

From Baby Steps to Policy Initiative: Hawai`i's Efforts to Promote School Readiness

—Alex Harris

Aunties and *tutus* (grandmothers) escort their excited *keiki* (children) to the beach. Principals and teachers greet eager kindergarteners entering school on the first day. Community workers open the doors of their programs to provide neighborhood children with spaces to play. Incarcerated fathers visit with their children, hoping to repair damaged relationships. These seemingly unrelated activities all impact child development and can be instrumental in helping children be ready to succeed in school and in life.

What is School Readiness?

Traditionally, the concept of 'readiness' has been narrowly defined and focused exclusively through an academic pre-kindergarten lens. However, the last decade of brain research has conclusively shown that readiness is a much more complex concept that includes aspects of health and safety, as well as early experiences. Researchers from the University of Hawai`i's College of Education first brought the issue of school readiness to the public in the state of Hawai`i through a groundbreaking study on kindergarten readiness funded by the Hawai`i Community Foundation and the Atherton Foundation (Feeney, Grace, & Brandt, 2001). This study provided the underpinnings for a broad-based initiative designed to improve the readiness of Hawai`i's children and its schools.

In 2001, the Hawai`i Legislature passed a definition of school readiness, believed to be one of the first in the nation. The definition states,

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

This official recognition of Hawai`i's commitment to its children essentially acknowledges that readiness is a shared responsibility among parents, schools, and communities. In spite of this rhetorical commitment, however, the challenges appear daunting as national research confirms what kindergarten teachers have long suspected—a large gap in academic ability between high- and low-income children is already marked by the age of six (Economic Policy Institute, 2002). Local assessments corroborate these findings (Brandt & Grace, 2002; HSSRA, 2005).

Of course, the readiness issue is not driven purely by socio-economic status. A significant body of research finds that middle-class kindergarteners possess reading and math skill levels closer to those of the poorest children than those of the most affluent (Economic Policy Institute, 2002). One third of all children (and more than half of low-income and minority children) who enter kindergarten cannot recognize the letters of the alphabet. And in a finding that is just as concerning, one in five children who enter kindergarten are completely unfamiliar with the conventions of print—for example, that words on a page read from left to right and from top to bottom (Trust for Early Education, 2002). Many children also come to school lacking the ability to communicate their needs effectively, to sit still and listen, and to get along with others in a group.

Although many children are unprepared to enter school, many elementary schools then fail to offer students the range of support needed for successful transitions into the formal education system. Together, concerns about children's readiness and schools' readiness offer insight into the beginning of a deeply troubling academic achievement gap that is pervasive in too many schools across the nation (Future of Children, 2005).

For Hawai`i to meet the challenges of a literate citizenry spelled out by the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB), this achievement gap must be addressed before kindergarten even begins. NCLB first requires students and schools to be judged on their performance in third grade; ensuring that children enter school ready to succeed—an aim of the Hawai`i reforms—is directly linked to the level of this performance. Schools cannot hope to meet the intensifying Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks without also addressing school readiness.

Thus, belief in the importance of school readiness has mobilized a broad coalition of concerned stakeholders to become organized and act. As a result, a number of programs, policies, and materials have been developed to improve the readiness of children and of schools. The purpose of this article is to examine the context in which these efforts are taking place. It will explore Hawai`i's promising three-year-old School Readiness Initiative, seeking to understand the expected outcomes and benefits, as well as the personal and

societal cost if students continue to enter school unprepared.

First, the article will examine the evolution of Hawai'i's School Readiness Initiative, from its initial development to its being piloted in select communities. Next, it will describe anticipated developments as the effort slowly spreads statewide. Considerable volunteer time and support from a wide variety of public and private funding sources have contributed to the initiative's success. The partnership and the activities it initiated were supported by an intermediary organization, the Good Beginnings Alliance, which effectively directs and targets the coalition's efforts.

The Political Context for School Readiness

Ongoing work to support school readiness is occurring within changing national and local contexts that are important to understand since these environments directly impact Hawai'i's children before they enter the formal education system.

