

GETTING TO RESULTS

BUILDING A PROTOTYPE FOR RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY IN MARYLAND

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Focusing on Results

Maryland is changing the way it plans and budgets for the well-being of children and families. Rather than measure success in traditional measures, such as the number of children and families that pass

through programs or the size of agencies' budgets, the State is beginning to focus more on the actual conditions of well-being, or "results," that we want for our children and families.

In January 1999, "Maryland's Results for Children, Youth and Families" — eight priority results — were announced by the Maryland Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, chaired by Lt. Governor Kathleen Townsend. Soon thereafter, the 1999 Maryland General Assembly created the Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families. In October 1999, the Joint Committee, co-chaired by Del. Mark Shriver and Sen. Ed Kasemeyer, set out to develop a prototype results-based process for the legislature and executive branches to follow in planning, budgeting and accounting for the well-being of children and families.¹ The Joint Committee selected "Children Entering School Ready to Learn" as the result upon which it would focus in developing its prototype.

An "Unprecedented" Joint Budget Hearing on School Readiness

The Joint Committee's development of a prototype culminated in February 2001 with a Joint Budget Hearing on School Readiness, held by the Senate Budget and Tax Committee and two House of Delegates Appropriations' Subcommittees, Education and Economic Development and Health and Human Resources. Sen. Barbara Hoffman, Chair of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee and a leading member of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families, observed that the Joint Budget Hearing was "unprecedented in Maryland and, as far as we can tell, in this country."

At the Joint Budget Hearing, budget analysts from the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) explained the distinction between traditional budgeting in Maryland and the new, results-based approach:

"Typically budget hearings focus on programs or groups of programs as they are organized administratively, for example, a single department or part of a larger depart-

ment. They are also typically concerned with the immediate upcoming budget year rather than having a longer-term strategic planning focus. This hearing focuses instead on... strategies outlined by the [Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families] to positively move [measures of] school readiness. It includes an identification of dollars most directly targeted to the achievement of stated results regardless of the specific agency or source of those funds.² In this way, the legislature has the opportunity to:

- Take a holistic view of those programs, dollars, and policies that the State is utilizing to achieve a common goal. This is done in the context of one meeting rather than being spread across numerous agency budget hearings. Integrating all of the programs related to this result in one analysis provides...the opportunity to assess how these programs interact with one another (e.g., if and how they are coordinated...);
- Focus on not only what is in the proposed budget but also on long-term strategic questions (five years out) and about how to move the State's performance in this result area from where we are to where we want to go;
- Focus attention on initiatives that have an important impact but which may be normally considered as part of larger programs which dwarf them in size and thus deflect attention; and
- Have all the appropriate parties at the table when addressing this result area."³

