

HAWAII GOOD BEGINNINGS  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COUNCIL

SCHOOL READINESS TASK FORCE

REPORT TO THE  
2003 LEGISLATURE



December 2002

**SCHOOL READINESS REPORT TASK FORCE  
REPORT TO THE 2003 HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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“All children in America should start school ready to learn”.

- 1994 National Education Goals Panel

Educators, early childhood experts and policymakers in Hawai`i are committed to ensure the implementation of the National Education Panel goal. Our vision of Hawai`i's commitment to children is one of shared responsibility among parents, schools, and communities. To enable children to succeed in kindergarten and subsequent school experiences, we must each accept the responsibility of collective action. The challenge is daunting; kindergarten teachers suggest that over half of their students enter their classrooms unprepared. If Hawai`i is to achieve the goal of a literate citizenry spelled out by President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, we must close this achievement gap before it is further perpetuated.

In 1989, Hawai`i's Legislature adopted Act 369, publicly recognizing that early education plays an important role to encourage positive outcomes for children. During the past decade, educators and policymakers have turned an ever-increasing focus upon whether young children are prepared for success as they enter the formal education system. This notion of 'school readiness' is now firmly entrenched as a key concept throughout education reform.

In September of 2001, Hawai`i's Interdepartmental Council on Children and Families established the School Readiness Task Force co-chaired by the CEO of Kamehameha Schools and the Department of Education Superintendent. The Task Force convened representatives from across state departments and the early childhood community to engage in an exhaustive process to develop a plan to improve the quality of early learning experiences for the young children of Hawai`i.

The Task Force set out to answer this critical question – What do we have to do to ensure that children enter school ready to succeed? More specifically, what must communities, families and schools do to improve children's school readiness? As an essential first step, Hawai`i enacted the definition of school readiness during the 2001 legislative session. It reads:

*Young children are ready to have successful learning experiences in school when there is a positive interaction among the child's developmental characteristics, school practices, and family and community support.*

Building on this work, the Task Force prepared this report to serve as an outcomes framework to guide policymakers, agencies, early childhood leaders, and other stakeholders in making decisions about the early childhood system in Hawai`i. It contains specific recommendations to the Legislature, Departmental Agencies, and the private sector for immediate action as well as for long-term follow-up and implementation.

### **Core Principles**

Throughout the process, Task Force work has embraced the following core principles to guide the implementation of the recommended strategies:

- The foundation of a child’s life is developed in the first eight years.
- The family is the child’s first teacher.
- As partners in their child’s learning, families must attend to the child’s physical, emotional, social, and cognitive developmental needs
- Families shall have access to quality early childhood education and care of their choice

*Note:* The School Readiness Task Force defines ‘early childhood’ to include children birth to age 8. Because of the short timeline to create this report, many recommendations focus on children just before they enter kindergarten. However, learning begins at birth. Preschool teachers often report that 3 year-olds enter their programs without the age appropriate social-emotional and language skills. To truly impact school readiness, this effort must continue to address issues related to children birth to age 3, as well as consider children ages 5 to 8.

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## **II. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Hawai`i School Readiness Task Force recommends the following actions. The implementation of these recommendations is not the responsibility of any one agency. It will require the adoption, endorsement, support, and implementation of a variety of state departments, community organizations, community members, policymakers, schools, and families (*See section VI for details*).

### Major Recommendations

#### **Office of the Governor**

- Establish a Commission on School Readiness to oversee the operational planning needed to improve school readiness through increased access to early learning opportunities and enhanced infrastructure. The Commission will assign a Financing Subcommittee to identify the cost of fully implementing a School Readiness System.

#### **Hawai`i’ State Legislature**

- Adopt Resolution that recognizes and supports Hawai`i’s Preschool Content Standards

#### **Hawai`i’ State Departments**

- Assess Readiness of Children and Schools at the System Level
- Support Preparation and Ongoing Education of Practitioners and Administrators
- Link the Kindergarten-Second Grade Content and Performance Standards and the Hawai`i Preschool Content Standards
- Establish a statewide systematic approach to address successful transition

**Higher Education**

- Prepare teachers and administrators qualified in early childhood education

**Philanthropy/Private Sector**

- Create a Financing Task Force to calculate support needed to fund high-quality early education services and organizational structure for universal preschool, and for school readiness services for families and children.
- Develop an initiative to pilot a Community and Family School Readiness Network

Hawaii's ability to prepare young children for school clearly depends upon the infrastructure in place to support school readiness. It is not enough to simply provide low-income families with financial subsidies. A fully developed system must include components such as a coordinating mechanism, public policy development, ongoing resource development, facilities, data system, and evaluation. The remainder of this report highlights the need for quality care and education in Hawaii, proposes a developed school readiness system, and identifies key outcome measures that implementation of this system is expected to improve.

