Ready Set Go!
West Virginia School Readiness

Supporting School Readiness in West Virginia

A comprehensive framework to support young children and their families with transitions prior to and after school entry

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What is Ready, Set, Go! WV?

Ready, Set, Go! WV is a framework to help individuals understand and support the various transitions in which young children engage prior to and after school entry. Established in 2011 to support kindergarten readiness, Ready, Set, Go! WV was expanded to ensure that all young children should be afforded opportunities to transition successfully into and out of early childhood settings prior to the first grade. Provisions of the school readiness framework include a holistic view that supports young children's development across domains, as well as transition strategies to support children and families as they enter school.

The Framework's focus on children is reflected in the graphic below:

Ready State and Communities

Ready Schools and Programs

Ready Families
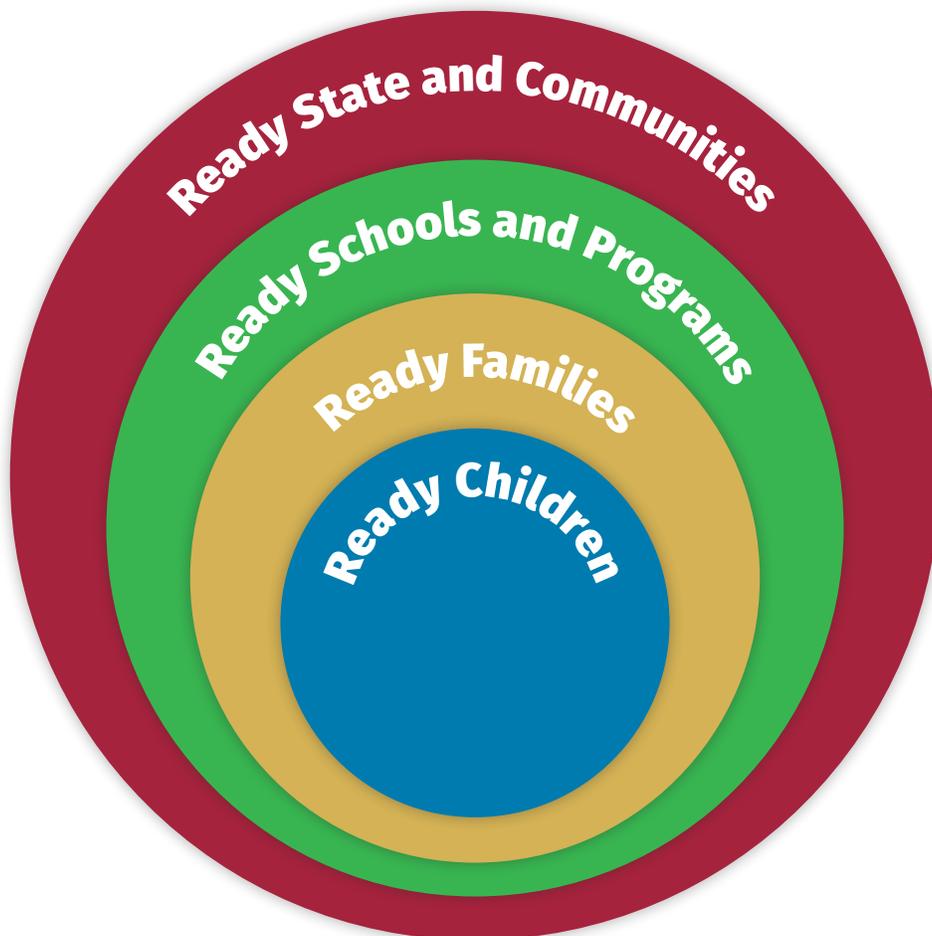
Ready Children

School 'Readiness' in WV: a formal definition

In West Virginia, school readiness refers to the process of assuring children have access to the best available resources prior to entering first grade. Available resources support children and their families and focus on maximizing children's holistic development from birth.

Acknowledging that each child's development is significantly affected by previous experiences, school readiness also entails the capacity of schools and programs to welcome families and be prepared to serve all children effectively within the developmental domains of:

- health and physical development,
- social and emotional development,
- language and communication,
- cognition and general knowledge, and
- individual approaches to learning.

To support school readiness efforts and assure the use of developmentally effective methods for children prior to entering first grade, the Ready, Set, Go! West Virginia Comprehensive Framework for School Readiness is utilized in West Virginia. This comprehensive framework includes an approach that focuses on how the state and local communities, schools, and programs can offer support and resources for families and children prior to and during their transition into school. Programs serving children in Early Learning Readiness grades (WV Pre-K and Kindergarten) also provide opportunities for children to build solid foundations and positive dispositions to learning.

