# MANY THINGS
# WE NEED
# CAN WAIT

# THE CHILD
# CANNOT

**Baltimore's Five-Year**

**Action Plan for Achieving**

**School Readiness**

MANY THINGS WE NEED CAN WAIT

# THE CHILD CANNOT.

NOW IS THE TIME HIS BONES ARE

BEING FORMED, HIS BLOOD BEING

MADE, HIS MIND BEING DEVELOPED.

TO HIM, WE CANNOT SAY TOMORROW;

# HIS NAME IS TODAY.

**Baltimore's Five-Year Action Plan for Achieving School Readiness**

**Presented to the Reason to Believe Enterprise by the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program**

**March 2005**

*Gabriela Mistral,*
*Chilean poet*

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Dear Mayor O'Malley, Mr. Nelson, and Mr. Brown:

In September 2003, you gave us the tremendous opportunity to come together as a leadership body to make significant improvements in the degree to which Baltimore's youngest children enter school prepared to succeed.

Over the past 18 months, we have worked together—sometimes in frustration, often with great joy—to define and flesh out a school readiness agenda for Baltimore City.

As we developed relationships and established our work plan, we took some initial steps to improve school readiness. Together, we:

• Developed and distributed 7,000 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten registration packets to encourage early school registration for the 2004–2005 school year and to share school readiness information with parents;

• Improved teacher training on the administration of school readiness assessments;

• Provided quality children's books and literacy training to home-visitors and family child care providers; and

• Launched the *Countdown to Kindergarten–Baltimore* public engagement campaign in September 2004 to raise awareness about the importance of school readiness and to get information immediately into the hands of parents and caregivers of young children. (This work is being conducted in close collaboration with the statewide *Countdown to Kindergarten* campaign, an initiative that complements our work here in Baltimore City.)

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**The Honorable Martin O'Malley**
**Mayor of Baltimore**
**Co-Chair, Reason to Believe**


**Douglas W. Nelson**
**President, Annie E. Casey Foundation**
**Co-Chair, Reason to Believe**


**Eddie C. Brown**
**President, Brown Capital Management**
**Co-Chair, Reason to Believe**

The bulk of our effort, however, has gone into the development of the enclosed Five-Year Action Plan that we present to you for comment, review, and—we most fervently hope—adoption as Baltimore's School Readiness Agenda.

With the implementation of the strategies laid out in this plan, our goal over the next five years is to see an increase in the percentage of Baltimore City kindergartners assessed as fully ready for success in school from the totally unacceptable 2003–04 mark of 27% to 52% or better. This represents a steady five-percentage point gain each year for the next five years—a difficult but achievable goal.

While we strive, ultimately, for all children to be fully ready for school success, we recognize that such a result will not be achieved overnight. Meanwhile, we look to build a strong foundation for school readiness across Baltimore and ensure lasting gains.

We commit ourselves to working with you and all those who care about this city and its future to give life to this plan. We join with you in the recognition that we must do better by our youngest children—that it makes sense in both human and economic terms to invest up-front in preparing them for school success rather than remediating deficiencies after the fact. Finally, we extend to you our deep and heartfelt thanks for the time, support, and encouragement to do this work. What you have given to us, we hope to return many times over in increased opportunities for Baltimore's children.

Sincerely,

2003–2005 Participants
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**In September 2003,** the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program was launched by the Reason to Believe Enterprise and the Family League of Baltimore City, in collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School for Public Service at New York University. The mission of the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program—or B-LAP, as it has come to be called—is

## to accelerate the city's efforts to ensure that all Baltimore City children enter school ready to succeed.

To do so, B-LAP participants committed themselves to both short-term and long-term efforts to:

• Make a measurable difference in the school readiness of Baltimore's children by November 2004; and

• Achieve school readiness for generations of Baltimore's families to come beginning with the development and implementation of a Five-Year School Readiness Action Plan.

Fifty community leaders, public officials, parents, and early childhood care and education providers identified as most able to affect school readiness were invited to participate in B-LAP. We have engaged in a unique and intensive process requiring participants to work collectively toward the goal of improving the school readiness of Baltimore's children. B-LAP members have met in two-day sessions monthly since September 2003. During these sessions, and smaller group meetings between sessions, B-LAP members have:

• Identified and implemented immediate actions to increase the number of kindergartners assessed as fully ready for success in kindergarten in the fall of the 2004–05 school year;

• Honed their leadership skills specifically for the purpose of moving forward a school readiness agenda; and

• Developed this Five-Year Action Plan to address the barriers that inhibit our youngest children from acquiring the skills needed for school success, and to build on and expand the best practices already in place that provide a foundation for this school readiness agenda.

## BALTIMORE'S FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SCHOOL READINESS

What follows in this report is a comprehensive Five-Year Action Plan that, when implemented, will put Baltimore City on the road to making real and measurable gains in the school readiness of its youngest children, from birth to age five. B-LAP's purpose in developing this plan is to identify the specific strategies and their associated action steps that will lead to achieving significant gains in school readiness, and then to hold itself and others accountable for the implementation of the plan. The strategies presented here are grounded in best and promising practices, and reflect our efforts over the past year to determine what can truly contribute to improvements in the school readiness of Baltimore's children. The plan is intended to be a "roadmap" to be used by policymakers, legislators, parents/caregivers, the business community, early care and education providers, health care providers, and other concerned citizens to lead to the desired "destination" —the place where all Baltimore's children are fully prepared for school success.

It is B-LAP's goal that with the implementation of the strategies laid out in this plan over the next five years, Baltimore will see its percentage of kindergartners assessed as fully ready for success in school increase from the totally unacceptable 2003–04 mark of 27% to 52% or better. This represents a steady five percentage point gain each year for the next five years—a difficult, but achievable goal. While we strive, ultimately, for all children to be fully ready for school success, we recognize that this result will not be

achieved overnight. Instead, we look to build a strong foundation for school readiness in Baltimore that will ensure lasting gains and has impact on generations of families to come.

## DEFINITIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

A few definitions and observations are necessary to help set the stage for understanding the plan:

• *School readiness*—All children are born ready to learn. They are naturally curious and want to explore and understand the world around them. During the first three years, trillions of connections are being made in their young brains as the result of their relationships and experiences. The richer these early years of life are, the more ready children will be for school. Therefore, the term "school readiness" means much more than having sharpened pencils and new sneakers on the first day of kindergarten; on the other hand, it does **not** mean expecting five-year-olds to arrive at kindergarten already knowing how to read and compute. Instead, school readiness means the point at which, as a result of nurturing and exposure to a rich learning environment **from birth,** a young child has reached certain levels of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, cognition, and general knowledge that allow him/her to meet kindergarten expectations.[1] Simply put, a child who is ready for school is one who is in good physical and mental health, is curious and enthusiastic, has a willingness to get along with others, has the necessary cognitive skills, and has a hunger to learn.[2]

• *Families/parents/caregivers*—This plan recognizes that the most influential factor in ensuring a child's readiness for school is his/her parents, caregivers, and other family members who share responsibilities for raising the child. In this plan, we define families

broadly, and intentionally include the full array of family compositions that represent the diversity of Baltimore City. The process of ensuring that a child will be ready for school begins at birth—perhaps even before birth—and is influenced by every experience in those all-important first five years. Zero to Three, a national organization promoting the healthy development of infants and toddlers, states that in order to become eager learners, children need to develop skills in four key areas in the first three years of life: (1) language and literacy; (2) thinking, including counting, sorting, and problem-solving; (3) self-control; and (4) self-confidence. The organization states further that children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when learning is fun.[3] It is a baby's parents and other caregivers who help to shape his/her self-esteem, confidence, and ability to relate well to others, and provide the foundation for language and literacy—the underpinnings of school readiness. For this reason, there are multiple strategies in this plan that strengthen and support parents and caregivers in their important role as first teachers and primary nurturers, and, more broadly, strengthen families to be supportive, strong, healthy, and economically viable.

• *Access to early care and education (ECE) programs*—The majority of American children now have mothers as well as fathers who work outside the home. As the number of working mothers with babies and young children continues to grow over the next several years, and as low-income single mothers are required to work, the need for access to the highest quality early care and education experiences becomes even more pressing. Most young children, even those whose parents are not in the workforce, spend considerable time in out-of-home settings including family, center-based and informal child care; preschool or nursery schools; and Early Head Start and Head Start. Like the home environment, these early care and education settings contribute to a child's readiness for kindergarten. All of Baltimore's children deserve to attend quality early care and education programs, ranging from child care to preschool. Such programs must be available to all parents, including those who work and require care for their children from birth, and those who may care for their child in the home but desire social interaction and additional early learning opportunities. Access to such quality

programs should not be limited based on income or neighborhood of residence. Moreover, parental awareness about the value of such programs in fostering early social/emotional growth and readiness for school needs to be enhanced. Current program capacity in early care and education programs in Baltimore is not nearly sufficient to meet the need. B-LAP's strategies include those focused on expanding program availability and building capacity and quality across the entire range of early care and education programs.

• *Quality early care and education*—Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to improve the quality of out-of-home early care and education settings. These efforts include the accreditation and credentialing of child care programs, training of teachers and other early care providers, and enrichments to the curricula of early care and education programs. Although Maryland is a recognized leader in the field of regulated child care, more still needs to be done, and successful efforts now underway need to be brought to scale to expand their reach and penetration into Baltimore's communities. B-LAP's intention, through the implementation of strategies outlined in this plan, is to ensure that even while we press for program expansion, such early care and education programs in Baltimore City will also emphasize quality. We defined quality as encompassing:

- High standards for teacher qualifications, staff development, and staff compensation;
- A comprehensive and age-appropriate curriculum that stresses social-emotional development as well as cognitive learning;
- Culturally appropriate curricula and settings;
- A child care workforce trained in early childhood development and early learning strategies;
- A warm and inviting environment, welcoming of both children and their families; and
- An emphasis on all the domains of learning and evidence of the capacity to prepare children for school success.

• *Attracting and retaining early care and education staff*—B-LAP recognizes that adequate and equitable staff compensation remains a barrier for Baltimore's early care and education programs. Unless addressed, low staff compensation—especially in child care programs—will continue to prevent programs from rising to a level of high quality because it is difficult to attract and retain well-qualified and professional level staff. To this end, B-LAP has committed itself to joining existing advocacy efforts to raise early care and education staff compensation as a necessary step to achieving the high level of quality programs that Baltimore City families deserve.

• *Quality program data*—Over our past 12 months of work, B-LAP members have compiled and examined the array of data regarding the state of school readiness of Baltimore's children and the programs available to them and their families. In so doing, B-LAP has come to recognize the limitations of existing data and the need for more complete information that can inform efforts to accelerate the school readiness of Baltimore's youngest children. To this end, strategies have been identified to build on our data capacity and institute mechanisms to continually review information that will help all stakeholders understand the need for, and our successes in, addressing school readiness in Baltimore City.

## ACTION PLAN GOALS AND GUIDELINES

With these definitions and observations in mind, the Five-Year Action Plan calls for implementing strategies related to seven significant goals essential to achieving school readiness for all Baltimore City children. In embracing these goals, B-LAP followed the six-goal framework set forth in *Maryland's Five-Year Action Plan for Achieving School Readiness* with the addition of a critical seventh goal addressing the readiness of schools to receive and support all young children.

- All children, birth through age five, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families, including full-day options.

- Parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.

- Children, birth through age five, and their families will receive necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.

- All early care and education staff will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.

- All Baltimore citizens will understand the value of quality early care and education as the means to achieve school readiness.

- Baltimore will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.

- Baltimore City schools will be prepared to receive all children.

In constructing this plan, B-LAP members felt it was critical to meet several criteria or guidelines. We determined that our plan must:

• Be grounded in a clear understanding of the degree to which Baltimore City's children currently enter school ready for success;

• Acknowledge the societal causes—such as poverty, racism, and a lack of broad commitment to the well-being of children—that interfere with school readiness, while being realistic in developing ambitious, yet achievable, recommendations for change;

• Acknowledge that the most critical factor in achieving school readiness is the family's understanding of and ability to raise children in a developmentally appropriate, nurturing environment from birth;

• Build on assets already in place throughout the neighborhoods of Baltimore City that contribute to our school readiness efforts;

• Be based on best and emerging practices from the school readiness field that demonstrate success or show promise for improvements in school readiness outcomes;

• Include strategies that range from low cost/no cost to more expensive but necessary strategies that are needed to achieve the school readiness result;

• Include strategies that target the universe of families with young children in Baltimore as well as vulnerable populations whose needs are greatest;

• Include strategies that are, in fact, reasonable and doable, but significant enough in their reach and penetration that they can result in real and measurable improvement in our school readiness outcomes.

# WILL INVESTMENTS IN SCHOOL READINESS YIELD SUBSTANTIAL RETURNS?

The benefits of high-quality early childhood experience to the child, family, and community as a whole are both substantial and substantiated. A growing body of research, beginning in the late 1960s and carrying through to the present day, clearly documents the return to the public on investments in high-quality early care and educational experiences.

Most frequently cited is evidence from the High/Scope Perry Preschool study in Ypsilanti, Michigan, which demonstrated definitively the economic, educational, and social benefits of this comprehensive early childhood development program. Newly released data from the longitudinal research on program participants document that for every dollar invested in the program during the early 1960s, over $17 in benefits have been returned to society as a whole.[4]

Evidence and support come not only from the early care and education field, but also from bankers and economists. Nobel-laureate economist James J. Heckman, Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, joins the Minneapolis Federal Reserve and the Economic Policy Institute in citing the economic and social benefits of investments in early childhood development:

• Heckman states, "People who participate in enriched early childhood programs are more likely to complete school and much less likely to require welfare benefits, become teen parents, or participate in criminal activities."[5]

• In 2003, the Minneapolis Federal Reserve reviewed the available research on investments in early childhood development programs and concluded that the public could expect a 16% return on these investments—a stronger rate of return than from traditional urban economic development investments such as stadiums. As the authors concluded,

"Can new stadiums offer a comparable public return on investment as an ECDP [early childhood development program]? How does a new stadium reduce crime, increase earnings and potentially break a chain of poverty?"[6]

• And, finally, researchers from the Economic Policy Institute stated: "The United States should be investing in high-quality early childhood development programs to improve the quality of life for millions of children, reduce crime, make the workforce of the future more productive, and strengthen the overall economy. The resulting budget relief gained by providing early childhood development services to poor children will ultimately contribute to funding some of the nation's most pressing future needs."[7]

The evidence is clear. Poor school readiness leads to increased rates of remedial and special education placements, illiteracy, high school dropout, social service interventions, juvenile delinquency, adolescent parenting, later adult criminal justice interactions, and welfare dependency. Children's increased special needs also lead to increased workforce absenteeism on the part of parents and attendant declines in productivity.[8] On the other hand, increased school readiness results in improved academic performance, fewer behavioral problems, greater school attendance, higher graduation rates, and, ultimately, success in later life. In Baltimore, the cost of the *status quo* is high. The opportunity for improvement, and thus economic returns, is great.