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### III. THE CASE

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There are approximately 78,000 children under the age of 5 in Hawai`i.

- Kindergarten teachers across Hawai`i report that many children enter kindergarten unprepared to succeed.
- Only 23 percent of all 3 and 4 year-olds attend preschool.
- Almost half of low-income 3 and 4 year-olds (15,102) do not currently receive preschool subsidies.

Child poverty, family isolation, and other interrelated social conditions often threaten children’s readiness for kindergarten. For children to grow and thrive, families, schools, and communities must work together. Responsibility for children’s success is shared and investment in the early years is essential to support families, schools and communities.

**Why invest in early education?**

Research supports these reasons to invest in early education and care:

- 85 percent of a child’s development occurs in the first five years of life
- Early education and care reduces the K-12 academic achievement gap
- Early education and care minimizes future social costs and improves current workforce productivity

And, it is the right thing to do:

- Our youngest children deserve a chance to succeed

**The early years lay the foundation for a child’s future success**

Exciting breakthroughs in brain research definitively demonstrate that early experiences affect the development of the brain and lay the foundation for our intelligence, emotional health, and moral development. The nurturing role of the family during this period is critical to develop successful patterns for lifelong learning.

The recent blue-ribbon report, From Neurons to Neighborhoods, developed by a committee of seventeen national experts in the fields of education, psychiatry, neuroscience, economics, and public policy, states that “striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten. These differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances, and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance.”

The report goes on to state, “children grow and thrive... when there is a positive interaction among family, school, community, and the child.” Sadly, there are few opportunities for parents and caregivers of young children to increase their knowledge and skills. This gap is especially apparent in low-income communities. Community programs that connect parents to resources are crucial.

**Early education and care reduces K-12 academic achievement gap**

New research now confirms what kindergarten teachers have long suspected – a distressingly large gap between the academic abilities of high- and low-income children already manifests

itself by the age of six<sup>1</sup>. Clearly, many complex social conditions perpetuate this achievement gap. The result is that “children from more disadvantaged backgrounds...lag further behind in acquiring more sophisticated reading and math knowledge and skills such as recognizing words by sight or solving simple addition and subtraction problems”<sup>2</sup>.

With increasing pressure on states and localities from the federal education mandate, No Child Left Behind, Hawai`i’s focus must shift to the prekindergarten years if we are to ensure all children enter school ready to succeed.

### **Early education and care minimizes future social costs and improves current workforce productivity**

Cost/benefit analyses now correlate quality early childhood experiences with long-term benefits for children in educational attainment, economic well-being, and social behavior. Simply put, the return on investment during the early years is significant. National studies estimate that every \$1 invested in high quality programs for disadvantaged children saves society \$7 in forgone welfare, crime, and remedial education costs.

Increasingly, business leaders are joining the chorus calling for quality early childhood education and care programs. With children safely cared for, parents are more likely to be productive workers because they are less hampered by child care problems resulting in employee turnover and absenteeism. An economic analysis estimates that “by making it possible for parents to work, the formal child care sector enables Americans to earn more than \$100 billion, and engenders over \$580 billion in total labor income, and \$69 billion in tax revenue.”<sup>3</sup> Nowhere is this more apparent than with single mothers attempting to leave welfare for work.

### **Our youngest children deserve a chance to succeed**

We often hear that the true greatness of a state is measured by the future it provides for its children. Supporting early childhood education and care offers policymakers an opportunity to improve the school readiness of young children and focus on prevention rather than remediation. Current fiscal expenditures in Hawai`i are heavily weighted towards older children. This report envisions a Hawai`i where *all* children can reap equitable portions of hope through increased family connections to quality services.

### **Challenges to a coordinated, accessible system**

Our vision is a coordinated system of programs and services that support families’ choices for their children’s early education. The existing fragmented and under-resourced system cannot achieve the goal of children ready for school. Families have difficulty accessing support services that will help them do their job better and provide them with the knowledge and skill necessary to ensure their children enter school ready to succeed. Early childhood education programs struggle with a paradoxical market failure. Many, but not all, families at the low end of the economic scale have access to free or heavily subsidized services. Those with higher incomes can afford to pay what programs charge. But market prices are too high for the majority of

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<sup>1</sup> *Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as Children Begin School*, Economic Policy Institute, 2002

<sup>2</sup> National Education Goals Panel report

<sup>3</sup> *The National Economic Impacts of the Child Care Sector*, The National Child Care Association, 2002

families to afford quality services. This keeps rates artificially low and results in under-capitalization that manifests in compensation too low to retain and recruit highly trained professionals and limited ability to expand services or improve quality.

