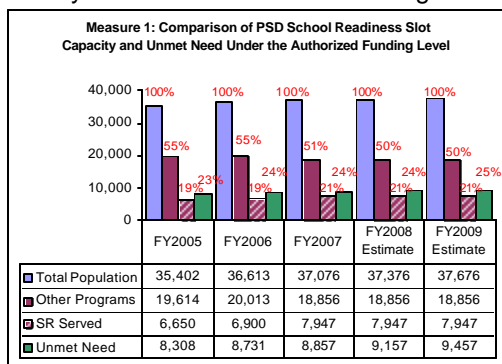


Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Template Part II, Program Accountability Summary

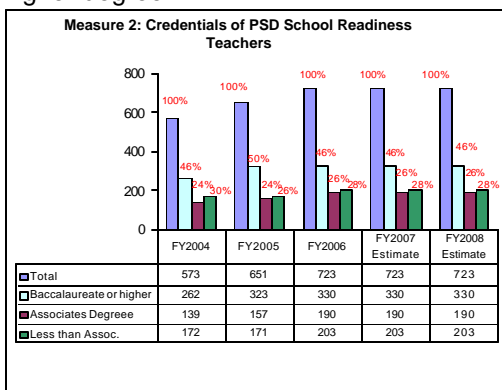
Program Purpose: To provide access to high-quality early childhood programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds in the 19 Priority School Districts

Program: School Readiness Program/
Connecticut State Department of Education

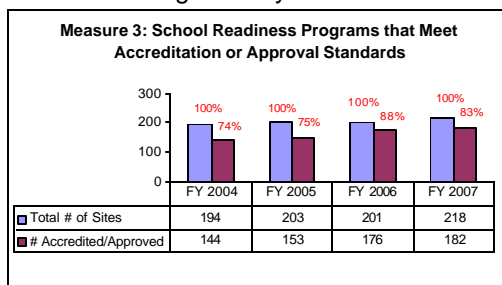
Performance Measure 1 Unmet Need in Priority Districts: The unmet need in Priority School Districts is increasing



Performance Measure 2 Teacher Qualifications: 72% of the current school readiness teachers hold an associate or higher degree



Performance Measure 3 Program Quality: 83% of the School Readiness Programs are accredited or approved under the recognized systems.



| Key Budget Information | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Total Current Program Year Funding | \$56,338,972 |
| Funding as Percent of All Funding for Population Result | |
| Program Funding As Percent of Total Agency Budget | |
| Funding Distribution | |
| Total Federal Funds | |
| Total State Funds | \$56,338,972 |
| Capital Projects Subtotal | |
| Other Funding | |
| Percent of Total Current Funding Contracted to Third Parties | |

Story Behind the Baselines

The School Readiness Early Care and Education Program was established by Public Act 97-259 in 1997 and is codified in the Connecticut General Statutes 10-16p through 10-16u. Its purpose is to increase the number of slots for young children in accredited/approved programs, increase the number of full day/full year slots to meet family needs and share the cost among state and its various agencies, the communities and families. At least 60% of the children served must be at or below 75% of the state median income level. Programs are required to be accredited or approved within three years of funding and all teachers must meet the state's qualification levels.

Turning The Curves: What do you propose to do over the next two years and why?

1. Work on increasing the number of available slots through increased funding, expansion and enhancement of available facilities, and expansion of a workforce pool that meets the education and training requirements.
2. Work on the design and implementation of a system that will move teachers to a baccalaureate degree level as well as attract and retain highly trained and educated teachers for these programs.
3. Continue to support programs in the process of becoming accredited/approved and in maintaining their accreditation/approval.

Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Template Part II, Program Accountability

Program Purpose To provide access to high-quality early childhood programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds in the 19 Priority School Districts

Program School Readiness Program/ Connecticut State Department of Education

Contribution to Population: Result All children in Priority School Districts will have access to quality preschool programs that support children's healthy development, family involvement and achievement of the skills and knowledge expectations defined by the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework in order to enter kindergarten ready for school success.

| Key Budget Information (<i>Dollars reported in millions</i>) | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Total Current Program Year Budget | |
| \$56,338,972 | |
| Funding as Percent of All Funding for Quality of Life Result | |
| Program Funding as Percent of Total Agency Budget | |
| Budget Distribution: | |
| Federal | |
| State | \$56,338,972 |
| General Fund | |
| Capital Project Funds | |
| Other State Funding | |
| Other Funds (Not Federal or State) | |
| Percent of Total Current Funding Spent on Direct Service | |
| Percent of Total Current Funding Contracted to Third parties | |

Basic Program Facts

Since the fall of 1997, the Connecticut State Department of Education has administered the state school readiness and child day-care grant program. The program was designed to increase the number of spaces in accredited and/or approved programs for young children to provide access to high quality school readiness programs, increase the number of spaces for young children to receive full-day/full-year school readiness and child day care to meet family needs and to establish a shared cost for such programs among the state, its various agencies, the communities and the families. Currently this program has created 8,611 preschool spaces for 3- and 4-year-old children. Under the terms of C.G.S. Section 10-16p, the majority of the preschool spaces, 7,947, have been developed in Connecticut's Priority School Districts. A small competitive grant program contributes to additional preschool spaces in school districts with at least one priority school or in districts that fall in the lowest 50 of wealth rank. This template primarily reflects information on the school readiness programs in the Priority School Districts except where noted.

The neediest children in our Priority School Districts have multiple at-risk factors such as poverty, unemployment and lack of health care which put them at risk for learning difficulties and contribute to the achievement gaps in Connecticut. This is evidenced by the low Connecticut Mastery Test reading and math scores for the children in these communities. Research unequivocally shows that these achievement gaps can be narrowed by ensuring that

