

Proposed Strategic Initiatives

CY 2007 / FY 2008

*A Report From the State School Readiness Board to
Governor Janet Napolitano*

January 16, 2007

Based on proposals from the:
*Members of the State School Readiness Board, Healthy Child Collaborative,
Professional Development and Articulation Task Force,
Quality Rating Expansion Team,
the Arizona Early Education Funds and the Head Start-State Collaboration Office*

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Background

The State School Readiness Board (SSRB) was established by Executive Order to develop a coordinated, efficient, and cost effective delivery system for early childhood education in Arizona through the following strategies:

- Advise the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Legislature on the most effective policy direction and methods to improve the coordination, quality and delivery of early childhood education.
- Recommend a multi-year plan on how early childhood education functions in state government can be coordinated and integrated to improve service delivery, quality of care, avoid duplication and fragmentation of service and maximize public and private investment.
- Identify and recommend methods to measure quality, availability and effectiveness of early childhood education programs in Arizona.
- Identify and measure indicators of school readiness.
- Track state, federal and local monies allocated for early childhood education and recommend mechanisms for enhancement, integration and coordination.
- Provide technical assistance to community efforts that enhance school readiness and encourage collaboration of organizations to promote school readiness.

During 2003, the SSRB convened 144 people who served on five Policy Work Groups (New Initiatives/ Financing, Program Coordination/Governance, Health Care, Quality & Cost, and Professional Development) to develop the recommendations on how to develop an early childhood education system for the state of Arizona. These recommendations were sent to Governor Janet Napolitano on November 18, 2003.

The recommendations were the basis for Governor Napolitano's five-year, School Readiness Action Plan, which envisions an Arizona where all children begin 1st grade safe, healthy and ready to succeed. Governor Napolitano presented the plan to the SSRB on January 22, 2004.

In the 2004 State of the State address, Governor Napolitano outlined an early education agenda which included the phase-in of full-day kindergarten, increasing well-child health screening and immunizations, developing a quality rating system, increasing funding for child care, creating scholarships for early childhood education teachers, designing a master teachers program, emphasizing early literacy and additional funding for Healthy Families.

To further develop the components of the School Readiness Action Plan, the Governor asked the SSRB to convene Implementation Teams to determine the specifics on moving forward. At the end of 2004, the SSRB Implementation Teams provided Governor Napolitano with suggested strategies to phase-in a quality rating system, child care health consultants, an early childhood scholarship program, and improved health screening. In addition, the SSRB recommended expanding preschool, improving the rate paid to providers for child care subsidies, and strategies to improve coordination and efficiency of existing early childhood programs.

At the end of CY 2005, the State School Readiness Board reported progress on the strategies put forth in CY 2004 to Governor Napolitano. Based upon the work of the Implementation Teams and related working

committees in CY 2005, the SSRB Coordination Team suggested further enhancements and additional strategies to Governor Napolitano in order to continue to develop a quality rating system, develop and fund a child care health consultant network, expand an early childhood scholarship program, and increase professional development opportunities for early childhood education teachers, improve the health of young children, and increase the quality of early childhood education programs.

Outcomes Summary for the Governor's School Readiness Action Plan Initiatives CY 2006

On January 27th, CY 2006 the Governor met with the School Readiness Board to present the third year phase-in of the School Readiness Action Plan. Due to the efforts of Governor Napolitano, the School Readiness Board, and community members, the following was accomplished in CY 2006:

READY FAMILIES

- ✓ Gave approximately 94,000 first grade students and 88,000 fourth grade students their own book.
- ✓ *Arizona Parents' Kits* pilot was completed and The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust began distribution of 70,000 *Parent Kits* through area hospitals to all new parents throughout Maricopa County.
- ✓ The second annual AHCCCS *Report Card on Children's Preventive Health Initiative* was released.
- ✓ With AHCCCS, DHS, and the Academy of Pediatrics, 130 physicians were trained on the PEDS developmental screening tool.
- ✓ Twelve additional Child Care Health Consultants were trained, bringing the total number of consultants in Arizona that are available to support child care quality to 47.
- ✓ An additional 25 child care trainers were trained on increasing the knowledge and skills of child care staff in the areas of children's oral health and healthy weight.
- ✓ State child care licensing staff were trained on best practices to support mental and emotional health of infants and young children in child care.

READY PROGRAMS & SCHOOLS

- ✓ Full-day kindergarten was expanded to school districts and charter schools for pupils who meet the enrollment requirements for ADE kindergarten programs
- ✓ Through a public/private partnership with the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona and the Governor's Office, 46 child care centers participated in a Quality Rating System pilot in Tucson; improving the quality of care for approximately 3700 children.
- ✓ Secured \$400,000 to increase DHS licensing staff to reduce monitoring caseloads and reduce backlog of annual inspections of child care facilities.