**The issue of quality**

The need for quality in early education and care should no longer be an issue for debate. Research has clearly demonstrated that children who have early learning experiences that include interactions with knowledgeable and supportive adults, opportunities to explore and play in an environment rich in materials and planned learning activities, including early literacy activities, achieve greater social and intellectual gains than those who do not.<sup>4</sup> The challenge is to provide the resources that allow early education and family support programs to attain the level of quality that results in good outcomes for all children.

Finally, the quality of early education and care will continue to be uneven without the universal adoption of standards, assessment and an accountability mechanism.

**Where do we go from here?**

If we are to provide quality early learning opportunities to all young children, there is clearly a dramatic need for Hawai`i to accomplish the following:

- Develop a system to assess the readiness of children for kindergarten and of schools to help them succeed.
- Expand the knowledge and capacity of families, schools, communities and policymakers to work together to ensure that Hawai`i's keiki enter school safe, healthy, and ready to succeed.
- Provide focused support for families to obtain the knowledge and skill needed to prepare their children for kindergarten.
- Increase access to high quality early education programs for children three and four years of age. This must include infrastructure improvements in areas such as professional development, compensation, and facilities.
- Enhance the ability of elementary schools to meet the developmental needs of young children, especially those entering kindergarten.

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**IV. SCHOOL READINESS DEFINITION**

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The following definition of school readiness for Hawai`i's young children was adopted by the Task Force, recommended to the Governor for legislative action, and adopted into statute through Act 13 (HRS):

*School readiness means that young children are ready to have successful learning experiences in school when there is a positive interaction among the child's developmental characteristics, school practices, and family and community support.*

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<sup>4</sup> *Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Go To School*, National Center on Early Development and Learning, 1999, among others.

This definition of school readiness is one of shared responsibility and accountability. It requires the following factors be considered:

*Children's developmental characteristics* and abilities vary widely in individual children including: (1) physical development and well being; (2) social and emotional development; (3) school-related behaviors and skills; (4) approaches to learning; (5) motor development and self-help skills; (6) communication and language development; (7) cognitive development and general knowledge

*Family support* including: (1) meeting children's basic needs; (2) providing emotional support; (3) supporting learning by providing stimulating experiences; (4) talking to children, and reading to them every day.

*School support* including: (1) welcoming children and families; (2) involving families in school; (3) providing transitions between the home or early education program and the school; (4) providing active, hands-on learning experiences; (5) supporting quality instructional methods; (6) building relationships between children and teachers; (7) honoring individual and cultural diversity; (8) partnering with community agencies

*Community support* including: (1) provisions for children to have adequate nutrition; (2) opportunity for physical activity; (3) health care; (4) enriching preschool and home experiences; (5) programs that help families be their child's first teacher

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## V. OUTCOMES

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The School Readiness Task Force delegated the task of identifying the outcomes by which Hawai'i will measure whether or not we have succeeded in preparing our young children for school to five Work Groups made up of a cross section of stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The Work Groups developed outcomes and preliminary indicators to guide future planning and implementation processes. The outcomes are listed below.

### Outcomes

- Outcome #1 All 3 and 4 year-old children will have access to quality early educational programs.
- Outcome #2 Families are knowledgeable about children's needs and how to foster healthy development.
- Outcome #3 Communities are knowledgeable about children's needs and how to foster healthy development.
- Outcome #4 Kindergarten and preschool teachers, and other school staff have developmental knowledge and appropriate expectations of children.
- Outcome #5 Administrators at every level in public or private programs that serve

young children (3,4 & 5 years old) demonstrate understanding of the importance of qualified teachers to helping children succeed in school.