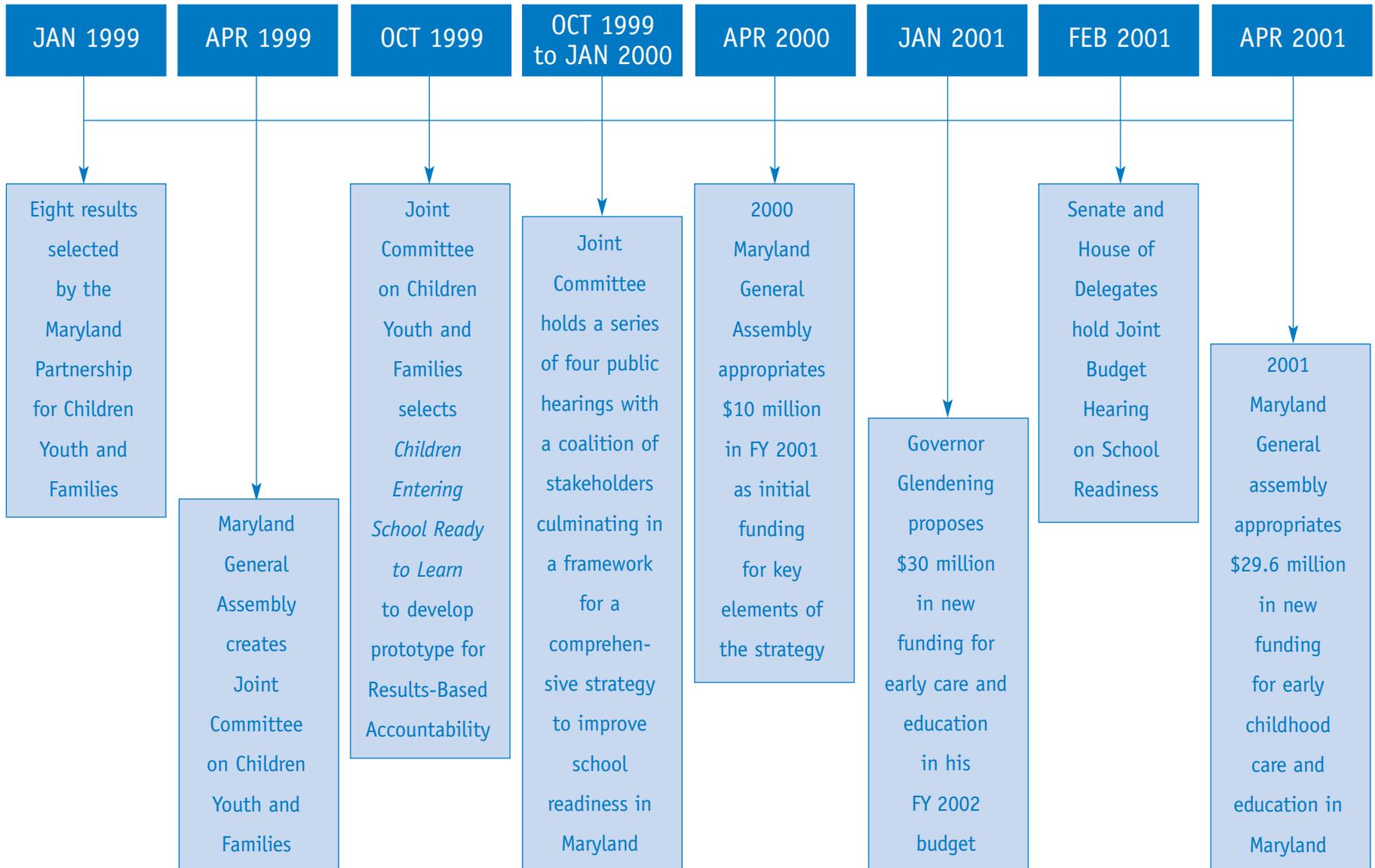
DLS also noted, by comparison, that Managing for Results (MFR), an agency-focused attempt to move the State's budgeting process into a more strategic framework, rarely moves an agency beyond the immediate fiscal year or links it with other agencies in seeking to achieve results.

"This joint budget hearing is unprecedented in Maryland and, as far as we can tell, in this country. "

Sen. Barbara Hoffman,
Chair, Senate Budget and
Tax Committee
February 26, 2001

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THE ROAD TO RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOL READINESS IN MARYLAND



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The Prototype for Results-Based Accountability in Maryland — Key Questions

The Joint Committee's prototype approach to planning and budgeting was adopted by the Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families in framing a strategy to improve school readiness in Maryland and by the budget committees for the 2001 Joint Budget Hearing on School Readiness. The prototype may be most readily understood as a series of questions that are asked on a regular, ongoing basis.

The Results-Based Prototype: Key Questions

1. What is the result (condition of well-being) we want for our children, youth and families? (*In the case of the prototype, the result is "Children Entering School Ready to Learn" or "school readiness".*)
2. How are we doing with respect to school readiness in Maryland?
3. What are the causes and forces at work that explain our current situation with respect to school readiness?
4. What will it take to improve the current status of school readiness?
 - Who are the partners who have a role to play?
 - What has worked elsewhere?
 - What are no-cost or low-cost strategies?
5. What will be the cost if we do nothing — the "cost of bad outcomes"?
6. What is our strategy — our action plan and budget — to improve school readiness?
7. How will we know if the different elements of our strategy, including individual programs, are working?

What follows is a brief description of how each of these questions was answered from October 1999 to February 2001 as the results-based prototype was developed and implemented in Maryland.

1. What is the result (condition of well-being) we want for our children, youth and families?

As noted above, the Joint Committee for Children, Youth and Families chose to initially devote its energy to one result area: "Children Entering School Ready to Learn." This result was defined as children entering school having achieved the developmental milestones that enable them to pay attention, communicate, work and play with others, solve problems, behave appropriately, use reason, and be creative.