READY TEACHERS

- ✓ With ASU, completed the Arizona System Ready/Child Ready final grant report for the U.S. Department of Education and the summary update of project activities.
- ✓ Implemented a demonstration project, utilizing funding from Workforce Investment, that expands the statewide early education development scholarship (SEEDS) program by creating a linkage with the Department of Economic Security (DES) Professional Career Pathways Program.

- ✓ CHASE Bank, a JP Morgan Company, funded years one (2005-2006) and two (2006-2007) of the CHASE Early Education Emergent Leaders program.
- ✓ Twenty-four early childhood practitioners graduated from the first year class of CHASE Emergent Leaders; twenty-five additional early childhood education practitioners were recruited for year two.
- ✓ The work of the Professional Development and Articulation Committee laid the foundation for the articulation of course credits between Arizona community colleges.
- ✓ The work of the Professional Development and Articulation Task Force was presented to the Arizona Board of Regents, influencing their decision to develop a framework for a new early childhood education associate degree leading to teacher certification.

READY COMMUNITIES

- ✓ The Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEFs) distributed over \$500,000 to fund six Regional Partnerships; private funder, Phelps Dodge, funded two additional partnerships
- ✓ Held a summit for state agency staff to support the expansion of Parent Led Community Action Teams in support of the objectives of the Community Development Initiative
- ✓ Received a National Governor's Association Grant to conduct a Governor's Early Childhood Summit
- ✓ Received a grant by the National Technical Assistance Center (Smart Start) to create a technical assistance plan for Arizona.

The following teams were charged with producing these outcomes: Healthy Child Collaborative, Professional Development and Articulation Task Force, Quality Rating Expansion Team, and through the Arizona Community Foundation, the Arizona Early Education Funds Board and its subcommittees.

CY 2006 Progress Narrative

READY FAMILIES

Child Care Subsidies

Child care subsidies are provided to eligible working families and allow children from low-income families to be in stable child care arrangements comparable to those used by families not eligible to receive child care assistance under Federal, State or Tribal programs. In CY 2005, Governor Napolitano eliminated the child care waiting list by adding \$11.2 million dollars to the program. In CY 2006, the State School Readiness Board (SSRB) recommended increasing the child care subsidy level to better reflect the current cost of child care. Governor Napolitano increased the child care subsidy rate from the 75th percentile of the 1998 market rate survey to the 75th percentile of the 2000 market rate survey. The child care subsidy rate increase to the 75th percentile of the 2000 market rate survey maintain the no waiting list status established in CY 2005.

Child Care Health Consultants

In CY 2006, the SSRB recommended phasing-in Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) by supporting the Department of Health Services' (DHS) FY 2007 budget request for two additional CCHCs to begin a statewide system. Child Care Health Consultants were not in the final FY 2007 budget.

To add to the pool of nurses and other health professionals trained to be health and safety resources for early childhood practitioners; twelve additional health professionals were trained in the Child Care Health Consultants curriculum.

Arizona's sole, full-time CCHC, under contract to the State School Readiness Board and the Department of Health Services, trained Department of Health Services child care licensing staff about child care environments that support the mental and emotional health of young children. Trainings were also held on nutrition and physical activity to combat childhood obesity and a train-the-trainer workshop on promoting oral health for young children was provided to 25 early childhood trainers.

Child Care Health Consultants were also integrated into the Tucson implementation of the quality rating system pilot through the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.

The *Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Centers* was published in early CY 2006 with funding from The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust. An additional 600 manuals were printed in the last quarter of CY 2006 for distribution to centers in rural Arizona communities using federal State Maternal and Child Health Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grants funds. Over 900 *Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manuals for Child Care Centers* have been distributed to date.

Health Screening & Assessment

Developmental screening by physicians/health practitioners is key to keeping children healthy by providing guidance to parents and/or early intervention or treatment to help children be ready to succeed. The Parental Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) developmental screening tool was recommended and adopted by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) as the screening tool most

amenable to use in busy physician practices. AHCCCS, its contracted Health Plans, and the Arizona Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics collaborated to provide training to physicians who began using of the PEDS tool with AHCCCS babies discharged from a Newborn Intensive Care Unit as of January 1, 2006. Through calendar year 2006, more than 130 physicians were trained.

The *AHCCCS Report Card on Children's Preventive Health Initiative* was revised and reissued in CY 2006. This report outlines the goals, baseline measures, and benchmarks to improve early childhood screening.

Infant/Toddler Mental Health

During CY 2006, the staff of the Department of Health Services Office of Child Care Licensing attended 16-hours of training on infant mental health conducted by the Arizona Infant Toddler Institute. This information and skill building training session provided information on environmental conditions and caretaker behaviors that support healthy emotional development of infants and toddlers.

Parent Education

In CY 2006, The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust completed the pilot distribution of the *Arizona Parents Kit*. The evaluation of the *Kit* further validated that the information presented in the kits had a positive influence on parents' behaviors—especially regarding use of infant car seats and placing babies on their backs for sleep. Distribution of the Kits to all parents of newborns in Maricopa began in November, 2006. The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust will continue supporting distribution of the *Kits* in Maricopa County through CY 2007 and CY 2008.

