

# *Proposed Strategic Initiatives*

*CY 2006 / FY2007*

*A Report From the State School Readiness Board to  
Governor Janet Napolitano*

*January 13, 2006*

Based on proposals from the:

*Members of the School Readiness Board, Health Implementation Team, Professional Leadership  
Implementation Team, Quality Rating Expansion Team, Quality Rating Levels Indicators Team,  
the Arizona Early Education Funds and the Head Start Collaboration Office*

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## Background

The State School Readiness Board (SRB) was established by Executive Order to develop a coordinated, efficient, and cost effective delivery system for early childhood education in Arizona through the following strategies:

- Advise the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Legislature on the most effective policy direction and methods to improve the coordination, quality and delivery of early childhood education.
- Recommend a multi-year plan on how early childhood education functions in state government can be coordinated and integrated to improve service delivery, quality of care, avoid duplication and fragmentation of service and maximize public and private investment.
- Identify and recommend methods to measure quality, availability and effectiveness of early childhood education programs in Arizona.
- Identify and measure indicators of school readiness.
- Track state, federal and local monies allocated for early childhood education and recommend mechanisms for enhancement, integration and coordination
- Provide technical assistance to community efforts that enhance school readiness and encourage collaboration of organizations to promote school readiness.

During 2003, the SRB convened 144 people who served on five Policy Work Groups (New Initiatives/ Financing, Program Coordination/Governance, Health Care, Quality & Cost, and Professional Development) to develop the recommendations on how to develop an early childhood education system for the state of Arizona. These recommendations were sent to Governor Janet Napolitano on November 18, 2003.

The recommendations were the basis for Governor Napolitano's five-year, School Readiness Action Plan, which envisions an Arizona where all children begin 1<sup>st</sup> grade safe, healthy and ready to succeed. Governor Napolitano presented the plan to the SRB on January 22, 2004.

In the 2004 State of the State address, Governor Napolitano outlined an early education agenda which included the phase-in of full-day kindergarten, increasing well-child health screening and immunizations, developing a quality rating system, increasing funding for child care, creating scholarships for early childhood education teachers, designing a master teachers program, emphasizing early literacy and additional funding for Healthy Families.

To further develop the components of the School Readiness Action Plan, the Governor asked the SRB to convene Implementation Teams to determine the specifics on moving forward. At the end of 2004, the SRB Implementation Teams provided Governor Napolitano with suggested strategies to phase-in a quality rating system, child care health consultants, an early childhood scholarship program, and improved health screening. In addition, the SRB recommended expanding preschool, improving the rate paid to providers for child care subsidies, and strategies to improve coordination and efficiency of existing early childhood programs.

## **Outcomes Summary for the Governor's School Readiness Action Plan Initiatives 2005**

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the Governor met with the School Readiness Board to present the second year phase-in of the School Readiness Action Plan. Due to the efforts of Governor Napolitano, the School Readiness Board, and community members, the following was accomplished in 2005:

### READY FAMILIES

- ✓ Secured \$11.2 million to eliminate the child care subsidies waiting list.
- ✓ Expanded the Healthy Families program to nearly double the number of participating families (15,550) in 100 communities.
- ✓ Gave approximately 90,000 first grade students and 86,000 fourth grade students their own book.
- ✓ With the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, developed and produced 7,500 *Arizona Parents' Kit*. The Kits were piloted in two hospitals in Maricopa County.
- ✓ The AHCCCS *Report Card on Children's Preventive Health Initiative* was released.
- ✓ With AHCCCS, DHS, and the Academy of Pediatrics, trained 65 physicians on the PEDS developmental screening tool; trained 10 additional health professionals; 75 about oral health awareness; and 24 about nutrition and physical activity to mediate childhood obesity.
- ✓ Through the grant from the National Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative/Zero to Three, developed caregiver competencies to improve the quality of infant and toddler care.

### READY PROGRAMS & SCHOOLS

- ✓ Expanded full-day kindergarten to school districts that have 80% of their school population eligible for the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Act.
- ✓ Through a public/private partnership with the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona and the Governor's Office, 46 child care centers are piloting a Quality Rating System in Tucson.
- ✓ With DES, DHS, and ADE completed a plan to phase-in a statewide quality rating system. The Governor's Children's Cabinet is monitoring the outcome.