- Outcome #6 Policy-makers understand and foster the healthy development of young children.
- Outcome #7 Teachers, family childcare providers, aides and paraprofessionals working with young children (3,4 &5 years old) have higher education degrees and specialized professional development in early childhood education and care appropriate to their roles.
- Outcome #8 Families support their children' s readiness for school.
- Outcome #9 Communities support families in preparing children for school
- Outcome #10 A statewide, systematic approach to address successful transitions is in place.
- Outcome #11 Assessment of Hawai` i' s ability to provide support for children' s reading for school is based on principles of best practice in assessment.
- Outcome #12 Statewide uniform procedures for measuring key readiness characteristics of children-as-group are established and reported by schools.
- Outcome #13 Statewide uniform procedures for measuring key readiness practices and policies of schools and preschools are established and reported by administrators, principals, and teachers.
- Outcome #14: Statewide procedures for communicating and reporting children and school readiness outcomes are established and used by appropriate audiences.
- Outcome #15 A set of core preschool content standards are adopted that align with DOE content and performance standards, are applicable to all preschools in Hawai` i and are adopted by key stakeholders in early childhood.
- Outcome #16 Preparation and ongoing education in early education for practitioners is accessible and of high quality.
- Outcome #17 There is an increased capacity at the state and county level to develop and sustain a statewide, public/private commitment to ensure that Hawai` i' s children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed.

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## VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Task Force recommends that the Governor appoint a **Commission on School Readiness**, facilitated by Good Beginnings Alliance, to oversee the operational planning to improve school readiness through increased access to early learning opportunities and enhanced infrastructure. The Department of Education (DOE) should be designated and funded as the lead agency to continue planning the School Readiness Initiative. Membership of the Commission should include a wide range of stakeholders from early childhood education and care<sup>5</sup>. Detailed information from the Work Groups, including their reports and Performance Outcome Grid, will provide the foundation for the Commission’s work. In particular, the Commission should consider the following issues:

- Where is the School Readiness Initiative housed?
- What population will it target?
- What is the governance structure?
- How extensive are the required financial resources and from where will they be drawn?

In this Report, the Task Force recommends six comprehensive strategies to guide the Commission during its operational planning. For Hawai‘i to achieve the goal that all children are safe, healthy and ready to succeed in school, both the government and private sector must work together to support these recommendations.

### Strategies

#### *1. Establish a Community & Family School Readiness Network*

There shall be created a central point that provides school readiness resources, technical assistance, and data collection to encourage families and communities to foster school readiness. The ultimate goal of the network will be to provide families with children birth to third grade, caregivers, and communities with the information and resources to ensure that children are ready to succeed in school. Groups served through this Network may include Families for R.E.A.L., Healthy Start, faith-based organizations, preschools, family centers, and community groups such as civic clubs and community associations.

#### **Functions:**

- Resource - Provide information about children’s development and learning and what can be done to help children be ready to succeed in school (Example: Family and Community Guidelines for Supporting Children’s Readiness).
- Technical Assistance and Training- Coordination of information and readiness-related services to ensure statewide availability and accessibility for family-serving agencies and groups; provide organizational training and technical assistance on readiness-related issues.
- Data collection and reporting – Collect and report aggregate data on readiness outcomes related to families and communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Suggested members include Kamehameha Schools, Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children, University of Hawaii, Hawaii State Teachers Association, Good Beginnings Alliance, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Board Of Education, Head Start, private preschool provider, and Hawaii Business Roundtable.

**Actions Required:**

Philanthropy and Private Sector:

- Support development of Community and Family Guidelines to help communities and families understand their role in preparing children for school.
- Develop an initiative to pilot the Community and Family School Readiness Network

**2. Provide Statewide Voluntary Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Programs**

The Task Force recommends an incremental roll out of this initiative, with this component of the School Readiness Initiative initially targeting 3- and 4-year-old children who live in areas identified by the DOE under Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act. Title 1 provides support for schools where children require additional services to meet educational goals. Most early education programs for 3- and 4-year-olds in Hawai`i are provided through the private sector. The Task Force recommends that wherever possible these programs be strengthened to achieve the goal of the preparing children to succeed in school. Programs may be center-based or offered in home settings for children unrelated to the provider.

Statewide access compels the State to ensure that families can find and afford programs that meet quality standards, have the resources to offer standards-based learning experiences, recruit and retain qualified teachers and assess children’s progress.

**Functions:**

- Provide financial assistance to families based on ability to pay.
- Provide direct support to early education programs enrolling eligible children to improve quality and increase accessibility, e.g. support for:
  - Program expansion based on need, especially in under-served areas
  - Recruitment and retention of qualified practitioners and administrators
  - Ongoing Staff Development
  - Implementation of research- and standards-based curricula
  - Outcomes-focused program assessment
- Provide assistance to expand and enhance facilities serving eligible children (eg. Pre-Plus)

**Actions Required:**

Legislative:

- Approve legislation to provide Statewide Voluntary Access to Quality Early Childhood Educational Programs
  - a. Increase funding for financial assistance based on families’ ability to pay
  - b. Approve and fund community-based needs assessment for early childhood programs (i.e. facilities, additional spaces for children)
  - c. Recognize privately funded feasibility study of strategies to increase compensation for early childhood program staff and request report to Legislature, Interdepartmental Council and Good Beginnings Alliance in 2004.
  - d. Fund planning and design of incremental Quality Improvement Initiative with pilot projects targeted for FY 2005. Funding should include two years: 1 year planning and design, 1-year pilot projects.