**Right now in Baltimore City** there are nearly 42,000 children, birth to age five.[9] More than 8,000 of them will enter kindergarten each year for the next five years. An average of 6,500 per year will become students of the Baltimore City Public Schools. The section that follows discusses how likely it is that these children will be prepared for school success, absent a concerted effort, and is based on three years worth of school readiness data gathered from assessments of Baltimore City kindergartners.

## ASSESSING SCHOOL READINESS: THE WORK SAMPLING SYSTEM

As a result of its growing recognition of the importance of school readiness to future academic performance, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) established the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) as a framework for the state's coordinated efforts.[10] In establishing the MMSR, MSDE identified the Work Sampling System (WSS) to meet the need for a statewide assessment of school readiness. MSDE adapted and piloted the WSS in 2000 and began universal implementation in public kindergarten classrooms statewide in the 2001–2002 school year. The WSS serves both to guide and improve kindergarten classroom instruction and to provide a county-by-county assessment of readiness.

Unlike standardized tests, the WSS is a *portfolio-based assessment.* Rather than asking students to answer pre-selected questions or complete pre-determined tasks, the WSS requires teachers to assemble a portfolio of each child's work over the first eight weeks of school that is representative of his or her skills in a variety of domains. Teachers receive extensive training in the elicitation, observation, and rating of their students' performance. During a specified two-week period each November, teachers evaluate and rate their students' performance on 30 selected indicators across the WSS domains of

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learning. These indicators reflect skills and abilities that entering kindergartners should reasonably be expected to possess.

The WSS assesses readiness in seven learning domains:
• Social and Personal Development
• Language and Literacy
• Mathematical Thinking
• Scientific Thinking
• Social Studies
• The Arts
• Physical Development and Health

Within each domain, students are assessed as being fully ready, approaching readiness, or developing readiness. MSDE distinguishes among these categories as follows:

• *Full Readiness:* Students consistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully.

• *Approaching Readiness:* Students inconsistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require targeted instructional support in specific domains or specific performance indicators.

• *Developing Readiness:* Students do not demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require considerable instructional support in several domains or many performance indicators.[11]

Finally, a composite score is calculated for each student that averages results across the seven domains.

Maryland is nationally recognized as a leader in developing, collecting, and using data from this type of performance-based assessment. A number of other states now developing their own coordinated school readiness efforts have used the MMSR, including its use of the WSS as a performance-based assessment tool, as a model for their own programs.[12]

## BALTIMORE'S RESULTS

WSS data released by the Maryland State Department of Education for the 2003–2004 academic year indicate that 27% of Baltimore City kindergartners were assessed by their teachers as fully ready for school when they entered kindergarten. Fifty-five percent of all kindergartners statewide were assessed as fully ready that same year.

In the graph below, WSS data illustrate that the school readiness of Baltimore City's children has remained fairly flat—not experiencing significant increases or declines—in the three years for which data are available.

WSS COMPOSITE SCORE: PERCENT FULLY READY
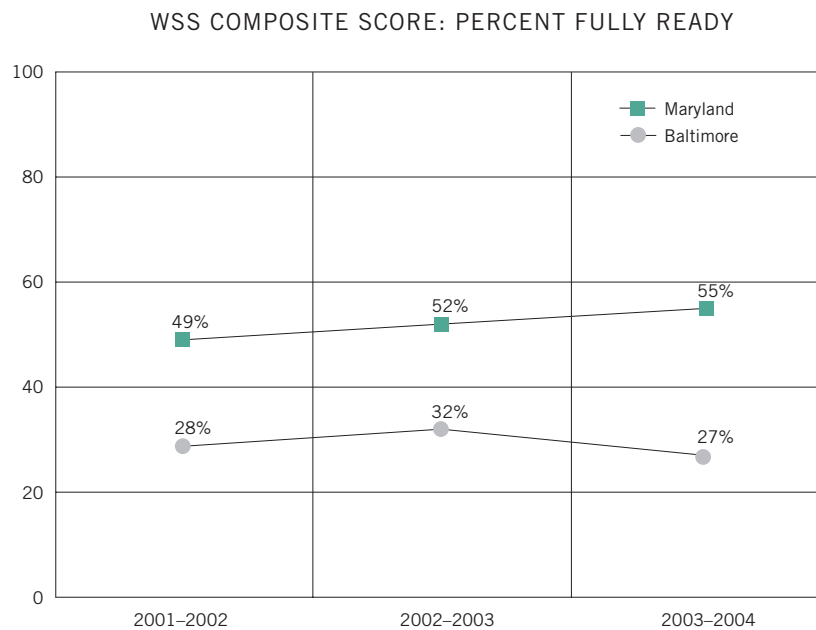
Composite score results for Baltimore City children in each *category* of readiness as assessed in November of 2003 and compared to their Maryland peers are noted in the following graph.

WSS COMPOSITE SCORES 2003–04

| | Baltimore | Maryland |
|---|---|---|
| Fully | 27% | 55% |
| Approaching | 64% | 39% |
| Developing | 9% | 6% |
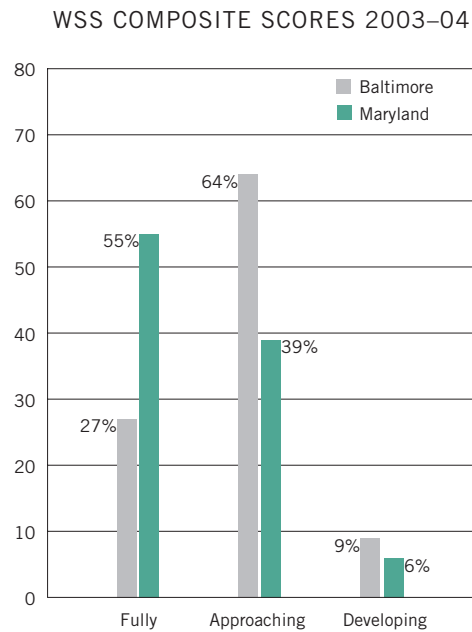
The following table provides a county-by-county comparison of the readiness of kindergartners in Maryland.

**PERCENT OF ENTERING KINDERGARTNERS ASSESSED AS FULLY READY BY COUNTY, 2003–2004**
2003–2004 WSS Composite Score

| COUNTY | PERCENT FULLY READY |
|---|---|
| Baltimore City | 27 |
| Cecil | 37 |
| Caroline | 45 |
| Prince George's | 48 |
| St. Mary's | 49 |
| Anne Arundel | 55 |
| Dorchester | 56 |
| Washington | 58 |
| Baltimore County | 59 |
| Garrett | 59 |
| Worcester | 59 |
| Calvert | 60 |
| Montgomery | 60 |
| Talbot | 60 |
| Wicomico | 61 |
| Allegany | 62 |
| Carroll | 63 |
| Howard | 63 |
| Queen Anne's | 63 |
| Somerset | 67 |
| Charles | 68 |
| Frederick | 70 |
| Harford | 76 |
| Kent | 84 |
| *Maryland* | *55* |

Baltimore City children lag behind their peers statewide in *every domain* of learning and readiness assessed by the Work Sampling System. As the table below demonstrates, they are the farthest behind in the content areas of social studies, scientific and mathematical thinking, and language and literacy. They are assessed as being the least far behind in physical development.

**PERCENT OF ENTERING KINDERGARTNERS IN BALTIMORE AND MARYLAND ASSESSED AS BEING FULLY READY BY WSS DOMAIN 2003–2004**

| DOMAIN | MARYLAND | BALTIMORE |
|---|---|---|
| Social Studies | 40 | 12 |
| Scientific Thinking | 32 | 13 |
| Mathematical Thinking | 48 | 19 |
| Language/Literacy | 45 | 22 |
| Arts | 62 | 36 |
| Social/Personal | 61 | 36 |
| Physical Development | 69 | 46 |
| *Composite* | *55* | *27* |

Differences in readiness also exist *among* Baltimore City students—the most noticeable being by gender, English proficiency, and prior care setting.

Girls are one-third more likely to be assessed as fully ready than boys.

WSS COMPOSITE SCORES 2003–04
Baltimore City
Readiness by Gender
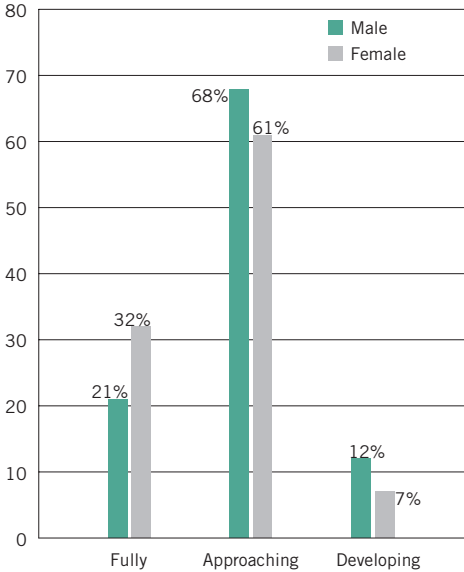
Only 19% of non-native English speakers are assessed as being fully ready.

WSS COMPOSITE SCORES 2003–04
Baltimore City
Readiness by English Language
Proficiency
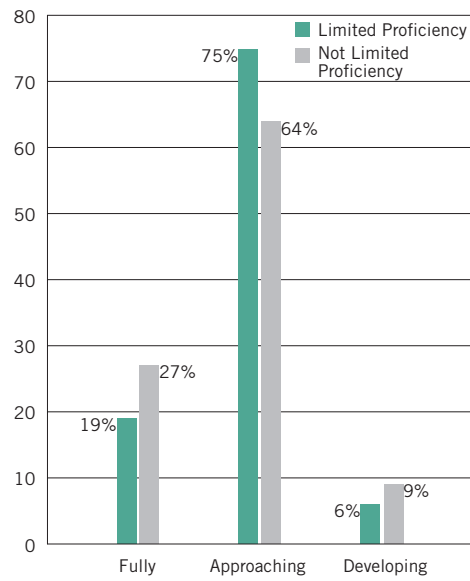
There is considerable variability in the readiness of children who have had different early childhood care and education experiences.

WSS COMPOSITE SCORES 2003–04
Baltimore City
Percent Fully Ready by Prior Care Setting

Child Care Center n=180
21%

Family Child Care n=68
13%

Head Start  n=393
27%

Home/Informal Care  n=1,051
27%

Non-Public Nursery  n=80
34%

Pre-Kindergarten  n=1,280
31%

0    5    10    15    20    25    30    35    40
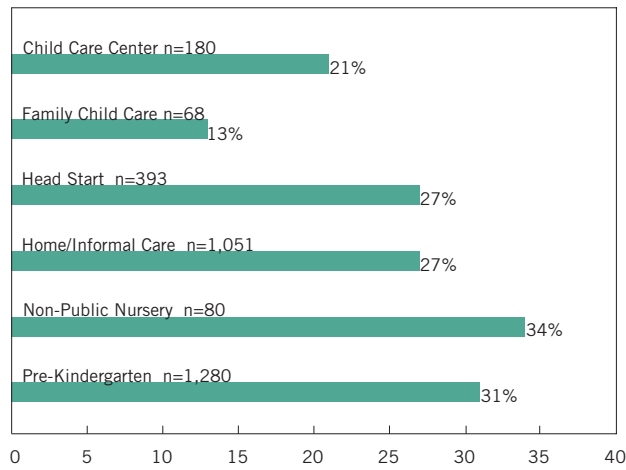
Though these data should be interpreted with caution as the number of children assessed in each category varies greatly, according to the WSS data, children from some prior care settings are assessed at greater levels of readiness than children from others. Yet even with these differences, it is clear that there is great room for improvement in *all* early childhood care and education settings.

Indeed, a number of efforts are already underway to understand and improve the results of an array of kindergarten and pre-kindergarten assessments. In 2003, Baltimore's Head Start program initiated the Creative Curriculum—a comprehensive curriculum and assessment program. Data from these assessments, given in the fall, winter, and spring of the school year, indicate that children in Head Start are making significant gains in developmental skills over the course of the year. The following table charts this progress using data from 1,082 children who were assessed during the 2003–2004 school year in Creative Curriculum domains similar to those measured by the Work Sampling System.

**BALTIMORE CITY HEAD START: CREATIVE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS 2003–04**
Percent of 1,082 Head Start Students Assessed at Step III  (highest skill level)

| DOMAIN | FALL | WINTER | SPRING |
|---|---|---|---|
| Science | 4% | 13% | 55% |
| Mathematics | 5% | 17% | 57% |
| Language Development | 11% | 27% | 66% |
| Literacy | 6% | 21% | 58% |
| Creative Arts | 7% | 23% | 65% |
| Social & Emotional Development | 13% | 28% | 68% |
| Physical Health & Development | 13% | 32% | 74% |

The recommendations contained in this Action Plan are grounded in our understanding of the WSS and other available data and their implications for improving the readiness of Baltimore's children for formal schooling. In particular, the data suggest the need for and benefit to:

• Providing additional school readiness resources and supports to all parents and others who care for children from birth to age five;

• Taking advantage of the opportunity to move more of the Baltimore City children who would likely be assessed as *approaching readiness* to full readiness, by providing additional targeted supports;

• Concentrating work on the specific content areas of social studies, scientific and mathematical thinking, language and literacy;

• Addressing the particular needs of non-English speakers;

• Addressing the particular learning needs of boys; and

• Attending to quality and consistency in early childhood care and education settings.

## WHY AREN'T OUR CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS?

All parents and caregivers of young children have high hopes and dreams for their children and want their children to be successful in school. Yet not all children enter school having fully realized their developmental potential. While many factors account for differences in readiness, B-LAP has identified several that we believe are crucial:

• Parents and caregivers who have the skills and ability to provide their infants and young children with an emotionally stable, language-rich, cognitively stimulating, healthy early childhood;

• The availability of educational, economic, health, and social systems and community-based services that support biological, foster, adoptive, and kinship parents as their children's first teachers and nurturers;

• Adequate full-time, high-quality family- and center-based early child care provided by skilled personnel;

• A leadership and a citizenry that understand the value of quality child care and education, provide adequate funding to support these programs, and hold them accountable for outcomes; and

• Schools that are ready to accept and support all children, providing a seamless transition in learning and development from the preschool environment into the kindergarten classroom.

