

# Anne Arundel County's Five Year Strategic Action Plan for Improving School Readiness

Prepared by the Anne Arundel County Early Childhood Coalition

*Formerly the Anne Arundel County Leadership in Action Program*



**Vision Statement:**

Every child in Anne Arundel County has the optimal opportunity to begin learning at birth and to build, in his or her first five years, a solid foundation for his or her success.

**Mission Statement:**

The Anne Arundel County Early Childhood Coalition engages the community on behalf of children to make school readiness a priority in Anne Arundel County.

## Executive Summary

In October 2006, the Anne Arundel County Local Management Board for Children, Youth, and Families (LMB), in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, launched the Anne Arundel County Leadership in Action Program, also known as A-LAP. A-LAP's goal was to accelerate Anne Arundel County's efforts to ensure that all children enter school fully ready to learn by developing a comprehensive five-year strategic plan to help guide those efforts.

While the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) data available for the 2007-2008 school year shows that 72% of children in Anne Arundel County entered school fully ready to learn, it also shows that 28% of Anne Arundel County's kindergarten students were assessed as not being fully ready to learn. To quantify the impact of its plan to accelerate school readiness, A-LAP selected the Work Sampling System (WSS) as the indicator to measure progress toward meeting its goal.

A-LAP developed the strategies and actions herein to achieve measurable gains in school readiness while holding itself and others accountable for implementing the plan. The strategies presented are grounded in best and promising practices, and are intended to be used as a "roadmap" to guide policymakers, legislators, parents, caregivers, the business community, early care and education providers, healthcare providers, and other concerned citizens. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that all of our children enter school fully ready to learn.



The goals presented in the plan are adapted from the school readiness objectives set forth by the Maryland’s Early Care and Education Committee, and highlight the importance of the relationship between school readiness and the following: good physical and mental health; parental involvement in the education process; parental empowerment; and, access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate early care and education programs; A-LAP’s goals are as follows:

- All Anne Arundel County children, birth to age five, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families.
- All Anne Arundel County parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child’s first teacher.
- All Anne Arundel County children, birth through age five, and their families will receive the necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure that they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.
- All Anne Arundel County early care and education providers will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.
- All Anne Arundel County residents will understand the value of quality early care and education, and what it means to achieve school readiness.
- Anne Arundel County will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.



A-LAP’s goal is that Anne Arundel County will continue to see the percentage of kindergartners assessed as fully ready to learn maintain its upward trend toward the 100th percentile as the strategies presented in this plan are implemented over the next five years.

## Leadership in Action—Background and Overview of A-LAP

In October 2006, the Local Management Board of Anne Arundel County, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched the Anne Arundel County Leadership in Action Program, also known as A-LAP. A-LAP's goal was to accelerate Anne Arundel County's efforts to ensure that all children enter school fully ready to learn.

To achieve this goal, a group of 40 leaders were invited to participate in the A-LAP process—leaders who were identified as being the most able to affect school readiness. Those leaders, representing various areas of the public and private sector, State and local government, and advocacy and service-providing organizations, committed themselves to developing a plan to guide Anne Arundel County's efforts to make a measurable difference in the number of kindergarteners entering school fully ready to learn by November 2007.

The process of developing this plan occurred over an 18-month period during which A-LAP members participated in nine two-day planning sessions to accelerate progress with meeting the objectives established by the A-LAP.

As a result of the A-LAP process, the following objectives were met:

- Immediate actions were identified and implemented to increase the number of kindergarteners assessed as fully ready to learn during the 2007-2008 school year.
- Interagency collaboration and leadership increased significantly to create and implement a school readiness agenda for Anne Arundel County.
- A five-year strategic plan was developed to guide Anne Arundel County's efforts to ensure that all children enter school fully ready to learn.



To maintain consistency with the school readiness agendas that were established for the State of Maryland through the Maryland Leadership in Action Program and for Baltimore City through the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program, the A-LAP consulted the strategic plans developed through those respective planning processes to guide the development of Anne Arundel County's school readiness agenda.

In doing so, the A-LAP presents its goals, strategies, and action items in a way that will address and eliminate the barriers that often impede a child's ability to acquire the skills needed to be successful in school—barriers that are consistently documented through ongoing data and research, and are presented in the aforementioned plans as well. When fully implemented, this plan will strengthen Anne Arundel County's impact on school readiness for all children.



While the A-LAP members came together with the intent to create a plan that will ensure that all children enter school fully ready to learn, its members recognize that this result will not be easily achieved. However, it is because of the A-LAP process that a strong foundation has been built for school readiness in Anne Arundel County—a foundation that will have a lasting, long-term impact on generations of families to come.

## **The Importance of the First Five Years**

Children typically acquire the skills necessary for achieving success in school during the first five years of their lives. Research on brain development shows that ninety percent of brain growth occurs before age five. This period of human growth and development has been cited as being the time during which a child has the greatest opportunity to acquire the cognitive and social skills needed for success in school and in life.

