

**Florida Cabinet for Children and Youth**  
***Kindergarten Readiness***  
***Turn the Curve Exercise Summary***

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**Workgroup Members**

Brittany Birken, Agency for Workforce Innovation  
Shay Chapman, Department of Health  
Stu Greenberg, Department of Education  
Gail Hansen, Agency for Health Care Administration  
Johana Hatcher, Department of Children and Families

Cindy Hutchens-Gueth, Department of Health  
Jennifer Park, Agency for Workforce Innovation  
Rose Salinas Agency for People with Disabilities  
Fred Schuknecht Department of Juvenile Justice  
Karen Wiggins, Department of Health

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**Result**

Kindergarten Readiness

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**Indicator Baseline**

See Attached

- The indicators for the development of the baseline are being changed and as a result, the workgroup recommends:
  - Continuing to examine the ECHOS data points over time.
  - Monitor the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) data over the next several years. Currently, there are initial baseline data for FAIR but no trend data as the FAIR has only been administered once (2001-11). Therefore, additional data points are needed from subsequent years of administration to determine trend.
  - As school readiness indicators change over time, continue to examine how those trend data move.

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**Story behind the Baseline**

- Introduction of state prekindergarten program, Voluntary Prekindergarten in 2005. Specific educational standards were developed for VPK and have been reviewed/ revised (2008).
- School Readiness Standards were implemented in 2002 and Voluntary Prekindergarten Standards in 2005. The development of these standards, an expectation that programs align instruction to the appropriate standards, and professional development (VPK and school readiness?) supporting implementation of the on these standards helped define expectations for providers.
- There is limited historical perspective for the baseline and the introduction of early learning and Voluntary Prekindergarten Standards and the Prekindergarten program begin in 2005. Multiple years of data for DIBELS and ECHOS are available but the FAIR was introduced this year so a new baseline was established in 2010 for that measure. Data indicators on kindergarten readiness need to be examined closely as these programs continue to develop.

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**Partners**

- **The Framework Partners**
  - State Government
  - Institutes of Higher Education
  - Child Care Providers
  - Early Learning Coalitions
  - Community and Statewide Private Non-Profits
  - School Districts
  - Head Start
- **Parents**
- **Pediatricians**

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**Ideas to Turn the Curve**

**1. Look at quality constructs that empirically impact Kindergarten readiness scores for Florida children.**

- Examine existing data to determine what variables present in children’s early experiences allow for rates of kindergarten readiness.
- Determine what additional data are needed to better understand and identify the supports necessary to maximize kindergarten readiness rates.

*Empirical research studies should examine best practices in early childhood programs and determine the extent to which they yield in greater rates of gain for participating school readiness programs as defined by the Early Learning and Developmental/VPK Standards. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) works should be reviewed including their recent publication, “Increasing the Effectiveness of Preschool Programs (2010).”*

*Empirical studies should also examine out-of-school factors that limit children’s chances of school success. Out-of-school factors such as: 1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6) neighborhood characteristics were found to affect children’s school success (Berliner, D.C., 2009).*

*A thorough review of scientific evidence should be completed prior to study design to ensure that relevant factors are considered in the research.*

**2. Collect pre- and post-assessment data on children during Voluntary Prekindergarten participation so that children can be identified and supported prior to kindergarten entry and services can be recommended.**

- Children who are determined to not be ready for Kindergarten at the end of their school year, 540 hour Voluntary Prekindergarten program, would be eligible for and entitled to participate in an intensive summer program.
- This approach would target children most at risk for entering kindergarten with academic and social deficits and could lead to an increase in the percent of children entering kindergarten “ready.”

**3. Adopt comprehensive progress monitoring tools that link providers/teachers to learning and developmental resources for use throughout program participation.**

- Ongoing and timely feedback to teachers will allow providers/teacher to make ongoing and early adjustments to developmental and educational opportunities for children. Frequent progress monitoring will provide teachers with much of the information necessary to expand on children’s strengths and provide opportunities for development in areas of need. A comprehensive approach to progress monitoring used consistently across programs will contribute to effective teaching strategies that in turn will lead to more children entering kindergarten “ready.”
- The use of ongoing progress monitoring tools with regular parent conferences will allow parents and teachers to work as a team to best support children.

**4. Require providers to complete an Early Learning and Developmental Standards/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Standards training.**

- Trainings in the Early Learning and Developmental Standards and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Standards are available but not required.
  - *Currently, many providers who receive School Readiness or VPK funds complete the Standards training, but a mandate for completion of this training (Not yet developed)for program participation may increase training participation and result in broader and more consistent supports for children.*

**5. Develop and offer Early Learning and Developmental Standards/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Standards training for parents.**

- The Early Learning and Developmental Standards (created for both provider and parent audiences) and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Standards companion parent document/training, It's Okay to Play in VPK!, are resource manuals for parents. Early Learning and Developmental Standards do not currently have targeted training developed for parents.
  - *The development of parent targeted training and completion of this training for program participation would increase supports for children outside of the program participation hours. VPK does have this training developed but it is offered as a train the trainer to VPK Directors who in turn provide parent workshops in their programs thus building capacity and local "ownership" for best practices.*

**6. Make a change in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Statute addressing age eligibility.**

- Currently, the Voluntary Prekindergarten program serves all four year old children (based on Sept 1 age). Changing the eligibility to children who are at least age 4 by Sept 1 who have not yet participated in Voluntary Prekindergarten would support provider recommendations, parent choice, and potentially have no added cost to the state (see below).
  - *This change would allow children to participate in Voluntary Prekindergarten during the year that precedes their kindergarten entry. This would allow for children who start Kindergarten at age 6 to participate in Voluntary Prekindergarten the year prior to kindergarten entry but not necessarily as a 4 year old .*
  - *Parents would be able to delay Voluntary Prekindergarten participation for their child by one year if their child is going to start kindergarten at age 6 rather than age 5. This is most meaningful for children with summer birthdays and other children who may be identified as having developmental delays.*
  - *This eligibility change could result in cost saving for the state as state retention during the elementary grades may be reduced by allowing for later Voluntary Prekindergarten entry.*