Over the past 40 years, Baltimore City has gone through a difficult transition that has had a negative impact on these key factors. Shrinking from a city with a population of 939,000 to one of 650,000, Baltimore has seen the exodus of much of its business and manufacturing base, as well as its middle class, both African American and Caucasian. As a result, Baltimore has a concentration of the economically depressed. At the same time, its declining political clout has left Baltimore with fewer resources to meet an increasing need. Institutional racism cannot be ignored as a root cause of both the continuing decline of, and the lack of resources available to, Baltimore's predominantly African-American population.

These realities are reflected in Baltimore's network of social supports and early educational services. Chronically underfunded services are attempting to serve highly stressed populations, including teen and single-parent families, the working poor, homeless families,

and highly mobile families living in substandard housing, as well as families grappling with exposure to crime and substance abuse.

For very young children from these families, there is a lack of sufficient quality, full-time early child care and education resources that are fully able to do their part in preparing children to enter school ready to learn. Until very recently, society has placed little value on the quality of early child care. As a result, the child care field, with one of the lowest occupational pay scales, has been unable to effectively compete for and retain qualified personnel or provide the support and incentives necessary to improve the skills and quality of care given by current providers. Early Head Start, full-time Head Start, and pre-K programs have thus been in chronic short supply.

Parents, many without adequate community-based support systems and experiential models for successful parenting, often struggle to fulfill their role as their children's first teacher. While it is important to recognize that many Baltimore City families succeed in this responsibility, it is equally important to recognize that quality, culturally relevant parent and adult education, as well as health care, parent support, and social services, are not consistently in place to support the city's parents.

Although collaborative approaches are growing, and the early childhood community has made major strides toward improved coordination and integration of services, "turf" is still an issue, and services remain fragmented and difficult to navigate. There have not been, to date, adequate societal responses to many major social and health needs, including the prevalence of maternal depression in the community, the chronic shortage of mental health services for young children, and the scarcity of adequate affordable housing. Distrust by many parents, with histories of negative experiences with city agencies, has too often resulted in the paradox of underutilized services in a time when resources are scarce.

Until recently, with the advent of the Maryland Model for School Readiness and the passage of the 2002 Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, there has been a lack

of political will to bring the necessary level of quality early childhood education and support services to Baltimore City's families with young children. This has partly resulted from a general societal lack of understanding of the relationship of early childhood development to success in school and later life. But it has also resulted from the fragmentation of responsibility for school readiness among federal, state, and city government; private social service agencies; the business sector; and the community. This has clouded the issue of accountability and had an impact on efforts to reform service and support systems.

With a decline in the population and a shift in the racial and economic makeup of the city, the Baltimore City Public School System has suffered the same lack of attention and resources evidenced for the city as a whole. Significant progress has and is being made in student performance within the system, especially in the elementary grades. Nonetheless, inadequate funding and chronic budget shortfalls, resulting from both declining enrollment and a withdrawal of the broader community's care and attention to the education of Baltimore's children, have led to an increasingly stressed teaching staff that are working in poorly maintained schools while attempting to serve a challenged student population with limited resources.

Linkages between parents with young children entering the school system and the school they enter have been weakened. Their own educational experiences alienate many parents from the school system, and teachers require additional skills, training, and time to reach out to parents. Coordination of curriculum and the transition between many preschool programs and schools is limited. These factors often deny schools the resources and energy that involved parents can bring to the schools and make continuity in learning more difficult for children as they move from preschool programs to kindergarten.

B-LAP members acknowledge these as causes that interfere with children's school readiness, and have proceeded to develop ambitious, yet achievable, recommendations for change.

## WHAT IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY?

Significant work lies ahead in order to ensure that all of Baltimore's children are prepared for school success at entry into kindergarten. Yet despite the many obstacles to school readiness noted earlier, important efforts are already underway to address many aspects of improving school readiness, and parents from across the city are playing an instrumental role in preparing their children for school success. The efforts described below, some currently offered on a small scale, but showing great promise, provide the foundation upon which B-LAP now proposes to build our Five-Year School Readiness Action Plan for Baltimore City. By increasing the scale and pace of these efforts, we strongly believe that Baltimore City will see advancement in school readiness.

### ONGOING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL READINESS

• Homevisiting programs—such as those under the Success By 6® Partnership umbrella and others, including Baltimore City Healthy Start, Maryland Healthy Families, and the Baltimore City Health Department's Maternal and Infant Nursing Program—provide services designed to improve birth and child health outcomes and family functioning to pregnant women and families with young children. These programs serve approximately 1,500 families annually. Through homevisiting programs, families are paired with a nurse, case manager, or outreach worker who provides intensive case management, service coordination and family support from pregnancy until the child turns age two or three. The homevisitor works with the family to ensure that health care, including prenatal care, family planning, and pediatric care, is regularly obtained; emergency needs are met; parenting knowledge and skills are enhanced; and issues of child well-being are addressed. Baltimore's homevisiting programs are now also engaged in the distribution of language and literacy kits to families to help foster language development in children beginning at birth.

• Baltimore City has six of the state's 26 Family Support Centers, drop-in centers for families with children from birth to four years. Each center serves approximately 125 families per year, providing services for both parents and children. These centers bring a range of child development and family support services together in a community-based setting. Each center offers a variety of services that promote nurturing and school readiness, including child health, parenting skills, education and referral for family planning, adult education, and family self-sufficiency and self-advocacy. By serving parents and their children together, the centers have the opportunity to screen children for early identification and referral of developmental delays, and provide education to parents on the importance of addressing such delays early. Of the 500 children ages birth to 47 months who visited a Baltimore City metropolitan area Family Support Center three or more times during FY 2004, 90% had received an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental assessment; 14 children or 2.8% were referred to the local Infants and Toddlers Program. By the time of the sixth visit, 100% of all children, ages birth to 47 months attending a Family Support Center had received an ASQ, with 3.5% referred to the Infants and Toddlers Program.[13]

• Baltimore's Success By 6 Partnership has, over the last five years, invested over $30 million in homevisiting, family support, and community services to improve the degree to which Baltimore's children are born healthy, live in safe and nurturing families, and enter school ready to learn. Working in four high-risk communities of Baltimore City, Success By 6 has established community collaboratives in each community to guide the enhancement of neighborhood family support services. This investment, along with other national and local efforts, has resulted in improvements to the city's infant mortality rate and other birth outcome indicators.

• Baltimore City has two of the state's 24 Judith P. Hoyer Centers, or "Judy Centers." The Judy Center Initiative, established in 2001, provides children birth through age five and their families with access to an array of comprehensive, integrated, full-day, and full-year early care and education services. Through collaborative partnerships among

local agencies and community organizations—including a strong relationship with neighborhood child care providers—each Judy Center promotes school readiness by enhancing language and early literacy, as well as cognitive, social and emotional, and physical development. The Moravia Park Judy Center serves 414 children and the DRU Judy Center serves 698 children annually. The Judy Centers also provide evaluation centers for the community to identify young children with developmental disabilities. The DRU Center has an audiology center that serves children citywide.

• Baltimore City Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, which provide free, comprehensive child and family development services including education, health, nutrition, disability services, and family partnerships, are working to increase school readiness through a number of special initiatives:

- Through the Successful Linkages Between Head Start and Public Schools Project, Baltimore City Head Start has entered into a formal agreement to promote smooth transitions from Head Start to public school;
- 85% of Baltimore City's Head Start teachers now have an Associate of Arts degree or higher in the field of Early Childhood Education;
- A proposed new policy will require all Head Start teachers to have a baccalaureate degree in early care and education or a related field by 2010;
- A new policy requiring all teachers' assistants to be enrolled in a program leading to an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education by 2007 has recently been implemented.

• Efforts have been made to educate Baltimore City child care providers concerning the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR). A small but growing number of providers have received comprehensive MMSR training and credentials. To date, 131 (10%) of 1,257 licensed family child care providers in Baltimore City, and 346 child care center personnel have received credentials from the Maryland Child Care Administration. In FY 2004 alone, 264 credentials were issued in Baltimore City, the second highest number in a single jurisdiction for that year, just below Prince George's

County with 265 credentials issued. In addition, 26 (13%) of Baltimore's 201 child care centers are accredited by various agencies, including the Maryland State Department of Education and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

• Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center's Head Start/Child Care Collaboration Program's unique collaboration model places Head Start classrooms in existing child care programs. In existence since 1993, this Head Start/Child Care demonstration is currently in 11 child care centers and serves 199 children. The collaboration is pursuing further expansion to test the model in family child care settings. The model benefits families, children, child care programs, and Head Start by allowing Head Start to reach eligible children who otherwise might not benefit from Head Start because of their need for full-day, year-round child care not typically available in traditional Head Start settings. In addition to meeting the need for full-day care, the collaboration improves the level of quality in participating child care programs, and maximizes the resources of both Head Start and child care programs.

• In its first year of operation, the Coppin State University/Baltimore City Head Start Partnership Project provides an academic career ladder, which includes Coppin's Bachelor Degree Program in Early Childhood Education/Human Development; Baltimore City Community College's Associate Arts Degree Program in Early Childhood Education; and academic tutoring and counseling to increase retention and graduation. The project targets Head Start teachers, but also includes child care teachers participating in Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center's Head Start/Child Care Collaboration Program. The intent is to increase the number of teachers in center-based programs with Associate Arts, Bachelor of Arts, or advanced degrees in Early Childhood Education. The University recruits students into the program, subsidizes child care services for students with children, provides other incentives, and hires one faculty member to train the students. This project is an example of how the qualifications of ECE staff in Baltimore City can be enhanced and quality staff can be retained. Eleven teachers are currently enrolled in the project.

• The dearth of mental health resources for very young children pushed the Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center and the Family League of Baltimore City to test new interventions to address the needs of children with challenging behaviors, their parents, and the child care providers who care for them. Funding from the Maryland Department of Human Resources and other sources established an initiative that provides training for child care providers on mental health in young children and on-site technical assistance by a behavioral pediatrician and early childhood specialists at center and family-based child care programs. Guided by need and circumstances, services may include individual assessment of children, referral to other agencies, detailed written plans of action to improve the providers' interactions with children, and modeling appropriate responses to challenging behaviors for providers. The current intervention has been in existence for two years and has reached 650 children. During this period, detailed observation and assessments (with parental consent) were conducted on 74 children served by 72 child care providers in center- and home-based settings; 89% of the children were not removed from their child care settings.

• Baltimore Mental Health Systems Inc. and Baltimore City Head Start are collaborating to provide mental health services to a number of Head Start programs. Through this partnership, Master's level mental health clinicians, who are employed by local mental health agencies, spend between 20 and 40 hours per week at identified Head Start programs. Services provided by the clinician include staff development, parent workshops and support groups, staff and parent consultations, classroom observations, prevention groups with the children, and individual, group, and/or family mental health treatment. In FY 2004, 12 Head Start programs, with a total funded enrollment of 2,596 children, participated in the project and were served by nine mental health clinicians. The following services were provided by the mental health clinicians: 306 children received mental health treatment services, 762 child prevention activities, 1,009 staff and parent consultations, 77 family workshops or support groups, and 93 staff development activities.

• The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program provides homevisiting to families with young preschoolers specifically to support parents' involvement in preparing their children for school success. One of the seven HIPPY Programs in Maryland is located in Baltimore City. The Enterprise Foundation HIPPY Program services the Sandtown-Winchester Community. The HIPPY Program has been extremely successful in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood. During the 2003–04 program year, it offered slots for 80 children. The HIPPY staff conducted 2,470 one-hour homevisits and 11 three-hour parent meetings. HIPPY parents reported spending approximately 1.5 hours per week or approximately 20 minutes per day completing HIPPY activities with their children. Collectively, HIPPY parents spent approximately 3,500 hours utilizing the HIPPY curriculum. The program reached a record high 98% capacity, providing HIPPY services to 79 children. Through a recent Enterprise Foundation survey, teachers reported that 100% of their students who completed at least one year of the HIPPY Program performed at or above average in all performance indicators surveyed.

• The Family League of Baltimore City, working in collaboration with partner agencies, operates the Early Literacy for Families (ELF) Project. This project provides an array of activities that enhance early childhood literacy for children birth to age four. The activities are designed to help parents and early care and education providers increase their capacity to facilitate the development of cognitive, language comprehension, expressive language, and learning readiness skills. ELF also aids in developing linkages among early childhood programs and health care services for young children. Among the various activities included in the ELF Project are: the distribution of 3,500 early language and literacy development kits to parents; the provision of literacy coaching to 100 family child care providers; the distribution of 2,000 "Born to Read" bags to pregnant women through four prenatal care providers; the expansion of "Reach Out and Read"—the nationally known program that involves pediatricians in "prescribing" reading to families with young children—to additional pediatric clinics; the provision of language and literacy workshops to parents and other caregivers; the hosting of two

ministerial dinners to engage the faith community in early literacy activities; and the production and distribution of materials aimed at promoting early language and literacy development.

• Baltimore's Reach Out and Read (ROR) effort promotes early literacy by making books a routine part of pediatric primary care. ROR enhances the literacy development of children by reaching them at an early age and by providing parents with the information, support, and materials they need to make books a part of their children's lives. Participating pediatric providers give anticipatory guidance about reading aloud to parents and an age-appropriate book to the child at every well-child visit, while volunteer readers model reading to children in the clinic waiting area. Initiated in Baltimore City in 1997, there are currently 29 ROR programs in and around Baltimore City, giving out books and literacy information to more than 23,000 children and their parents each year.

• Every Baltimore City elementary school currently has full-day kindergarten for all children, placing Baltimore City ahead of the requirement within the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act that jurisdictions achieve this goal by the year 2007. Pre-kindergarten programs serve over 3,000 three- and four-year-olds. If fully funded, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act can provide the framework and opportunity for a full-day pre-kindergarten program to all at-risk three- and four-year-olds in Baltimore.

