published by the Association of Childhood Education International and has articles addressing engaging environments.

**National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** <http://www.naeyc.org>

- ▶ **Position paper and key messages on developmentally appropriate practice**  
<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/KeyMessages.pdf>

**Natural Learning Initiative (NLI)** <http://www.naturalearning.org/>

NLI has compiled a wide variety of resources to promote the importance of the natural environment in the daily experience of all children.

- ▶ **Move More North Carolina: A Guide to Creating Active Outdoor Play Spaces**  
[http://www.naturalearning.org/sites/default/files/PlaySpacesGuide\\_eatsmartmovemore.pdf](http://www.naturalearning.org/sites/default/files/PlaySpacesGuide_eatsmartmovemore.pdf)  
This guide provides examples of active outdoor play spaces and best-practice tips for designing them.

**The NC Children and Nature Coalition** <http://ncchildrenandnature.org/resources/for-educators/>

Comprehensive resources for engaging children in outdoor classrooms.

**Quality in Outdoor Environments for Child Care** <http://www.poemsn.org/>

Provides a link to the Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale.

**The Reggio Emilia Approach** <http://www.reggioemiliaapproach.net/about.php>

The Reggio Emilia Approach to pre-school education identifies the environment as the child's third teacher.

**Supported Inclusion Tip Sheet: Creating a Positive Environment**

<http://www.ccdh.org/vendorimages/ccdh2008/ccdh/creating-Positive-environment.pdf>

Developed by the City of Toronto and the Early Childhood Services Team: Community Living Toronto, this tip sheet shows how thoughtful arrangement of the indoor and outdoor environments can support and include all children.

**Teaching Children to Care** <http://www.responsiveclassroom.org>

Nel Noddings provides an examination of a caring, respectful classroom learning environment.

**UNC: FPG Child Development Institute** <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>

Provides ECERS and SACERS instruments for evaluating early childhood environments as well as much more information.



## Articles

**The Environment as the Third Teacher** <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED493517.pdf>

Important environmental aspects of knowledge include providing information for the senses, supporting the unique needs and preferences of children, providing experiences that are content-rich, and which provide feedback.

Rushton, S. 2001. **Applying brain research to create developmentally appropriate learning environments.** *Young Children*, 56(5), 76–82.

The author of this article examines the early childhood and primary learning environments and developmentally appropriate practices in light of the findings of brain research. The author identifies effective teacher strategies as well as situations that hinder learning.

Stoecklin, V. **Developmentally Appropriate Gardening for Young Children.**

<http://www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/gardening.shtml>

This article offers tips for incorporating developmentally appropriate gardening for young children into preschool programming to achieve the following goals: environmental stewardship, personal growth/social skills, an integrated learning environment, nutrition/health, science education, and practical living skills.

## Books

Bailey, B. (2001). ***Conscious Discipline: 7 Basic Skills for Brain Smart Classroom Management.*** Loving Guidance: Silver Spring, MD.

This book provides an emotional intelligence and classroom management system for early childhood and elementary programs. It covers topics from conflict to cooperation and explores ways to help children perceive, use, understand, and manage their emotions.

Gould, P., & Sullivan, J. (1999). ***The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom: Easy Ways to Adapt Learning Centers for All Children.*** Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

<http://inclusiveclassroom.com/>

Isbell, R., & B. Exelby. (2001). ***Early Learning Environments that Work.*** Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House. Available from NAEYC.

The authors of this book explore how to manipulate furniture, color, materials, storage, lighting, and more to encourage learning through classroom arrangement. The authors provide detailed illustrations and photographs to help you set up or arrange what you already have in the classroom.

Kostelnik, M. J. & Grady, M. L. (2009). ***Getting It Right from the Start: The Principal's Guide to Early Childhood Education.*** Corwin Press.

Recommended reading by Catawba Community District Team.

## Documents Included in Appendix F

1. ***Characteristics of a good learning environment for young children.***

A checklist created by P. L. Snowden (2007).

# APPENDIX G, RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE CURRICULA, INSTRUCTION, AND CHILD ASSESSMENT

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## Websites

### **Compacts for Reading and School-Home Links: Connecting Schools and Homes to Help Children Read**

<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/index.html>

These publications are designed to help Compact partners set reading goals and provide lessons and activities that allow children to accomplish goals. (Also available in Spanish.)