The Governor's 2004 program to provide a book to Arizona children continued in 2006. Both Arizona first and fourth grade students were given a book in 2006. *The Seed and the Giant Saguaro* was distributed to first grade students and *The Unbreakable Code* was given to fourth grade students.

Family Support

For FY 2005, the Governor's budget allocated \$8.7 million to double funding to Healthy Families, a successful home visiting program designed to help families at risk for child abuse and neglect develop good parenting skills to nurture and protect their children. With these additional funds, seven new Healthy Families teams were established during CY 2006. Two new Healthy Families teams were implemented in Maricopa County, two in Pima County, and one each in Flagstaff, Sierra Vista, and Yuma .

READY PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS

Full-Day Kindergarten

The FY 2007 budget supported by the Governor and adopted by the Legislature included significant new funding for full-day kindergarten. The allocation, \$160 million over two years, made full day kindergarten available on a voluntary basis to all families within school districts or charter schools that offer full-day kindergarten. Budget Bill 2874, signed by Governor Napolitano on June 21, 2006, stipulated that a school district or charter school may offer full-day kindergarten instruction to pupils who meet the enrollment requirements for Department of Education kindergarten programs.

Licensing

The FY 2007 budget included an additional \$400,000 for the Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Child Care Licensing. The funding includes 8.5 additional employees, bolstering the Department's ability to conduct timely and thorough child care facilities inspections.

Quality Improvement

The SSRB recommended that initial implementation of a quality improvement system begin with building the base, which includes child care subsidies, licensing, and wages. During Budget negotiations, Governor Napolitano was successful in eliminating the waiting list for child care subsidies. Additionally, a plan was developed to phase in an increase in the number of licensing surveyors to a 1:50 ratio over a three period. In the FY 2007 budget 6.5 child care licensing surveyors, 1 team leader and 1.5 support staff were added to the Office of Child Care Licensing.

The Governor asked the Children's Cabinet and the SSRB to oversee a public-private partnership with United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona which received a federal Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) grant to pilot a quality rating system. The Tucson pilot quality rating system began with 50 child care centers and, due to some attrition, is now at 46 centers. The pilot began February 2005 and ended in August 2006. The positive impact of this project is 46 more centers moved toward national accreditation and the quality of care for approximately 3700 children in primarily low-income communities was improved.

Early Childhood Block Grant

Approximately 4,200 children in Arizona are enrolled in preschools run by school districts funded by the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG). School districts provide early childhood education programs on site or subcontract with private preschool providers. Block grant preschools serve three to five year-old children who are statistically at risk of failing school. The ECBG funds, state general fund dollars, may be used by school districts to operate preschools, support full-day kindergarten, and other K-3 enhancements. For fiscal year 2007, \$19.45 million, was allocated for ECBG programming.

Head Start-State Collaboration Office

In CY 2006, Head Start programs continued to participate in the committees and work groups of the School Readiness Board. Head Start program representatives exchanged information and shared resources on professional development, community assessment, and health issues including oral and mental health. Additionally, Head Start sites participated in the quality rating system piloted in Tucson through the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.

The Quality Rating Expansion Team of the State School Readiness Board focused on finalizing a statewide quality improvement model. In working with the Head Start-State Collaboration Office, the team explored other state models that integrate Head Start program attributes (such as Head Start Performance Standards and use of the Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring-PRISM tool) as a possible rating identifier. Final implementation procedures for integration of these Head Start systems into Arizona's Quality Rating tool will be determined in CY 2007.

The Head Start-State Collaboration Office continues to support and make progress in the areas of health and welfare of low-income children and their families. In CY 2006, the Head Start-State Collaboration Office, in partnership with the Governor's Task Force on Earned Income Tax Credit and the Arizona Head Start

Association, completed outreach and education efforts for low-income families at Head Start sites throughout the State.

During CY 2006, programs, education, and service improvement for children with disabilities was addressed by the Early Childhood Inclusion Coalition and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. Work by the Early Childhood Inclusion Coalition and Head Start State Collaboration Office continues into CY 2007.

The Head Start-State Collaboration Office and the Head Start Association assisted in the distribution of the *Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Centers*. Specialists in Head Start programs distributed 250 manuals to child care centers and other early childhood programs. In supporting the use of the Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Centers in early childhood education programs and centers, Head Start Health Specialists received training in Child Care Health Consultation through the state project of the School Readiness Board.

The Head Start-State Collaboration Office and Head Start programs continue to support and participate in the Emergent Leaders project during CY 2006.