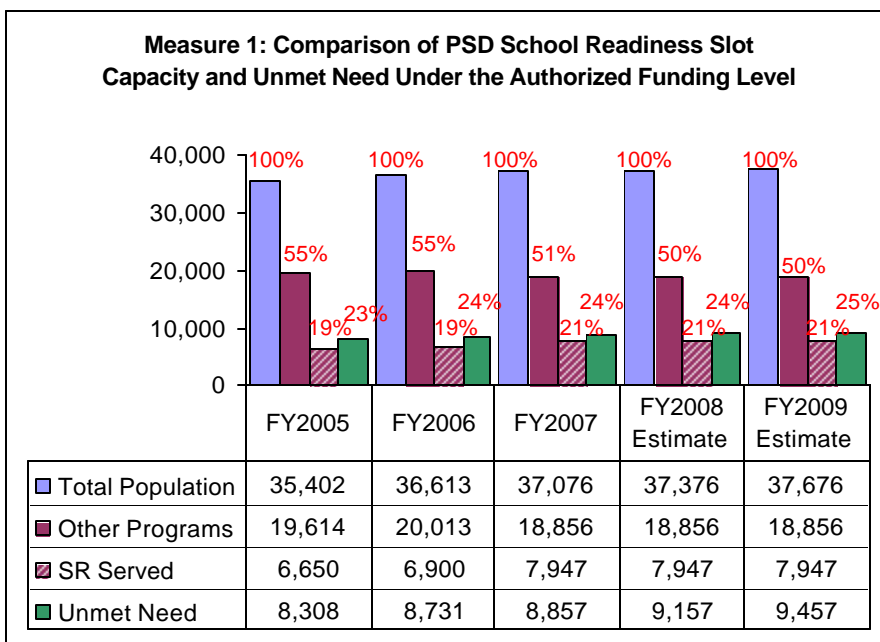
SDE: School Readiness Program

all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to a high-quality early childhood program. In order to be most effective, early childhood programs must include high-quality teachers, high standards, accountability, parent partnerships and a consistent continuum between the early childhood program and the next level of education, kindergarten. In addition, our school readiness programs are based on ten (10) quality components and provide supports and services for collaboration with community agencies, health, nutrition, parent education and services, transition to kindergarten, professional development that includes training in emerging literacy and diversity, family literacy, child and program evaluation, a sliding fee scale and a non-discriminatory admissions process. The plan to implement these supports and services are described by each school readiness program in their RFP application. The program's adherence to the quality components is reported through the Connecticut School Readiness Preschool Program Evaluation System (CSRPEs), as well as state monitoring visits and quarterly Community Liaison site visits. These reports only focus on the program's implementation of the services and emphasize collaboration with outside service providers in order to support the individual needs of families in the context of their community. Our challenge in Connecticut is to build on the high-quality early childhood program design we have established and expand and enhance it to ensure that all children in our neediest communities have the opportunity and experiences that will help them enter school "ready to learn."

Indicators and the Story Behind the Baselines

Summary of Story Behind the Baselines

Currently the State Department of Education (SDE) does not collect outcome data on children participating in school readiness programs, and until such a process is in place, the following quality measures are presented as proxy measures.



Performance Measure 1 Unmet Need in Priority Districts

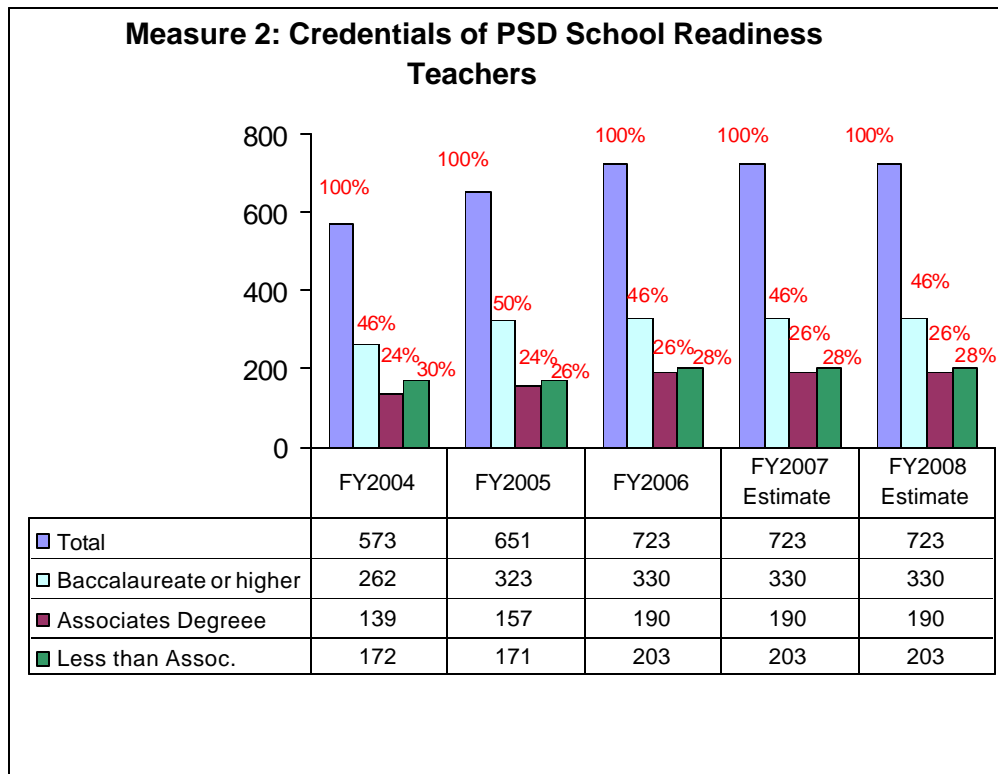
Story Behind Indicator.