Compared to countries such as France, Italy and New Zealand, the United States has made a relatively limited public investment in young children. However, a few notable exceptions have occurred. Head Start was born in the 1960's out of President Johnson's War on Poverty. Another federally funded program, called the Child Care Development Block Grant, was enacted in 1991 and transformed five years later in response to the workforce needs created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act that made fundamental changes in our welfare system.

Early Head Start was designed to target the development of infants and toddlers, and was stimulated by research that conclusively demonstrated that over 85 percent of brain development occurs in the first years of life (Institute of Medicine, 2000). Consequently, the current focus on universalizing pre-kindergarten programs is the direct result of education reform pressures that have intensified academics in the early elementary years and have led to the demand all children receive adequate preparation before entering school. Since the 1980s, however, a re-conceptualization of the idea of readiness has been underway in a number of states with the aim of preparing children to come to school ready to be successful learners and of equipping schools to serve the needs of young children in supportive learning environments.

The Context of School Readiness in Hawai'i

State statistics show that approximately 16,000 children are born in Hawai'i each year. About half are in low-income families, defined as up to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty

Level (Hawai'i Kids Count, 2003). Today, single-parent and dual working-parent households predominate. And though research demonstrates the value of preschool experiences in children's later school success, the current estimates are that only half of Hawai'i's young children will attend preschool before beginning kindergarten. Preschool attendance is highly correlated with income status, with a disproportionately high number of children from families with high incomes attending. Moreover, the number of Hawai'i's children with health insurance is consistently above the national average, but it has slipped in recent years. Drug related births in particular are a growing concern. Between 550 and 600 children are born each year to crystal methamphetamine using mothers (Ice Babies Show Signs, 2004). The number of confirmed child abuse cases and instances of neglect has steadily grown from 2,531 in 1997 to 3,930 in 2001 (Blueprint for Change, 2003).

Hawai'i's families face many challenges in navigating a patchwork of programs and services. This 'patchwork' results from an outgrowth of many well meaning and often, uncoordinated efforts. For example, federal, state, county, and private funding sources are often restrictive and discourage wide participation. Some are restricted due to ancestry (federally funded Native Hawai'ian programs, Kamehameha Schools, Alu Like, Inc.). Others are limited by income status (Temporary Aid to Needy Families, Childcare Development Block Grant, Preschool Open Doors, Head Start). Several programs are only available to children with special needs (Department of Education 619 Special Education Preschools) or families of at-risk infants and toddlers (early prevention programs such as Healthy Start).

This patchwork quilt of programs and services has so many gaps it cannot truly be considered a 'system' of care and education. As a result, programs can only serve certain 'qualified' children during certain times of the day or year. Hawai'i has not capitalized on national efforts to blend funding at the state or program levels. Growing public pressure following two decades of progressive advocacy for young children has resulted in the development of many distinct funding streams for discrete populations of children. In no small part, this fragmented early education system is correlated with the wide range of readiness that Hawai'i's children exhibit when they enter the formal kindergarten education system.

The Good Beginnings Alliance

While early childhood education in Hawai'i has benefited from a significant growth in federal funding over

the past fifteen years, it has, at the same time, struggled to develop a high quality network of programs and services for young children.

In 1997 Act 77 was passed in response to the demand for an agency that focused exclusively on the needs of young children. This statute established the nonprofit Good Beginnings Alliance, and its public counterpart, Hawai'i's Interdepartmental Council on Children and Families (IDC). The IDC, consisting of the Governor's Cabinet and representatives from business and philanthropy, was formed to improve coordination of state policy on issues affecting young children and their families. Modeled after Smart Start in North Carolina and the Ounce of Prevention Fund in Illinois, the Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) was created to serve as the coordinating mechanism for Hawai'i's early childhood system. GBA exists as an intermediary organization; this means that it plays a fundamental role in encouraging, promoting, and facilitating child policy at the county and state level, but does not actually perform direct service.

As an intermediary organization, GBA has played an essential role in helping shape the school readiness initiative in Hawai'i. Specifically, GBA provides this effort with trained personnel, offers technical and institutional knowledge, serves as a neutral convener, coordinates resource allocation, gathers key data, and forges important connections to other national school readiness initiatives.