- e. Enact enabling legislation to increase the number of public school facilities serving young children, especially in areas where other options are not feasible.

### ***3. Recognize and Support Hawaii Preschool Content Standards***

The goal is to ensure that children receive a preschool education that prepares them to succeed in school. The first step in this goal is to set meaningful content standards for preschools. Once they are set, linking them to the DOE's standards for Kindergarten-Second Grade ensures a smooth transition and consistent educational continuum. Linkage will also support early education programs and the DOE in meeting federal mandates for child learning standards.

#### **Action Required:**

##### Legislature:

- Adopt Resolution that recognizes and supports Hawai'i's Preschool Content Standards

##### Collaboration between GBA, early childhood providers, DOE and Higher Education to Link Preschool and K-2 Standards:

- Adopt a process for approval of Hawai'i Preschool Content Standards by key stakeholders in early childhood education in Hawai'i
- Demonstrate linkage of Preschool Standards and DOE K-2 standards.
- Provide training on use of the standards to preschools and elementary school staff.
- Provide incentives for incremental adoption of preschool standards by public and private providers of early education programs.

### ***4. Assess Readiness of Children and Schools at the System Level***

State and community level assessment of School Readiness will provide important information to guide planning, development and implementation of strategies to ensure that children, families, schools and communities are receiving needed support. There shall be statewide uniform procedures established to:

- measure key readiness characteristics of children.
- measure key readiness practices and policies of schools and preschools as reported by administrators, principals and teachers.

#### **Action Required:**

##### Department of Education:

- Allocate resources to build capacity for appropriate assessment and data collection.

### ***5. Ensure that Teachers and Administrators are qualified in early childhood education***

Research confirms that young children are more successful in school when they have well-prepared professional teachers who base practice on research and sound professional judgment. Teachers are more effective when they are supported by administrators who demonstrate understanding of the importance of early childhood education in their policies and practices.

#### **Actions Required:**

##### Philanthropy and private sector

- Fund the planning, design and initial implementation of a comprehensive professional development strategy for early education practitioners including:

- Incentives for adoption by stakeholders of the voluntary standards for professional qualifications and professional practice developed by the Hawai'i Early Childhood Career Development Coalition.
- Adoption of initial strategies for improving compensation aimed at recruiting and retaining qualified early educators.
- Support development of a voluntary standards-based credential for preschool administrators.

#### Department of Education

- Provide access to information about early childhood education to elementary school administrators.
- Provide incentives for preference in hiring of kindergarten teachers with early childhood preparation and experience.
- Offer staff development in child development and developmentally based practice to all teachers and paraprofessionals with focused attention on K-2 teachers and paraprofessionals who work with young children.

#### Higher Education

- Increase capacity to prepare teachers and administrators in early childhood education
- Support the DOE in offering staff development in child development and developmentally based practice to all teachers and paraprofessionals with focused attention on K-2 teachers and paraprofessionals who work with young children.

#### ***6. Establish a statewide systematic approach to address successful transitions.***

A statewide approach will ensure a successful transition from home and early education program to kindergarten by providing all children and families with the necessary information and support.

#### **Action Required:**

- Philanthropy and Good Beginnings Alliance will design and pilot test transition programs that are flexible and responsive to the needs of families in different geographic areas or target groups.
- Based on available funding the DOE will implement a statewide approach on transitions based upon the pilot program, and building on existing resources.

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## **VII. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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Since Act 13 was adopted by the 2002 Legislature, the following significant steps have been taken to achieve several of the School Readiness outcomes:

#### **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**

The University of Hawai'i Education Policy Center has developed two readiness assessment tools: one concerns children's readiness for school, and the other deals with schools' readiness

for children. Through funding from the Hawai`i Community Foundation, the validation of this instrument began in the Fall 2002.

**Preschool Content Standards**

School Readiness Task Force Assessment and Standards Work Group has developed preschool content standards that align with the Department of Education K-12 standards. These standards provide guidance for preschool administrators and teachers regarding the content of their daily programs for children. In addition, the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind created additional urgency to the appropriate and realistic correspondence between content expectations for programs serving children exiting the preschool years and entering kindergarten.

**Early Learning Opportunities Act: Transitions**

Good Beginnings Alliance has secured federal funding to develop and pilot a plan for children's successful transitions into Kindergarten. This plan will be designed for children entering kindergarten from both preschool and home environments and will be implemented statewide.