This graph reflects the total population in Priority School Districts for 3 and 4 year olds, the number of children served in other programs (private preschool, public school preschool, Head

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Start and Department of Social Services Child Care Centers) and the School Readiness Programs. The unmet need is 90% of the children not enrolled in any program.¹ Over the past three years the authorized funding levels have supported an increase in the school readiness slot capacity in priority school districts from 6,650 in FY 2005 to 7,947 in FY 2007 which reflects growth of more than 20%. However during those years, the birth cohort has increased approximately 2% each year. Therefore, despite having created 1,297 more slots, the unmet need has increased by 549 from 8,308 in FY 2005 to 8,857 children in FY 2007. If we use the history for the population in the birth cohorts and the current number of slots remains the same, the number for the unmet need will continue to grow as we estimate that by FY 2009 the unmet need count will rise to 9,457. There are also other challenges to be faced in meeting the needs of the Priority School Districts which include availability of qualified workforce and the location and conditions of available facilities in the districts.

¹ In FY 2004 and 2005, *A Report of School Readiness Need and Costs to Serve All 3- and 4-Year-Old Children in 19 Priority School Districts* which is submitted by SDE on annual basis, used 90% of the total child population minus the current community slot capacity to estimate the unmet need. It was determined that 10% of the families would elect not to participate in school readiness programs. In FY 2007, more detailed data collection allowed communities to determine their percent of families that would elect not to participate in school readiness programs. Fourteen of the nineteen communities determined that the 10% non-participatory rate best reflected their communities. Five communities submitted specific rationale and determined different percentages, Windham- 12%, East Hartford, Middletown, Waterbury – 20% and Hartford – 25%



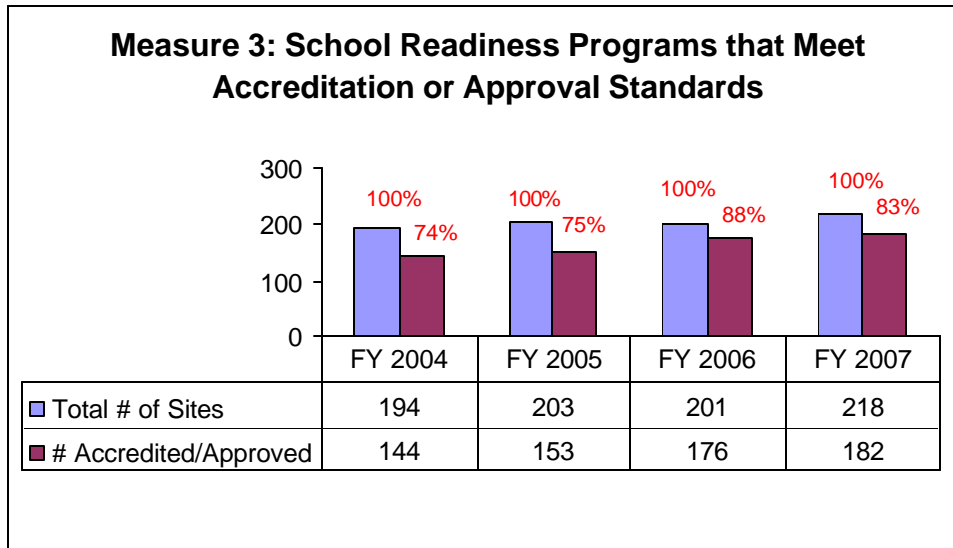
Story Behind Measure 2

The current legislation requires that all teachers in school readiness programs have, at minimum, a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with 12 credits in early childhood education or child development; or an associate's degree or a four-year degree with 12 credits in early childhood education or child development; or be a certified teacher with an endorsement in early childhood or special education. Research finds that teachers who are highly trained and

SDE: School Readiness Program

educated are critical components in providing high-quality programs for children, especially children at risk. In line with these research findings, the Department of Education has proposed that by 2010 all teachers must have an associate degree with 15 credits in early childhood education or child development in order to address the legislative requirement that by 2015 all teachers will have a baccalaureate degree. This goal is aligned with the increasing requirements for teachers defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) which are focused on teachers having an associate's degree by 2010, and by 2020, a baccalaureate degree.