### READY TEACHERS

- ✓ With ASU, completed the Arizona System Ready/Child Ready, a professional development grant through which 301 teachers were trained.
- ✓ Expanded statewide scholarship program (SEEDS) with \$433,000 of Workforce Investment funds.
- ✓ Thirty early childhood practitioners graduated from the inaugural class of Emergent Leaders.
- ✓ The Governor's office and the Arizona Early Education Funds procured a \$500,000 grant from Chase Bank, a JP Morgan Company, half of which will support the next two years of Emergent Leaders.
- ✓ Children's Action Alliance, the Association of Supportive Child Care, and the SRB released *Compensation & Credentials: A Survey of Arizona's Early Education Workforce*.

## READY COMMUNITIES

- ✓ The Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEFs) raised over \$2 million.
- ✓ Published an executive summary of the School Readiness Action Plan and distributed 16,123 copies.
- ✓ A Business Forum on Early Education was held for 165 business leaders on Jan 28, 2005.
- ✓ Launched the “You’re It” social marketing campaign.
- ✓ SRB and AEEFs convened a Design Team to create a plan to work with local communities toward implementing the School Readiness Action Plan.
- ✓ A full-time Head Start State Collaboration Director was hired.

The following teams were charged with producing these outcomes: Health Implementation Team, Professional Leadership Implementation Team, Quality Rating Expansion Team, Quality Rating Levels Indicators Team, Budget & Legislative Team (hosted by Alan Stephens & George Cunningham), and through the Arizona Community Foundation, the Arizona Early Education Funds Board and its subcommittees including the Design Team.

## Progress Narrative

### READY FAMILIES

#### Child Care Subsidies

Child care subsidies are provided to eligible working families and allow children from low-income families to be in a stable child care arrangement. The School Readiness Board (SRB) recommended increasing the number of children from low-income, working families that have access to this resource by eliminating the child care waiting list. Governor Napolitano eliminated the waiting list by adding \$11.2 million dollars to this program.

#### Child Care Health Consultants

The SRB recommended phasing-in Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) by supporting the Department of Health Services' (DHS) FY 2006 budget request for two additional CCHCs to begin a statewide system. The CCHCs were not in the final FY 2006 budget. The Department of Health Services has requested that the CCHCs be in the FY 2007 budget. The SRB suggested that DHS contract through Maricopa County Public Health, Indian Health Service, or a Community Health Center to hire two CCHCs for child care centers in Maricopa County (where the largest number of children are in child care), and to continue providing consultation to child care centers in Pima County.

To add to the pool of nurses and other health professional trained to be health and safety resources for early childhood practitioners, ten more health professionals have been trained on the Child Care Health Consultants curriculum.

Arizona's sole, full-time CCHC, under contract to the School Readiness Board and the Department of Health Services, trained child care staff about nutrition and physical activity to combat childhood obesity. In addition, child care health professionals in Pima County trained 75 children and early childhood practitioners about oral health awareness and mentored student nurses attending the University of Arizona.

CCHCs have also been integrated into the pilot quality rating system that is being administered through a grant at the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.

The *Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Centers* was written and is being finalized for printing.

#### Health Screening & Assessment

Well child screening and immunization by physicians/health practitioners is key to keeping children healthy. The Health Implementation Team recommended that, because developmental screening is key to providing guidance to parents and/or early intervention or treatment to help children be ready to succeed, physicians and health practitioners should receive training on developmental screening and be encouraged to utilize a universal screening tool. Based on the recommendations of a group of developmental pediatricians convened through the Arizona Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics, the Parental Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) developmental screening tool was recommended and adopted by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) as the screening tool most amenable to use in busy physician practices. AHCCCS, its contracted Health Plans, and the Arizona Chapter of the Academy

of Pediatrics are collaborating to provide training to physicians who will begin use of the PEDS tool with AHCCCS babies discharged from a Newborn Intensive Care Unit as of January 1, 2006.

The *AHCCCS Report Card on Children's Preventive Health Initiative* was published. The *AHCCCS Report Card on Children's Preventive Health Initiative* outlines the goals, baseline measures, and benchmarks to improve early childhood screening.