Much has been written about the growing role of intermediary organizations such as GBA (Open Society Institute, 2004). One finding is that such intermediary organizations, in the absence of any state agency or public coordinating body, play an essential role in the success of a broad-based school readiness effort.

The Hawai'i School Readiness Initiatives

In 2001 the Interdepartmental Council established the School Readiness Task Force, to be facilitated by the Good Beginnings Alliance and co-chaired by the CEO of Kamehameha Schools (a land trust that educates Native Hawaiian children) and the Superintendent of the Hawai'i State Department of Education. The task force convened representatives from across several state departments, elected officials, and representatives of the early childhood community with the aim of developing strategies that would improve the quality of early learning experiences for the young children of Hawai'i (See the list of partners at the end of this article).

The task force formed five working groups to study and

make recommendations on specific aspects of school readiness. They were: infrastructure, standards and assessment, families and the system, transitions, and practitioner/administrator education. Each working group was co-chaired by two representatives: one from the public sector and one from the private/nonprofit sector.

Many aspects of development contribute to readiness. Children struggle to succeed in school when they are hungry, when they are abused, and when they are chronically absent due to poor health. And even though the School Readiness Initiative described in this article has primarily focused upon academic preparedness, partnerships with other agencies and nonprofit groups have served to support child health, improve child safety, and increase access to high quality early care and education. This planning work has occurred in an atmosphere of favorable public opinion towards early childhood education, which has resulted in strong alliances with business, labor, and philanthropy (Good Beginnings Alliance, 2004).

The definition of school readiness enacted by Hawai'i's 2001 State Legislature provided the essential foundation for building an approach to readiness as a joint responsibility of families, schools, and communities. This legislated mandate has, therefore, provided the task force's partners with a common baseline upon which to construct their roles and responsibilities.

The task force has subsequently concentrated on a comprehensive, research-based strategy to ensure that children are prepared for school, developed in partnership with its constituent agencies and stakeholders. The components are

1. improving quality through the development of preschool content standards,
2. supporting parents and communities,
3. supporting the transition to kindergarten, and
4. assessing the impact of these efforts.

Improving quality through the development of preschool content standards

A major strategy for improving preschool quality was the development of preschool content standards. The *Hawai'i State Preschool Content Standards* (GBA, 2003) were jointly developed by members of the early childhood community, including personnel from the University of Hawai'i and the Hawai'i State Department of Education. They closely follow the Early Learning Standards outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, NA ECS/SDE, 2002). While not mandatory, the content

standards integrate physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and behavioral skills, and provide programs with guidelines regarding what children are expected to learn and adults expected to teach. The standards are central to developing a high quality school readiness system because they unify expectations.

The content standards for four-year-olds are now aligned with the Department of Education's K-3 Content and Performance Standards, forming a P-3 standards-based system linking early childhood and early grades in the elementary school. By linking expectations in preschool to those in K-12 public education, knowledge and skills promoted by preschool programs are connected with those that will likely lead to later success. Both the state Legislature and the Board of Education have formally adopted these content standards. The Department of Human Services has printed thousands of copies of the standards, and dissemination has begun in public and private preschools statewide.

Supporting parents and communities

As the child's first teacher, parents play a crucial and fundamental role in their child's readiness for school. The *Family/Community Guidelines*, which have been developed as a companion to the content standards, are based upon the belief that programs must work with families from the start. As a first step, the formal language of the content standards has been translated into 'user-friendly' language to help teachers and family-serving agencies to develop appropriate training for parents. The goal is for families to help prepare their children for school. Family-serving agencies such as the state library system are being targeted to disseminate this information through their extensive networks. The guidelines contain a similar structure and the same five developmental domains as the content standards, but are designed for use in the development of materials for families.

Hawai'i's unique cultural history has a strong influence on the way that educational services are delivered. The rapid growth of parent/child education programs, often termed "Play+Learn groups," is a prime example of how communities can organize to support young parents. Occurring in settings that range from a schoolyard to under a tree and even within a prison's confines, Play+Learn groups offer an alternative network to distribute information, support parents, and address school readiness issues.