### B-LAP'S EARLY CONCERTED EFFORTS

Baltimore Leadership in Action Program members are committed to taking both immediate and long-term action to help Baltimore children "turn the corner" in their rates of school readiness. B-LAP's major early accomplishments include the following:

• Initiation, development, assembly, and distribution of 7,000 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten registration packets to encourage early school registration and to share school readiness information with parents. Systemwide packets had not previously existed;

• Recommendation of changes to Baltimore City Public School System's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten registration form to increase knowledge of each child's prior care settings;

• Development of a summer learning calendar that was distributed in the registration packets prior to the 2004–05 school year;

• Implementation, in coordination with the Baltimore City Public School System Office of Early Childhood, of an action plan to improve teacher training on the Work Sampling System;

• Hosting of a focus group for Baltimore City Public School System kindergarten teachers on the Work Sampling System, designed to elicit feedback critical to enhancing the usefulness of the assessment process;

• Coordination and implementation of local School Readiness Fairs in the spring and summer of 2004;

• Successful solicitation of support from the Abell and Annie E. Casey Foundations to provide quality children's books and training to homevisitors and family child care providers in approaches to reading aloud and promoting early literacy;

• Launching, in the spring of 2004, of the *Countdown to Kindergarten–Baltimore* public engagement campaign to raise awareness about the importance of school readiness and to get information immediately into the hands of parents and caregivers of young children that will help them in their important role as first teachers. This ongoing campaign is being conducted in collaboration with the similar statewide effort of the same name to raise awareness among public policymakers, legislators, and others of the value of quality early care and education;

• Creation of various materials about the Work Sampling System and school readiness for parents and other caregivers that are being distributed as part of *Countdown to Kindergarten;*

• Creation of school readiness public service announcements sharing simple, fun activities that parents can do at home to enhance school readiness in the seven major areas of learning. These commercials were designed by B-LAP partner, Maryland Public Television (MPT) and air during children's programming on MPT.

## Five-Year Action Plan Goals and Strategies to Improve School Readiness

B-LAP has set a target of achieving a five percentage point gain in the percentage of kindergartners assessed as fully ready on the Work Sampling System assessment each year for the next five years. To reach this target, B-LAP's Five-Year Action Plan concentrates its work in seven key goal areas. Fifty strategies within these seven goal areas have been developed, all responsive to the criteria described above. Some of the strategies will be achieved by B-LAP acting as a body, while others will be achieved by B-LAP member agencies and other organizations, acting individually or collaboratively. Several require action by policymakers to increase public support for school readiness interventions. The goals and their associated strategies are discussed briefly below and more fully in the tables that follow this discussion.

### Goal 1: All children, birth through age five, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families, including full-day options.

Numerous studies have shown that children who attend high-quality early childhood programs, particularly programs that provide language stimulation activities and in which curriculum aims are clearly specified and integrated across domains, are better prepared for kindergarten.[14] The quality of family child care homes and child care centers is especially critical because many children spend their earliest years in these settings. Efforts to improve the quality of care in child care homes and centers include credentialing programs with financial incentives for providers who complete multilevel training programs, accreditation of child care programs that meet high standards, and targeted efforts to infuse language and literacy enrichment activities into child care programs.

This goal addresses the need to ensure that all young children have the opportunity to attend high-quality early care and education programs, including quality child care programs, Early Head Start and Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs. Current capacity (as of December 2004) in early care and education programs includes approximately:

- 9,093 slots in 1,257 family child care providers;[15]
- 8,764 slots in 201 licensed child care centers;
- 3,469 slots in Head Start;
- 3,500 slots in public pre-kindergarten programs; and
- 186 slots in Early Head Start.

Clearly, this is inadequate to meet the needs of 42,000 children, birth to age five in Baltimore City, particularly for certain populations including infants and children with special needs. Indeed:

- 5,786 Baltimore City children are estimated to be eligible for Head Start. Programs currently exist for 60% of these children;

- 8,473 infants and toddlers are estimated to be eligible for Early Head Start. Current availability reaches only 2% of the estimated need.

Moreover, many families are unable to afford quality child care programs, yet cost containment measures in the state child care subsidy program have resulted in thousands of families being placed on a waiting list for child care vouchers.

The strategies within this goal area to address these challenges include:

- Identifying and pursuing all possible funding opportunities to expand the availability of quality early care and education programs;

- Expanding full-day Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs;

- Expanding Early Head Start, Family Support Center programs, and Judy Centers serving the youngest children, birth to age three;

- Expanding language and literacy and arts enrichment programs in Head Start and pre-kindergarten classes;

• Increasing the quality of child care through accreditation and credentialing;

• Increasing the supply of providers serving infants and toddlers, special needs children, families needing non-traditional hours care, and the before- and after-school needs for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children; and

• Advocating increased purchase of care funding to subsidize quality child care.

**Goal 2: Parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.**

Parents play, undoubtedly, the most influential and critical role in affecting their children's readiness for school. It is the parents who encourage or discourage their children's curiosity; who show them that they are beloved, special people; who expose them to books, music, art, and dance; who encourage language development by responding to coos and by acting as the babies' "tour guide and narrator"; who help them learn how to think and solve problems; who teach them self-control; and who build their self-confidence. All parents want the best for their children and want them to succeed. Supporting parents and other caregivers in achieving these aspirations and ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to be their child's first teacher is the thrust of this goal. The experiences of existing early learning programs, such as Family Support Centers, the HIPPY Program, and Head Start, which require significant parental involvement, have shown that, with encouragement and support, many more parents can succeed in this role. While parents impact all areas of their children's well-being, early parental interactions with their children are particularly crucial in determining children's school readiness in the domains of social-emotional growth and early language and literacy.

Baltimore has some supports in place for parents/caregivers, but more are needed especially to reach those families whose children are at increased risk for poor school readiness:

• Homevisiting programs, such as Healthy Start, Healthy Families and the Health Department's Maternal and Infant Nursing Program, provide services during pregnancy and continue to work with families until the child reaches preschool age. This early support is critical to ensuring that babies are born healthy and receive the early nurturing and care critical to later school success. It is estimated that at least half of the families giving birth in Baltimore City (4,500 of 9,000 births annually) could benefit from homevisiting services. Current capacity, however, only allows approximately 1,500 (33%) of the most vulnerable families to be served;

• Born to Read—an early literacy effort where pregnant women are counseled about the importance of reading to their babies from birth—will reach 2,000 of over 9,000 (22%) pregnant women in 2005;

• The Family Support Centers in Baltimore City serve approximately 750 families (5%) of the more than 15,000 families with young children, birth to age four, annually;

• The HIPPY Program exists currently in only one community in Baltimore;

• Success By 6 Partnership exists currently in only four communities in Baltimore;

• Programs targeting non-English speaking Hispanic families remain limited despite the growing number of Hispanic families in the city. Most notable of the existing programs are Casey Family Services, Centro de la Comunidad, and Apostolado Hispano;

• Over 9,000 ex-offenders return to their families and homes in Baltimore City each year. Little is in place to identify, support, and educate those returning ex-offenders who are parents of young children.

Strategies within this goal area focus on:

• Conducting creative outreach to parents/caregivers of children, birth to age five, to educate them about school readiness and link them with child development, pre-literacy and literacy support, and early care and education resources;

• Targeting parents of children at highest risk for poor school readiness, including incarcerated parents and English language learners;

• Advocating increased community-based supports—for example, more Family Support Centers and homevisiting programs—for parents of babies and young children under the age of four;

• Engaging parents/caregivers actively in school readiness efforts by providing them with tools and messages they can effectively use;

• Educating parents/caregivers on the administration and expectations of the Work Sampling System; and

• Training parents to be advocates for their children.

**Goal 3: Children, birth through age five, and their families will receive necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.**

The first step in preparing children for school success is ensuring that they are physically and mentally healthy from birth and live in an environment where their basic needs for shelter, food, and clothing are met. Ensuring the good health of young children was the basis for such major federally funded initiatives as the state Children's Health Insurance Program and the Infants and Toddlers Program. Federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau funding focuses on improving birth outcomes and addressing significant child health problems, such as childhood lead poisoning, child immunizations, and childhood asthma. Despite impressive national, state, and local efforts, areas of child health that relate to school readiness are still in need of improvement.

Recognizing the link between child health and well-being and school readiness, B-LAP members feel it is critical to address the health, mental health, and income supports of young children and their families living in Baltimore City. While addressing the city's health and poverty problems is an extremely challenging endeavor and well beyond the

scope of a single school readiness plan, there are key areas where health, mental health, income support, and school readiness are tightly connected. In particular, parental stressors, such as lack of income, substance abuse, depression, or chronic health problems, can greatly interfere with parents' abilities to appropriately nurture and care for their children. Consequently, B-LAP has developed 16 strategies to address these concerns. These include:

• Ensuring more families are linked to health care coverage and income support benefits;

• Infusing a focus on school readiness and early childhood development in primary health care;

• Addressing early childhood mental health needs through an integrated system of care;

• Promoting the early identification of developmental disabilities of young children;

• Addressing issues of parental health, such as maternal depression, that can interfere with positive parenting; and

• Preventing certain health problems, such as lead poisoning and childhood asthma, that are so closely tied to school readiness.

It is in these key areas where we can most feasibly make measurable gains in child health outcomes that will lead to measurable improvements in school readiness.

### Goal 4: All early care and education staff will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.

Having well-qualified, highly trained staff working in any early care and education program (from homevisiting of pregnant women to public pre-kindergarten classrooms) has universally been found to be one of the most significant factors contributing to the success of children and families in those programs. Studies of homevisiting programs, for example, have shown that program impact is tied to how well homevisiting staff are

trained. The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), the state of Maryland's framework for achieving school readiness, requires ongoing and thorough teacher training in helping teachers gain an in-depth understanding of children's learning styles and capabilities to allow them to support each child's learning potential. The MMSR model is now being applied to the child care field and Head Start as well.

Since 2001, efforts have been made to move the child care community toward National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) accreditation, a process by which child care centers improve their services in order to meet recognized national or state quality standards. Similarly, efforts have also been underway to have child care staff participate in the Maryland Child Care Administration's credentialing program. This credential recognizes levels of achievement in continued professional training in early childhood education, and recognizes professional development activities. While training of early care and education providers, and accreditation and staff credentialing have been ongoing in Baltimore City, much more needs to be done.

• 136 child care providers have been trained on the Maryland Model for School Readiness. Part of that training includes credentialing information. Ten percent of the 1,260 licensed family child care providers in Baltimore City are credentialed. Twenty-six out of 201 child care centers in the city are accredited through NAEYC or MSDE.

• Many infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are in the daily care of "informal" providers, relatives and family friends not subject to state regulations for child care. Little data are available about the numbers of these individuals who provide this informal care, although some of them do receive Purchase of Care child care vouchers from the Baltimore City Department of Social Services. In the month of September 2004, there were 722 such providers in Baltimore City who received these payments, serving 776 families with 1,532 children. Many of these providers are not fully aware of their own role in impacting the school readiness of the children in their care. Targeted efforts are

needed to reach out to them and provide them with extra child development and early care support and education.

Early care and education programs in Baltimore City must ensure that their staff members are adequately trained on effective early childhood curricula and the Maryland Model for School Readiness to meet B-LAP's definition of quality. To this end, strategies in this goal area include:

• Developing "best practice" training for pre-kindergarten teachers and paraprofessionals serving four-year-olds;

• Expanding training on MMSR to reach more early care and education providers and Baltimore City Public Schools System teachers and administrators;

• Supporting the use of high-quality curriculum in early learning programs; and

• Supporting the ongoing professional development of family and other informal child care providers, in whose care so many young children are entrusted.

### Goals 5: All Baltimore citizens will understand the value of quality early care and education as the means to achieve school readiness.

B-LAP recognizes that creating and carrying out a comprehensive school readiness agenda for Baltimore City cannot be the work of only a handful of individuals. Building public will to support the early learning needs of very young children and to advocate for the resources needed to support this agenda must be a major component of the city's school readiness efforts. Experience from other states, most notably California where Proposition 10 resulted in the creation of the California Children and Families Commission, and North Carolina where the highly touted Smart Start Initiative enjoys widespread public support, shows that public engagement regarding the impact of early childhood programs and school readiness efforts can build significant public will *and result in increased funding* in support of these efforts.

Within this goal area, therefore, B-LAP is proposing:

• The long-term institutionalization of its school readiness campaign, *Countdown to Kindergarten–Baltimore* (CTK-B), which was launched in the spring of 2004, in coordination with a similar statewide public engagement campaign. This effort is based on the successful *Countdown to Kindergarten* campaign created and implemented in Boston, which inspired our work in Baltimore City. B-LAP acknowledges and thanks the city of Boston for its generosity in allowing us to use its campaign name.

• The engagement of numerous partners—parents, early care and education programs, faith leaders, public and private agencies, business, health care, and community organizations—in CTK-B to build widespread support for and involvement in Baltimore's school readiness efforts.

### Goal 6: Baltimore will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.

Until the launching of the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program, promoting school readiness for Baltimore's youngest children had been the work of individual early care and education providers, parents, and advocates, most often working alone or, at times, within small collaboratives. There has not been a comprehensive school readiness agenda behind which all of these stakeholders could rally and that sets a course of action for collective improvement. Neither has there been an infrastructure in place to monitor and hold accountable existing school readiness work, to provide the forum for discussion of school readiness needs, or to seek the resources necessary to maintain and expand school readiness efforts.

B-LAP members are grateful to the Reason to Believe Enterprise for sponsoring the past year of planning, which has resulted in the development of this ambitious, yet doable, plan. But a plan alone is not enough. B-LAP is calling for the institutionalization of our efforts through the establishment of a permanent body with the charge of ensuring the

implementation of this plan and holding all stakeholders accountable for their efforts to promote school readiness. To this end, the strategies associated with this goal focus on:

• Housing B-LAP within the Family League of Baltimore City, which is the City's Local Management Board, as a permanent standing committee to monitor the implementation of the Five-Year Action Plan. As the state-mandated organization for coordination of services to and policies regarding families, children, and youth in Baltimore City, the Family League is the logical entity to provide a base for the ongoing work of B-LAP;

• Creating a School Readiness Stat (comparable to the highly touted CitiStat process) to monitor regularly the data that inform us of how well we are progressing in meeting our school readiness goals;

• Improving the breadth and quality of data available to inform Baltimore's school readiness efforts;

• Seeking the funding, relationships, and collaboration needed to implement this action plan; and

• Institutionalizing and expanding the early language and literacy activities already in place in order to bring to scale efforts to address one of the most consequential domains of learning, where Baltimore City children are currently performing very poorly. This would be the first step toward going to scale on efforts to address each of the domains of learning within the Work Sampling System.