READY TEACHERS

Professional Development

Scholarships: The Arizona System Ready/Child Ready (AzSRCR) project, a professional development and scholarship program for early childhood education professionals enrolled in community college coursework and related professional development activities, concluded in CY 2006. During the project's two years of professional activities and year of evaluation and assessment, Arizona System Ready/Child Ready (funded through a \$1.6 million U.S. Department of Education grant) brought together the talents of the State School Readiness Board (SSRB) and Arizona State University's College of Education's Early Childhood Education Department to address Arizona's shortage of qualified early childhood teachers by developing an integrated system of early childhood teacher education and professional development opportunities and enhancing collaboration and participation for early childhood teacher education and professional development opportunities through collaboration among the SSRB, Arizona State University, and community colleges. Three hundred and seventeen (317) early childhood practitioners, mostly classroom assistants and aides, were enrolled in college courses during the grant period.

Because AzSRCR was designed to address barriers faced by adult students in the early care and education workforce force, the Professional Leadership Implementation Team of the SSRB recommended that the Scholarships for Early Education Development (SEEDS) Program, funded with \$683,000 of Governor's Discretionary Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Set Aside funds, build upon the lessons learned from the AzSRCR project. During CY 2005 and CY 2006 WIA funds were distributed to Cochise College in Cochise County, Arizona Western College in Yuma County, the Office of the Pima County School Superintendent, Yavapai College in Yavapai County, Mohave College in Mohave County, and United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona (for participants in Tucson and Maricopa county). Central Arizona College also received funding in 2006 to link SEEDS to the DES Professional Career Pathways Program and to fund coursework for early childhood education practitioners in Maricopa, Yuma, Pinal, Apache,

Yavapai, Greenlee, Gila & Graham Counties with the intent of expanding SEEDS scholarships to additional, underserved areas of the State. The Arizona System Ready/Child Ready project concluded in CY 2006.

Training/Wage Incentive: In CY 2005/CY 2006, committee members who were instrumental in developing the framework for a statewide scholarship program, began looking at training issues as they contemplated ECE wage incentives. The committee's research included trainer qualifications and strategies to strengthen the quality of training available to early care and education practitioners while beginning to improve alignment of trainer qualifications with community college requirements for occupational course instructors. They proposed that S*CCEEDS adopt a new tiered system for registered trainers: a tier I trainer would remain unchanged from the current S*CCEEDS Level III Trainer; however a new Type II trainer would be required to have an Associates degree, a specific number of years working with children or in a topical area such as pediatric nursing, and training/education in adult learning strategies.

To increase the level of education of the early childhood education workforce, and to reduce turnover in the field and within individual programs, the committee also explored incentives for attracting and retaining individuals to the profession. Several states offer strategies that Arizona might use to provide ongoing wage supplements for retention in the field, retention at the program level and for increased education

Leadership Development: Since the launch of the Arizona's Early Education Emergent Leaders program in October, 2004, eighty Emergent Leaders have participated in this statewide leadership development program designed to intentionally build leadership skills among Arizona's early care and education practitioners. Emergent Leaders reflect the cultural and geographic diversity of the children and families in Arizona early childhood education programs. The first cohort (2004 – 2005) was a partnership of the SSRB, Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start Association, and Southwest Human Development, and was funded with supplemental funding from the federal Head Start Bureau and enrolled 30 Emergent Leaders. The second and third cohort groups (2005–2006, and 2006–2007) each enrolled 25 Emergent Leaders in a program that progressively expanded the earlier concept to increasingly focus on state early childhood education experts and speakers and to link leadership to quality programming. The second and third cohorts were funded through a contribution from CHASE Bank, a JP Morgan Company, to the Arizona Early Education Funds.

A crucial component for each cohort group is the professional development support that each Emergent Leader receives from a practicing mentor with expertise in early childhood education. Additionally, each Emergent Leader engages in professional development activities with prominent local, state and national early childhood education experts and leaders that challenge perceptions, abilities and professional growth. The first class of Emergent Leaders graduated in June, 2005; the second class, in June, 2006; and the third will be graduating in June, 2007.

Articulation: Since 2004, the Professional Development and Articulation Task Force, a committee of the SSRB charged with facilitating and enhancing professional development of Arizona's early childhood education workforce, has persistently faced the difficult challenge of histories, relationships and territory to address articulation within the community college system and between the community college system and the university system. In CY 2005, this committee conceptualized the post-secondary career pathways in Arizona for early childhood education practitioners. In CY 2006, committee work extended to the development of baseline courses that could articulate between the Early Care and Education/Child and Family Studies programs at a majority of the community colleges. The committee also attained the support of the Early Childhood Education Articulation Task Force of the Arizona Board of Regents to move forward

with the development of a course of study at the community college level that would articulate, in its entirety, to bachelor degree coursework and teacher certification from the public university system.

Reports: In CY 2005, Children's Action Alliance, with support from the Association of Supportive Child Care and the School Readiness Board, released *Compensation & Credentials: A Survey of Arizona's Early Education Workforce*, a baseline analysis upon which the wages and educational levels of Arizona's early childhood education teachers in licensed child care programs in Arizona is assessed. The SSRB began preliminary planning for the next *Compensation & Credentials* survey in 2006.