From FY 2004 to FY 2006, the Connecticut School Readiness Preschool Program Evaluation System Reports (CSRPPES) revealed that the number of teachers has increased from 573 to 723. However, while the actual number of teachers with a baccalaureate degree has increased from 262 to 330, the actual percentage for the total number of teachers with this degree level has decreased from 50% in FY 2005 to 46% in FY 2006. The number of teachers with associate degrees increased from 139 to 190 and their percentage of the total number of teachers shows a slight increase from 24% to 26%. The graph above demonstrates that continuing to maintain these same percentages while the total number of teachers increases will not meet the legislative requirement that by 2015 all teachers must have a baccalaureate degree. Even if we were to maintain the same number of classrooms with no expansion in the number of children served, we must address how to support the movement of 203 teachers from a CDA with 12 credits to an associate's degree with at least 15 credits by 2010. Concurrently we must continue to aggressively help those 203 plus the 330 teachers who currently have an associate's degree towards achieving a baccalaureate degree in order to meet the goal that has been set for 2015. However, this process must address more than these 533 teachers currently in the field as programs continue to be challenged by a high turnover rate and low pay scales which affect their retention of teachers who achieve these qualifications.



Performance Measure 3 Program Quality

Story Behind Measure 3

State law requires that school readiness programs must be accredited or approved by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Head Start or the American Montessori Society (AMS) within three (3) years of initial funding as a school readiness program. The five percentage point decrease in the percent of accredited programs from FY 2006 to 2007 is actually reflective of the increased number of new programs that were added in FY 2007 and these programs have three (3) years in which to become accredited. Currently, 100% of the programs that were contracted before January 1, 2004 are accredited or approved. All other programs are in process to comply with the requirements on or before their third anniversary and school readiness programs that are currently accredited by NAEYC are on schedule for their re-accreditation visit.

All programs will face more challenges in this new system as they work to achieve or maintain their accreditation, due to the revised criteria which is more specific and defined. This will result however in an improved system of accreditation since there will be more consistency in the level of quality among the programs that achieve accreditation. In order to ensure equity among the accreditation/approval systems, the Connecticut Preschool Program Standards for programs that are approved by Head Start, NEASC or AMS are being revised to reflect the new NAEYC criteria. As the number of new programs expand, they must be supported as they work to achieve accreditation/approval within the three year period. Technical assistance for these programs is available through the Accreditation Facilitation Project, the SDE collaboration with AFP and the workshops and trainings provided by both AFP and SDE.

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Partners and Their Roles

1. Connecticut Health Education Facilities Authority (CHEFA) and SDE School Facilities to address the need to construct and renovate facilities in the Priority School Districts in order to address the unmet need.
2. Partnerships with Higher Education to address the need to increase the pool of qualified staff.
3. Continued partnership with Department of Social Services on school readiness, quality enhancement funds and other issues.
4. Continued partnership with the Connecticut Community College System for support for the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) to assist programs in meeting accreditation criteria.
5. Partner with State Education Resource Center for workshop and trainings on selected topics.
6. Continue to collaborate with the Priority District School Readiness Councils in the implementation of the requirements of the school readiness legislation in their communities.

What do you propose to do to improve performance in the next 3-5 years and why?

These are items that are potentially low cost actions:

1. *Assist local school readiness councils in the development of strategic plans that address facility issues through identification of potential sites both within the community and adjacent to the community as well as the formation of partnerships with local businesses, community foundations and public-private partnerships.
2. *Provide technical assistance and support to programs pursuing CHEFA or bonding initiatives for construction or renovation.
3. *Work with Higher Education to expand and enhance a partnership between SDE, the 4-year and community colleges to design and implement the coursework for the baccalaureate degree in early childhood and alternative methods of delivering the coursework such as on-site, web-based, childcare and alternative scheduling.