Research also shows that children who enter school not fully ready to learn continue to struggle for the remainder of their academic careers. This can have an irreparable impact on their ability to become productive, self-sufficient adults because they have not acquired the basic foundational skills necessary to make a successful transition through all stages of human growth and development.

Furthermore, children who are assessed as not fully ready to learn often result in higher placement in special education programs, increased rates of juvenile delinquency, higher high-school drop-out rates, lower enrollment in higher education programs, and decreased readiness to meet the cognitive demands of the workforce—critical issues that will have a negative impact on Anne Arundel County’s economy—which is why school readiness must remain a priority.

## Understanding and Measuring School Readiness

The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) defines the early learning standards and indicators of what children should know and should be able to do before they enter school. The MMSR includes the Work Sampling System (WSS) as its assessment component, which helps teachers evaluate the skills, knowledge, behavior, and academic accomplishments of their students across a variety of curricular areas<sup>ii</sup>.

The WSS measures a kindergarten student's readiness using 30 indicators that are organized in seven domains—Social and Personal Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking, Social Studies, The Arts, and Physical Development and Health. Through ongoing observation, recording, and evaluating everyday classroom experiences and activities, teachers gain a better understanding of what their students know, are able to do, and the skills they need to work on.

After the teachers have completed the assessment process using the WSS, they are required to report the data collected to MSDE for further review, analysis, and compilation. The data is reported and analyzed according to the following domains: Race and Ethnicity; Gender; Prior Early Care; Special Education; Limited English Proficiency; and, Enrollment in the Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) Program<sup>iii</sup>.

The assessment results reported reflect the percent of students who have reached one of the following levels of readiness: Full, Approaching, or Developing<sup>iv</sup>. Once compiled and reported, the WSS data is then used as an indicator to help educators assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of young children, and to understand the systemic needs that must be met in order to ensure all children will be successful.

To quantify the impact of its plan to accelerate school readiness, the A-LAP selected the WSS as the indicator to measure progress with meeting its goal. A review and analysis of the WSS data available for Anne Arundel County shows that although the percent of children entering school fully ready to learn is increasing, there is still a considerable amount of work to do to reach our goal of ensuring that all children enter school fully ready to learn.

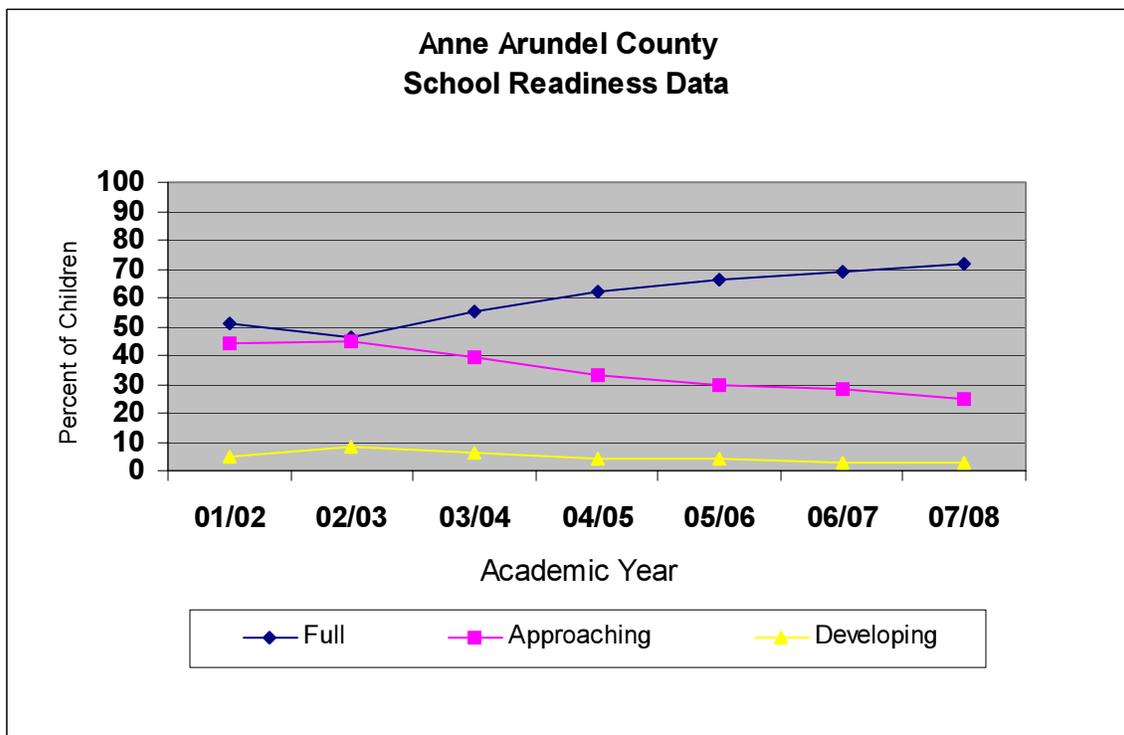
As illustrated in the chart below, 72% of kindergarten students were assessed as being fully ready to learn during the 2007-2008 school year. During the 2007-2008 school year, 5,281 kindergarten students were screened using the MMSR, and 72% of those students were assessed as being fully ready to learn while 28% (approximately 1,478) were assessed as either approaching or developing readiness.