Upon the conclusion of the Arizona System Ready/Child Ready project, a final grant report to the U.S. Department of Education regarding project activities was completed with ASU. Additionally, a summary update on Arizona System Ready/Child Ready was completed at the end of 2006.

READY COMMUNITIES

Public-Private Partnerships

The Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEF) were created as part of the Governor's School Readiness Action Plan to build the capacity of local communities to provide quality early childhood education. The funds were established at the Arizona Community Foundation in partnership with the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.

AEEF was tasked with raising private donations and galvanizing the business community in support of quality early childhood care and education at the local level. AEEF is helping build an early education infrastructure by providing seed money to support the creation of regional partnerships or expand the capacity of partnerships that already exist.

These regional partnerships are meant to mobilize entire communities around quality early care and education, and are made up of local stakeholders including parents, child care providers, health professionals and representatives from public schools, business, local government, philanthropy, the faith community and law enforcement. Modeled after the North Carolina Smart Start effort, each regional partnership identifies early care and education funding priorities based on local needs and assets.

In CY 2006, AEEFS issued a Request for Regional Partnership Proposals. Eight regional partnerships were initially funded; an additional eight are currently in the application process. By funding this network of regional partnerships, AEEF is building the infrastructure necessary to distribute the funds raised by Proposition 203. An assessment is underway to determine how existing partnerships would need to adapt in order to be eligible for Proposition 203 funding. Funding from the Ellis Center for Educational Excellence is allowing technical assistants to work with the unfunded partnerships across Arizona to help prepare them for the transition.

Projected Outcomes and Proposed Strategies for CY 2007

The projected outcomes for CY 2007 are built on the work of the SSRB committees over the past three years. In CY 2007, the School Readiness Board will continue advising the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Legislature on the most effective policy direction and methods to improve the coordination, quality and delivery of early childhood education and health.

Under the four areas of focus outlined in the School Readiness Action Plan—Ready Families, Ready Programs and Schools, Ready Teachers, and Ready Communities—the School Readiness Board has developed eleven priority strategies for CY 2007 that are key to the maintenance and advancement of early childhood education Arizona. These priority strategies aim to improve child health and access to care, support families, enhance program quality, and address the shortage of qualified early childhood education teachers. Additionally, the SSRB recommends supporting strategies that continue ongoing initiatives and create linkages to and enhance the priority strategies.

READY FAMILIES

The early years of life build the foundation for the good health, emotional stability, social competence, and cognitive ability that children need to succeed. Young children need screenings, immunizations, good nutrition, and access to health and dental care to ensure they are healthy and developing as expected. Parents need access to information and services so they can provide safe, healthy, enriching environments for their young children.

Ready Families Priority Strategies

- **Expand developmental screening at well-child visits using the PEDS screen tool at 9, 18 and 24 months for children enrolled in the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).**

Rationale: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all infants and young children be screened for developmental delays. Screening procedures should be incorporated into the ongoing health care of the child as part of the provision of a medical home.¹ Moreover, the use of standardized developmental screening tools at periodic intervals will increase accuracy and increase early detection of developmental delays.

For the past year, AHCCCS and the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics have been partners in a pilot project to increase screening for developmental delays. The pilot provides the provision that AHCCCS pay an incentive reimbursement to physicians to conduct developmental screenings of babies discharged from neonatal intensive care units. Physicians are trained and reimbursed for using the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) instrument for these screening visits. PEDS has been shown to have adequate sensitivity, specificity, validity, and reliability, and is standardized on diverse populations. The periodicity of screenings conforms to the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. July 2001, *Developmental Surveillance and Screening of Infants and Young Children*. Pediatrics, 108:1 192-196.

Screening of all babies at 9, 18, and 24 months in covered by AHCCCS programs will substantively increase the likelihood that babies will be diagnosed early for developmental delays. Waiting until a child misses a major milestone, such as walking or talking, may result in late rather than early recognition.

Estimated Cost: The 2008 Executive Budget recommendation for PEDS is for \$4,205,700 Total Fund (consisting of \$1,405,700 General Fund and \$2,800,000 Federal Match). That amount assumes a 10/1/07 implementation date representing only 9 months of expenditure

▪ **Support continued coverage of Arizona's KidsCare program and participate in the effort to assure reauthorization of the federal SCHIP.**

Rationale: As of November 1, 2006, 57,854 children and 14,314 parents were insured to receive health care services under Arizona's KidsCare program. Best estimates are that 250,000 children continue to be without health insurance coverage. Reauthorization makes possible uninterrupted coverage for children and provides the opportunity to reach those children eligible but not now covered.

Estimated Cost: The Executive Budget recommends an increase of \$28,892,300 in Total Funds in FY 2008 for Arizona's share of the KidsCare program. This amount includes \$8,402,900 from the General Fund and \$20,489,400 from the State Children's Health Insurance Program Fund. It is assumed that under reauthorization, the current 3-to-1 federal-to-state match requirement would continue.