Given the appropriate funding and staffing levels the SDE proposes to do the following:

1. Assist school readiness programs in the development of a plan that documents that all staff have completed training in the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Frameworks and the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework within the first year of their employment.
2. Exploration of strategies for provision of scholarships and other supports for staff working to complete their degree including partnerships with foundations, businesses CCAC and loan programs.
3. Provide a process that will issue a certificate for consultants that successfully complete an approved training agenda that is designed around standards, quality, accreditation/approval requirements and ensure that funded programs utilize them on a consistent scheduled basis.
4. Provide workshops, technical assistance on accreditation and professional development in the areas of the state standards and strategies for aligning curriculum implementation and assessment for young children.
5. Explore the development of a process whereby the ECERS would be administered to all programs at the mid-way point of their five (5) year accreditation/approval period with an action plan required for all programs that do not achieve a rating of 5 in all areas.
6. Age anchor the PAF in order to allow it to be used to measure children's progress and determine outcomes which can be reported.

SDE: School Readiness Program

7. Develop a system that supports on site coaching and a process to monitor the fidelity of the coaching to the standards as well as the effects on teaching practices linked to standards and the curriculum.

Appendix A, Data Development Agenda

Given the appropriate funding and staffing levels the SDE proposes to do the following.

- a. Development of the PSIS system to include all preschool children enrolled in programs that receive state or federal funding.
- b. Develop a system to assess the effectiveness of school readiness programs including an examination of the outcomes for children who participate in programs that receive state or federal funding.
- c. Develop a data system that tracks staff credentials and completion of requirements for training in the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Frameworks, Preschool Assessment Framework, pre-literacy and diversity training in order to ensure all staff in state or federal funded programs have appropriate skills and knowledge to provide a high quality program. This is a potential component of the proposed registry system.
- d. Develop a data system that tracks family engagement and partnership in early childhood programs and the resulting outcomes for children.

SDE: School Readiness Program
Appendix B, Link to Budget

SDE: School Readiness Program

Appendix C, Information and Research Agenda

- Develop a project that addresses the connection between ongoing best practices in coaching and monitoring to outcomes for children and implement it in all programs.
- Research and identify best practices in parent engagement and partnership in early childhood programs and develop a framework of components to be used by programs.
- Research and identify best practices for working with ELL children in preschool and develop guidelines and training for preschool staff.

Appendix D, Partners

1. Current collaborative partnership with CHEFA, SDE School Facilities, communities, private industry and businesses are a part of the resolution for addressing the unmet need. We need to enhance and expand these partnerships that support loan programs, bonding initiatives, renovations and locations of sites in community buildings and at work sites in order to address the increasing need for quality facilities that can serve young children.
2. There is a need for expansion of the workforce that will serve young children and a process to ensure that they meet the qualification requirements in order to address all children in need of an early childhood program. Partnerships with Higher Education and the provision of alternative pre-service and ongoing professional development through on-site courses, weekend courses, web based courses, video conferencing and pooling of higher education staff to maximize resources can assist in ensuring qualified teaching staff. In addition there must be support for staff in meeting these requirements through scholarships, salary incentives, guaranteed loans, childcare, and equitable compensation which could require increased reimbursement rates or state salary supplements.
3. In order to adhere to the requirement that all programs must meet accreditation/approval requirements and with the revision of the NAEYC criteria, we need to expand and enhance our work with the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP). Continued partnership and support for AFP will enable the provision of qualified consultants to work with programs on achieving and maintaining their accreditation or approval.
4. Addressing the needs of a system for early childhood requires collaboration among all entities that have a focus on early childhood. Through the Early Childhood Cabinet's Teams for Goals 1 and 2, SDE can work to plan, design and implement strategies in a comprehensive manner that address these needs.
5. There is a need for an accountability system that includes child, program and systems accountability. SDE will work with the Policy and Research Council and the Early Childhood Cabinet in the development of the Quality Rating Scale, the development of an accountability system and longitudinal evaluation.
6. It is critical that all early childhood programs that funded by state and federal funds be of high quality. and that there is consistency among programs based on the standards of quality. SDE must continue to collaborate with DSS to ensure consistency and continuity among the programs they fund, in order to ensure the implementation of quality standards such as teacher qualifications, accreditation/approval, standards, curriculum and assessment. In addition SDE and DSS must ensure, through their joint administration, that the Quality Enhancement Funds given to Priority School Districts are used to improve program quality.