**Goal 7: Baltimore City schools will be prepared to receive all children.**
Ensuring that children arrive at kindergarten with the necessary school readiness skills is the major thrust of B-LAP's work, but it does not end there. The final, but critical, factor that influences school success is having schools that are prepared for children at all levels of readiness, that are welcoming and already familiar to children and their families, and that have a good understanding of the needs of children so their progress toward school success can be seamlessly continued. The National Education Goals Panel

recognized the importance of having "ready schools," and developed a set of indicators that define such schools. Ready schools:

• Smooth the transition between home and school;

• Strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools;

• Introduce or expand approaches that have been shown to raise achievement;

• Serve children in communities; and

• Take responsibility for results.

In the discussion that led to the development of this goal, B-LAP members were emphatic that Baltimore's school readiness agenda must address the issue of the preparedness of Baltimore's elementary schools to receive children and continue them on their trajectory toward school success. The strategies proposed to do so include:

• Formalizing and promoting the early registration of children for kindergarten so schools know early who their incoming kindergartners will be and can plan accordingly and engage families before school begins;

• Ensuring that elementary schools are welcoming places for children and their families;

• Building the capacity and commitment of elementary schools to ensure all children will learn;

• Developing formal transition activities between the kindergarten program of the Baltimore City Public Schools and the array of early care and education environments from which young children come, including Head Start, neighborhood preschools, and child care programs;

• Recruiting and retaining a high-quality early childhood workforce at the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten levels; and

• Helping schools forge stronger community partnerships that promote and support school readiness efforts.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PLAN

The goals and strategies of B-LAP's Five-Year School Readiness Action Plan for Baltimore City are laid out in more detail in the pages that follow. For every strategy, there are action steps that explain the major activities to be taken to implement the strategy, and a time frame noting when those action steps should occur.

Additionally, each action step is coded in two ways:

*Level of Investment*—this indicates the approximate level of funding needed to implement each action step within a strategy:

$       —requires no to low funding, approximately $0–$400,000
$$      —requires moderate levels of funding, approximately $400,000–$1,000,000
$$$    —requires high levels of funding, exceeding $1,000,000

*Degree of Difficulty*—this indicates the degree to which new or different methods of working together or collaborating are required:

ϒ       —requires no change in how we work together toward implementation
ϒ ϒ     —requires moderate changes in how we work together
ϒ ϒ ϒ —requires significant new approaches to working together

**GOAL #1:** All children, birth through age five, will have access to quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of families, including full-day options.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Decrease financial barriers to enrolling children in quality early care and education programs | Advocate increased Purchase of Care funds to provide vouchers to more families in need of financial assistance | 2005 | $$$ | Y |
| | Advocate decreased copayments for families receiving Purchase of Care funds | 2005 | $$$ | Y |
| | Engage and train families, child care providers, and others in advocacy for Purchase of Care funds | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y |
| Increase the number of accredited child care programs and the number of credentialed child care providers | Advocate continued funding and incentives for both accreditation and credentialing programs | 2005 | $$ | Y |
| | Provide opportunities to educate child care providers about the importance of credentialing and accreditation | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y |
| | Develop programs to support new child care providers during their first year of licensing and mentoring programs to encourage all providers to pursue credentialing and program accreditation | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y Y |
| | Develop additional incentives for child care providers to seek GED and higher education | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y |
| | Expand and encourage the use of an assessment tool to determine the quality of teaching by child care providers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y |
| | Create a centralized tracking system to track providers who participate in credentialing and accreditation programs | 2006/Ongoing | $ | Y |
| Expand early care and education programs serving the youngest children, from birth to age three, including Early Head Start, Family Support Centers, and Judy Centers | Identify neighborhoods with high risk factors for school failure | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y |
| | Identify partners interested in operating Early Head Start, Judy Centers, and Family Support Center programs in targeted neighborhoods | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Y Y |
| | Identify facilities to house expanded programs | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | Y Y |
| | Seek additional funds to expand Early Head Start programs, adding 500 new slots over the next five years | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | Y |
| | Seek additional funds to expand Family Support Centers in Baltimore, adding two centers over the next five years | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | Y |
| Expand full-day early care and education programs serving children ages 3–5 in Baltimore City, including full-day public pre-kindergarten programs and full-day Head Start programs | Use mapping data and the proposed School Readiness Stat to identify areas of need that are underserved by preschool programs | 2005 | $ | Y |
| | Assess feasibility of collaboration between half-day programs to create full-day blended care options for children | 2005 | $ | Y Y Y |
| | Assess feasibility and impact of restructuring Head Start half-day programs to full-day to improve utilization of existing programs | 2005 | $ | Y Y |
| | Allocate funding in Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) budget to expand public pre-kindergarten programs, adding 20 new programs over the next five years | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | Y Y |
| | Develop and implement a strategic plan to create partnerships between BCPSS, Baltimore City Head Start (BCHS), and child care programs to facilitate expansion of preschool programs through contracts and collaboration with other providers and to identify facilities available for expansion | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | Y Y Y |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enhance the quality of Baltimore City Head Start and pre-kindergarten classes by expanding language and literacy and arts enrichment programs | Seek funding for expansion of Early Reading First initiative to all BCHS programs | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | ⛉⛉⛉ |
| | Seek funding for expansion of Wolf Trap Institute's Early Learning through the Arts Program to all BCHS sites | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉⛉⛉ |
| | Seek funding to restore Wolf Trap Institute's Early Learning through the Arts Program to all BCPSS pre-kindergarten classes | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉⛉⛉ |
| Increase the supply of early child care and education providers who provide service for: infants/toddlers; before and after school for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten; children with special needs and families needing care during non-traditional hours | Review and modify Child Care Administration (CCA) licensing and certification process to speed the response to providers interested in serving these specific populations, and ensure adequate staffing to respond to provider inquiries | 2005 | $ | ⛉⛉ |
| | Develop and implement a recruitment and public engagement campaign to increase the number of and retain the existing child care slots for these categories of care | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉⛉⛉ |
| | Create new incentives and means of compensation for providers who care for these groups of children | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | ⛉⛉⛉ |
| Compile, monitor, apply for, and respond to grant announcements for early care and education programs, collaborate where possible in seeking new funding, and advocate for new funding opportunities | Establish a protocol for agencies to apply for funding, including collaborative applications where feasible and appropriate | 2005 | $ | ⛉ |
| | Identify and obtain grant availability lists (e.g., foundations, federal agencies) that focus on education, early care, and related issues | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉ |
| | Disseminate information about funding opportunities through the grant newsletter published by the Family League of Baltimore City and/or the Baltimore City Public School System grants office | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉ |
| | Identify appropriate grant applicants to write grant proposals | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉ |
| | Advocate additional funding for early care and education programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉⛉ |
| Advocate increased compensation of early care and education providers as a means of attracting and retaining highly trained staff to the field | Work with advocacy groups, including the Compensation Subcommittee of Maryland Committee for Children's Public Policy Committee, to work for increased compensation for early care and education providers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⛉ |

**GOAL #2:** Parents of young children will succeed in their role as their child's first teacher.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conduct outreach to parents/caregivers of children ages 0–5 to educate them about school readiness and link them with child development, pre-literacy and literacy skill building activities, and early care and education resources, targeting parents/caregivers of children at highest risk for poor school readiness. | Seek opportunities (e.g., school readiness fairs, health fairs, toddlers fairs, etc.) throughout the city to provide parents/caregivers with information about child development, pre-literacy and literacy skills, and early care and education programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ＹＹ |
| | Provide technical support to other agencies working with parents/caregivers to help them engage in school readiness activities | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ＹＹ |
| | Work with Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) to educate foster families and kinship care providers about child development, pre-literacy and literacy skills, and early care and education programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Ｙ |
| | Identify other agencies working with parents/caregivers of vulnerable children and review/develop protocols for educating parents/caregivers about child development, pre-literacy and literacy skills, and early care and education programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ＹＹ |
| | Engage the faith community, medical care providers, and community organizations to assist in educating parents/caregivers about child development, pre-literacy and literacy skills, and early care and education programs in their communities | 2005 | $ | ＹＹＹ |
| | Advocate increased funding for development of programming at grassroots level to reach parents through faith community, medical care providers, and community organizations | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ＹＹ |
| | Focus efforts on other high-risk groups, e.g., incarcerated parents and parents whose second language is English | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ＹＹＹ |
| Encourage parents/caregivers to engage in school readiness activities | Revise 2004 Summer Activity Calendar for inclusion into school registration packets in 2005 | 2005 | $ | Ｙ |
| | In conjunction with other B-LAP Goal Groups, evaluate and revise the 2004 kindergarten registration packets to ensure the relevance of the information to parents | 2005 | $ | Ｙ |
| | Assist with distribution of kindergarten registration packets to parents and collect feedback forms from parents/caregivers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Ｙ |
| | Publicize to families the availability of Born to Read and Reach Out and Read programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Ｙ |
| | Create posters with messages for parents/caregivers to use to prepare their children for school; place posters in public waiting areas | 2006 | $ | Ｙ |
| Use *Countdown to Kindergarten* public awareness campaign to connect to all parents/caregivers of preschool children | Via media coverage, inform parents/caregivers about the expectations of school readiness/WSS and activities to help them prepare their children to meet these requirements | 2005 | $$ | ＹＹ |

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| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expand community-based support for parents of children 0-3 to strengthen their roles as adults and parents | Advocate increased funding for family support centers and homevisiting programs | 2006/Ongoing | $$$ | ⅄ ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Advocate increased funding for family literacy programs | 2006/Ongoing | $$$ | ⅄ ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Advocate increased funding for center-based parent/child programs focusing on children 0–3 | 2006/Ongoing | $$$ | ⅄ ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Encourage the faith community to increase efforts to support parents of babies and children ages 0–3 including upgrading child care services for infants | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Work with advocacy groups and neighborhood collaboratives/associations to encourage family-friendly workplace policies for parents | 2006/Ongoing | $$ | ⅄ ⅄ ⅄ |
| Educate parents about the importance of the first months and years and how and why to use a responsive, language-rich, nurturing parenting style | Increase use of center-based family support programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Increase availability/use of center-based parenting programs | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Increase use of home-based parenting curricula such as "Growing Great Kids" or "Parents as Teachers" | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Incorporate nurturing/bonding information into already existent parent trainings | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| | Expand Born To Read Program to more obstetric practices | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ |
| | Increase depression screenings for pregnant women and new parents in community-based settings | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ ⅄ |
| Engage parents in educational forums that empower them to act as advocates for their children individually, as a group, and at the legislative level | Link with existing advocacy agencies that provide appropriate training | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ |
| | Work with existing programs that engage parents/caregivers in child-centered education (e.g., Head Start, Healthy Start, Family Support Centers, ECE programs, community collaboratives, faith initiatives) to include advocacy training within their educational program | 2007/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ |
| | Advocate increased funding for grassroots-level organizations to coordinate and conduct education around parental advocacy opportunities | 2007/Ongoing | $ | ⅄ |

## GOAL #3: Children, birth through age five, and their families will receive necessary income support benefits and health and mental health care to ensure they arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **_Developmental Disabilities_** | | | | |
| Improve rates of identification and service delivery for children birth to five years with developmental disabilities | Disseminate materials and publicize efforts to medical providers on how to effectively access Baltimore Infants and Toddlers Program (BITP) and Child Find | 2005 | $ | ΥΥ |
| | Include in BITP policies and procedures that results of child assessments and Individual Family Service Plans be communicated to the child's primary care provider | 2005 | $ | Υ |
| | Expand awareness of the Infants and Toddlers Program and Child Find referral processes among agencies and stakeholders that serve children 0–5 | 2005 | $ | ΥΥ |
| | Increase the array of professionals and paraprofessionals who are qualified to conduct developmental screening of young children | 2006 | $$ | ΥΥ |
| | Streamline screening and referral processes to child development programs, so a single referral may facilitate triage into multiple services for which a family may be eligible | 2005 | $$ | ΥΥΥ |
| | Explore reestablishment and expansion of the Head Start/Child Find collaboration model and Early Head Start/Infants and Toddlers Program collaboration model for improving identification and referral and access to service delivery | 2006/Ongoing | $$$ | ΥΥΥ |
| | Work with and support existing advocacy efforts to increase capacity of BITP to accept and process referrals in a timely fashion | 2007 | $$$ | ΥΥΥ |
| | Work with and support existing advocacy efforts to increase capacity of BCPSS Child Find program to accept and process referrals in a timely fashion | 2008 | $$$ | ΥΥΥ |
| **_Substance Abuse_** | | | | |
| Ensure implementation of the Family League/Baltimore Substance Abuse System (BSAS) Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Plan addressing the substance abuse needs of families experiencing a pregnancy and/or with children ages 0–5, in order to:<br>• Increase the early identification of substance abuse<br>• Increase access to appropriate treatment services<br>• Provide supportive services to complement substance abuse treatment | Ensure all ECE providers know about the recommendations of the plan and work with them to implement those strategies relevant to their work | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ΥΥ |
| | Develop mechanisms to strengthen relationships between ECE providers and substance abuse treatment and prevention programs that provide services to pregnant women and families with young children | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |

