

Readiness Matters 2016 Business Leaders Brief

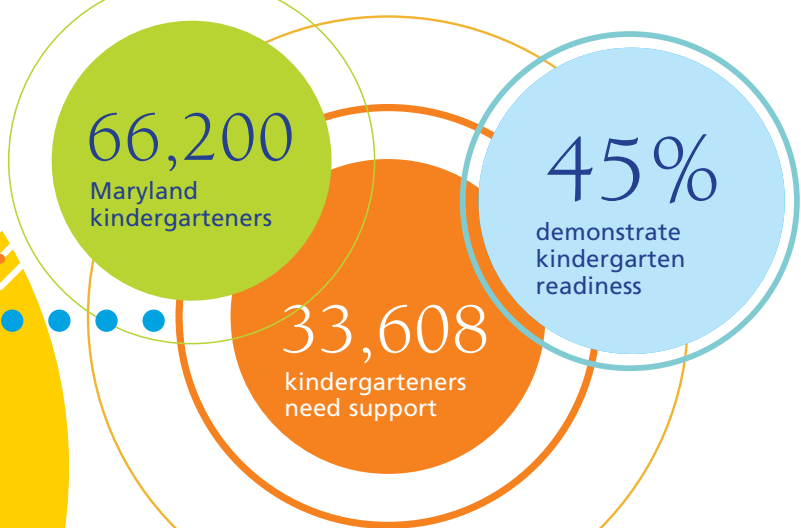
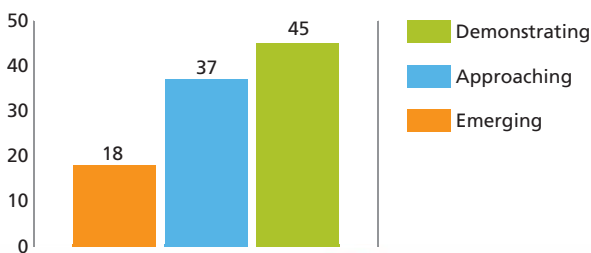
Ready for Kindergarten

In school year 2014-2015, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) launched Ready for Kindergarten (R4K): Maryland's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System to align with the State's more rigorous PreK-12 College and Career-Ready Standards. These standards raised the bar for all school-age students, including kindergarteners. As part of R4K, kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to measure the specific skills and behaviors that children bring with them to school and should have mastered prior to entering kindergarten. The KRA relies on developmentally appropriate performance tasks and observations of children's work and play. Kindergarten readiness levels are identified as Demonstrating Readiness, Approaching Readiness, and Emerging Readiness.

Our Challenge

More than 66,000 children entered Maryland's kindergarten classrooms this school year; less than half (45%) demonstrate the foundational knowledge, skills and behaviors that enable a child to fully participate and succeed in school. Kindergarteners who demonstrate readiness are prepared for the academic rigor of today's kindergarten programs and are on the path toward academic success.

Kindergarten Readiness



The data are clear: too many of Maryland's children are coming to school unprepared for kindergarten and school success. This year, 33,608 children (55%) started school without the skills to do kindergarten work. To put this into perspective: the number of children who were unprepared for kindergarten on the first day of school would fill half the seats in Ravens Stadium, and is equivalent to the number of people living in Garrett County or the City of Annapolis.

What's more, the data show that 18% of kindergarteners possess minimal foundational skills and behaviors and require substantial assistance. There is a significant cost to the lack of readiness: Maryland spends approximately \$14 million each year on children that repeat kindergarten.

America's future depends on a highly skilled workforce, but the majority of our children aren't developing the skills and abilities that will prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow: only 43% of kindergarteners demonstrate readiness in Language & Literacy and 40% in mathematics. Worse, children from low-income families, those learning the English language (ELLs), or those who have a disability consistently enter school without the foundational skills and behaviors needed to succeed in kindergarten and require more instructional support or targeted interventions.

Research indicates that the skills and knowledge children have upon entering school are strongly predictive of future academic performance. Unfortunately, children who enter kindergarten behind their peers are unlikely to catch up.

Achievement Gap Data

Children from three subgroups continue to enter school without the skills and behaviors needed to succeed in kindergarten and may require more instructional support or targeted interventions. As a result, there are achievement gaps between children from these subgroups and kindergarteners as a whole.

Subgroup	Percentage	Gap
Disability Status		
19% Children w/ Disability		28 pts
47% Children w/o Disability		
Language Status		
21% English Language Learners		29 pts
50% English Proficient		
Income Status		
33% Children from Low-Income Households		22 pts
55% Children from Mid- to High-Income Households		

The Solution

We know what to do. Robust evidence suggests that having children participate in high-quality developmentally appropriate early care and education programming can:

- Increase pre-math skills by as much as 21%;
- Increase pre-reading skills by as much as 52% - 74% for low-income children;
- Reduce special education placements by as much as 43%;
- Increase graduation rates by as much as 44%; and
- Increase median earnings by as much as 36%.

The 2015-2016 KRA data confirm that programs like public PreK are beneficial and prepare Maryland's young children for school:

- 44% of children enrolled in public PreK programs the year prior to starting school demonstrate the foundational skills and behaviors essential for kindergarten success – within 1 point of the statewide average.
- Kindergarteners who attended public PreK programs – the majority of whom are from low-income households – are better prepared for school than their peers (15 points higher than those at home or in informal care the year prior to school and 11 points higher than kindergarteners from low-income households).

The Time Is Now: Make It Count

Over the last several years, Maryland has made many strategic investments to identify and eliminate the achievement gaps that begin before children enter kindergarten. The impact of these investments, which are very different from what has been done previously, has yet to emerge. If we are to strengthen Maryland's early care and education system and ensure that all children enter kindergarten fully ready to succeed, we need your help.

“We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we wait until they reach school - a time when it may be too late to intervene.” Dr. James Heckmann, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2000)

Visit www.ReadyAtFive.org for Readiness Matters 2016: statewide publication, statewide issue brief and PowerPoint, customized jurisdictional issue briefs and PowerPoints, information for families, and a business brief. Scan here to see more school readiness data:



Business leaders can play a pivotal role in improving the kindergarten readiness of Maryland's young children. Here's what you can do:

Stay Informed

- Get the Ready At Five monthly e-newsletters and ParentTips.
- Attend a Ready At Five School Readiness Symposium.

Tell Others

- Distribute to your employees and customers Ready At Five's free resources and information about the importance of the early years and the benefits of high quality early childhood education. Use traditional and social media outlets to spread the word and show your support for Maryland's youngest children.

Invest

- Make early care and education a key part of your company's and foundation's philanthropy and corporate social responsibility efforts, as well as personal giving.

Get Involved

- Host a Ready At Five business breakfast to share information with your colleagues, friends, and peers from civic groups.
- Adopt family-friendly business policies that support employees with young children and help them become more involved and engaged with their child's education.
- Provide time for your employees to volunteer with local early childhood programs, Judy Centers, and public schools, lending their expertise, talent and energy. Recognize and reward employees who volunteer.

Influence Decision Makers

- Tell your elected officials that you support Maryland's continued public investments in early childhood education.
- Connect with Local Education Agencies (school systems) and Early Childhood Advisory Councils. Help statewide and local leaders develop investment strategies that will support and sustain the future of our early care and education system in Maryland.
- Advocate for specific legislation and funding for early care and education.



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