Supporting the transition to kindergarten

The transition to kindergarten is a crucial time in a child's

life, as it represents the shift from an informal or family setting to a more formal and structured classroom. Research from the SERVE Institute (1999) shows that transitions play a critical role in any school readiness system:

One of the most significant changes that occurs in a child's life is the transition to formal school. On one level, the transition from home (or preschool) to school is simply a change in physical location. However, this transition is often much more complicated than simply changing buildings or settings. For children entering school, it means learning a new set of rules and behaviors, adjusting to a new peer group, and getting to know new teachers. For their families, it means making sure that records and information about the child are transferred, meeting and communicating with teachers, attending school programs, and adapting to established school and district policies. (pg. 4)

The task force on transitions forms bridges that connect early childhood education and the DOE system more intimately than any other aspect of the School Readiness Initiative. Elementary schools that receiving federal Title I dollars are required to support the transition of students from early childhood into kindergarten. In addition, the idea and practice of transition form an important rallying point within the department's Comprehensive Student Support System.

The task force began by surveying transition activities statewide. This research revealed a lack of consistent practices. Schools and communities appeared to take a haphazard approach and established practices did not appear to be well-coordinated, well-thought-out, or connected to early childhood programs. The task force's response was to commission research into best practices and develop a framework for transition programs. The results of this research are now being piloted in Waianae, Oahu with Native Hawaiian organizations and the Department of Education's Preschool Special Education Program and STEPS transition teams. A *Transition Toolkit* has been developed to bring schools and early childhood programs together to implement these best practices at the complex and school levels.

Assessing the impact of these efforts.

The rapid implementation of Head Start's National Reporting System and other assessments of children are of concern to early childhood experts who worry about the potential negative impact that these assessments may have on

children. At the same time, today's climate of accountability dictates that policymakers demonstrate the impact of public investments to the taxpayer.

The search for system level accountability by the task force has resulted in the development of a two-part instrument to assess whether children enter school ready to have successful learning experiences and whether the schools are ready for those children. The instrument, developed by Dr. Mary Brant and Dr. Donna Grace, draws content from both the Preschool Content Standards and Transitions Protocols, and assesses, not individual children, but the group as a whole, resulting in a class profile.

The *Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment* has been externally validated and piloted in selected communities. Using private resources, it was transformed into an online assessment as part of the Department of Education's assessment infrastructure for the 2004–05 school year. This tool provides a valuable baseline of information for the purposes of state strategic planning and for determining accountability at the complex and school levels. It is not intended to be used to determine whether individual children are, or are not, ready for kindergarten.

Key Allies

An important ingredient of this initiative is the cultivation of a group of organizations committed to the goal of improving school readiness. To date, the School Readiness Initiative has largely relied upon volunteer time, patchwork funding, and creative alliances and partnerships to advance the work at the state level. The fact that this initiative has lacked a formal infrastructure has been both a bane and a blessing. While staff and financial resources have often been difficult to garner, partnerships offer a combined contribution that would be difficult to match if only a single entity were to lead. Distributing responsibility for the effort has led to a high degree of shared accountability and maximized resources.

Public agencies and private nonprofit entities face a variety of institutional constraints and limited degrees of programmatic flexibility. Understanding these forces and balancing the work with partners' strengths and needs has been crucial to successfully recruit allies for the School Readiness Initiative. For example, state agencies can provide significant resources but often lack the political authority to integrate their efforts or move beyond their current commitments. On the other hand, nonprofit

organizations can contribute content knowledge from within the early childhood field, more accurately target resources, and recommend and implement innovations. The university community lends academic credibility and technical expertise to the effort. Finally, the legislators on the task force contribute political acumen and provide increased visibility in the dissemination of information.

Partners like Kamehameha Schools and various state agencies have enabled the printing of large quantities of materials and products. Smaller membership entities such as the Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children have incorporated their work to promote preschool accreditation and annual conference planning into the school readiness framework.