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| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mental Health and Other Consultative Services** | | | | |
| Provide health consultation to child care providers to assist with the identification, referral, and resolution of child health concerns raised by child care providers | Educate ECE programs regarding the roles of Child Care Health Consultants | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ |
| | Identify funding streams to hire Child Care Health Consultants | 2006 | $$$ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Increase the number of trained Child Care Health Consultants | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Link Child Care Health Consultants to a network of pediatric clinicians in Baltimore City | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| Work to build an integrated system of care for early childhood mental health by providing an array of consultative and clinical services, which include promotion, prevention, and intervention services, to all children and families | Participate in and represent the needs of Baltimore's children on the statewide Early Childhood Mental Health Steering Committee | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ |
| | Assist ECE providers in integrating social and emotional development into their daily curricula (e.g., Second Step) | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Increase the number of mental health professionals (consultants and clinicians) in Baltimore City trained in Early Childhood Mental Health and available to ECE programs | 2006/Ongoing | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Educate ECE programs regarding the roles of mental health professionals (consultants and clinicians) | 2006/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Work with institutes of higher education to include early childhood mental health into their curricula | 2007/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Identify funding streams to support an integrated system of care for early childhood mental health services that includes adequate staffing of appropriate early childhood mental heath services | 2009 | $$$ | ⍦ ⍦ ⍦ |
| Improve the identification of maternal depression and other parental mental health issues | Provide education and integrate the use of maternal depression screening and referral process into the services provided by ECE programs | 2006 | $ | ⍦ |
| | Promote maternal depression screening in prenatal care and pediatric primary care sites | 2007 | $ | ⍦ |
| **Primary Care/Medical Home** | | | | |
| Increase routine developmental screening by primary care providers | Educate parents to ask for developmental screenings for their children | 2005 | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Publicize to health care providers the availability of line item Medical Assistance reimbursement for standardized developmental screening | 2006 | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Enroll individual practices in quality improvement initiatives to improve developmental screening in primary care | 2007 | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ ⍦ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Primary Care/Medical Home*** Continued | | | | |
| Expand the Reach Out and Read (ROR) Program among primary care practices, and promote awareness beyond the medical community | Expand Baltimore ROR program to more primary care practices | 2005 | $ | ⍦ |
| | Increase awareness of ROR among ECE providers | 2006 | $ | ⍦ |
| Improve awareness, communication and collaboration between ECE programs and pediatric primary care providers | Develop forms and protocols that facilitate referrals and follow-up on referrals between primary care providers and community-based programs | 2006 | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Incorporate medical home topics into core training for home-visitors, child care providers, early childhood educators | 2006 | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Sponsor community events targeted at allowing primary care providers and other community stakeholders to meet and learn about each others' programs | 2007 | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Where possible, standardize referral forms and centralize eligibility information about the array of programs available to young children at risk of not being ready for school, for use by primary care providers and other programs serving young children | 2009 | $$$ | ⍦ ⍦ ⍦ |
| Increase awareness among parents and the ECE community of the concept of a medical home and its relationship to improved health outcomes | Develop brochure for parents on "choosing primary care," which incorporates the desired attributes of a medical home | 2005 | $ | ⍦ |
| ***Condition-Specific Issues*** | | | | |
| Improve parental knowledge about symptoms and management of childhood asthma | Utilize ECE programs that reach out to and/or serve pregnant women and children 0–6 to do public education about childhood asthma | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ |
| | Provide training for child care providers and family support workers about childhood asthma | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ |
| | With housing advocacy organizations, develop tenant workshops on healthy home environments for children | 2006 | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| Improve availability of dental screenings/treatment for children birth to age five | Implement "Baby Bottle Syndrome" education, and education about caring for baby teeth, targeted to pregnant women and new parents, utilizing ECE programs and pediatricians | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⍦ |
| | Advocate Medicaid reimbursement of dental sealant application by pediatric primary care providers | 2006 | $ | ⍦ ⍦ |
| | Expand childhood dental screening and treatment opportunities for children 0–5 within ECE programs through new funding and collaborations | 2006/Ongoing | $$ | ⍦ ⍦ |

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| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Condition-Specific Issues* Continued | | | | |
| Initiate efforts to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity in Baltimore City | Ensure all ECE programs are providing information to parents about childhood nutrition and fitness | 2005 | $ | ᵞᵞ |
| | Initiate a public information campaign directed to parents about childhood obesity and its impact on school readiness | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᵞ |
| | Institute children's recreation and exercise activities in all ECE programs that directly serve children | 2007 | $$ | ᵞᵞ |
| | Require all licensed child care providers to obtain training in childhood fitness/nutrition | 2007 | $ | ᵞᵞ |
| | Explore mechanisms (e.g., farmer's markets, food co-ops) for improving access to affordable, nutritious food in high-risk communities | 2007 | $$ | ᵞᵞ |
| Further reduce incidence of childhood lead poisoning in Baltimore City | Revise lead reporting form for schools to include lead values | 2005 | $ | ᵞᵞ |
| | Ensure that all ECE providers have access to Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning's Lead Safe Housing Registry and other resources | 2005 | $ | ᵞ |
| | Use ECE programs as a vehicle to provide parent education and workshops on lead poisoning. | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᵞ |
| | Where appropriate, incorporate the use of a lead risk questionnaire and blood lead screenings per established guidelines in selected ECE programs | 2006 | $$ | ᵞᵞ |
| Increase immunization compliance rate for children 19–35 months | Utilize ECE programs that reach out to and/or serve pregnant women and children 0–5 to do public education on the need to immunize toddlers and preschoolers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᵞ |
| | Develop targeted strategies to reach and immunize homeless children | 2006 | $$ | ᵞ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **_Medical Insurance Coverage_** | | | | |
| Increase the number of Medicaid eligible pregnant women and children 0–5 who are enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) | Ensure appropriate training on MCHP enrollment and Health Choice benefits is provided to ECE providers | 2005 | $ | ⊤⊤ |
| | Collaborate with early care and education programs and programs serving pregnant women to disseminate MCHP applications | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Include information about child's health insurance during intake process of early care providers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Educate health care sites and ECE providers about providing insurance information and resources to underinsured and uninsured families | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Include MCHP information in _Countdown to Kindergarten_ materials | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Target faith and other community groups to reach working poor and other missed children | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Collect health insurer information at kindergarten enrollment and provide information as needed | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤⊤ |
| **_Income Support_** | | | | |
| Increase access to income supports (e.g., MCHP, TCA, WIC, Food Stamps, Earned Income Credit, Energy Assistance) for eligible families | Provide ECE programs with information about income support programs so that staff is well versed in programs available | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |
| | Use ECE programs as a vehicle to provide information to families about income support programs and means to access them | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⊤ |

**GOAL #4:** All early care and education staff will be appropriately trained in promoting and understanding school readiness.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop a professional development plan to present "best practices" topics to pre-kindergarten teachers and paraprofessionals serving four-year-olds; engage teachers in practice activities; observe and monitor pre-kindergarten teachers; provide feedback and support | Seek funding through annual BCPSS budget and other sources to provide professional development on "best practices" topics and instructional strategies for teachers | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Identify and collaborate with ECE partners on professional development for staff | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Implement professional development sessions throughout the year | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Devise a plan to observe and monitor pre-K teachers after professional development sessions | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Require school administrators to use the Maryland Standards for Implementing Quality Programs when monitoring pre-K programs | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Establish a system of oversight and accountability for pre-K teachers, including evaluations | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᛉ ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Develop a plan for providing feedback to and follow through for pre-K teachers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| Expand training on MMSR to reach more early care and education providers | Intensify MMSR training outreach strategies to early care and education providers | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Collaborate with early care and education programs in the Baltimore City community to build professional development opportunities | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Implement professional development sessions throughout the year | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Allocate a portion of state funding and other resources to provide professional development focusing on the Maryland Model for School Readiness Program | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Establish a centralized location for tracking accredited early care and education programs | 2006 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| Extend the Maryland Model for School Readiness Program professional development plan for area and school administrators | Present an overview of the Maryland Model for School Readiness Program | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |
| | Oversee MMSR programs in schools | 2005 | $ | ᛉ ᛉ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Encourage and support professional development including the use of quality curriculum in early child care and education programs serving children birth through five years | Continue to educate early care and education providers about curriculum in programs and to encourage them to use curriculum | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Continue work with institutions of higher learning (two- and four-year programs) to create a fair, user-friendly continuum of educational opportunities | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Create and maintain a wide range of training and educational opportunities for early care and education providers | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Create consistency among training and educational delivery systems by using a "core of knowledge" approach, as defined by the Child Care Administration, acceptable for all early care and education providers | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Provide ongoing technical assistance for early care and education providers to support, implement, and sustain what they learn | 2006 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Evaluate outcomes of children from programs that use training, further education, and curriculum | 2006 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Build on existing outreach efforts and incentives for early care and education providers to further their formal education (including GED) and to participate in training | 2006 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Advocate raising the educational requirement and compensation of child care providers | 2006 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| Reach informal child care providers (relatives and friends) to educate and support them in achieving school readiness for the children in their care ages birth to five years | Target specific messages within the larger *Countdown to Kindergarten* campaign to informal child care providers on their unique role and how they can impact school readiness | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Develop educational and support materials specifically geared to informal child care providers | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Modify BCCCRC's informal child care program, FYI: Child Care, to focus on school readiness and to use a variety of approaches to reach the greatest number of informal providers | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Advocate additional resources to expand the informal child care provider initiative | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Establish other educational and informational opportunities for informal child care providers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Identify and collaborate with a variety of public, private, home and community-based programs, faith community, etc., to disseminate materials to informal child care providers | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Explore the potential for piloting direct service efforts (education, technical assistance, and support) with informal child care providers in targeted communities, including the ability to track school readiness outcomes | 2006 | $ | ⅄⅄ |

**GOAL #5:** All Baltimore citizens will understand the value of quality early care and education as the means to achieve school readiness.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carryout Baltimore's public awareness and engagement campaign, *Countdown to Kindergarten* (CTK-B), to educate Baltimore City parents and other citizens, early care and education providers, faith community leadership, business community, community leaders, and elected officials on the importance of supporting and investing in institutions and activities that shore up school readiness<br><br>*Note: CTK-B works in partnership with the statewide* Countdown to Kindergarten *campaign, with the vision of creating a multi-tiered effort that works collaboratively and provides a coordinated message to the public.* | Expand plan for outreach across the city, including the most vulnerable populations and infants | 2005 | $ | ΥΥ |
| | In all work, promote awareness that learning begins at birth | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |
| | Establish a Steering Committee, inclusive of all sectors of the community, which will guide the activities of CTK-B and coordinate activities with the statewide CTK campaign | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |
| | Work in conjunction with the state CTK campaign to ensure that the unique needs of Baltimore City are being addressed by the statewide media campaign | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |
| | Raise additional funds to fully fund the CTK-B campaign and its evaluation | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ΥΥΥ |
| | Develop, distribute, and publicize the availability of high-quality materials that support parents and caregivers of children birth to five in their roles as "first teacher" | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | Υ |
| Under the banner of *Countdown to Kindergarten,* work with other community-based agencies, including health care providers and religious organizations, whose mission is to serve families with children from birth to five years to join in the school readiness agenda and to reach parents and other caregivers with awareness and support, tools and resources for children ages birth to five | Join forces with initiatives focused on language and literacy, including those for children 0–3. | 2005 | $$ | ΥΥ |
| | Incorporate into CTK-B the work of B-LAP's Ad Hoc group working with the faith community | 2005 | $ | Υ |
| | Identify potential community-based organizations not already involved in CTK-B and involve them | 2005 | $ | Υ |
| | Identify or develop school readiness materials that will fit into the mission of other agencies and provide technical assistance around their use | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ΥΥ |
| | Promote CTK-B and the school readiness message at other agencies' events, fairs, and celebrations. | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |
| | Work with other agencies to enroll parents and other primary caregivers into key services and programs that will enhance parents' ability to help their children enter school ready to learn | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ΥΥ |
| Engage local businesses, community groups, health care programs, and religious organizations to join forces with *Countdown to Kindergarten* to accelerate school readiness | Identify key groups and businesses that have access to large numbers of parents of young children | 2005/Ongoing | $ | Υ |
| | Reach out to other groups to engage them in this work as funders, promoters, and/or partners | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ΥΥ |
| | Working with CTK-B's public relations consultant, develop win-win strategies for advancing interests of local businesses and CTK-B, including creating a "Call to Action" to businesses to be aware of the campaign, to consider what they can contribute, and to help provide resources | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ΥΥ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Work in conjunction with other B-LAP Goal Groups, Baltimore City Public Schools, and early care and education programs and providers to encourage early school registration, smooth transitions, welcoming schools, and to celebrate staff of Pre-K, K, child care, and Head Start programs | Identify opportunities to celebrate achievements of early care and education programs and staff | 2005 | $$ | ⚲ |
| | In conjunction with other B-LAP Goal Groups, evaluate strengths and weaknesses of 2004 registration packet and assist in modifying as needed | 2005 | $ | ⚲ ⚲ |
| | Facilitate a smooth transition to kindergarten by these efforts | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⚲ |
| | Work with other B-LAP Goal Groups to coordinate efforts as relevant | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⚲ |
| | Serve on BCPSS Early Childhood Advisory Committee to ensure that the campaign's messages and focus are in line with and support the school system | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⚲ |
| | Along with other B-LAP Goal Groups and BCPSS, plan for and publicize the annual Spring *Countdown to Kindergarten* registration week to take place during the Week of the Young Child | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ⚲ ⚲ |

# GOAL #6: Baltimore will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds, and holds accountable its school readiness efforts.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scale up and institutionalize language and literacy activities citywide and use this issue as a point of entry for discussion of other domains of school readiness | Assess what is working based on existing implementation of current activities and evaluation | 2005 | $ | ʎʎ |
| | Develop institutionalization/scale up plan | 2005 | $ | ʎʎ |
| | Identify and seek needed resources | 2006 | $$ | ʎ |
| Establish a School Readiness Stat at the Family League of Baltimore City, co-chaired by representatives of the Mayor's Office/child care/BCPSS | Identify school readiness measures to be monitored | 2005 | $ | ʎʎ |
| | Cultivate interest in School Readiness Stat among policymakers and ECE providers and advocates | 2005 | $ | ʎʎ |
| | Make formal recommendation to mayor's executive staff for establishment of School Readiness Stat | 2005 | $ | ʎ |
| | Make invitations to other participants | 2005 | $ | ʎ |
| | Develop mechanism for data collection to inform Stat process and initiate the School Readiness Stat, ensuring it is coordinated with other related Stat processes | 2005 | $ | ʎʎ |
| | Monitor progress on improving WSS results and related school readiness indicators | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ʎʎ |
| Establish B-LAP as a policy-making and planning body, housed at the Family League of Baltimore City, to implement this Five-Year School Readiness Action Plan and be held accountable by the School Readiness Stat | Develop a School Readiness Strategist position as staff to B-LAP and identify funding to support the position | 2005 | $ | ʎ |
| | Develop B-LAP's ongoing role and responsibilities and operational structure | 2005 | $ | ʎ |
| | Monitor implementation and evaluation of school readiness efforts | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ʎʎ |
| Identify needed data to inform school readiness efforts and address data quality issues | Continue B-LAP's efforts to identify additional school readiness and early childhood data needed to refine our understanding of the status of school readiness in Baltimore City | 2005 | $ | ʎ |
| | Work with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), BCPSS, and others to improve the quality of existing WSS data, especially in the area of prior care | 2005 | $ | ʎ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop financing plan for implementation of Baltimore's Five-Year School Readiness Action Plan | Develop a school readiness budget that is a compilation of all projected costs and identified resources to implement these recommendations | 2005 | $ | ⅄⅄ |
| | Execute a Compact for Sound Government agreement to make resources available for future efforts. The Compact for Sound Government is a policy tool that is designed to:<br>• Improve the well-being of vulnerable populations;<br>• Save scarce public resources by avoiding long-term expenditures; and<br>• Redirect a negotiated share of the savings to ongoing efforts to improve the lives and futures of vulnerable children and families<br>*Note: B-LAP is interested in developing a Compact agreement with the Baltimore City Public Schools to measure the degree to which high-quality ECE programs reduce the need for special education services later on in a child's schooling.* | 2005 | $$ | ⅄⅄⅄ |
| | Identify other available resources to fund these efforts and develop a plan for obtaining these funds | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ⅄⅄ |