**Preschool by Four Media Campaign**

The Department of Human Services has made a commitment to increase awareness about the importance of preschool.

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**VIII. CONTINUATION OF THE SCHOOL READINESS AGENDA**

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At its November 2002 meeting, the Interdepartmental Council approved the continuation of the Task Force and its work to develop Hawai`i's school readiness agenda. The department heads requested that Good Beginnings Alliance continue staffing the Task Force to ensure the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report. As the process moves forward, the Task Force must address the following:

**Develop Infrastructure**

The Task Force recommends that the Governor appoint a Commission on School Readiness. This Commission must consider Hawai`i's ability to prepare young children for school, which depends upon the infrastructure in place to support young children. Key components include public policy development, general infrastructure support, scholarship disbursement, resource dissemination, facilities, data system, and governance and evaluation.

**Develop a Data System**

Tracking Hawai`i's ability to achieve outcomes for school readiness depends on quality data. The availability of data is crucial to assess the progress of this work. The Task Force recommends the development of a data agenda of information that must be collected in order to track statewide school readiness outcomes. The Interdepartmental Council's commitment to increased access to state department data will ensure more effective planning for programs that support school readiness. Resources will need to be allocated to build capacity for appropriate assessment and data collection.

### **Identify Immediate Funding Strategies**

Funding must be secured quickly to implement the report's initial recommendations. The legislature, state departments, philanthropies and the private sector must contribute what they can to launch the School Readiness Initiative and to leverage funds from the federal government and national foundations. The Financing Subcommittee will identify the cost of fully implementing a School Readiness System and present recommendations to the Commission on School Readiness on funding strategies that maximize existing resources.

### **Expand Focus on Infants and Toddlers**

The School Readiness Task Force defines 'early childhood' to include children birth to age 8. Because of the short timeline to create this report, many recommendations focus on children just before they enter kindergarten. However, learning begins at birth. To truly impact school readiness, this effort must continue to address issues related to children birth to age 3 such as:

- Program standards and family and community guidelines focused on birth to two year old population
- Developmental and health screening at age three.
- Increased awareness of and access to prenatal care.

### **Expand Focus on Health**

The School Readiness Task Force realizes that child health needs must be met in order for children to succeed in school. This report will align with the concurrent efforts of the Department of Health to produce a statewide plan for a comprehensive early childhood system.

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## **IX. CONTEXT**

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Planning for School Readiness occurs in a context of more than a decade of efforts moving toward the goal of all children safe, healthy and ready to succeed. Below is a summary of some of the major occurrences that lead to the recommendations in this report.

### **History: Hawai'i's interest in school readiness**

#### **Act 367 (1989)**

Directs the Department of Education to develop a plan to implement voluntary statewide early education to be delivered by private providers whenever possible. Full implementation is expected to occur by Fall 2000.

#### **Preschool Open Doors (1989)**

The Legislature approved state funding to help families pay for early education and child care through a sliding fee scale based on the families' ability to pay. Quality components of the project included workshops for parents about how to choose a preschool and support for staff development in participating preschools.

#### **National Education Goals Panel (1990)**

President George H. Bush and the nation's Governors adopted a set of goals to improve education in America. The first goal, "All children in America should start school ready to

learn”, established a national shift in education – recognition of the importance of the first years of children’s lives in preparing them for school.

**Hawai`i’s Early Childhood Master Plan (1996) and Act 77 (1997)**

The Early Childhood Master Plan described the coordinating structure that was implemented through Act 77 (HRS): a state level Interdepartmental Cabinet Council (IDC), a statewide non-profit coordinating agency (the Good Beginnings Alliance) and community councils in each of Hawai`i’s four counties.

**Hawai`i’s Early Childhood Education Professional Development System (1996)**

The Hawai`i Early Childhood Career Development Coalition, a group of 21 public and private organizations and agencies, was formed to oversee early childhood professional development efforts. The Coalition has adopted a number of standards to support quality in the early childhood workforce and designed the Registry now implemented by the Good Beginnings Alliance. T.E.A.C.H.®, Hawai`i’s program of public and privately funded scholarships, offers additional support for professional development.

**Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Succeed (1998)**

House Concurrent Resolution No. 38 established as state policy the goal that “All of Hawai`i’s Children Will be Safe, Healthy and Ready to Succeed.” The goal is implemented through public and private partnerships in communities across the state.