The chart also shows assessment outcomes for the 2006-2007 school year when 4,455 kindergarten students were assessed using the MMSR, and 69% of those students were assessed as being fully ready to learn while 31% (approximately 1,380) students were assessed as being either approaching or developing readiness. It is equally important to note that children in Anne Arundel County are entering school ready to learn at rates higher than the State average.

### Why Invest In School Readiness?

Investing in high-quality early childhood education not only benefits children and their families; it also benefits Anne Arundel County as a whole. A growing body of longitudinal research studies clearly document the return to the public on investments in high-quality early care and education.

Perhaps the most frequently cited research that supports the importance of investing in early childhood education is the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, which illustrates the economic, educational, and social benefits of comprehensive early childhood development programs. Recently released data associated with this study indicates that the total benefit cost-ratio is \$17 for every dollar invested, and that the benefit cost-ratio, with respect to the benefits that went to the general public, is \$13 to \$1<sup>6</sup>. Further evidence of the benefits of investing in school readiness is highlighted in the assessment and evaluation of the Abbott Preschool Program in New Jersey and in the Oklahoma Pre-K Program.



Source: Ready at Five Partnership, 2007-2008

Additionally, a recent assessment of kindergarten students in New Jersey's highest poverty school district, the Abbott District, showed marked improvement in the 2003-2004 school year compared with previous years. In 1999, the Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey mandated that the Abbott District provide preschool programs for the three- and four-year old children residing there. The results of this program illustrate that language scores were significantly higher during the 2003-2004 school year compared with scores from four years earlier, and that the percent of children scoring "very strong" in early reading skills increased to 47% from 42% in the preceding year<sup>vii</sup>.

An evaluation of Oklahoma's Pre-K Program, which is available to all four-year old children in the state of Oklahoma, showed very strong gains, as evidenced by the 31% increase in cognitive skills as well as by the 18% increase in language skills. Latino children demonstrated a 54% increase in test scores<sup>viii</sup>.



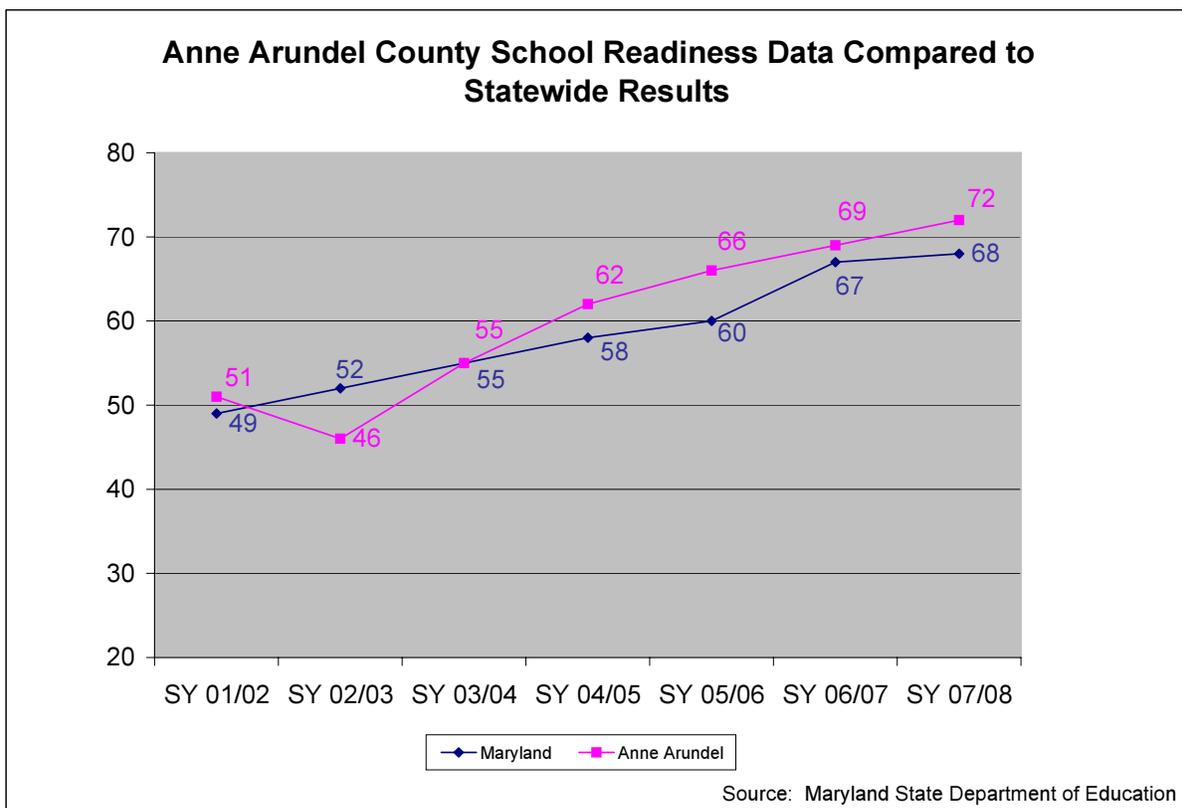
While support for investing in school readiness has traditionally been associated with the disciplines of early childcare and education, bankers and economists are now speaking out on the economic and social benefits of investing in early childhood development. In 2003, the Minneapolis Federal Trade Reserve reviewed the research available on investments in early childhood development programs and concluded that the public could expect a 16% return on investments in early childhood education programs—a stronger rate of return than from traditional urban economic development investments.