2. How are we doing with respect to school readiness in Maryland?

The Joint Committee wanted measurements by which the State could track its progress in achieving school readiness. Maryland had been tracking enrollment in pre-school programs; however, such measures did not tell whether children were actually entering school ready to learn. Therefore, the Joint Committee selected the Work Sampling System (WSS), a component of a school readiness program being developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), to help gauge the social, physical, linguistic, and cognitive skills of children entering kindergarten statewide. Preliminary results from the WSS were presented by the Department of Legislative Services at the 2001 Joint Budget Hearing:

"Overall composite scores [from the Work Sampling System] indicate a mediocre performance with 40% of children deemed ready, 50% identified as requiring some supports to succeed in kindergarten, and 10% requiring considerable support to succeed in kindergarten."⁴

While the first WSS data are preliminary, they represent a fundamental change in the State's approach to school readiness. As Del. Mark Shriver noted, "the Joint Committee has changed the equation in Maryland; up until now we had not confronted the fact that a system that does not measure and report whether its children are entering school ready to learn is inherently unaccountable."

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School Readiness Work Sampling System Composite Preliminary Data

County	Full Readiness		Approaching Readiness		Developing Readiness	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Allegany	45.3%	54.8%	49.8%	42.6%	4.8%	2.6%
Anne Arundel	35.1%	54.2%	53.5%	41.3%	11.5%	4.5%
Baltimore City	14.3%	18.6%	77.9%	76.8%	7.8%	4.6%
Baltimore County	17.7%	24.9%	69.1%	67.6%	13.3%	7.5%
Calvert	38.5%	48.4%	51.7%	41.9%	9.8%	9.7%
Caroline	Not Available					
Caroll	48.2%	58.7%	46.1%	41.3%	5.6%	0.0%
Cecil	30.4%	47.7%	48.9%	36.8%	20.7%	15.5%
Charles	30.2%	34.5%	60.3%	57.2%	9.5%	8.3%
Dorchester	41.2%	71.4%	32.4%	21.4%	26.5%	*
Frederick	41.5%	53.7%	48.0%	41.0%	10.4%	5.3%
Garrett	49.1%	48.1%	41.5%	44.2%	9.4%	*
Harford	Not Available					
Howard	56.0%	63.9%	39.4%	30.9%	4.6%	5.2%
Kent	41.7%	73.1%	50.0%	26.9%	*	0.0%
Montgomery	40.4%	53.1%	50.1%	40.9%	9.5%	6.0%
Prince George's	27.0%	34.7%	53.9%	50.2%	19.1%	15.1%
Queen Anne's	Not Available					
Saint Mary's	20.7%	17.3%	62.2%	66.7%	17.1%	16.0%
Somerset	29.7%	41.1%	50.4%	53.2%	13.6%	5.6%
Talbot	71.7%	80.5%	20.8%	14.6%	*	*
Washington	46.5%	64.5%	42.1%	26.8%	11.4%	8.7%
Wicomico	46.2%	60.9%	48.4%	35.6%	5.5%	*
Worcester	24.2%	38.2%	61.3%	50.9%	14.5%	10.9%
MARYLAND	34.5%	46.0%	53.8%	46.7%	11.7%	7.3%

Source: Maryland State Department of Education (*= fewer than 5 children)

“The Joint Committee has changed the equation in Maryland; up until now we had not confronted the fact that a system that does not measure and report whether its children are entering school ready to learn is inherently unaccountable.”

Delegate Mark K. Shriver
Presiding Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth and Families



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3. What are the causes and forces at work that explain our current situation with respect to school readiness?

It is not enough, however, to collect data and plot trendlines or “curves” with the data. A focus on results requires that the causes and forces underlying the curves (“the story behind the curve”) be analyzed and understood as a prerequisite to the development of a strategy, action plan, and budget that, ultimately, will improve school readiness (or “turn the curve”).