**Public and Private Agencies Implement Programs to Address Kith/Kin Care (1998)**

The Department of Human Services (through contracts with University of Hawai`i’s Center on the Family and through Maui County Good Beginnings), and other private agencies throughout the state support ongoing efforts to improve the quality of unregulated care in communities.

**The Hawai`i Performance Partnership Board (HPPB): Outcomes Focus (1999)**

Act 160 (HRS) created a nine-member board of business, philanthropy and government representatives appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. Performance Partnerships are outcomes focused, measure performance and work with the federal government to ensure flexibility if program measurements are achieved. School Readiness is one of the Performance Partnerships.

**Interdepartmental Council (IDC) School Readiness Performance Partnership (2000)**

The Interdepartmental Council adopted 17 indicators of school readiness. IDC members agreed to track the indicators annually and align their programs where possible to encourage positive trends in the indicators.

**Current Efforts to Implement a School Readiness Initiative**

**School Readiness Task Force (September 2001)**

The IDC created the School Readiness Task Force, co-chaired by Pat Hamamoto, Superintendent of Schools; and Hamilton McCubbin, CEO of Kamehameha Schools. The Task Force was charged with the development of a school readiness definition and the related strategies to implement a school readiness agenda for Hawai`i.

**Ready for Success in Kindergarten: A Comparative Analysis of Community Beliefs (December 2001)**

The Hawai`i Educational Policy Center examined perceptions of school readiness in Hawai`i. The research team conducted surveys and focus groups with preschool and kindergarten parents, teachers, and administrators and reviewed national research to develop recommendations for Hawai`i. The policy report provided the foundation for the work of the School Readiness Task Force.

**Kamehameha Schools Increased Activity in Early Childhood (January 2002)**

The leadership of Kamehameha Schools (KS) approved initiatives to increase the number of preschool classrooms, and scholarships to children attending qualified, non-KS preschools. A Task Force is formed to examine best practices in 0-2 early education and recommend potential roles and approaches for KS.

**Hawai`i Association for the Education of Young Children (HAEYC) Statewide Accreditation Project (2002)**

HAEYC has launched a statewide program to increase the number of NAEYC accredited preschools in Hawai`i. Accreditation standards are higher quality than childcare licensing standards.

**PrePlus Facilities on Elementary School Campuses (2001)**

The 2001 Legislature allocated \$5 million dollars for the biennium to build preschool facilities on elementary school campuses. Private agencies are contracted to operate the preschool programs.

**No Child Left Behind (January 2002)**

No child Left Behind (NCLB), the major educational reform strategy of President George W. Bush's administration, has significant implications for early childhood education. The obligation to measure 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores and the emphasis on standards and accountability require the Department of Education to examine the many contributing factors to a child's success in school. Among these are expectations for children entering kindergarten.

**Good Start Grow Smart (January 2002)**

The early childhood counterpart to No Child Left Behind, this initiative announced by President Bush addresses three major areas: strengthening Head Start, partnering with states to improve early childhood education; and providing information to teachers, caregivers, and parents on best practices and research in early childhood.

**Act 13 – Report to the Legislature (April 2002)**

With the signing of Act 13 (HRS) Hawai`i became one of the first states to place the definition of school readiness into statute. Act 13 was placed within the Good Beginnings Act 77, and requires Good Beginnings to present the 2003 legislature with policy recommendations and strategies to implement the definition.

**Early Learning Opportunities Act Grant (October 2002)**

The Good Beginnings Alliance received a \$916,000 federal grant to implement a variety of school readiness strategies on Oahu. The programs receiving funds via GBA are committed to the integration of their work across the education, literacy, and health arenas. The grant provides the opportunity to pilot some of the strategies suggested by the School Readiness Task Force.

**P-20 – Provisions for Early Learning through Graduate School and Life Long Learning (October 2002)**

P-20 is a partnership of the University of Hawai`i, the State Department of Education, and the Good Beginnings Alliance. The goal is to build broad public commitment and support for education, ensuring that every student has a competent, caring, and qualified teacher and that there will be improved transition from one segment of the education system to the next through all levels of a P-20 system.

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**X. SCHOOL READINESS TASK FORCE PROCESS**

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At its inception, The School Readiness Task Force committed to a broad-based process to develop the recommendations of this report. This section describes that process.

**Process**

With the policy report conducted through the Hawai`i Educational Policy Center as the foundation, the Task Force convened a subcommittee of early childhood experts to establish a definition of school readiness and develop a “roadmap” for how to proceed with the work.

The subcommittee recommended the establishment of work groups to address five key areas of school readiness: early childhood standards and assessment, family readiness, infrastructure, practitioner and administrator education, and transitions. Staff of the Good Beginnings Alliance and the Governor’s Special Assistant on Children and Families assisted the work groups.