### **Creative Curriculum** [http://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/ccs\\_overview.cfm](http://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/ccs_overview.cfm)

Teaching Strategies provides curriculum, assessment, and professional development resources for early childhood professionals, families, and communities. Site includes alignment of this curriculum and assessment tools with the North Carolina Foundations.

### **Cultural Competency Curriculum Modules** <http://www.thinkculturalhealth.org/>

This site discusses cultural competence models for curriculum.

### **Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success**

[http://www.ncprek.nc.gov/Foundations/pdf/BW\\_condensed.pdf](http://www.ncprek.nc.gov/Foundations/pdf/BW_condensed.pdf)

Members of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction developed expectations for Preschoolers Success in School.

### **High Scope** <http://www.highscope.org/>

HighScope Educational Research Foundation develops research-validated curriculum and assessments for preschoolers, infants, and toddlers and conducts research. Site includes alignment of the North Carolina Foundations with High Scope's Key Developmental Indicators.

### **NAEYC Position Statements on Curriculum Assessment and Program Evaluation**

<http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/cape>

This website contains multiple position statements by the National Association for the Education of Young Children based on current research.

### **NC Department of Public Instruction** <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>

NC Standard Course of Study K-12.

### **Starting Strong Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care** (OECD, 2004)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf>

Description of five curricula across the globe including: Experiential Education, The High/Scope® Curriculum, The Reggio Emilia Approach, TeWhāriki, and The Swedish curriculum.

### **What Works Clearinghouse- Early Childhood** <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topicarea.aspx?tid=13>

The WWC publishes intervention reports that evaluate research on early childhood education curricula and instructional strategies for 3- to- 5-year-old children.

## Articles

Dodge, D. T. (2004). **Early Childhood Curriculum Models.** *Child Care Information Exchange.* January/February 2004, 71-75. <http://www.childcareexchange.com/library/5015571.pdf>

Early, D. M., Maxwell, K. L., Burchinal, M., Bender, R. H., Ebanks, C., Henry, G. T., & ... Vandergrift, N. (2007). **Teachers' Education, Classroom Quality, and Young Children's Academic Skills: Results From Seven Studies of Preschool Programs.** *Child Development, 78*(2), 558-580. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01014.x

Horn, E., Lieber, J., Sandall, S., Schwartz, I., & Li, S. (2000). **Supporting young children's IEP goals in inclusive settings through embedded learning opportunities.** *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24*(4), 208-223.

Howes, C., & Pianta, R. C. (2011). **Foundations for Teaching Excellence: Connecting Early Childhood Quality Rating, Professional Development, and Competency Systems in States.** Brookes Publishing Company. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Klein, L. G., & Kenitzer, J. (2006). **Effective Preschool Curricula and Teaching Strategies.** *Pathways to Early School Success.* Issue Brief No. 2.

[http://nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_668.pdf](http://nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_668.pdf)

This report from the National Center for Children in Poverty explores lessons from research and practice about the role of an intentional curriculum and professional development and supports for teachers in closing the achievement gap for low-income preschool age children.

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Downer, J. (2011). **Aligning measures of quality with professional development goals and goals for children's development.** In M. Zaslow, I. Martinez-Beck, K. Tout, T. Halle, M. Zaslow, I. Martinez-Beck, ... T. Halle (Eds.), *Quality measurement in early childhood settings* (pp. 297-315). Baltimore, MD US: Paul H Brookes Publishing. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Schulz, M. (2009). **Effective Writing Assessment and Instruction for Young English Language Learners.** *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*(1), 57-62. doi:10.1007/s10643-009-0317-0

## Books

Bredenkamp, S. & Copple, C. (1997). **Developmentally Appropriate Practices, Revised Edition.** Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Bronson, M. (1995). **The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8: Selecting Play Materials to Support Development.** Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Cook, R., Klein, M., & Tessier, A. (2004). **Adapting Early Childhood Curricula for Children In Inclusive Settings,** 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

McLachlan, C., Fler, M., & Edwards, S. (2010). **Early Childhood Curriculum: Planning, Assessment, and Implementation.** Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

## Tools

**Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)** <http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/pianta-class/index.htm>

An observation tool for educators to assess classroom quality in pre-Kindergarten through grade 3 based on teacher–student interactions in the classroom rather than evaluation of the physical environment or a specific curriculum.