To this end, in January 2000, the Subcabinet on Children, Youth and Families discussed several negative forces working against Maryland’s children: inadequate availability of quality early childhood experiences; poverty; health issues; and systemic issues that create barriers to a fully integrated system to address the needs of children and families.⁵ Similarly, in the February 2001 Joint Budget Hearing, DLS cited key issues: inadequate compensation for child care workers; a shortage of infant child care slots; oversight of early childhood programming that does not offer parents much assurance about the quality of the experiences; increased percentages of low birthweight babies; shortages of residential slots in substance abuse programs for mothers and their young children; and between 20% and 30% of children with family incomes below 200% of poverty that do not have health insurance.⁶

In addition, the Subcabinet and DLS both noted that the recent convergence of neurological studies of early brain development and longitudinal studies of the long-term impact of early childhood experiences indicates that brain development is much more vulnerable to environmental influences than formerly suspected, especially in the earliest years.

4. What will it take to improve the current status of school readiness?

- Who are the partners who have a role to play?
- What has worked elsewhere?
- What are no-cost or low-cost strategies?

• Who are the partners who have a role to play?

In developing its prototype, the Joint Committee brought together all of those state agencies and programs that impact school readiness. The Joint Committee also reached beyond the public sector, inviting representatives from non-profit service agencies, the faith community, advocates, and businesses to participate in its hearings. The Joint Committee asked the Subcabinet to include those stakeholders in framing a comprehensive strategy to improve school readiness.

• What has worked elsewhere?

Both the Subcabinet and DLS cited studies that demonstrate the lasting effect of high quality, full-time early childhood education. DLS went on to note, however, that the impact of early intervention has often been found to be disproportionately larger for more disadvantaged children and that, similarly, disadvantaged children suffer disproportionately from exposure to low-quality care. Citing a number of studies, DLS also noted that there appear to be some common components which are suggestive of successful programs: more intensive interventions (all-day, year round); quality trained providers; and quality interactions. DLS concluded: “(1) Targeting disadvantaged families; (2) encouraging parental involvement; and (3) reducing high school drop-out and adolescent pregnancy rates appear to be the most promising solutions to the differential in outcomes highlighted in the study.”⁷

• What are no-cost or low-cost strategies?

This question goes to the heart of Results-Based Accountability. It challenges the assumption that “turning curves” is solely a function of increased funding, asking bureaucracies and communities alike to critically evaluate and change as necessary currently funded programs and activities. This question, however, received little attention in the Subcabinet’s strategy, other than a brief discussion of the Subcabinet’s plans to work on results-based budgeting and to improve collaborations among state agencies and with its provider and advocate partners.

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5. What will be the cost if we do nothing — the “cost of bad outcomes”?

This question seeks to surface and make explicit from a fiscal perspective the costs of not investing in children, youth and families or, in more positive terms, the potential savings from such investments. In the Joint Budget Hearing, DLS presented an exhibit highlighting State spending on programs seeking to counteract “bad early childhood outcomes.” The list, offered as a proxy for estimating the potential savings for Maryland from investing in new or expanded childhood intervention programs, included expenditures on dropout prevention, special education, disruptive youth, the Department of Juvenile Justice, academic interventions and Youth Service Bureaus. The total FY 2002 “Spending to Counteract ‘Bad Outcomes’” was almost \$600 million. DLS noted that the list was by no means comprehensive in that it excluded spending on welfare programs for teen moms and compensatory education and excludes spending in the adult years resulting from bad outcomes, including prison spending, food stamps, and Medicaid.

It is, of course, critically important that when the State does realize savings from investing in children and families, the State uses those savings to continue to fund such investments rather than putting those savings in the State’s General Fund.

6. What is our strategy - our action plan and budget — to improve school readiness?

At the urging of the Joint Committee, the Subcabinet developed and presented a set of four overarching strategies, each with a series of goals, to promote school readiness:

- Improve Quality of Child Care and Early Childhood Experience
- Increase Access to Early Childhood Experiences
- Support Families with Young Children
- Increase Access to Health Care and Early Childhood Health Screening

These strategies were analyzed by DLS at the Joint Budget Hearing, with the first two strategies receiving a more in-depth review. DLS offered a series of overarching conclusions on the strategies, including:

- Credentialing child care workers and accrediting child care centers and family day care homes is an important first step to improve the quality of early child care;
- The Subcabinet’s strategies are not sufficient to address the compensation issue;
- Given limited resources available for early childhood programs, it is most appropriate to target funds to at-risk children and families rather than provide universal services;
- The early childhood system lacks a single point of entry; and
- Barring a substantial infusion of funding into early childhood programs, the State should probably choose between focusing the majority of its resources on either improving quality or expanding pre-school opportunities for three-and-four-year-olds.