In a report issued in 2004 on the benefits of investing in school readiness, the Economic Policy Institute stated that “the United States should be investing in high-quality early childhood development programs to improve the quality of life for millions of children, reduce crime, make the workforce of the future more productive, and strengthen the overall economy. The resulting budget relief gained by providing early childhood development services to poor children will ultimately contribute to funding some of the nation’s most pressing future needs”<sup>ix</sup>.

While citing every research study that addresses the importance of the investment in school readiness is beyond the scope of this narrative, all of the findings cited in this text clearly show a strong correlation between investment in school readiness and positive outcomes and returns. Even more poignant is the strong correlation between poor school readiness and the negative outcomes that can have a detrimental impact on a child’s quality of life well into adulthood. However, having the opportunity to impact economic return through collective investment in school readiness is promising.

## Where Are We Now?

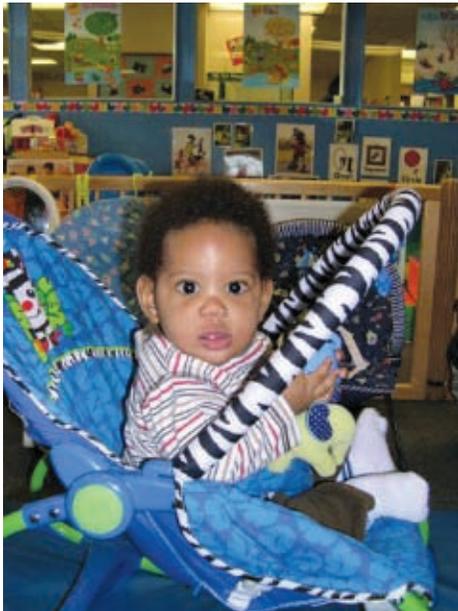
Current MMSR data shows that the number of Anne Arundel County kindergarteners entering school fully ready to learn has steadily increased over the past five years, yet it also shows that Anne Arundel County still has a considerable way to travel on the path of achieving its goal of having all children entering school fully ready to learn. It is also important to note that over the past four years, the number of children entering school fully ready to learn was higher than the State Average.



MMSR data released by MSDE for the 2007-2008 school year indicates that 28% of all children who entered Kindergarten were assessed as not being fully ready to learn—approximately 1,478 students. While many factors contribute to differences in readiness levels among students, A-LAP has played a vital role in increasing communication among the key stakeholders who have a role to play in ensuring school readiness in Anne Arundel County. This collaboration has created a forum for A-LAP to identify several factors believed to contribute to those differences.

Perhaps the most notable of the factors identified include the following:

- Lack of high-quality early childcare and early childhood education programs for all children.
- Lack of knowledge of resources and supports to families with young children.
- Lack of transportation to access available resources and services.
- Lack of training opportunities and incentives offered to childcare providers to maintain a quality childcare labor force and reduce high rates of staff turnover.
- Lack of culturally and linguistically competent services to meet the needs of Anne Arundel County’s rapidly growing diverse population.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of what school readiness means.
- An underlying “turf battle” among service providers when delivering services.
- Lack of support to parents who require additional assistance and support in parenting.



Sadly, these factors reverberate throughout Anne Arundel County’s continuum of children and family services, particularly within the service delivery models for social programs and early educational services—services that are designed to help the very children who most often do not receive their full benefit due to chronic under-funding, which often results in decreased access to services for all who are in need.

Even more troubling is the strong correlation between the number of students who were assessed as not being fully ready to learn and socio-economic status, as indicated by enrollment in the Free and Reduced Meal Program (FARM), coupled with other identifying indicators such as race, gender, prior early care, special education, and limited English Proficiency\*.

## **Anne Arundel County's Systemic Strengths**

Even in the midst of the ongoing societal issues and systemic challenges that have had some impact on the 28% of kindergarteners who were assessed as not having the skills needed to be successful in school, Anne Arundel County has been engaged in ongoing efforts to ensure the success of all children entering school.