## GOAL #7: Baltimore City schools will be prepared to receive all children.

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Encourage early registration for children entering kindergarten and pre-kindergarten as part of the *Countdown to Kindergarten* campaign, and support schools to participate in the early registration efforts | Promote the idea of implementing early registration efforts to principals and Area Executive Officers, including creating a systemwide calendar of registration activities | 2005 | $ | ϒ |
| | Secure funding for packets | 2005 | $ | ϒ |
| | Work with BCPSS to institutionalize early registration practice and launch during the Week of the Young Child in April | 2005 | $ | ϒ |
| | In conjunction with other B-LAP Goal Groups, finalize best materials for registration packets and organize assembly | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ϒ |
| | Work closely with media through *Countdown to Kindergarten* to publicize importance of early registration | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ϒ |
| | Expand outreach with special efforts for hardest-to-reach families | 2006 | $ | ϒ ϒ |
| Ensure that all schools are respectful and welcoming places for families and they create and sustain meaningful opportunities for engagement in teaching, learning and broader school issues | Provide opportunities for kindergarten staff to visit neighborhood early care and education programs for discussions about their philosophy, pedagogy, and expectations for children and families and to participate in open houses and other community events | 2005 | $ | ϒ |
| | Work in partnership with BCPSS Area Offices, Central Office, School Improvement Teams, etc., to identify schools ready to implement open houses, receptions for parents and young children, and other welcoming activities in spring and summer and provide technical assistance to those schools | 2005/Ongoing | $$ | ϒ ϒ |
| | Provide technical assistance including, but not limited to, developing programming for parents; ensuring the school effectively accommodates the language, culture, and special needs of the children it serves; and providing meaningful opportunities for parents to participate in the life of the school, to help make schools more family friendly | 2005 | $ | ϒ ϒ |
| Develop formal transition activities planned with relevant BCPSS departments and neighborhood preschools, child care centers, and Head Start programs | Facilitate activities between BCPSS and early care and education providers that affect alignment of goals and curriculum between early care and education and approaches to transition | 2005 | $ | ϒ ϒ |
| | Provide ongoing mechanisms and professional development opportunities to link schools to preschool programs, such as arranging for child care providers to visit schools and educators to visit centers and organizing common professional development activities | 2006 | $ | ϒ ϒ |
| | Develop mechanisms for record-sharing in order to better prepare kindergarten teachers for incoming students | 2006 | $ | ϒ ϒ |

| STRATEGY | ACTION STEPS | TIME FRAME | LEVEL OF INVESTMENT | DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Create systemwide knowledge and capacity around creating and sustaining "ready schools" | Under the banner of *Countdown to Kindergarten,* disseminate information to parents around the importance of WSS, what it measures, and what parents can do to improve children's readiness | 2005 | $$$ | ●● |
| | Identify system barriers and solutions for ensuring "ready schools," via multiple means including school assessment on ready schools based on the National Education Goals panel | 2005 | $$$ | ●●● |
| | Align proposed strategies with No Child Left Behind and BCPSS Master Plan requirements and other school system efforts already in place | 2005 | $ | ● |
| | Establish means to regularly integrate best practice research in early childhood education curriculum, training, and policy, and promote its use | 2005 | $ | ●● |
| | Gain systemwide commitment to an early childhood agenda, including expansion of BCPSS Office of Early Childhood Education | 2006 | $ | ●● |
| Recruit, retain, celebrate, and support a high-quality early childhood/early education workforce in the public schools | Assist in training kindergarten teachers and staff in WSS/MMSR | 2005 | $ | ● |
| | Find opportunities to promote exemplary work and to emphasize the importance of early childhood educators | 2005 | $ | ● |
| | Continue to partner with the Office of Early Childhood Education through active membership on its advisory committee to understand and build on current plans and best practices | 2005/Ongoing | $ | ● |
| | Identify and expand effective staff recruitment and retention strategies, such as mentoring opportunities | 2006 | $$$ | ●● |
| | Provide ongoing training on best practices through peer-to-peer learning and other learning forums, including integration with professional development activities for early care and education providers, as noted in Goal 4 | 2006 | $$ | ●● |
| Help schools forge stronger community partnerships to promote effective school readiness | Build on the momentum around the community schools movement to ensure inclusion of school readiness efforts | 2005/Ongoing | $$$ | ●● |
| | Expand Judy Centers in Baltimore City | 2006 | $$$ | ●● |
| | Expand homevisiting programs such as HIPPY | 2006 | $$$ | ●● |
| | Encourage schools to be used as community centers beyond the school day | 2006 | $ | ● |
| | Develop a specific plan to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children, e.g., children with developmental disabilities, children in foster or kinship care, children whose primary language is not English | 2006 | $ | ● |
| | Collaborate with community organizations, programs, and other resources to establish a network of supports and services for English Language Learner families | 2006 | $ | ● |
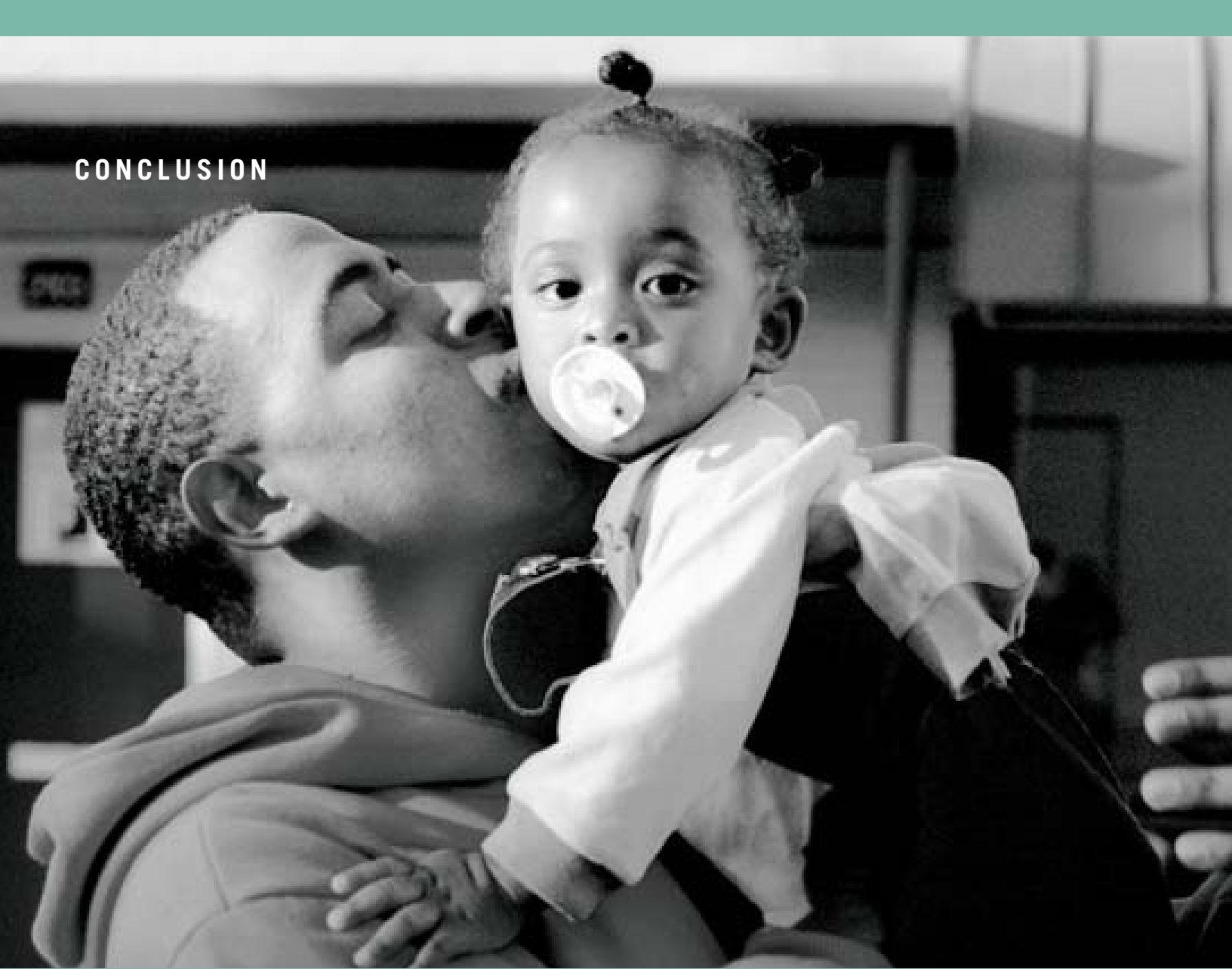
**Ensuring that all kindergartners** in Baltimore City enter school with the skills needed for success is a tall order but is perhaps the most critical factor to ensuring that today's young children grow into literate, nurturing, educated adults. The relationship between school readiness and school success is clear, and the relationship between early literacy and a promising future is well documented and undeniable. Today, workers without education have little chance to advance and often find themselves in jobs that do not pay livable wages or provide health benefits, pension, or even paid leave. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that suggests a relationship between parents' educational attainment and poor outcomes for their children. If Baltimore City is to have an informed, nurturing, economically self-sufficient citizenry, it must invest in its parents and their babies.

B-LAP participants are not blind to the many entrenched obstacles that, over the years, have prevented our young children from arriving at kindergarten ready to learn. Many of these obstacles relate to fundamental social ills—poverty, lack of family support, poorly educated parents, racism, substance abuse—that are so difficult to address, but cannot be ignored. Others stem from systemic problems—including underfunding of preschool opportunities and insufficient quality child care—whose solutions are more obvious but where adequate resources to address these needs are simply not forthcoming.

Nonetheless, in the face of these challenges, B-LAP participants are optimistic that with concerted focus, new collaborations, and a supportive and determined public Baltimore will be able to accelerate its efforts to achieve school readiness. B-LAP members ourselves have already made the commitment to carry forward this work, building on our intensive efforts over this past year. And—as the data in the preceding sections support—while most of the children arriving at Baltimore City kindergartens are not fully ready, they are, at least, approaching readiness. With additional targeted supports and earlier interventions, such children are indeed more likely to enter school ready for success.

Across the state, momentum toward achieving school readiness is building. The Baltimore Leadership in Action Program is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's second such effort in Maryland, having sponsored a statewide Maryland Leadership in Action

Program in concert with the Maryland Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families in December 2001. B-LAP's work builds on the work of the Maryland LAP. In September 2004, the Casey Foundation launched its third such effort in southern Maryland.

The growing recognition that we must do better by our youngest children—that it makes sense in both economic and human terms to invest up-front in preparing them for school success rather than remediating deficiencies after the fact—is the first important step to achieving our collective school readiness result. B-LAP calls upon parents and caregivers; public officials; the faith, business, and cultural communities; early care and education providers; and the host of other individuals and institutions that play a role in the lives of families with young children to join with us to implement this plan. We know what needs to be done. We know we cannot do it alone.

The strategies offered in this plan and the related action steps depend upon partners to provide inspiration, support, and education to parents, elected officials, and other community leaders; to ensure training, encouragement, and a living wage for those who care for our youngest children; and to build the public will to make the necessary investments in programs and services to create the foundations for healthy development and school success.

**Many things we need can wait; the child cannot. Please join us in this most important work.**

# CITATIONS

[1] Maryland Model for School Readiness: Definition of School Readiness, accessed at www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/MMSR/MMSRDE2.html

[2] Maryland Leadership in Action Program, *Achieving School Readiness: A Five-Year Action Agenda for Maryland,* October 30, 2002

[3] Zero to Three, *Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth,* 2004

[4] Schweinhart, Lawrence, *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions and Frequently Asked Questions,* November 2004, accessed at www.highscope.org/Research/PerryProject/perrymain.htm

[5] Heckman, J., *Invest in the Very Young,* 2001, accessed at www.ounceofprevention.org/downloads/publications/Heckman.pdf

[6] Rolnick and Grunewald, *Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return,* 2003, accessed at http://minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/03-03/earlychild.cfm

[7] Lynch, Robert, *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development,* 2004, accessed at www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_exceptional_returns

[8] *A Stitch in Time: Calculating the Costs of School Unreadiness in Developing Early Childhood Investment Strategies,* May 2002, joint publication of The Finance Project and the National Center for Service Integration.

[9] According to the 2000 Census, there are 41,694 children 0–5 in Baltimore City.

[10] As defined by the Maryland State Department of Education, "The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) is an assessment and instructional system designed to provide parents, teachers, and early child-hood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school."

[11] For further information about the Work Sampling System or Maryland results, please see www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/BCFF0F0E-33E5-48DA-8F11-28CF333816C2/2156/Readiness_Report_03_04_Results.doc

[12] B-LAP members and partners have developed a series of brochures and tip-sheets for parents and practitioners on the WSS. These materials are listed in the glossary to this report and can also be found at www.countdowntokindergarten.org

[13] Friends of the Family Management Information System data, 2004

[14] *Massachusetts Cost/Quality Study of Preschool Classrooms* (Marshall, Nancy, et al., Wellesley Center for Women & Abt Assoc., 2000; Bowman, Donovan, and Burns, Nat'l Academy Press, 2000; Dwyer, Chait, and McKee, 2000)

[15] Note: these slots are for children of all ages

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Accreditation**—A process by which early childhood programs improve their programs to meet state or national quality standards.

**Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**—A system of first-level screening questionnaires, composed of 19 questionnaires to be completed by parents or primary caregivers at regular intervals, for the purpose of identifying infants or young children in need of further evaluation to determine eligibility for early intervention services.

**All children**—For purposes of this Action Plan, "all" children refers to children birth through age five of all socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, including those with disabilities, special needs, and diverse abilities.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**—Established in 1948 by the founding family of United Parcel Service, the Foundation's primary mission is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. The Leadership in Action Program was initiated by the Foundation.