▪ **Expand the number of physician practices participating in the Reach Out and Read program.**

Rationale: Reach Out and Read (ROR) builds on the unique relationship between families and medical providers to help families encourage early literacy skills so children enter school prepared for success in reading. Currently, ROR is established in 112 clinics and hospitals and provides books to approximately 80,000 children annually. ROR needs funding support to enroll more doctors and nurses in low performing school districts and hard to reach rural communities.

Estimated Cost: An appropriation of \$500,000 from the General Fund for FY 2008 will support the purchase of books, training of doctors and nurses, transformation of clinic waiting rooms into literacy-rich environments, dissemination of high-quality parent education materials, and administrative costs.

▪ **Recommend funding to serve all families who are eligible for the Healthy Families program.**

Rationale: Evaluation of the Healthy Families program continues to document the efficacy of this program in strengthening and stabilizing families, and reducing the stressors that can lead to child abuse or neglect. Longitudinal evaluation shows that less than 2% of families that participate in the program have a subsequent substantiated report of abuse or neglect. This proven prevention program reaches approximately 17% of the estimated eligible population.

Estimated Cost: The Executive Budget recommends continuing the \$13,750,000 in Healthy Families funding in FY 2008. This amount is unchanged from the FY 2007 budget requested.

▪ **Utilize the General Fund to index the child care subsidy to the 75th percentile of the current market rate survey.**

Rationale: Currently subsidies are paid at the 75th percentile of the 2000 market rate survey, six years behind the true market cost of child care. In order to increase child care subsidies to the 75th percentile of the 2006 market rate survey and then to index them to new surveys conducted every two years, additional funding must be available and appropriated on an ongoing basis. If this does not occur, the higher reimbursement rates could result in reducing the number of children receiving DES child care assistance, reducing the number of child care providers willing to accept the subsidy, and/or establishing a waiting list.

Estimated Cost: Cost for determining the cost of indexing the child care subsidy to the 75th percentile of the current market rate needs to be determined at a specific point in time for accuracy.

Ready Families Supporting Strategies

- Expand well-child screenings and increase number and quality of medical homes
 - Recruit physicians for a quality improvement project to increase pediatric practices self-identifying as medical homes
 - Establish partnerships to create or expand database (such as ASIIS) to capture well-child visits, insurance status, screenings
 - Increase routine dental screenings for pregnant women and children beginning at age one
- Bolster health and safety practices in child care settings
 - Distribute the *Arizona Health & Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Providers* to child care providers statewide
 - Recommend to ADHS child care licensing and DES certification regulations that will achieve best practices in health, mental health, and safety practices in child care settings
 - Identify structure and funding support for “injury review process” to address health and safety improvements in child care settings to prevent injury, disability or death of children in care
- Improve the mental health of infants and young children through training of clinicians, child care workers and state agency staff
 - Revise, issue and implement an *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health State Plan*
 - Provide curriculum and workshops for child care providers, child care educators, and child care health consultant on care giving to children experiencing trauma, witnessing violence and /or victims of abuse referred by CPS
- Educate parents about how they can help their children be healthy, safe and ready to succeed
 - Develop a plan for statewide distribution of the *Arizona Parents’ Kit*
 - Support distribution of the United Way School Readiness Kits
 - Support expansion of the Community Development Initiative

- Assist the Arizona Early Education Funds Regional Partnerships in involving parents in community planning and identifying early childhood education needs and priorities to support school readiness
- Provide support to families to help children be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed
 - Support targeted, community-based outreach to bring eligible children into AHCCCS and Kids Care
 - Implement curriculum for child care staff to gain skills in informing parents of the value of well-child screenings and assisting parents in finding screening resources
 - Utilize Arizona 211 and the Birth-to-Five Helpline to inform parents about child health resources regarding infant/toddler mental health, child development, quality child care, child health coverage, and children with special health care needs
 - Increase Earned Income Tax Credit participation and refunds to families in Arizona (Governor’s Earned Income Task Force)

READY PROGRAMS & SCHOOLS

We know that the quality of early care and education for young children matters. When children enter school, what they know, are able to do, and their care and experiences since birth have already set a course for their future learning, future success and future outlook. For a growing number of children, entering kindergarten is not the first “school” experience. Today’s economic realities necessitate that more children than ever have both parents or their sole caregiving parent in the workforce, and this means that many more young children, than ever before, are spending greater numbers of hours in care outside their homes, most often in group child care programs. The quality of these first out-of-home environments and the qualifications, skills and professional development of their early care and education providers and teachers are making a lasting impact on a generation of young children and their offspring

Ready Programs & Schools Priority Strategies

- **Develop options for a structure and funding of a Child Care Health Consultation system to support best practices and improve quality in child care settings.**
Rationale: Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC’s) are key resources to assist child care providers in achieving high standards related to health and safety of the children cared for daily in child care centers. CCHC’s work with child care centers offering periodic, consistent, and monitoring visits and consultation as well as responding to emergent requests to provide assistance regarding health related issue affecting a specific child or within the center. CCHC’s also provide expert information and consultation on working with and communicating with parents of enrolled children. Currently only a small number of child care centers receive health consultation due to limited funding, the lack of an organizational structure to establish scope of work, methods to deploy trained staff, credentialing and continuing education.