In 2000, the LMB, through its Early Childhood Community Partnership Agreement with the then Governor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families, identified early childhood education as a priority for Anne Arundel County. As a result of that partnership, funding provided to the County to support initiatives focused on early childhood development and education, the Local Planning Team, a local group of stakeholders vested in improving outcomes associated with early childhood education, was convened to provide oversight of the process of identifying and implementing strategies funded through this agreement with the State.

This increased interagency collaboration, as well as the increased number and quality of programs that were available to provide support for children aged birth to five years have significantly impacted Anne Arundel County's ability to turn the curve. Examples of the programs that have consistently demonstrated their leverage to turn the curve for Anne Arundel County children are the BEST Program, Infants and Toddlers Autism Project, Early Literacy programs, Tots Line Live, and Home Visiting.

Perhaps Anne Arundel County's biggest strength is its existing leadership on Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Development Programs. The LMB, through its Community Partnership Agreement with the State of Maryland, remains positioned to provide leadership on the local level around this very important issue. Maintaining very close and successful working relationships with the key stakeholder agencies represented on the Local Planning Team, especially with the Arundel County Public School System, the LMB has been able to continue to serve as the interagency convener of and facilitator of this process.

It is because of the collective results that have been achieved through the Community Partnership Agreement that the LMB was able to secure additional funding to support the continuation of the early childhood programs that demonstrate results.

## **What Will It Take to Improve School Readiness In Anne Arundel County?**

While the A-LAP made considerable efforts to increase the number of students entering school fully ready to learn, there is still a significant amount to be done to reach the goal of ensuring full school readiness for all students in Anne Arundel County. In developing this plan, members of the A-LAP explored possible answers to the following questions—What are the best strategies to pursue? What efforts can guarantee the best return on investment, considering the limited resources that are available to support this work? What best practices have demonstrated gains in school readiness?

Perhaps the most valuable lesson learned during the A-LAP process was that there is no single solution or best way to answer any of those questions. One of the most notable accomplishments achieved as a result of the A-LAP process is the development of Anne Arundel County's first coordinated plan for improving school readiness—a plan that was informed by key stakeholder agencies, organizations, and community members who have a role to play in improving school readiness.

In creating this five-year strategic plan, the A-LAP developed strategies that were grounded in the school readiness objectives set forth by the Maryland's Early Care and Education Committee. Those objectives speak to the following—that children need to be in good health, both physically and mentally, to actively engage in learning; that parents must be encouraged and supported to fulfill their role as their child's first teacher; and that children must have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate early child care and education programs that aid in their preparation for school<sup>xi</sup>.

To that end, the A-LAP identified the following goals to drive Anne Arundel County's collective efforts to ensure that all children enter school fully ready to learn:

- **Goal 1:** All Anne Arundel County children, birth to age five, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families.
- **Goal 2:** All Anne Arundel County parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.
- **Goal 3:** All Anne Arundel County children, birth through age five, and their families will receive the necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure that they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.
- **Goal 4:** All Anne Arundel County early care and education providers will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.
- **Goal 5:** All Anne Arundel County residents will understand the value of quality early care and education and the means to achieve school readiness.
- **Goal 6:** Anne Arundel County will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.



## Understanding A-LAP's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Improving School Readiness in Anne Arundel County

The strategies and action items that complete A-LAP's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Improving School Readiness in Anne Arundel County are laid out in greater detail in the pages that follow. For every strategy, there are action steps that detail the major activities to be completed to implement the strategy, and a time frame for noting when those action steps should occur.

Additionally, each action step is coded in two ways:

**Level of Investment** – The approximate level of funding needed to implement each action step within a strategy:

\$	=	\$0-\$25,499
\$\$	=	\$25,000-\$49,999
\$\$\$	=	\$50,000-\$74,999
\$\$\$\$	=	\$75,000+

**Degree of Difficulty** – Indicates the degree to which new or different methods of working together or collaborating are required.

☆	=	Requires no change in how we work together toward Implementation.
☆☆	=	Requires moderate changes in how we work together.
☆☆☆	=	Requires significant new approaches to working together.



**Goal 1: All Anne Arundel County children, birth through age 5, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families.**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Decrease financial barriers to enrolling children in quality early care and education programs so all working parents have access to full-day, full-year child care	Advocate for increased funding for child care subsidies to decrease parent co-payments, increase parent income eligibility, and increase provider reimbursement rates	★ \$	2007/ongoing
	Conduct outreach to ensure all eligible children are receiving child care subsidies	★ \$	2007/ongoing
	Investigate the possibility of creating a county-level child care subsidy program	★ \$	2007/ongoing
Increase the supply of quality child care by increasing the number of accredited early care and education programs and the number of credentialed providers	Advocate for continued funding and incentives for accreditation and credentialing programs	★ \$	2007/ongoing
	Conduct outreach to increase enrollment of providers in the Maryland Child Care Credential and state and national accreditation programs	★ \$	2007/ongoing
	Provide support to enable providers to become credentialed and for programs to become accredited	★★ \$	2007/ongoing
	Identify and advocate for additional incentives for providers to seek advanced level child care training and higher education in ECE, including college scholarships, loan forgiveness and paid leave or paid substitutes	★ \$	2007/ongoing