The participation of legislators in the School Readiness Task Force (the chairs of the House and Senate Education committees, and the Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee) has led to productive dialogue about controversial topics such as the age of kindergarten entry with representatives from the early childhood community. These discussions, which occurred outside of the legislative session, have enabled greater cooperation during session. Elected officials have passed resolutions and advanced legislation to support the work of the Task Force. So far, however, the Task Force has neither asked for, nor received, dedicated state resources.

The final partner that has been central to the success of this movement is the Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE). A community-based Native Hawaiian nonprofit, INPEACE received a significant grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation through the SPARK Initiative (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) to promote school readiness in two low-income communities. The grant calls for simultaneous grassroots mobilization and state level change to support school readiness.

INPEACE's partnership with the task force has advanced the school readiness initiative by both sub-contracting with the Good Beginnings Alliance for related policy work and connecting the task force to two specific communities that are fertile environments in which to implement the initiative. By committing five years of flexible resources and working to build the capacity for promoting readiness in both communities, INPEACE is critical to the success of the nascent school readiness movement.

All these partner efforts require coordination. Binding these allies, resources, and commitments together has been part of the work of the Good Beginnings Alliance.

Moving Forward: The Evolution of the School Readiness Initiative

Taken separately, it may appear these components are simply individual policies and products. Taken together as a coherent initiative within the framework of a coordinated school readiness system, the various projects have led to considerable change. The child has now become the central focus of readiness policy. Support is also available for each segment of the target population: families, communities, preschools, and elementary schools. Building on the foundation of the content standards, the projects promote the idea of shared responsibility, support this concept through legislative language, and describe behaviors to improve quality and access so children will enter school ready to succeed.

These projects should not be viewed as separate and distinct. Rather, successful implementation of this initiative means that the content standards, guidelines, and transition protocols are integrated within a particular community. At the base of this effort lies a powerful assessment study that demonstrates its impact upon children and schools. Select communities are now asking to join the School Readiness Task Force to implement this initiative at the community level. A tremendous amount of energy, relationship building, and creative problem solving had to occur at the state level to achieve this degree of grassroots implementation.

The first and developmental phase of the School Readiness Initiative was completed in September 2004. It culminated in a two hundred person School Readiness Summit. The task force is now moving into a second phase by piloting the implementation of the program in a select number of communities. Phase three will result in statewide implementation of the school readiness initiative.

It is evident from feedback from pilot projects that members of the community and school personnel need to understand that the content standards, family/community guidelines, and transition protocols must be viewed as interconnected parts of a single initiative. Consequently, the workgroups were recently reconstituted to reflect three new arenas that are required to advance the agenda: improving and implementing promising practices (IIPP), building public will, and advancing public policy.

The IIPP workgroup is designing a framework for how

the preschool content standards, family/community guidelines, and transition protocols all interact at the community level. This framework incorporates roles and responsibilities of community partners and the desired outcomes. While the workgroup attempts to develop a comprehensive model, it is increasingly clear that communities are distinctly different and must each be approached in a slightly different manner.

Conclusion

Today's kindergarten classrooms are fundamentally different than those of fifty, twenty, or even five years ago. Whereas children once had a year to play and become acclimated to the formal school setting, they are now expected to read, write, add, and subtract by the time they arrive in first grade.

The cost of unready children and unready schools shows up in Hawai'i's escalating need for special education and academic remediation. Those who enter kindergarten and are not able to pay attention, get along with peers, or recognize letters are too often the same children who pass through school and into the workplace without a sound education or requisite skills. Longitudinal cost/benefit research clearly shows that investing in young children is directly correlated to their life outcomes and returns tremendous savings to society (Barnett, S. W., 1993).

Many of the policies and products developed by the School Readiness Task Force will soon be required by the Bush administration's 'Good Start, Grow Smart' initiative. The efforts of the task force have received praise for anticipating federal mandates around standards and assessment and fashioning a collaborative, nonpartisan response that is focused upon increasing the readiness of children for school success and the responsiveness of schools to the needs of children.