**Early Childhood Curriculum and Planning Assessment Tool**

<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/CAPE%20Self-Assessment%20&%20Planning%20Tool.pdf>

This is a self-assessment tool for considering a curriculum and assessment system and includes a tool for identifying and recording examples of how each recommendation is addressed.

## Parent Activities

**Encourage Reading at Home**

[http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps-mainweb01.nsf/9A10BA7BFBD5B3C28525730900679EBE/\\$file/10At-HomeReadingReinforcers.pdf](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps-mainweb01.nsf/9A10BA7BFBD5B3C28525730900679EBE/$file/10At-HomeReadingReinforcers.pdf)

This website provides parents tips for encouraging reading at home.

**Family Reading Night** <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/publications/family-reading-night.htm>

This book includes all the materials necessary to organize 10 different Family Reading Nights. With themes from Scary Stories to Dr. Seuss, this book helps you create the Family Reading Nights for your school.

**Learning at Home** <http://www2.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/early.html>

This website provides several activities for parents to do with their children (ages birth to preschool) at home.

**On the Go Literacy Activities for Parents and Children**

[http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps-mainweb01.nsf/FB2D96E20E0DC6E58525768200734E20/\\$file/Early-grades-on-the-go-activities-in-English.pdf](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps-mainweb01.nsf/FB2D96E20E0DC6E58525768200734E20/$file/Early-grades-on-the-go-activities-in-English.pdf)

This document provides several activities for parents to do with their young children to increase literacy while in the car and out in the community.

**Reading with Children** <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~literacy/parentpartnerships.cfm>

This website provides parents strategies for reading with their children.





# APPENDIX H, RESOURCES FOR TEACHER SUPPORTS AND ADULT LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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## Websites

**Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI): Sharing Knowledge** <http://acei.org/knowledge/>

Provides research, forums, brochures, and articles. Has online training resources, publications, and conferences.

**Child Care WAGE\$®** <http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/wage.html>

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors, and family child care providers working with children between the ages of birth-5.

**Division of Early Childhood (DEC): Tools You Can Use**

[http://www.dec-sped.org/About\\_DEC/Recommended\\_Practices/Tools\\_You\\_Can\\_Use/](http://www.dec-sped.org/About_DEC/Recommended_Practices/Tools_You_Can_Use/)

Provides recommended practices, PowerPoints, and checklists for early care and education professionals. Has an annual conference link and a store for additional resources.

**Edutopia: Teacher Development** <http://www.edutopia.org/teacher-development>

Edutopia.org, an initiative of the George Lucas Educational Foundation contains a deep archive of continually updated best practices, from classroom tips to recommendations for district-wide change.

**Families and Work Institute (FWI)** <http://www.familiesandwork.org/>

A nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that studies the changing workforce, family, and community. Focused on the development of broad scale communications campaigns to share early learning research with a wide range of public and private sector audiences.

**National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agency**

[http://www.naccrra.org/randd/child-care-workforce/cc\\_workforce.php](http://www.naccrra.org/randd/child-care-workforce/cc_workforce.php)

Provides research and data, conferences, and publications for early care and education professionals.

**The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** <http://www.naeyc.org/ecp/trainings>

NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8. Follow this link to find training opportunities for early childhood professionals.

**National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)** <http://nbcidi.org/>

The NBCDI's mission is to improve and advance the lives of Black children and their families, through advocacy and education. Provides resources and information pertaining to annual conferences.

**NCICDP Continuing Education Library** <http://ncicdp.org/continuing-education/continuing-education-library-cel-2/>

This website provides a library of resources for the professional development of early care and education professionals.

**The North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children (NCAeYC)**

<http://www.ncaeyc.org/profdev/profdev.html>

NCAeYC is the state affiliate of NAEYC. This site lists professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals.

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: Professional Learning Communities**

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/profdev/resources/proflearn/>

Provides detailed definitions, specific steps, and resources for implementing professional learning communities (PLCs), or adult learning communities (ALCs), as they are called in the Ready Schools Toolkit.