In the two years since the Joint Committee began its work (Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002), the State will have invested \$40 million in new funds (including some federal

Maryland’s Investments in Early Childhood Care and Education

- Judy Centers — high quality educational programming for children and comprehensive services for families — approximately 20 new centers will be funded in communities across the state
- Broad-based effort to increase number of the programs formally accredited
- State credentialing system and incentives for early childhood care and education providers to increase their credentials
- Establishment of a Blue Ribbon task force to address the long-term financing of early childhood care and education
- Increased funding for home visiting programs
- A public education campaign on early childhood care and education
- \$19 million in flexible funds to local jurisdictions available to improve early childhood care and education

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funds) in early childhood care and education. These investments focus on a number of the strategies discussed above and together constitute what has been described as a national model.

7. How will we know if the different elements of our strategy, including individual programs, are working?

A focus on results requires that, at the program level, we look beyond traditional measures of effort or activity, to gauge also whether the clients of a program have achieved those client outcomes the program was meant to influence. For example, a prenatal education program for expectant mothers would track not only the attendance and graduation of the mothers from the program but also whether those mothers gained the desired knowledge about prenatal care, practiced and obtained appropriate prenatal care, and had healthy births.

At the same time, separate and distinct from tracking such client outcomes is the challenge of evaluating the actual impact of a program on such outcomes. At the 2001 Joint Budget Hearing, DLS reported that few programs submitted evaluations. The State's largest investment in early childhood programming, EEEP, has not had an evaluation since 1991. The new Judy Centers, however, require and provide funding for evaluations. The Judy Centers also have a set of outcome measures. DLS recommended, and the Subcabinet concurred, that similar outcome measures be developed for the State's EEEP program. DLS summed up its discussion by saying the State is doing "mediocre" work in the area of evaluations.

Developing and Implementing a Prototype for Results-Based Accountability: Next Steps

The State has, over the course of 17 months, developed and implemented a prototype approach to results-based accountability. While much remains to be done and improved, a framework built upon key questions has been established. Two critical steps must be taken to continue the institutionalization of this approach. First, the 2002 General Assembly should hold a second Joint Budget Hearing on School Readiness. At the same time, the

Joint Committee should select a second result area in which to apply the prototype over the interim and in the 2002 General Assembly. This step will move Maryland toward the day when each of the eight result areas will, on an ongoing basis, be the subject of a sustained focus on and accountability for results. With such a focus and accountability, we can envision a Maryland in which communities support family life, children are born healthy, stay healthy, enter school ready to learn, succeed in and complete school, live with stable and economically independent families, and reside safely in their families and communities.

References

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2. *Response to Analysis for Children Entering School Ready to Learn, FY 2002 Budget, 2001 General Assembly*, Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families.
3. *Maryland's Results and Indicators*, <http://www.ocyf.state.md.us/Results/index.htm>.
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5. *Results and Performance Accountability, The Fiscal Policy Studies Institute Home Page*, Mark Friedman, Director, <http://www.resultsaccountability.com>
6. *Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families Presentation to the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families*, January 20, 2000, Annapolis, Maryland.

Notes

- 1 Technical assistance to the State in developing the prototype for results-based accountability was provided by Mark Friedman, of the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, and Phil Lee, of the University of Maryland School of Public Affairs, both with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- 2 The number of dollars targeted for school readiness in the analysis for the Joint Budget Hearing on School Readiness does not include all of the dollars that could impact this result area. The reasoning for the choice of programs included in the analysis is outlined by DLS in the *Children Entering School Ready to Learn Fiscal 2002 Budget Overview* (pp. 6-7).
- 3 *Children Entering School Ready to Learn Fiscal 2002 Budget Overview*, February 2001 (pp. 5-6).
- 4 *Children Entering School Ready to Learn Fiscal 2002 Budget Overview*, February 2001 (p 24).
- 5 *Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families Presentation to the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families*, January 20, 2000 (pp. 12-15).
- 6 *Children Entering School Ready to Learn Fiscal 2002 Budget Overview*, February 2001 (pp. 2-3, 12-21).
- 7 *Children Entering School Ready to Learn Fiscal 2002 Budget Overview*, February 2001 (pp. 27-8).