In spite of slender resources and the lack of a strong political mandate, the School Readiness Task Force has weathered changes in state leadership and continues to advance the school readiness movement in Hawai'i. The task force is continuing to work to expand public will around early childhood and push for needed policy changes. Moving from the initial development phase to begin implementation is the task force's current challenge. The impact of these efforts should soon be seen in improvements on the Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment and in third grade test scores. It should be felt in the creation of healthier families and more stable neighborhoods throughout the state. Most importantly,

SHOOL READINESS TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

CO-CHAIRS

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Dee Jay Mailer, CEO of Kamehameha Schools

FACILITATOR

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Betsy Moneymaker, Department of Education
Norman Sakamoto, Hawai'i State Senate
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History of School Readiness Related Efforts in Hawai'i

Berman Report (1989) Commissioned by the Hawai'i Business Roundtable, this Report on the future of Hawai'i's K-12 education called for comprehensive, publicly funded early childhood education.

Preschool Open Doors (1989)

The legislature approved \$3.2 million in state funding to help families pay for early education and child care through a sliding fee scale based on the families' ability to pay. Quality components of the project include parent workshops and support for staff development.

National Education Goals Panel (1990)

President George H. Bush and the nation's governors adopted a set of goals to improve education in America. The first goal, "all children in America should start school ready to learn," established a national shift in education—recognition of the importance of the first years of children's lives in preparing them for school.

Hawai'i's Early Childhood Education Professional Development System (1996)

The Hawai'i Early Childhood Career Development Coalition, a group of 21 public and private organizations and agencies, was formed to oversee early childhood professional development efforts. The coalition has adopted standards to support quality in the early childhood workforce and designed a registry now implemented by the good beginnings alliance.

Hawai'i's Early Childhood Master Plan (1996) and Act 77 (1997)

The Early Childhood Master Plan described a coordinating structure implemented through Act 77 (HRS): a state level Interdepartmental Cabinet Council (IDC), a statewide non-profit coordinating agency (the Good Beginnings Alliance), and community councils in each county.

Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Succeed (1998)

House Concurrent Resolution No. 38 established as state policy that "All of Hawai'i's children will be safe, healthy and ready to succeed." The goal is implemented through public and private partnerships in communities across the state.

Early Care and Education Professional Registry (2000)

Good Beginnings houses the registry that partners minimum state-licensing requirements with voluntary professional development for early care and education practitioners.

T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® Hawai'i (2000)

The Good Beginnings Alliance houses a scholarship program that includes sequenced educational scholarship opportunities for early childhood providers to study early childhood education at local colleges and universities.

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

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

School Readiness Task Force (September 2001)

The IDC created the School Readiness Task Force, which is co-chaired by the Superintendent of Schools and the CEO of Kamehameha Schools. The task force was asked to develop a definition of school readiness and create strategies to implement a school readiness agenda.

PrePlus Facilities on Elementary School Campuses (2001)

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

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

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

Kamehameha Schools Increased Activity in Early Childhood (January 2002)

The leadership of Kamehameha Schools approved initiatives to increase the number of preschool classrooms, and scholarships to children attending qualified, non-KS preschools.

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

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

No Child Left Behind (January 2002)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has significant implications for early childhood education. The obligation to measure third grade reading scores and the emphasis on standards and accountability require the Department of Education to examine the many contributing factors to a child's success in school. Among these are expectations for children entering kindergarten.

Act 13 – Definition of School Readiness Adopted by Legislature (April 2002)

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

Hawai'i's P-20 Initiative (October 2002)

P-20 is a partnership of the University of Hawai'i, the state Department of Education, and the Good Beginnings Alliance. The goal is to build broad public commitment and support for education and improving the transitions from one segment of the education system to the next.

Hawai'i Preschool Content Standards (2003)

The standards were endorsed by the Legislature and the state Board of Education and link to the DOE's standards in grades K–2.

Hawai'i Family and Community Guidelines (2003)

Based on the content standards, these guidelines offer school readiness suggestions for parents and community agencies working with families.

Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment —Children Ready for School and Schools Ready for Children (2004–04 School Year)

First Annual School Readiness Summit (September 2004)

Governor's Early Childhood Initiative (Spring 2005)

Governor Lingle approved an additional \$25 million in state and federal funds to increase access to early education programs for 'gap group' families and provide financial incentives for early childhood programs that voluntarily invest in providing higher quality education to children.



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