**Goal 1: Continued**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
<p>Expand the supply of high quality early care and education programs that provide services for all children, including non-English speakers and children with special health and mental health needs, and support existing programs to keep them in operation</p> 	<p>Identify areas with an inadequate supply of high quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) slots and recruit and recruit new providers, including non-traditional child care employees (such as retired persons and men) and non-English speakers</p>	<p>☆☆☆ \$\$</p>	2008
	<p>Create incentives for new providers and for providers who have been in the field to continue to improve their skills</p>	<p>☆☆ \$\$\$</p>	2009
	<p>Provide technical assistance to persons interesting in starting a child care business</p>	<p>☆☆ \$\$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Support MSDE's efforts, as outlined in their strategic plan, to develop an orientation kit for new providers</p>	<p>☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Continue to support providers who provide care during non-traditional hours</p>	<p>☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Increase informal child care providers participation in training and technical assistance in an effort to improve the quality of care</p>	<p>☆☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Develop a regional plan that identifies and strengthens underserved areas and populations identified through data collection and a needs assessment</p>	<p>☆☆ \$\$\$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Provide training and technical assistance to early care and education programs to provide culturally competent outreach and accommodations for families in their home language and culture and to recognize diverse learning styles</p>	<p>☆☆ \$\$\$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Advocate for expansion of early childhood mental health consultation services to support providers caring for children with behavioral or mental health needs</p>	<p>☆☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Increase the availability of child care options for children with mental health needs (explore the possibility of bringing a Therapeutic Nursery to Anne Arundel County)</p>	<p>☆☆ \$\$\$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Make health consultations available to ECE programs</p>	<p>☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Advocate for expansion of Early Head Start programming in Anne Arundel County and partner with existing child care programs following the Early Head Start model, including family child care</p>	<p>☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing
	<p>Advocate for family support models</p>	<p>☆ \$</p>	2007/ongoing

**Goal 1: Continued**



Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Expand full-day, full-year options for children currently in part-day programs during the school year	Promote partnerships among the school system, Head Start and child care to create collaborations that blend services to create developmentally appropriate full-day options for families	☆☆ \$\$\$	2009
Increase compensation for early care and education providers as a means of attracting and retaining highly trained staff to the field	Create new incentives and means of compensation for providers	☆☆ \$\$\$	2007/ongoing
	Participate in "Worthy Wage Day" activities and educate the public about the issue of provider compensation	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Increase awareness about the turnover-rate and its connection to low wages	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Advocate for health care benefits for ECE providers	☆ \$	2007/ongoing





**Goal 2: All Anne Arundel County parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Conduct outreach to and education of parents regarding school readiness, and promote school readiness strategies they can employ	Support fairs/events where parents of young children might be in order to promote school readiness	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Seek opportunities (e.g. fairs, libraries, physicians' offices, clinics, media) throughout the county to provide parents and caregivers with information about child development and early care and education programs and school readiness resources	☆☆ - ☆☆☆ \$ - \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Identify agencies, faith communities, doctors, and community organizations to engage them in school readiness activities	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Promote resources, such as Tots Line and the Public Library, where parents can go for advice, information, and referrals	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Increase the number of Parents as Teachers home visitors to parents with young children	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Provide Parents as Teachers training for existing early childhood home visitors	☆☆ \$\$	2008

**Goal 2: Continued**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Coordinate early learning and social development activities in a variety of settings	Partner with the public library system in providing programming to promote school readiness for pre-school children	☆☆	2007/ongoing
	Provide parent/child activities in a variety of settings at times that are convenient for all parents	☆☆ - ☆☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Continue to reach out to families from all backgrounds, especially those that are at risk of not being ready for school, and distribute appropriate school readiness materials	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Identify and promote reading programs that encourage reading to children at home, such as Reach Out and Read	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Promote positive language, communication, and developmentally appropriate play	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Create and expand book donation and book recycling programs to provide books to low-income parents	☆☆ - ☆☆☆ \$ - \$\$\$	2007/ongoing
Empower families to advocate for their own children and to participate in policy development and family involvement activities	Connect parents with existing agencies who may be seeking parent involvement	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Expand opportunities to involve families as partners in early care and education policy development	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing



**Goal 3: All Anne Arundel County children, birth through age five, and their families will receive the necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure that they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Increase access to and awareness of income support benefits and resources, to include health and mental health care benefits, for which a family may be eligible	Identify all programs in Anne Arundel County that provide services to the targeted population	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Collect information on the current income support benefits and resources for which a family may be eligible	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Develop fact sheets that will include websites and phone numbers for children and families in Anne Arundel County	☆ \$	January 1, 2008
	Coordinate the distribution of the fact sheets and sample resources through multiple points of entry along the continuum of children and family services (e.g. child-serving agencies, Faith Based Community Organizations (FBCO)s, Community Based Organizations (CBO)s, medical offices, emergency rooms, etc.)	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Increase knowledge and awareness of resources available to children and families within the service provider community	Educate and inform health care practitioners, child care providers, and service providers regarding the importance of providing information about income support benefits and health and mental health care benefits to un-/underinsured families	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Coordinate, develop, and implement "Resource Briefings," to serve as a medium through which information on income support benefits and health and mental health care benefits are made available to children and families in Anne Arundel County	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Increase access to appropriate substance abuse treatment programs available to pregnant women and family members/ caregivers of children aged birth to five years	Work with Anne Arundel County's Alcohol and Drug Council to address the issue of providing substance abuse treatment options for pregnant women and for parents in its 3-Year Strategic Plan	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Research funding opportunities and identify potential accountability partners to support the expansion and implementation of substance abuse treatment programs/services for pregnant women and parents	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Improve the identification of maternal depression and other parental mental health issues	Promote and advocate for maternal depression screenings as a component of prenatal care and in pediatric primary care sites	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Build an integrated system of care for early childhood mental health by providing an array of consultative and clinical services to children and families	Conduct a needs assessment/gap analysis to determine the level of need for early childhood mental health services	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing

**Goal 3: Continued**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Increase parental awareness of the value of consistent, quality medical care by a primary care provider and its relationship with improved health outcomes	Identify funding sources and potential accountability partners to support the implementation of all recommendations for building the integrated system of care for early childhood mental health for children and families in Anne Arundel County to ensure the sustainability of existing programs that have proven to be effective (e.g. BEST, Maryland Infants and Toddlers, etc.)	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Distribute information to parents that will explain the benefits of choosing a primary medical care provider	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Sponsor community events designed to provide a forum for primary care providers, community members, and service providers to learn more about programs and resources available to children and families	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Develop best practices that help coordinate and facilitate the referral and follow-up process between primary medical care providers and community-based programs/service providers	☆☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Increase routine developmental screenings conducted by primary care providers	Educate parents on the types of developmental screenings their children should receive and at what age thereby empowering them to request the appropriate screenings, as needed	☆ \$	2007/ongoing



**Goal 3: Continued**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
 <p>Increase parental knowledge about the health issues that affect young children</p>	Partner with ECE programs, CBOs, FBCOs, and child-serving agencies to conduct educational seminars that increase awareness about childhood asthma	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Partner with ECE programs, CBOs, FBCOs, and child-serving agencies to conduct educational seminars to increase awareness about dental screenings and dental treatment options available for children aged birth to five years	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Partner with ECE programs, CBOs, FBCOs, and child-serving agencies to conduct educational seminars to increase awareness about good nutrition, obesity, and obesity prevention among children aged birth to five years	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Initiate a public information campaign targeting parents that increases awareness about childhood obesity and its impact on school readiness	☆☆☆ \$\$\$	2007/ongoing
	Advocate for the integration of physical fitness activities into the daily schedule of all ECE programs	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Require that all licensed childcare providers obtain training in childhood fitness and nutrition	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Ensure that all ECE programs, FBCOs, CBOs, and child-serving agencies provide information to parents about childhood nutrition and physical fitness	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Partner with ECE programs, CBOs, FBCOs, and child-serving agencies to conduct educational seminars that raise awareness about the importance of childhood immunization	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
<p>Improve rates of identification and service delivery for children aged birth to five years with developmental disabilities</p>	Develop targeted strategies focused on providing outreach and information to the parents of homeless children on the importance of childhood immunization	☆☆ \$\$	2007/ongoing
	Expand awareness of current programs and services available throughout Anne Arundel County that provide services to children aged birth to five years with developmental disabilities such as the Infants and Toddlers Program and Child Find	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Support the expansion/replication of effective service delivery models and programs focused on serving children aged birth to five years with developmental disabilities	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
<p>Improve partnerships with healthcare providers to get all children, aged birth to five years, ready for school</p>	Increase the number of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals who are qualified to conduct developmental screenings of children aged birth to five years	☆☆ \$	2007/ongoing
<p>Improve partnerships with healthcare providers to get all children, aged birth to five years, ready for school</p>	Provide healthcare providers with resources to address the developmental issues that affect school readiness	☆☆ \$	2008/ongoing