Estimated Cost: System development options for structure and funding will occur with staff support funded through support provided through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA).

- **Recommend funding to ensure a sufficient number of Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) licensing surveyors to meet the state mandated annual monitoring visits for child care facilities.**

Rationale: ARS 36-885 B requires that ADHS visit each child care facility as often as necessary to assure continued compliance with the legislative article and department rules. During FY 2006, the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) licensed and monitored approximately 2,785 facilities. Furthermore, the OCCL continues to see a steady increase in the number of child care facilities applying for licensure. To meet the statutory mandate, the OCCL needs to achieve at least a staff to facility ratio of 1:50 and over time will require additional funding to maintain this staff-to-facility ratio. To achieve this surveyor to facility ratio, ADHS has embarked on a three-year phase-in of needed staff positions. FY 2008 represents the second year of this three-year phase-in.

Estimated Cost: The \$505,900 increase recommended in the FY 2008 Executive budget would fund 9 FTE positions to bring the surveyor-to-facilities caseload ratio to 1:50, based on the number of facilities licensed or applying for licensure during FY 2006.

- **Implement a voluntary quality rating system that both promotes and rewards quality early childhood education for young children.**

Rationale: Quality early childhood education contributes to later school success. Studies that examine children's development over time have shown that high-quality early childhood education is a predictor of improvement in children's receptive language and functional communication skills, verbal IQ skills, cognitive skills, behavior, and attainment of higher math and receptive language scores – all of which impact later school success.² Research also indicates that participants in high-quality early childhood education programs may also experience lower levels of grade retention and fewer placements in special education classrooms.³ (Source: Zero to Three Policy Center Fact Sheet, November 2006)

To compliment the State School Readiness Board's recommendation to index the child care subsidy to the 75th percentile of the current market rate survey, it is recommended that the quality rating system have five levels, with each level building on the previous level. Resources and technical assistance will be necessary components of the system. Increased subsidies and enhancement grants could be paid to the early childhood education program based on program improvements and higher levels of quality.

It is recommended that an early childhood education accountability tool (quality rating system) be finalized and implemented.

Estimated cost: To be determined.

² United States General Accounting Office. 2002. Child care: States have undertaken a variety of quality improvement initiatives, but more evaluations of effectiveness are needed. Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office (GAO-02-897). <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02897.pdf> (accessed November 7, 2006).

³ The Carolina Abecedarian Project. Early Learning, Later Success: the Abecedarian Study, Executive Summary. <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/-abc/summary.cfm> (accessed November 3, 2006).

- **Form a policy work group to review licensing regulations and make recommendations to the ADHS Office of Child Care Licensing to improve standards of care.**

Rationale: Arizona statute (ARS 36-883) designates the Arizona Department of Health Services as the agency responsible for establishing reasonable rules related to the health, safety and welfare of children in child care facilities. These rules include standards for adequate physical facilities, staffing levels, etc. Current research conducted on other state licensing systems and steps to improve standards which promote positive outcomes for children conclude that strong licensing rules and systems provide the foundation for further program improvement. Raising expectations for children's readiness without raising the expectations for program quality and ongoing improvement efforts will do little to meet state goals or to help children grow and learn.

The policy work group will address key program standards found to be associated with effective early childhood programs:

- o Health and safety standards
- o Staff qualifications, education and training – orientation and annual
- o Staff-to-child ratios and group sizes
- o Curriculum content and environment
- o Health, safety and supervision
- o Behavior management and discipline

Estimated Cost: ADHS will complete a cost analysis for proposed new licensing regulations as part of their rulemaking process.

- **Coordinate Early Childhood Education functions among state agencies, Head Start, Tribal programs, and other early childhood education programs and improve communication and access to information.**

Rationale: Developing a high-quality early childhood education system includes the creation of high-quality programs and the coordination of existing projects and services. The Head Start State Collaboration Office's (HSSCO) priority areas align with the Action Steps of the SSRB Action Plan to create a coordinated and accessible early childhood system for parents and children. The HSSCO is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Head Start to support the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships at the state level.

System development requires new coordination of information as well as improved access to services and resources. Head Start State Collaboration Office and the School Readiness Board, in coordination with the Professional Development and Articulation Team will launch and develop an early childhood resource website. The website will support professional development and the quality of early childhood programs by providing a one-stop source of information for those exploring careers in early childhood as well as those already working in the field and looking to advance in their careers. The website will also contain information that supports the efforts of program directors and others to improve the quality of their programs. Additionally, parent resources and current information on policy will be important features of the School Readiness website resource.