The Task Force agreed upon the following Guiding Principles to frame the process:

- Consideration for **children, families, schools and communities** will be included in all work
- A **collaborative and inclusive** systems approach will be used
- **Representatives from preschools, kindergarten, public and private agencies, families, and communities** will be included in all work groups
- Work groups will have a common **focus on results, outcomes and performance**
- The **needs of each stakeholder** will be addressed and value added to their work through participation in the process
- Work groups will acknowledge **respect for the internal accountability** of each stakeholder
  - The process will **learn** from the experience of **other states**

Co-chairs of each work group were selected from state agencies and major private organizations. To ensure stakeholder buy-in, representatives from both public and private sectors participated in the process. The groups met frequently over five months to create a strategic plan that included the guiding principles, major outcomes, indicators and strategies to address the key school

readiness issues. Notes from the five work groups will be forwarded to the Commission to provide a foundation for its subsequent work.

**Outreach**

Good Beginnings met with community groups on Oahu and the neighbor islands to share progress on the plan and receive feedback. Some of the venues included:

- Meetings with Partnership for Hawai`i's Keiki, Hoowaiwai NaKamalii, and SPARK Community Facilitators
- Good Beginnings Oahu Council
- Kauai Good Beginnings Council
- Big Island Good Beginnings Alliance Council in Hilo and in Kona
- Maui County Good Beginnings Community Council

Other organizations that assisted in the dissemination of the information and reporting back of comments and suggestions included INPEACE, Hoowaiwai Na Kamalii, Hawai`i Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Partnership for Hawai`i's Keiki.

**Next Steps**

The School Readiness Task Force stands ready to brief the Commission on the work it has accomplished. The recommendations stated in this report and the actions proposed require an ongoing commitment to planning and oversight. It is recommended that GBA continue to staff this effort and to assist the Commission in its work.

Hawai`i is poised to enter a new stage in addressing our keiki's school readiness. This document represents a firm commitment to ensure that all of our children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school, and that the schools they enter are ready for our children.

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**XI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**Task Force Membership**

*Co-Chairs*

Pat Hamamoto, Superintendent of Schools  
Hamilton McCubbin, CEO of Kamehameha Schools

*Members*

Betsy Brandt, Dept.of Education, UH Policy Center  
Suzanne Chun Oakland, Hawai`i State Senate  
Sylvia Yuen, UH Center on the Family  
Randy Hitz, UH Manoa College of Education  
Ken Ito, Hawai`i State House of Representatives  
Monica Kaauwai, HAEYC  
Shawn Kanaiaupuni, Kamehameha Schools  
Garry Kemp, Department of Human Services  
Lyn McNeff, Head Start  
Betsy Moneymaker, Department of Education  
Norman Sakamoto, Hawai`i State Senate  
Loretta Fuddy, Department of Health

**School Readiness Task Force Sub-Committee**

- Linda Buck, Career Development Coalition
- Christina Cox, Business Child Care Coalition
- Mike Fahey, Special Education, Department of Education
- Stephanie Feeney, College of Education, University of Hawai`i
- Donna Grace, College of Education, University of Hawai`i,
- Phyllis Ida, Special Education, Department of Education
- Vivian Ing, Families for REAL
- Marcia Hartsock, Center on the Family, University of Hawai`i
- Susan Jones, Hawai`i Community Foundation
- Terry Lock, Maui County Good Beginnings Coordinator
- Betsy Moneymaker, Department of Education
- Julie Morita, Department of Human Services
- Wendy Mow Taira, Native Hawai`ian Early Childhood System
- Kathy Murphy, Hawai`i Association for the Education of Young Children
- Amy Ng, Department of Education
- Suzanne Ramos, Kamehameha Schools
- Kathie Tibbets, Kamehameha Schools

**Work Group Chairpersons**

- Infrastructure
  - Kathy Kawaguchi, Department of Education
  - Loretta Fuddy, Department of Health
- Standards and Assessment:
  - Betsy Brandt, Department of Education
  - Shawn Kanaiapuni, Kamehameha Schools
- Family:
  - Sylvia Yuen, UH Center on the Family
- Practitioner and Administrative Education
  - Linda Buck, Honolulu Community College
- Transitions:
  - Stephanie Feeney, UH College of Education
  - Mike Fahey, Department of Education

**Staffing**

Good Beginnings Alliance and the Governor’s Advisor on Children, Youth, and Families facilitated and provided administrative support for the meetings and resultant report.

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