#### Infant/Toddler Mental Health

National research from *Neurons to Neighborhoods* shows that social-emotional development is the foundation upon which young children build future success. Parents, physicians, child care practitioners, home visitors, and others who come in contact with families with young children help to ensure that children form positive relationships with others in order to learn.

As a result of a grant to improve the quality of infant/toddler care from the National Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative/Zero to Three, child care staff competencies in nurturing infant/toddler social-emotional development were written. These competencies identify foundational training requirements for infant/toddler caregivers. In addition, a module developed to address infant/toddler social-emotional development was added to the CCHC training curriculum.

#### Parent Education

During 2005, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust convened an interdisciplinary team of early childhood advocates and experts to assist them in modifying the Parents' Kit developed in California (funded through California's First Five program). The Arizona Parents' Kit contains high quality videos/DVDs about health and nutrition, child safety, early literacy, discipline, and quality child care (produced by the I Am Your Child Foundation); a first book for the child; and the Arizona Parents' Resource Guide — a compendium of national and Arizona-specific resources for parents of children prenatal through age five years. The Arizona Parent's Kit is being distributed on a pilot basis. The Piper Trust is evaluating the impact of the Parent's Kit to change parental actions in support of their child's development and readiness for school.

The Valley of the Sun United Way has developed and is distributing a companion school readiness kit geared to parents of three to five year old children. In addition, the Arizona Partnership that included the United Way affiliates and many other organizations, have launched a social marketing campaign called "You're It." The purpose is to increase the public will to invest in early childhood. Messaging about parents' responsibility to ensure they nurture healthy children is part of the campaign.

Building on the success of the Governor's 2004 program to provide a book to all Arizona first graders, both first and fourth grade students were given a book in 2005. *Don't Call Me Pig! A Javelina Story* was distributed to first grade students and *Coyote School News* was given to fourth grade students.

#### Family Support

In 2004, the Governor's budget included \$8.7 million to double funding to Healthy Families, a successful home visiting program designed to help families at risk for child abuse and neglect develop good parenting skills to nurture and protect their children. The additional funding has allowed the Healthy Families program, administered through the Department of Economic Security (DES), to contract for services in 100 communities, engaging 15,550 eligible families with newborns (17.8 percent of all such eligible families) through the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## READY PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS

### Full-Day Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten was expanded to schools that have 80 percent or higher of their students' families eligible for services under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Act. Governor Napolitano was successful in securing \$38,050,000 for the expansion of this program.

### Quality Rating System/Stars (Support to Achieve Readiness Standards)

The SRB recommended that initial implementation of the quality rating system begin with building the base, which includes child care subsidies, licensing and wages. Two years of budget negotiations resulted in the elimination of the child care subsidies waiting list. A plan was developed to phase in licensing specialists to a 1:50 ratio over a three period. Funding was identified from the Child Care Development Fund Quality Set-Aside dollars to support additional licensing surveyors in FY 2005. Additional licensing specialists were in the FY 2006 budget but were not approved by the state legislature.

The Governor asked the Children's Cabinet and the SRB to oversee a public-private partnership with United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona which received a federal Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) grant to pilot a quality rating system. The Tucson pilot quality rating system began with 50 child care centers and, due to some attrition, is now at 46 centers. The pilot began February 2005 and will end August 2006. The positive impact for these 46 centers means they are moving toward national accreditation and improving quality of care for approximately 3700 children in primarily low-income communities.

Per Governor Napolitano's request, the SRB convened the state agencies to monitor the pilot process and recommend steps toward phasing in the quality rating system statewide. In addition, a group of community leaders was convened to review the research from the Tucson pilot project and, using information from the pilot project, to refine each level of the quality rating system.

### Early Childhood Block Grant

The Governor's budget recommended \$2 million for "Preschool Plus" to expand the Early Childhood Block Grant; however, the appropriation was not included in the legislature's FY2006 budget.

### Head Start

The overarching goal of the Head Start State Collaboration Office as directed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, to "*Assist in building early childhood systems and access to comprehensive services and support...*," is well aligned with the School Readiness Board efforts to create a coordinated early childhood education system for the State of Arizona

Members of the Arizona Head Start Association and the Association's Executive Committee continue to be actively engaged in the process of formulating strategic steps to facilitate implementation of a statewide early childhood system focusing on healthy children, quality programs, and professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners.