**Apostolado Hispano**—Operated by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Provides pastoral care and short-term social services to Hispanic persons in the Baltimore metropolitan area. The center's bilingual staff offers assistance with employment, English proficiency, and access to health care.

**Approaching readiness**—A category of readiness as determined by the Work Sampling System; this category is characterized by the Maryland State Department of Education as "students inconsistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require targeted instructional support in specific domains or specific performance indicators."

**Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center (BCCCRC)**—A private nonprofit community organization that is part of the Maryland Child Care Resource Network, a project cooperatively funded by Maryland's public and private sectors to strengthen child care and offer needed services on the local level. Operating under the auspices of Maryland Committee for Children, BCCCRC provides services for Baltimore City parents, child care providers, employers, educators, and policymakers. These include: providing help to parents who are looking for child care, training for child care professionals, and assistance for employers interested in helping their employees to balance work and family life.

**Baltimore City Healthy Start**—A quasi-nonprofit corporation, affiliated with the Baltimore City Health Department, that has the responsibility for implementation of the federal Healthy Start grant, focused on improvements in birth outcomes, through the provision of intensive outreach, homevisiting, and center-based services. Healthy Start also is a lead agency for Baltimore's Success By 6® Partnership, coordinates the Reach Out and Read Program, implements the Lead Abatement Action Project, and operates Recovery in Community.

**Baltimore Leadership in Action Program (B-LAP)**—A leadership development program that was created in 2003 as a partnership of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Reason to Believe Enterprise, the Family League of Baltimore City, and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School for Public Service at New York University. The purposes of the program are (1) to accelerate the rate at which children enter school ready to learn in Baltimore City; and (2) to increase the leadership capacity of those leaders in Baltimore City accountable for that result.

**Baltimore Mental Health Systems, Inc. (BMHS)**—A quasi-nonprofit corporation, affiliated with the Baltimore City Health Department, and serves as the local mental health authority for Baltimore City. BMHS's focus has been on expanding the range of services, improving continuity of care, developing new affordable housing opportunities, creating new financing initiatives, and promoting community acceptance and public education.

**Baltimore's Success By 6® Partnership**—A strategy under the auspices of the United Way of Central Maryland, the Family League of Baltimore City, and the Safe and Sound Campaign that builds on the strengths of families, neighborhoods, and service providers citywide. It brings homevisiting services to pregnant and parenting families with children, newborn to age 6, to link them to health care and community services, and to support them in providing home environments that are safe and nurturing for young children. Success By 6 also supports a variety of services at neighborhood organizations, including early learning classes, child development, addiction treatment, and parent support groups.

**Born to Read**—An early literacy initiative being implemented jointly by the Enoch Pratt Free Library and Baltimore City Healthy Start, with funding from the Family League's federal Early Learning Opportunities Act Grant. The initiative utilizes prenatal care providers to give early literacy anticipatory guidance to pregnant women to encourage them to read to their babies from birth.

**Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act**—State law that imbeds the recommendations of the Thornton Commission by the Maryland General Assembly in 2002. The Act focuses on adequacy and equity, with the state's disadvantaged school systems receiving a greater share of the $1.3 billion in funding to be provided over six years.

**Casey Family Services**—As a direct services component of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Services has assisted vulnerable children and families for 25 years. The division of Casey Family Services in Baltimore City serves East Baltimore and provides community-based services for young families, a wide range of family support services for children and parents, and home-based day care for children of young parents.

**Centro de la Comunidad**—A community-based nonprofit organization that serves children, youth, and adults in Baltimore's growing Latino community in three keys areas: employment/citizenship, social services/outreach, and health.

**CitiStat**—An accountability tool, based on the ComStat program pioneered in the New York City Police Department, and now employed by Mayor Martin O'Malley of Baltimore City. Through this process, key

data from city agencies are tracked on a weekly basis; agency or bureau heads are convened every other week to review the data with the CitiStat team. The key tenets to the CitiStat process are: "accurate and timely intelligence; effective tactics and strategies; rapid deployment of resources; and, relentless follow-up and assessment."

**Countdown to Kindergarten**—The name for both the statewide and Baltimore City public awareness campaigns focused on early learning and the importance of early childhood experience, ages zero to five. Through education and advocacy, this campaign works to build the political will among both the general public and elected officials to make investments in critical programs for young children. Through parent education and support, it provides families with information and support to help them prepare their children to succeed in school.

**Creative Curriculum**—The teaching approach used widely in Head Start programs throughout the United States, including Baltimore City. According to its website, "The Creative Curriculum® for Infants and Toddlers provides a comprehensive framework that emphasizes that relationships between caregivers/teachers and children and their families form the basis of curriculum for very young children. The Creative Curriculum® for Early Childhood describes and demonstrates how to plan a developmentally appropriate program focusing on ten well-organized interest areas. Its underlying philosophy draws from Jean Piaget's work on cognitive development, Erik Erikson's stages of socio-emotional development, and accepted theories of how children learn best."

**Credentialing**—The process of validating education and experience in the area of early childhood/elementary education and the issuance of a certificate to recognize the level of achievement.

**Developing readiness**—A category of readiness as determined by the Work Sampling System; this category is characterized by the Maryland State Department of Education as "students do not demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities, which are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require considerable instructional support in several domains or many performance indicators."

**Early Care and Education (ECE)**—For purposes of this report, ECE includes a full range of care, education, and support of children 0–6, including child care, local Infants and Toddlers Programs, Early Head Start/Head Start, Family Support Centers, homevisiting, early literacy, and health and mental health services.

**Early Head Start**—A federal program to promote healthy family functioning that provides high-quality child and family development services to low-income pregnant women and infants and toddlers, birth to age three.

**Early Learning for Families (ELF) Project**—The name given to Baltimore City's early language and literacy program, funded through the federal Early Learning Opportunities Act Grant. This 17-month grant was awarded to the Family League of Baltimore City in October 2003 to support efforts to promote the early language and literacy development of children, ages 0–4.

**Early Reading First**—One of two new reading programs added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000, Early Reading First is a nationwide effort awarding federal funds competitively to local education agencies and public or private organizations that serve children from low-income families to enhance young children's language and cognitive development by providing high-quality instruction and ongoing professional development based on scientifically based research.

**Family League of Baltimore City (FLBC)**—A quasi-public, nonprofit organization, founded in 1991, to fulfill the Maryland legislative mandate for the establishment of Local Management Boards (LMBs) in all jurisdictions in the State of Maryland. The role of the LMB is to focus attention and resources on improving the well-being of children and families by engaging communities and encouraging public and private partnerships. The FLBC's focus is on: (1) developing a set of results and indicators that measure progress toward improved outcomes for children and families; (2) developing strategies that have the strongest potential to actually improve those outcomes, and (3) establishing data mechanisms to collect baseline and ongoing data to track the impact of the strategies and to inform citywide and community-level planning and decision-making.

**Family Support Centers**—Community-based programs that provide free services to parents with young children birth to 47 months to help them raise healthy children and build productive futures. Friends of the Family, Inc. (FOF) is the intermediary for a host of public and private funders who have invested in the Maryland network of 26 centers, six of which are in Baltimore City. FOF provides funding, training, technical assistance, monitoring, and quality assurance to the network.

**Full readiness**—A category of readiness as determined by the Work Sampling System; the Maryland State Department of Education characterizes this category as "students consistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities, which are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully."

**Head Start**—A federal program for low-income preschool children and families, including children with disabilities, that provides comprehensive services. Services include early childhood education, child health and development, nutrition, and family support.

**Healthy Families**—A national prenatal and early childhood homevisiting initiative under Prevent Child Abuse America. Based on 20 years of research-based best practices, Healthy Families tailors services to meet the unique needs of families while promoting positive parent-child interactions. Major components of the Healthy Families model include structured required training and an intensive national credentialing process to assure quality and model fidelity. In Baltimore City, Union Baptist Church implements the Healthy Families Program within the DRU/Mondawmin communities.

**Healthy Start**—Funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the federal Healthy Start Program provides community-based, culturally competent, family-centered, and comprehensive perinatal health services to women, infants, and their families in communities with very high rates of infant mortality, low birthweight, and racial disparities in perinatal outcomes. Healthy Start began in 1991 as a demonstration program in 15 communities throughout the country with the goal of reducing their infant mortality rates by 50% over the 6-year demonstration

period; there are now over 100 federally supported Healthy Start projects around the country. In Baltimore City, Healthy Start is implemented in two communities in East and West Baltimore by Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc., a quasi-public nonprofit corporation of the Baltimore City Health Department.

**High/Scope Perry Preschool Study**—"A study that examines the lives of 123 African Americans born in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. From 1962–1967, at ages 3 and 4, the subjects were randomly divided into a program group who received a high-quality preschool program based on High/Scope's participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program. In the study's most recent phase, 97% of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40. Additional data were gathered from the subjects' school, social services, and arrest records. The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool." (from the High/Scope Education Research Foundation website)

**Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)**—A homevisiting/school readiness strategy that recognizes parents as their child's first and most important teacher. HIPPY helps parents work with their three-, four-, and five-year-old children at home. Supported by easy-to-use activity packets, homevisits, and group meetings, parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school and beyond. In Baltimore City, the HIPPY Program is implemented by the Enterprise Foundation.

**Homevisiting**—A strategy for primary service delivery utilizing professionals, paraprofessionals, or volunteers to offer support to children and their families primarily in their homes. They seek to promote child development, child health, and family well-being and connect families to their communities, thereby enabling them to access needed resources and services.

**Infants and Toddlers Program**—A statewide interagency early intervention system for children from birth to age three with disabilities and their families. Services to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with special needs and to support their families are provided through local Infants and Toddlers Programs in every Maryland jurisdiction. In Baltimore City, the Infants and Toddlers Program is implemented by the Baltimore City Health Department.

**Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Centers (Judy Centers)**—Partnerships between local school systems, local agencies, and community-based organizations for the purpose of improving young children's school readiness, with funding provided through the Maryland State Department of Education. Judy Center services include quality early childhood education, health, and family support services.

**Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program**—A system of recognition, awards, and incentives for child care providers that acknowledges levels of education, experience, and professional activity in the area of early care and education.

**Maryland Child Care Administration**—The division of state government responsible for fostering the development of a child care system that meets the needs of Maryland's families for safe and appropriate

child care and helps low-income families obtain child care to support the efforts to achieve and maintain economic independence. The goals of the Administration are to increase availability of child care, increase access to child care for low-income families, and improve the quality of child care.

**Maryland Children's Health Plan (MCHP)**—A federal and state funded health insurance program designed to provide full health benefits for children up to age 19, and pregnant women of any age who meet the income guidelines.

**Maryland Leadership in Action Program (M-LAP)**—The first of the Leadership in Action Programs, created in partnership between the Annie E. Casey Foundation; the Maryland Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families; and the Council for Excellence in Government. Initiated in December 2001, the program convened a group of 40 leaders for the purpose of accelerating the rate at which children enter school ready to learn in Maryland, and to increase the leadership capacity of those leaders in Maryland accountable for that result. M-LAP continues to exist, now as the Early Childhood Education Committee of the Subcabinet.

**Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)**—A statewide school readiness framework that includes "readiness" outcomes and indicators and an assessment component to inform instruction and support of young children's readiness for school. The MMSR includes ongoing staff development and research-based best practices in early pedagogy and provides an annual statewide evaluation of what entering kindergartners know and are able to do.

**Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)**—The department of Maryland State Government responsible for the provision of public education in the state of Maryland.

**Maryland Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families**—Promotes interagency collaboration and increased partnership opportunities across the state. The Subcabinet provides leadership and policy direction and is comprised of the Secretaries of the Departments of Budget and Management, Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, Juvenile Justice; the State Superintendent of Schools; the Special Secretary for Children, Youth, and Families; the Director of the Office for Individuals with Disabilities; and representatives from other state agencies as designated by the governor.

**Maryland's Five-Year Action Plan for Achieving School Readiness**—The five-year school readiness plan for Maryland developed by the Maryland Leadership in Action Program.

**Maternal and Infant Nursing Program**—The citywide homevisiting program for high-risk pregnant women and infants carried out through the Baltimore City Health Department.

**Medicaid**—A jointly funded, federal-state health insurance program for individuals including children, the aged, blind, and/or disabled, and people who are eligible to receive federally assisted income maintenance payments.

**National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**—Founded in 1926, the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children with more than 100,000 members, a national

network of nearly 450 local, state, and regional affiliates, and a growing global alliance of like-minded organizations, dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8.

**National Education Goals Panel**—A unique bipartisan and intergovernmental body of federal and state officials created in July 1990 to assess and report state and national progress toward achieving the National Education Goals. Ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn was the first of the panel's eight goals.

**Purchase of Care (POC)**—A federal and state funded child care subsidy program to help pay for child care costs.

**Reach Out and Read (ROR)**—A pediatric literacy program developed at the Boston Medical Center, now implemented throughout the country. The three components of ROR are: (1) pediatricians provide anticipatory guidance to parents, as part of well-child visits, about the importance of reading to their children from birth; (2) an age-appropriate new book is given to each pediatric patient as part of the well-child visit; and (3) volunteers read to children in the clinic or office waiting area to model for parents techniques for engaging children in reading. In Baltimore City, ROR is coordinated by Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc.

**Reason to Believe Enterprise**—A civic partnership between Baltimore City and state government, the foundation community, and the business sector, with the mission to raise and invest local and state funds to reverse predictable negative outcomes and improve life chances of vulnerable children, youth, and families in Baltimore City.

**Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)**—One of the components of the federal Family Investment Program, Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) provides cash assistance to needy families with dependent children when available resources do not fully address the family's needs and while preparing program participants for independence through work.

**Wolf Trap Institute Early Learning Through the Arts Program**—Founded in 1981, the Institute provides arts-in-education services for children ages 3–5 and their teachers and families through the disciplines of drama, music, and movement. Regional programs of the Institute are located throughout the country.

**Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) Program**—A federally funded program, formally known as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, that provides healthy supplemental foods and nutrition counseling for pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children under age five.

**Work Sampling System (WSS)**—A state-adopted early childhood assessment system as part of the Maryland Model for School Readiness that supports young children's skills in seven domains of learning, including social/personal; language/literacy; mathematical thinking; scientific thinking; social studies; the arts; and physical/motor development.

*About the Annie E. Casey Foundation*

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information and a copy of this report, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org. For more information about Baltimore's efforts to improve school readiness, contact the Family League of Baltimore City, 410.662.5500.*

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation**