Progress and Prospects in the Development of Indicators of School Readiness

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Structure of Presentation

- **Conceptualization of School Readiness**
- **National Surveys**
- **State Level: Child Indicators Projects**
- **State Level: Child Assessments**
- **Uses of School Readiness Indicators**
- **Gaps and Next Steps**
- **Selecting Key Indicators**

Conceptualization of School Readiness

Wrestling with the articulation of the First National Education Goal:

"By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn."

Conceptualization of School Readiness

Three Components of School Readiness

(1) Readiness in Children

(2) Readiness of Schools

(3) Family and Community Supports

Conceptualization of School Readiness

Component 1:
Readiness in Children

(1) **Physical well-being and motor development**

(2) **Social and emotional development**

(3) **Approaches to learning**

(4) **Language development and emerging literacy**

(5) **Cognition and general knowledge**

Conceptualization of School Readiness

Component 2:
Readiness of Schools

- **Creating linkages**
- **Providing high quality instruction**
- **Commitment to the success of all children**
- **Assure access to community services**
- **Carrying out appropriate assessments**

Conceptualization of School Readiness

Component 3:
Family and Community Supports

(1) High quality early childhood care and education

(2) Parents as children's first teachers

(3) Nutrition, physical activity experiences, and health care

Issue of Time Frame

Conceptualization of School Readiness

- **Supports prior to school entry, and condition of children and schools at child entry?**

- **Time frame from before birth through age 8?**

National Surveys

- **Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K)**

- **The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)**

- **National Household Education Survey (NHES)**

ECLS-K

National Surveys

- **Nationally representative sample of 22,782 kindergartners from 1,277 kindergartens**

- **Follows children longitudinally from kindergarten entry in fall of 1998 through fifth grade**

- **Information from parents, teachers, school administrators, and direct assessments of children**

School Readiness Indicators from the ECLS-K

National Surveys

- **Children's Readiness**
  - **Physical Well-Being & Motor Development**
  - **Social & Emotional Development**
  - **Approaches Toward Learning**
  - **Language Development**
  - **Cognition & General Knowledge**

- **Schools' Readiness**
  - **Teacher Characteristics**
  - **Transitional Practices: home to school**
  - **Classroom Characteristics**
  - **Principal Characteristics**
  - **School Resources**

- **Family & Community Supports**
  - **Infant Birthweight**
  - **Parent-Child Activities**
  - **Preschool Participation**

FACES

National Surveys

- **Nationally representative sample of Head Start programs, centers, classrooms, and children**

- **Two cohorts of children: 3,200 & 2,800**

- **Follows children from Head Start enrollment through first grade**

- **Information from parents, program staff, child assessments & classroom observations**

School Readiness Indicators from FACES

National Surveys

- **Children's Readiness**
  - **Physical Well-Being & Motor Development**
  - **Social & Emotional Development**
  - **Approaches Toward Learning**
  - **Language Development**
  - **Cognition & General Knowledge**

- **Schools' Readiness**
  - **Teacher Characteristics**
  - **Classroom Characteristics**

- **Family & Community Supports**
  - **Infant Birthweight**
  - **Parent-Child Activities**
  - **Preschool Participation**

NHES

National Surveys

- **Random-digit dialed household survey conducted in all 50 states and the District of Columbia**

- **Conducted in spring 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, and 1999**

- **School Readiness modules included in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1999**

- **One adult asked to respond for the entire household (1-3 children per household)**

School Readiness Indicators from NHES

- **Children's Readiness**
  - **Physical Well-Being & Motor Development**
  - **Social & Emotional Development (1993 only)**
  - **Language Development (mostly literacy; 1993 & 1999)**

- **Schools' Readiness**
  - **(none)**

- **Family & Community Supports**
  - **Infant Birthweight**
  - **Health Care**
  - **Parent-Child Activities**
  - **Preschool Participation**

State Level: Child Assessments

Statewide assessments at kindergarten entry or during kindergarten year in 13 states. More in planning stages.

Principles of Assessment

- **Four distinct purposes for assessment**

- **Particular assessment and sampling strategy need to match purpose**

- **Recommend that, when goal is monitoring and program evaluation, rely on a sample rather than universal assessment**

**State Level:
Child Assessments**

- **State-level surveys and direct assessments often initiated in response to legislation**

- **Assessments as part of monitoring of program**

- **Examples: North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, California**

State Level: Child Assessments

North Carolina's Kindergartners & Schools: A Summary Report
(Maxwell, Bryant, Ridley & Keyes-Elstein, April 2001)

- Used five dimensions of readiness in children

- "Benchmarked" against national findings

- Operationalized readiness of schools

State Level: Child Assessments

Findings from *North Carolina's Kindergartners & Schools*

- **On average, kindergartners in North Carolina show similar patterns of development as national samples in areas of health and physical development, social development, and approaches to learning**

- **Show lower average scores in areas of language and literacy and math**

- **Lower income children at risk**

South Carolina

**State Level:
Child Assessments**

- **Work in planning stages**

- **Direct assessments**

- **Detailed survey with parents focusing on contributors to children's school readiness**

- **Timing issue still open**

- **Selection of measures based on:**
  - **detailed articulation of five dimensions**
  - **literature review on contributors to school readiness and conceptual model**

Uses of Indicators
of School Readiness

- **Broad descriptive portrayal**

- **Subgroups highlighted**

- **Antecedents and sequellae of children's readiness; sequellae of schools' readiness**

- **As source of data for benchmarking**

- **Identifying patterns of concern in children's development**

- **Identifying where supports are strong and where they need strengthening**

Gaps and Next Steps

- **Collection of data for a nationally representative sample of kindergartners on a recurrent basis**

- **Continued collection of data for Head Start sample on additional cohorts**

- **Recurrent items in NHES module**

Gaps and Next Steps

- Areas where survey content could be strengthened:

  - **Children's Readiness**: aspects of cognitive development other than language and literacy

  - **Schools' Readiness**: qualifications of school principals; linking families to community services; transitional practices

  - **Family and Community Supports**: health practices and health care

Gaps and Next Steps

- **State-level data collection:**
  - **Continuing to monitor re: cautions about child assessments**
  - **providing more resources for benchmarking**

- **Moving to county level/community level indicators**

Selecting Key Indicators

<u>Two Processes:</u>

(1) Monitor process of state-level efforts in communication of findings in state legislatures and to public

(2) Use resources in national datasets to carry out longitudinal analyses to identify most critical predictors of later outcomes