Head Start programs in Southern Arizona have played an active role in informing parents and the community about quality in early childhood programs. Two Head Start programs volunteered and were chosen to participate in the quality rating system piloted in Tucson through the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona. Information regarding barriers to improving quality and to incentives that assist

programs to improve their program quality continues to be shared with the School Readiness Board teams focused on the development of a quality rating system. The School Readiness Board's Quality Rating Expansion Team and the Quality Rating Levels Indicators Team both include a representative from the Head Start State Collaboration Office or the Arizona Head Start Association.

The Quality Rating Levels Indicators Team was convened to finalize the framework for a statewide quality rating model. To accomplish this task, the team has reviewed research and quality rating system models from other states and a consultant was hired to research the use and cost of quality rating tools. Particular attention has been given to state models that work towards integrating Head Start program attributes (such as Head Start Performance Standards and use of the Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring-PRISM tool) as a possible rating identifier. Head Start grantees, the Director of the Arizona Head Start Association, and the Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office are members of this team.

The Emergent Leaders Project was created as a professional development initiative for 30 early childhood education practitioners. This project was funded through a Head Start State Collaboration supplemental grant.

### READY TEACHERS

#### Professional Development

*Scholarships:* At the end of 2003, the School Readiness Board (SRB) and Arizona State University received a U.S. Department of Education \$1.6 million three-year grant —Arizona System Ready/Child Ready (AzSRCR)— to phase-in a professional development and scholarship program for early childhood education professionals.

In 2004, the Professional Leadership Implementation Team of the SRB recommended that the Scholarships for Early Education Development (SEEDS) Program begin using the lessons learned from the AzSRCR project. In 2005, \$250,000 from the Governor's Discretionary Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Set Aside funds was distributed to Cochise College and Arizona Western College in Yuma, for early childhood education scholarships for family child care providers. An additional \$433,000 was requested and received. This funding is expanding the SEEDS program into additional, underserved areas.

*Leadership Development:* The SRB, Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start Association, and Southwest Human Development launched Arizona's Early Education Emergent Leaders program in October, 2004 with \$120,000 of supplemental funding for the federal Head Start Bureau. The purpose of the Emergent Leaders program is to build leadership skills for 30 leaders in early childhood education each year. The objectives are to provide early childhood leaders with professional development opportunities that will challenge them to apply learned theories into practice, enhance management skills, increase training, provide a forum for collaboration and networking among early childhood directors and managers, and to intentionally build leadership that reflects the cultural diversity of the children served in Arizona early childhood education programs. The first class of Emergent Leaders graduated in June, 2005.

Chase Bank, a JP Morgan Company, provided the lead gift of \$500,000 to the Arizona Early Education Funds. Of that donation, \$250,000 will be used to support the next two years of the Chase Early Educators Emergent Leader Program. The 2<sup>nd</sup> class of Emergent Leaders convened in September, 2005.

*Report:* Children's Action Alliance, with support from the Association of Supportive Child Care and the School Readiness Board, released *Compensation & Credentials: A Survey of Arizona's Early Education Workforce*, which provides up-to-date information on the wages and educational levels of teachers in licensed child care programs in Arizona.

## READY COMMUNITIES

### Public-Private Partnerships

The Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEFs) were launched at the Arizona Community Foundation (in conjunction with the Tucson Community Foundation and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona) to target private funds toward the objectives identified in Governor Napolitano's School Readiness Action Plan. The Governor envisioned an interlocking Board to keep the AEEFs and the SRB aligned. Five members of the AEEFs Board are also members of the SRB: Ken Burdick and Steve Lynn, who serve as AEEFs Co-Chairs, Nadine Basha (Chair of the SRB), Steve Mittenthal, and Judy Mohraz.

To date, the AEEFs have raised over \$2 million, and during 2005, convened four subcommittees to determine the operating structure and allocation process. The AEEFs Program Committee was charged with determining programmatic goals for the fund. The Program Committee, in conjunction with the SRB, convened a Design Team, which was tasked with providing specific direction on how to best allocate dollars through Regional Partnerships. Nadine Basha, Chair of the SRB, serves as Chair of the Design Team. The Design Team is an active task force that met throughout the summer and fall to craft recommendations, and conducted community interviews with partnerships across Arizona in order to garner insight and direction. The AEEFs hired Linda Cannon to serve as facilitator. The Design Team recommendations will go to the AEEFs Board in early 2006. In addition to funding Regional School Readiness Partnerships, the Program Committee is also recommending that funds be distributed to innovative statewide projects.