**North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals** <http://ncicdp.org/>

Promotes the implementation of a comprehensive professional development and recognition system that links education and compensation for child development professionals to ensure high quality care and education services for children and families.

**PBS TeacherLine** <http://pbs.org/teacherline>

Professional development for PreK-12 educators. A service of PBS Teachers.

**Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA)** <http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/>

Committed to improving the quality of care and education for young children and their families through advocacy and professional development.

**Zero to Three** <http://www.zerotothree.org/>

A national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

## Articles

Bartel, V. B. (2005). **Learning Communities: Beliefs Embedded in Content-Based Rituals.** *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(3), 151-154. doi:10.1007/s10643-005-0040-4

Carter, M. (2010). **Drive-Through Training.** Exchange: *The Early Childhood Leaders' Magazine Since 1978*, (194), 61-63. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Catapano, S., Huisman, S. & Song, K. (March 2008). **Are we there yet? Perspectives from partners in a community of practice.** *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts*, p. 2-20.

[http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/spil/publications\\_ijlsc.html](http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/spil/publications_ijlsc.html)

This article has a complete discussion of the theory, development, and implementation of communities of practice.

Given, H., Kuh, L., LeeKeenan, D., Mardell, B., Redditt, S., & Twombly, S. (2010). **Changing School Culture: Using Documentation to Support Collaborative Inquiry.** *Theory Into Practice*, 49(1), 36-46. doi:10.1080/00405840903435733

Wesley, P. W. & Buysse, V. (2001). **Communities of practice. Expanding professional roles to promote reflection and shared inquiry.** *Special Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 21(2), p. 114-123.

<http://tec.sagepub.com/content/21/2/114.short>

This article introduces the concept of expanding roles to include collaborative reflective inquiry within communities of practice as one way to reform professional practices.

### **Planning for Professional Development in Child Care**

<http://ncicdp.org/documents/best.pdf>

This collaboratively developed manual was written for individuals and organizations who are involved in designing, coordinating, and promoting professional development opportunities the child care workforce in their local community. SEDL is a private, non-profit education research and development organization focused on improving teaching and learning. SEDL has published several documents about PLCs.

# APPENDIX I, RESOURCES FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS AND ASSURING QUALITY

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## Websites

**Action Plan Tip Sheet** [http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action\\_plan.pdf](http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/pdfs/Action_plan.pdf)

After completing the logic model process, use this link to inform the action plan process.

**Action Planning: Developing a Plan**

<https://files.pbworks.com/download/nr1D3cWu9k/bonnernetwork/13113652/BonCurActionPlanning.pdf>

This informational chapter provides a step-by-step guide to developing an action plan.

**Baltimore Community School Initiative: Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory**

<http://www.baltimoreconnections.org/schools/NeedsAssess.pdf>

Use this form to assist with a Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory. It has sample questions for stakeholders including students, parents, school staff, and community partners.

**Community Literacy Resource Inventory**

<http://www.kitimatcommunityservices.ca/files/Download/Cmty%20Literacy%20Resources%20Inventory%20-%20March%202011.pdf>

This document provides an example of a resource inventory for Kitimat, British Columbia Canada.

**Community School Assessment Checklist** <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/csassessment.pdf>

This tool contains a series of checklists to assist school and community leaders in creating and/or strengthening community school partnerships.

**The Community Toolbox** <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/default.aspx>

Developed by the University of Kansas, this website includes how-to guidance, toolkits, and other resources for building healthy communities. It covers topics such as: Assessing Community Needs and Resources, Promoting Interest and Participation in Initiatives, Developing a Strategic Plan, Evaluating Programs and Initiatives, Maintaining Quality, and much more.

**Conducting a Community Assessment** <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/css/ppt/chap2.htm>

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory provides an informative chapter on how to conduct a community assessment, an exercise by which a collaborative partnership gathers information on the current strengths, concerns, and conditions of children, families, and the community.

**Ensuring Quality in Head Start:** The FACES (Family and Children Experiences Survey) Study

<http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/performance-measurement/ensuring-quality-in-head-start-the-faces-study>

Head Start has developed an outcome-oriented accountability system, which combines scientific research with program-level reporting and monitoring, and is based on a consensus-driven set of criteria for program accountability.