Estimated Cost: HSSCO Federal Grant, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Federal Grant, possible funding from Professional Development Resources for web portal development. Website costs: \$50,000 including in-kind and 1st year support.

Ready Programs & Schools Supporting Strategies

- Support voluntary, state-funded, full-day kindergarten
- Improve quality of early childhood programs
 - Work with Regional Councils/Partnerships to identify criteria that enhance early childhood programs and services in their communities.
 - Develop mechanisms and approaches to enhance community collaboration with Regional Councils/Partnerships and First Things First
- Seek opportunities to improve quality by leveraging public and private dollars through new and existing programs
 - Continue participation in Zero to Three Learning Community on integration of infant/toddler criteria into quality improvement plan
 - Utilize information in the final evaluation report from First Focus on Kids pilot in Tucson to revise the quality improvement plan
- Improve the health of Arizona children birth to 6 years old
 - Work collaboratively with AHCCCS and health providers to increase services to Head Start children and families
 - Work collaboratively with Office of Oral Health to increase dental screening, fluoride treatments, and follow up care to Head Start children
 - Address early childhood health issues, including asthma and obesity, through newsletters, awareness campaigns, resource development
- Increase the pool and retention of qualified early childhood professionals
 - Identify mechanisms and opportunities for leadership to support and strengthen services to children with disabilities through the Early Childhood Inclusion Coalition

READY TEACHERS

Teacher quality plays a significant role in young children's early learning experiences. A well-educated and trained teacher knows how to engage both children and their families, and how to effectively use resources to enhance young children's growth, explorations and learning. A highly qualified teacher understands child development and can translate that understanding into high quality learning experiences in ways that lay the foundation upon which young children continue to build throughout their school careers and into their work lives.

Ready Teachers Priority Strategies

- **Develop the structure and identify funding for a comprehensive professional development system for Early Childhood Education**

Rationale: The State of Arizona currently has some components of a professional development system; however, the goal is to develop an integrated system of early childhood professional development that addresses quality improvement, resulting in improved school readiness outcomes for children and a high quality early childhood workforce. Arizona's comprehensive professional development system would address five components: *funding, core professional knowledge, qualifications and credentials, quality assurances (including training and technical assistance) and access and outreach.*

Arizona's Comprehensive Early Childhood Professional Development System would build on and enhance existing programs and resources such as S*CCEEDS, SEEDS, the Professional Career Pathways Program, and professional associations.

Estimated Cost: The State School Readiness Board is in the process of developing cost estimates.

Ready Teachers Supporting Strategies

- Enhance comprehensive leadership development system for early childhood education practitioners
 - Identify on-going funding for the Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program
 - Continue to develop and report on Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program
- Increase the number, diversity and quality of early childhood education practitioners through education and training
 - Continue to work with the Early Childhood Education Articulation Taskforce to develop and refine early childhood education articulation agreements within the community college system and between community colleges and public universities
 - Refine the SEEDS program, including implementation and evaluation of a demonstration project that links with the DES Professional Career Pathways Program
 - Develop a professional development program for center directors that links to program quality improvement, staff professional development and technical assistance and explore funding sources and granting college credits to participants
 - Develop the framework and cost estimate for a Wage Incentive Program that is based on level of educational attainment and continuous early childhood education employment
 - Explore the feasibility of an incentive initiative which acknowledges early childhood education programs that implement quality improvement plans, provide high quality professional development opportunities for staff and that retain highly qualified staff; and develop a framework for a quality awards strategy that rewards programs that focus resources on supporting staff professional development

READY COMMUNITIES

Early care and education are primarily delivered at the local level. Whether it is a mother trying to find a child center that offers high quality care, or a family searching for health care for their infant, services are delivered through local entities, which may or may not work together. Most states that have invested resources in early care and education have overcome the vast fragmentation of the system by requiring communities to work together to stimulate collaboration. Following this model, Arizona seeks to build an effective early childhood education system on the principle of flexible, local implementation, and state accountability.

Ready Communities Supporting Strategies

- Continue data collection for biannual publication of Key Performance Indicators report
- Work with the Early Childhood Development and Health Board (ECDH) and Regional Partnerships/Councils to conduct community assessments and build capacity to create and implement local action plans
- Work with the Early Childhood Development and Health Board (ECDH) and Regional Partnerships/Councils to develop evaluation criteria that measure change in program quality and services
- Assist the Early Education Funds Regional Partnerships in transitioning to the Regional Councils mandated by the Early Childhood Development and Health Initiative as they develop strategies to effectively partner with early childhood education and health programs
- Coordinate technical assistance services for the planning and implementation of comprehensive, quality-enhancement systems at the state and local level with the Early Childhood Development and Health Board and Regional Partnerships/Councils.

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