In addition, during 2005 the Governor convened foundations from throughout Arizona to discuss how they could target funding to the goals in the School Readiness Action Plan. Several foundations are considering or currently using the School Readiness Action Plan as the template for allocation of early childhood education grants.

An early education business forum was held in January 2005, with 165 business leaders attending. Governor Napolitano, Governor Hunt of North Carolina, and Art Rolnick, Vice President of the Federal Reserve Board, addressed the group on the importance of quality early childhood programs and services.

## Projected Outcomes and Proposed Strategies for 2006

The projected outcomes for 2006 are built on the work of the SRB committees over the past two years. In 2006, the School Readiness Board will continue advising the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Legislature on the most effective policy direction and methods to improve the coordination, quality and delivery of early childhood education.

Under the four areas of focus— Ready Families, Ready Programs and Schools, Ready Teachers, and Ready Communities— projected outcomes include enhancing and developing methods to provide parent education; enhancing children’s social-emotional development and literacy skills; ensuring that families have access to health care, strengthening basic early childhood education infrastructure such as licensing, subsidies and market rate while working toward improving the quality of early childhood education; supporting adequate compensation for teachers; enhanced education and training for early childhood professionals; encouraging universities and community colleges to develop articulation plans for early education coursework; and encouraging the building of capacity of communities to implement high-quality early childhood education.

### Projected Outcomes

#### SCHOOL READINESS BOARD

- The School Readiness Board will focus on the following: meet 5 times in 2006 to communicate, monitor and support School Readiness Board recommendations to Governor Napolitano and to coordinate early childhood education functions between state agencies, Head Start, and Tribes
- Define a sustainable framework to continue work of the School Readiness Board Plan
- Support “You’re It” social marketing campaign
- Support implementation of full-day kindergarten
- Support revision to the child care center rules and regulations to improve the quality of care for children

Comment [d1]:

#### READY FAMILIES

- Develop a plan for statewide distribution of the Arizona Parent’s Kit
- Publish and distribute the *Arizona Health and Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Centers*
- Promote funding to build the Child Care Health Consultation system and enhance capacity by adding two additional consultants
- Support efforts to reduce KidsCare premium-sharing and reinstate 12-month AHCCCS eligibility redetermination
- Introduce use of the PEDS developmental screening tool for babies discharged from the Newborn Intensive Care Unit

Comment [d2]: Im not sure that this one is, its part of Mary’s grant that she’s writing, need the actual details .

#### READY PROGRAMS & SCHOOLS

- Maintain a “no waiting” list for DES child care subsidies
- Support market rate adjustment to at least 2002 market rate
- Support DHS budget for additional licensing staff
- Produce final quality STARS levels

- Produce a report on the development of the Quality Rating System (STARS)
- Publish results of the Quality Rating System Pilot in Tucson
- Outline key performance indicators of factors affecting school readiness and prepare a baseline report
- Coordinate Head State professional development standards with the work of the Professional Development and Articulation committee
- Link Head Start and Early Childhood Block Grant program standards to the Quality Rating System (STARS)
- Working with local and statewide Earned Income Tax Credit efforts, increase the availability and accessibility for all eligible families (Head Start and non-Head Start families).

#### READY TEACHERS

- Produce and publish an annual report on the Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program
- Refine and implement Statewide Early Education Development Scholarship program (SEEDS)
- Produce Arizona System Ready/Child Ready final report

#### READY COMMUNITIES

- Support the Arizona Early Education Funds' strategies to distribute \$1 million to statewide and regional projects in 2006
- Work with the Arizona Early Education Funds and other entities to develop Regional School Readiness Partnerships

## Proposed Strategies Narrative

### READY FAMILIES

#### Rationale

Children must be healthy physically and mentally in order to be ready to succeed. Support to families is critical to ensuring the health of children. Support can be from myriad contacts (e.g., physicians, child care staff, home visitors) and within various environments (home, child care setting, office).