**Evaluation Publications and Resources** <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/publications-resources>

From the Harvard Family Research Project.

**National Network for Collaboration** <http://crs.uvm.edu/ncco/>

Website provides information, activities, and links related to collaboration including: change process, identifying goals, assessing progress, communication skills, community capacity building.

- **Collaboration Process Checklist:** <http://crs.uvm.edu/ncco/cd/checklis.htm>

**Program Development and Evaluation** <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/>

This website from the University of Wisconsin–Extension provides detailed information on a program development model that includes situational analysis, priority setting, program action, the logical model, and evaluation.

**SMART Goal Resources** <http://www.aea11.k12.ia.us/ldr/processresultspd.html>

This link provides several resources (PowerPoint, guides, templates, and examples) for writing and monitoring SMART goals.

**SMART Goal Setting Guide** <http://www.ndgrowingfutures.org/files/pdf/SMARTGoalGuide.pdf>

This website provides steps, tips, and a template for setting SMART goals.

**The TE.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Technical Assistance & Quality Assurance Center**

[http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach\\_ta\\_qac.html](http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach_ta_qac.html)

This website addresses assuring quality. It provides built-in support and accountability for safeguarding your early childhood professional development investments.

**The Urban Child Institute**

<http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org/articles/research-to-policy/research/ensuring-quality-in-pre-k-classrooms-improves-outcomes-for-kids>

This website provides key initiatives, resources, and articles for ensuring quality in PreK as it relates to improved outcomes for children.

## Helpful Documents Included in Appendix A

1. **Asset Mapping**

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research developed this informational chapter on asset mapping. Asset mapping provides information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. Finally, asset mapping promotes community involvement, ownership, and empowerment.

2. **Activity: Core Beliefs for Ready Schools**

This assessment is intended to be completed by Community-District Teams to determine their collective level of Ready Schools thinking.

3. **Community–District Team Action Plan Template**

Teams can use this template to develop their action plan.

4. **The Community–District Team Self-Assessment**

The print version of this tool is in draft form. The online version can be found on the NC Ready Schools website.

# APPENDIX J, RESOURCES FOR GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY BUILDING

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## Websites

**The Center for Participatory Change (CPC)** <http://www.cpcwnc.org/>

Through grassroots organizing, capacity building, networking, and grant making, CPC helps rural people make improvements in their communities through projects that they plan, implement, and evaluate themselves. Provides a Toolkit for fund raising, grant writing, leadership skills, and running a non-profit; offers small grants to grassroots organizations in Western North Carolina.

**Grassroots Community Building** <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/thinkcity.html>

This website provides "what works" tips for community development.

**Organize to Win: A Grassroots Organizing Handbook** <http://www.britell.com/text/OrganizeToWin.pdf>

Provides essential elements and motivational strategies for Grassroots campaigns.

**Ready School + Ready Communities = Ready<sup>2</sup>**

<http://hugh.ncsmartstart.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Ready2.-The-Power-to-Connect-Ready-Schools-Ready-Communities-Slides-optimized.pdf>

This link is provided by the Down East Partnership for Children. It is a PowerPoint that describes the impact of Ready<sup>2</sup>.

**Working with the Community: Activist Milestone #11, Build a Coalition of Community Allies**

[http://www.results.org/skills\\_center/advocacy\\_how\\_tos/working\\_with\\_the\\_community/milestone\\_34/](http://www.results.org/skills_center/advocacy_how_tos/working_with_the_community/milestone_34/)

From the Advocacy How-Tos section of the Skills Center on the RESULTS website. The Skills Center also includes information on and resources for Group Building and Leadership and Fundraising.

## Articles

Atmore, E., & Grassroots Educare Trust, G. (South Africa). (1993). *A Community Development Approach to Early Childhood Educare Intervention in Disadvantaged Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED369496.pdf>

Atmore, E., & Grassroots Educare Trust, G. (South Africa). (1990). *Empowering Communities*. Retrieved from [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNABR086.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABR086.pdf)

Ford & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1991). *GOAL ONE Resource Directory: A Resource Directory of Selected Community-Based Collaborative Efforts To Improve Comprehensive Service Delivery to Young Children and Their Families*. Retrieved from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED342482&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED342482](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED342482&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED342482)



## Books (For Team Building Activities)

- Cain, J. & Jolliff, B. (2010). *Teamwork and Teamplay: A Guide to Cooperative, Challenge, and Adventure Activities That Build Confidence, Cooperation, Teamwork, Creativity, Trust, Decision Making...* Kendall Hunt Pub Co.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Teamwork-Teamplay-Cooperative-Activities-Cooperation/dp/0787245321>
- Cavert, C. (1999). *Games (and other stuff) for Group Book 1: Activities to Initiate Group Discussion.* Wood N Barnes.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Games-other-stuff-Group-Book/dp/1885473397>
- Cavert, C. (2000). *Games (and other stuff) for Group Book 2: More Activities to Initiate Group Discussion.* Wood N Barnes.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Games-other-stuff-group-Book/dp/1885473214>
- Cavert, C. & Frank, L. (2000). *Games (and other stuff) for Teachers: Classroom Activities that Promote Pro-Social Learning.* Wood N Barnes.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Games-other-stuff-Teachers-Activities/dp/1885473222>
- Eckert, L. (2000). *If Anybody Asks Me...: 1,001 Focused Questions for Educators, Counselors, And Therapists.* Wood N Barnes.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Anybody-Asks-Me-Counselors-Therapists/dp/1885473249>
- Jones, A. (2000). *Team-Building Activities for Every Group.* Rec Room Pub, Inc.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Team-Building-Activities-Every-Group-Alanna/dp/0966234162>
- Midura, D. & Glover, D. (1995). *More Team Building Challenges.* Human Kinetics.  
<http://www.amazon.com/More-Building-Challenges-Daniel-Midura/dp/0873227859>
- Newstrom, J. & Scannell, E. (1997). *Big Book of Team Building Games: Trust-Building Activities, Team Spirit Exercises, and Other Fun Things to Do.* McGraw-Hill.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Book-Team-Building-Games-Trust-Building/dp/0070465134>
- Rohnke, K. (1980). *Cowstails and Cobras 2: A Guide to Games, Initiatives, Ropes Courses & Adventure Curriculum.* Project Adventure.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Cowstails-Cobras-Initiatives-Adventure-Curriculum/dp/0840354347>
- Rohnke, K. (1984). *Silver Bullets: A Guide to Initiative Problems, Adventure Games and Trust Activities.* Project Adventure.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Silver-Bullets-Initiative-Adventure-Activities/dp/084035682X>
- Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1997). *Quicksilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership.* Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.  
<http://www.amazon.com/Quicksilver-Adventure-Initiative-Activities-Leadership/dp/0787216100>



## Documents Included in Appendix J

### 1. **Adopt-A-School**

Many industries, companies, and employees are actively engaged in educational institutions. This toolkit provides a guide for employers to structure their involvement. It shares lessons learned by other Adopt-A-School programs.

### 2. **Team Building Activities**

These 12 team building activities were provided by the Recreation Department at UNCW.

- » Stepping Stones
- » 3-6-9
- » Back to Back
- » Count Off
- » Cross the Line
- » Group Juggle
- » Helium Stick
- » Human Knot
- » Information Wheel
- » Magic Carpet
- » People Map
- » Picture of the Day



# APPENDIX K, COMMUNITY-DISTRICT TEAM ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

## Community-District Team Action Plan Template

*Purpose: To guide Community-District Teams implementing Ready Schools Initiatives*

**Pathways Addressed:**

Priority	Action (What will be done?)	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date (Month/Day)	Resources (financial, human, political, etc.) A. Resources Available B. Resources Needed	Potential Barriers
				A. B.	
				A. B.	
				A. B.	
				A. B.	
				A. B.	

Conducting Needs Assessments and Resource Inventories (How did you develop your goals to align with the needs and resources of families, schools, and the community?)

Monitoring Progress (How will you know that you are making progress?)

Review/Revise the Action Plan (When will your next review/revision occur? Who needs to be at the table? How will you determine that your action has been completed?)