**Goal 4: All Anne Arundel County early care and education providers will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Coordinate and expand professional development opportunities for Anne Arundel County early care and education providers	Support pre-service training increases proposed by MSDE's Department of Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan for child care center staff and family child care providers	☆ \$	When released
	Make Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) training available for all early care and education providers	☆☆☆ \$\$	2012
	Fully implement the articulation of training hours to college credits based on the existing agreement with Anne Arundel Community College	☆☆ \$	2012
	Expand participation in the Maryland Child Care Credential program	☆☆ \$\$\$	2007/ongoing
	Provide support for professional development activities, including training, mentoring, technical assistance and accreditation support	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
	Promote providers' skills in early literacy through collaboration with Anne Arundel County Public Library	☆ \$	2007/ongoing
Establish opportunities for joint staff development activities for early care and education professionals	Expand early care and education staff development activities offered by the local school system and other child serving agencies to include participants from regulated early care and education programs	☆☆ \$	September 2008
Establish opportunities for early care and education professionals to improve their knowledge of services supporting school readiness	Link Kindergarten teachers with early care and education professionals in feeder programs for networking and sharing of school readiness information and expectations	☆☆ \$	September 2008
Provide school readiness training to parents and informal providers in community-based settings	Train early care and education professionals to align curricula between early care and education programs and Kindergarten	☆☆ \$	September 2008 / ongoing
	Partner with Arundel Child Care Connections to provide an annual orientation session for early care and education providers on existing child services in the county	☆☆ \$	September 2008
	Develop an on-line resource guide for child care professionals on county services that support school readiness	☆☆ \$	September 2008
	Provide school readiness training and material appropriate for parents and informal providers and conduct outreach to local community groups to form partnerships	☆☆ \$	December 2008



**Goal 5:** All Anne Arundel County residents will understand the value of quality early care and education as the means to achieve school readiness.

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
 <p>Develop a public awareness and engagement campaign for Anne Arundel County on the link between quality early care and education &amp; school readiness</p>	Coordinate with the statewide Countdown to Kindergarten Campaign. Disseminate Countdown to Kindergarten information to local media and county residents	☆☆ \$	December 2007
	Connect with appropriate agencies to develop a media plan to promote the value of quality early care and education programs in improving school readiness	☆ \$	January 2008
	Partner with local newspapers and other media outlets to deliver our message	☆ \$	February 2008
	Develop a logo for all campaign materials denoting the importance of early learning in school readiness and ask partners to promote it when they distribute material	☆ \$	March 2008
	Partner with anyone who works with families with children birth to five to promote the link between quality early experiences and school readiness	☆☆ \$	2008/ongoing
	Agencies will partner to encourage administrators and teachers to participate in Countdown to Kindergarten activities, to disseminate school readiness information to parents of preschool children with kindergarten registration packets and to collaborate with feeder early care and education program staff	☆☆ \$	January 2008
	Celebrate successes in improving school readiness in Anne Arundel County	☆☆ \$	Annually
	Cultivate non-traditional champions to deliver the message of the importance of quality early care and education programs	☆☆ \$	April 2008
	Educate tax-payers about the importance of investing in programs that support families with young children	☆☆☆ \$	April 2008
Encourage employers to adopt family friendly employee practices	Coordinate with Arundel Child Care Connections to hold trainings for employers on the Maryland Child Care Resource Network’s Employer Tool Kit for implementing work/life programs	☆☆ \$	2008 / ongoing
	Determine what incentives may be available to encourage the adoption of family friendly policies in Anne Arundel County and what new policies could be implemented	☆☆ \$	2008 / ongoing
	Review public and private employers’ policies to determine whether they support employees’ work/life needs	☆☆ \$\$	December 2008



**Goal 6: Anne Arundel County will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.**

Strategy	Action Steps	Degree of Difficulty / Cost	Timeframe
Create an Anne Arundel County School Readiness Advisory Council to promote school readiness efforts through collaboration and to monitor implementation of this school readiness plan	<p>Develop committee's roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Include all stakeholders with particular attention to removing barriers that would inhibit participation by representatives of families in need of quality school readiness improvement</p> <p>Review plans to improve school readiness and monitor implementation</p>	☆☆ \$	2008/ongoing
Create a staff position for an ECE Coordinator in the Anne Arundel County Executive's office	Provide staff support to the Advisory Council and facilitate collaboration efforts to improve school readiness	☆☆ \$\$\$	July 2008
Promote county-wide knowledge about creating and sustaining ready schools	Provide information on characteristics of "Ready Schools" as outlined in the report Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation	☆☆ \$	December 2007
Identify sustainable funding streams to support quality ECE programs and improve compensation of ECE staff	Work to identify public and private resources for school readiness efforts	☆☆☆ \$	December 2007/ongoing
Conduct an economic impact study to determine the value of quality ECE programs	<p>Identify a county economic impact manager</p> <p>Review economic impact studies in other states</p> <p>Identify funding to conduct a study of the impact of the ECE delivery system on AA Co economy</p>	☆☆☆ \$\$	July 2008
Assure accountability and integrity in the implementation of this plan through ongoing evaluation and oversight	<p>Use results-based accountability, decision making and budgeting</p> <p>Review annual progress on goal of <i>All Children in Anne Arundel County Entering School Fully Ready to Learn</i> and issue progress report on results</p>	☆☆ \$	March 2008/ongoing

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>x</sup> Special Early Childhood Report: The National Educational Goals Panel. October 1997.

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