#### What we're going to do

The SRB recommends that all who come in contact with families with young children have the training and tools needed to provide the best care and advice possible to help children be safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. Working with multi-disciplinary personnel, training curricula are being developed and disseminated to train physicians, child care staff, state licensing staff, child care health consultants, and others about developmental screening, oral health, nutrition and physical activity for the young child, health and safety regulations and preferred practices, and social and emotional development in the young child. New parents are being provided up-to-date parenting information and state and national resources in healthy child development. Physicians participating in the Reach Out and Read program encourage parents to begin early literacy by giving a new book to children who come in for well-child visits. State agency and community-based organization personnel are working together to identify objectives and strategies to improve the system capacity to recognize and respond to improving the mental health of young children. Families are encouraged to enroll in health coverage programs for which they qualify in order to have access to health screening and intervention as needed.

#### How we're going to do it

The Health Implementation Team has been renamed the Healthy Child Collaborative to reflect the multiple partners involved in healthy children. Healthy Child Collaborative members support each other to accomplish the following recommendations in the five focus areas of the federal Maternal Child Health Bureau's Statewide Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant: access to medical homes, parent education, family support, mental health, and child care.

### READY FAMILY STRATEGIES FOR 2006

#### **Enhance the quality of medical homes by working with pediatric practices.**

- Introduce routine developmental screening at well-child visits using the PEDS screening tool, beginning with AHCCCS enrolled babies born on/after 1/1/06 who are admitted to newborn intensive care units
- Recruit physicians to join a quality improvement project to increase pediatric practices who self-identify as medical homes
- Expand the number of physician practices participating in the Reach Out and Read program

#### **Educate parents about how they can help their children to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed.**

- Develop a plan for statewide distribution of the *Arizona Parents' Kit*
- Provide consistent messages about child health for inclusion in the "You're It" social marketing campaign

**Improve the mental health of infants and young children through training of clinicians, child care workers, and state agency staff**

- Write the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health State Plan
- Revise child care regulations to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers (I/T) through training in social emotional development for I/T caregivers

**Bolster health and safety practices in child care settings**

- Publish and distribute the *Arizona Health & Safety Policy Manual for Child Care Providers*
- Seek funding to initiate the Child Care Health Consultation system, enhance the system by adding two additional consultants, and link with the STAR system (Support to Achieve Readiness Standards)
- Train child care providers to promote children’s oral health awareness and nutrition and physical activity.

**Provide support to families to help children to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed**

- Ensure eligible children have a primary source of well-child screening and health care by supporting recommendations to outreach to bring in all eligible children into AHCCCS and KidsCare, eliminate cost-sharing premium for KidsCare families, and reinstate 12-month eligibility redetermination for AHCCCS.
- Support the Healthy Families program

READY PROGRAMS & SCHOOLS

Rationale

Quality early learning experiences can lead, not only to success in elementary schools, but also to a more productive, happy and healthy life. The actions in this plan seek to provide all children with access to high-quality early learning settings so that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed.

What we’re going to do

The School Readiness Board recommends that as a state we continue to focus on improving the quality of care for children and families. One method to accomplish this objective is to provide guidance and assistance to families and early childhood practitioners through the distribution and implementation of a quality improvement plan for early childhood programs.

How we’re going to do it

To build on the success of the quality rating pilot project in Tucson, a plan will be developed to continue selected elements of the quality rating system pilot in the 46 child care centers in Tucson as the Early Learning Opportunities Act Grant funding ends in August of 2006.

To improve the overall quality of early childhood education the infrastructure (licensing, child care subsidies, and market rate) of the system needs to be stabilized to provide families and early childhood education programs with the critical resources to improve the quality of care delivered.

To identify the criteria for the final levels of the quality rating system that are meaningful to all communities, the School Readiness Board will convene “learning communities” in multiple geographic locations throughout the state to share the process for building the infrastructure of the quality

improvement system and to gather input on the levels of this system. Comments from these listening sessions will be incorporated into a final report that highlights the recommendations for the implementation of a quality improvement system.

In addition to the development of the levels of a quality improvement plan, resources such as technical assistance and higher rates of child care subsidy reimbursements for higher levels of quality to early childhood programs, assist programs in improving the quality of their care. The lessons learned from quality early childhood projects and information on how to link such projects with a statewide system to improve quality is critical. To assist in this endeavor, the SRB, community leaders and partners will host a summit to present the learning communities' final comments on the quality improvement system to Governor Napolitano.

#### READY PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS STRATEGIES FOR 2006

#### **Build and enhance the infrastructure for early childhood education**

- Maintain a "no waiting" list for DES child care subsidies
- Support market rate adjustment to at least 2002 market rate
- Support DHS' budget request for additional licensing staff to eliminate the backlog of annual licensing visits thereby improving quality
- Outline key performance indicators affecting school readiness and prepare a baseline report

#### **Build quality through STARS**

- Publish results of the public/private partnership between the Governor's Office and United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona regarding the QRS
- Produce final quality STARS levels, including incentives
- Identify adequate resources for technical assistance and tiered reimbursement
- Increase the number of child care centers voluntarily participating in STARS
- Produce a glossary of definitions of terms to be used within the STARS levels
- Integrate Early Childhood Block Grant preschools quality improvement projects into STARS
- Link professional development requirement and early learning standards to quality elements of STARS

#### **Head Start State Collaboration Office**

##### Rationale

Developing a high-quality early childhood education system includes the creation of high-quality programs and the coordination of existing projects and services. The Head Start State Collaboration Office's (HSSCO) eight priority areas align with the Action Steps of the SRB Action Plan to create a coordinated and accessible early childhood system for parents and children.

The HSSCO is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Head Start Bureau to support the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships at the State level. The purpose is:

- To assist in building early childhood systems and access to comprehensive services and support for all low-income children;

- To encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services and initiatives and to augment Head Start’s capacity to be a partner in state initiatives on behalf of children and their families;
- To facilitate the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes and decisions affecting the Head Start target population and other low-income families.

What we’re going to do

The School Readiness Board supports the coordination of early childhood education functions between State agencies, Head Start, and Tribes. This will be accomplished by creating venues to promote the exchange of common early childhood outcomes between Head Start, community child care, and Tribal programs and by encouraging Head Start agencies to participate in state and local planning. The HSSCO will continue its critical work with the Arizona Head Start Association to promote the development of high quality early childhood programs, offer training opportunities to early childhood teachers, and support parents. Through the HSSCO, Head Start will be a participant in the development and implementation of the STARS quality rating system and the statewide professional development system.

How we’re going to do it

The SRB, Head Start programs, and the Arizona Head Start Association will continue to collaborate to ensure continued communication and representation between Head Start families and other community child care programs. To facilitate collaboration in activities designed to benefit low-income children and families, the HSSCO will provide an exchange of information about state efforts and opportunities for program enhancement. The office will continue to request the participation of Head Start and community early childhood practitioners on SRB work-teams and committees. These efforts will provide ongoing opportunities for sharing proven best practices.

HEAD START COLLABORATION OFFICE STRATEGIES FOR 2006

- Link Head Start and Early Childhood Block Grant program standards to STARS
- Offer professional development trainings hosted by the Arizona Head Start Association to Head Start and other early childhood teachers and programs
- Coordinate Head Start professional development standards with the work of the Professional Development & Articulation committee
- Working with local and statewide Earned Income Tax Credit efforts, increase the availability and accessibility for all eligible families (Head Start and non-Head Start families).

READY TEACHERS

Rationale

A well-prepared, highly qualified, early childhood workforce is the foundation for a high quality system of care and education for Arizona’s children birth to age 5. We know that the more education teachers receive, the better the outcomes are for children.

We cannot ensure that children will be ready to succeed without ensuring that the early childhood workforce has the professional development (training and education), experience and support to be successful also. There is little incentive for qualified teachers to make early childhood education a career

choice or for high quality teachers to remain in the field. The pay is low, there are few employee benefits, and the workday is long and demanding.

These workforce challenges are compounded by professional development challenges. First, three different and often uncoordinated systems of professional development exist for early childhood education teachers—the community-based system of *workshop hours and training*, the community college system of *vocational development* and the university system of *education*. Teachers receive different levels of information based upon the system they are engaged in and that system's particular expectations and goals. Secondly, movement (or articulation) between these three systems is problematic and the pathways are not well defined. Early childhood education practitioners frequently find that no credit is given for prior experience and workshop hours, or that a course of study begun at one institution of higher education is not valid at another (even one within the same county or college system). Additionally, four-year institutions have been reluctant to grant credit for coursework that they believe may lack academic rigor. Lastly, most early childhood education practitioners are full-time employed, adult learners with both work and family responsibilities, who find the programs at four year institutions inaccessible due to course schedules that do not meet the needs of non-traditional adult learners.

#### What we're going to do

The SRB recommends building upon the work of S\*CCEEDS and the Arizona System Ready/Child Ready grant as we continue to develop a progressive system of professional development for early childhood education practitioners in Arizona. Working with faculty and administrators representing the public institutions of higher education, personnel from community-based training and resource/referral agencies, and child care and preschool personnel, guidelines for coursework articulation and early childhood training will be developed. State agency and community-based early childhood practitioners are researching and developing a salary incentive program to attract and retain teachers in early childhood education. Through a series of workshops with national, state and local experts in early childhood education, early childhood practitioners in leadership positions across the state will continue to have opportunities to collaborate, network and develop leadership skills.

#### How we're going to do it

We have renamed the Professional Leadership Implementation Team (PLIT) the Professional Development & Articulation (PDA) committee to emphasize the focus on professional development and coursework articulation. PDA members will work collaboratively to address the articulation and training needs of Arizona's early childhood workforce, while researching an incentive system to encourage the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

### READY TEACHERS STRATEGIES FOR 2006

#### **Enhance the Professional Development System for early childhood education practitioners**

- Outline, diagram, and make recommendations for an Arizona Professional Development System that includes training, technical assistance and S\*CCEEDS
- Continue to develop the Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program

**Increase the number, diversity, and quality of early childhood education teachers through education and training.**

- Continue work with the Early Childhood Articulation Taskforce to develop agreements between public community colleges and state universities
- Refine Statewide Early Education Development Scholarship (SEEDS) program including the use of Workforce Investment Act Funds for the Early Education Scholarships
- Produce Arizona System Ready/Child Ready final report and participate in the dissemination of research findings from the Arizona Systems Ready/Child Ready project

**Phase in a statewide wage incentive program for early childhood education professionals**

- Research and make recommendations for a statewide early education wage incentive program

READY COMMUNITIES

Rationale

The Arizona Early Education Funds (AEEFs) have been established at the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF), in conjunction with the Tucson Community Foundation and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona. The ACF, with partnering agencies across Arizona, will help communities build the quality and capacity of early childhood education programs for children birth to age five. These funds were created with the support of Governor Janet Napolitano to execute the School Readiness Board's action plan.

What we're going to do

Funding strategies are designed to build a statewide and regional support system for early childhood education. The fund will be partially endowed and partially spendable, and funds will be distributed across Arizona using systemic models that benefit children directly.

How we're going to do it

In the states that have made real changes in their early childhood systems, a regional partnership model has been used to incentivize collaboration and build on the strengths of local communities.

The Regional Partnership Design Team was formed with the specific charge of designing the regional aspect of the Arizona Early Education Funds' funding distribution, in the form of School Readiness Partnerships at the regional and community level. The Design Team met from May through October and operated under the following guiding principles:

- Transformational change thinking is required – the old ways of doing business are no longer relevant in today's world.
- Focus on community development and build on the strengths of local communities.
- Decisions should be outcome driven with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of children who begin school ready to succeed.

The recommendations of the Design Team were informed by research of similar initiatives in other states, best practices and lessons learned in Arizona, and interviews of participants of existing partnerships throughout the state that are focused on early education.

The Design Team recommendations will go to the full AEEFs Advisory Board on December 14<sup>th</sup>, and if accepted, a “Request for Partnership” will be released in early 2006.

The School Readiness Board will work with AEEFs and other organization to build local capacity to implement school readiness strategies in communities throughout Arizona.

#### READY COMMUNITIES STRATEGIES FOR 2006

##### **Create public/private partnerships and build local capacity.**

- Support the Arizona Early Education Funds’ fundraising efforts to move towards the goal of a \$20 million endowment by the end of the third year
- Support the Arizona Early Education Funds’ strategies to distribute \$1 million to statewide and Regional School Readiness Partnerships in 2006
- Work with the Arizona Early Education Funds and other entities to develop Regional School Readiness Partnerships

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Governor's Office of Children Youth and Families

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