Ready State and Ready Communities

Description:

A thorough understanding of West Virginia's comprehensive framework for school readiness and transitions will allow state and community partners to serve as resources for county collaborative early childhood teams and other groups or individuals who play a role in the lives of young children and their families. The infrastructure supported by a ready state and ready communities can positively benefit children and families.

A Ready State and Ready Communities:

- Emphasize the state's definition of school readiness in programming and through messaging;
- Provide resources to encourage an increased public understanding of developmental milestones during the early years;
- Share and understand resources by making connections;
- Develop a comprehensive guide to increase public awareness of the importance of the early years;
- Leverage state and/or community resources;
- Form partnerships with business, medical, dental and behavioral health communities; and
- Provide high-quality early care and education that is developmentally appropriate for all students.
- Provide materials in various communication modes as necessary.

Ready Schools and Ready Programs

Description:

Schools and early childhood programs typically provide young children with their first formal experience outside their homes. A *whole child* approach is included in West Virginia's definition of School Readiness to make sure all components of young children's development are nurtured. Ongoing communication with families to promote children's comprehensive development must be a foundational component of all Ready Schools and Ready Programs.

Ready Schools and Ready Programs:

- Live a vision that is committed to the success of every child;
- Ensure clear communication with all stakeholders (families, educators, and administrators);
- Expand and utilize the county early childhood collaborative team;
- Use vertical team collaboration to coordinate the efforts of grade to grade educators and enhance grade level programming;
- Evaluate transition plans regularly;
- Include all applicable partners (i.e., school psychologist, school nurse, counselor, home visitor, behavior specialist, therapist, WV Birth to 3, etc.);
- Ensure built-in accountability for transition plans;
- Provide a transparent enrollment process to increase families' understanding of requirements and options to best fit their needs;
- Offer multiple opportunities for family engagement and participation; and,
- Provide all families with appropriate supports and resources to promote their children's learning and development.
- Provide resources and services to address the diverse and individual needs of students.

Ready Families

Description:

Early childhood leaders, educators, and advocates can develop strong home/ school connections by emphasizing the critical role of families and care givers in the lives of their children. Using a strengths-based approach will acknowledge the uniqueness of families and also help increase collaborative efforts to meet young children's needs during the early childhood transition process.

How can families' approaches to school readiness be supported?

- Help families understand the importance of providing environments for their children that are:
  - *caring,*
  - *safe,*
  - *healthy,*
  - *stable, and*
  - *enriching;*
- Equip families with at-home, no-cost resources to increase family/child engagement;
- Emphasize the importance of the early years as a unique period of children's development;
- Equip families with tools to effectively advocate for their children's learning; and,
- Link families to medical and dental homes.
- Help families and professionals build partnerships and support families as primary decision makers for their children.
- Link families to community and family leadership opportunities.
- Ensure protection of rights, if applicable.
- Ensure meaningful family engagement for all.

Ready Children

Shifting away from the dated philosophy that children should be ready for school, Ready, Set, Go! WV (along with national organizations and a growing body of grounded research) asserts that the school or program should instead be *ready for the child*.

The formal definition for school readiness in WV emphasizes the holistic development of all young children and recognizes the varying levels of opportunities for development each child will have experienced prior to school or program entry.

Each child deserves:

- the opportunity to engage in supportive transitions;
- to be accepted without prior perceptions;
- access to high-quality early childhood programming;
- opportunities to be successful;
- a strengths-based learning approach, building on current levels of development;
- inclusive environments that offer developmentally appropriate routines, play and activities; and
- opportunities to access/receive nutrition, physical activity and linkages for health care and dental health services.

Understanding Early Childhood Transitions in WV

Young children in West Virginia typically move through one or more transitions prior to first grade entry:

- Home or program to school (i.e., home to WV Universal Pre-K or home to Kindergarten)
- Home or program to service (i.e., home to WV Universal Pre-K, home to Kindergarten, home to a home visiting program, home to Pre-K Special Needs Services, Early Head Start to Head Start, WV Birth to Three to WV Universal Pre-K, etc.)
- Grade to grade (i.e., WV Universal Pre-K to Kindergarten, Kindergarten to First Grade, etc.)

To support transitions, county collaborative early childhood teams and other interested individuals may choose to utilize the WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (found on page 10 of this document).
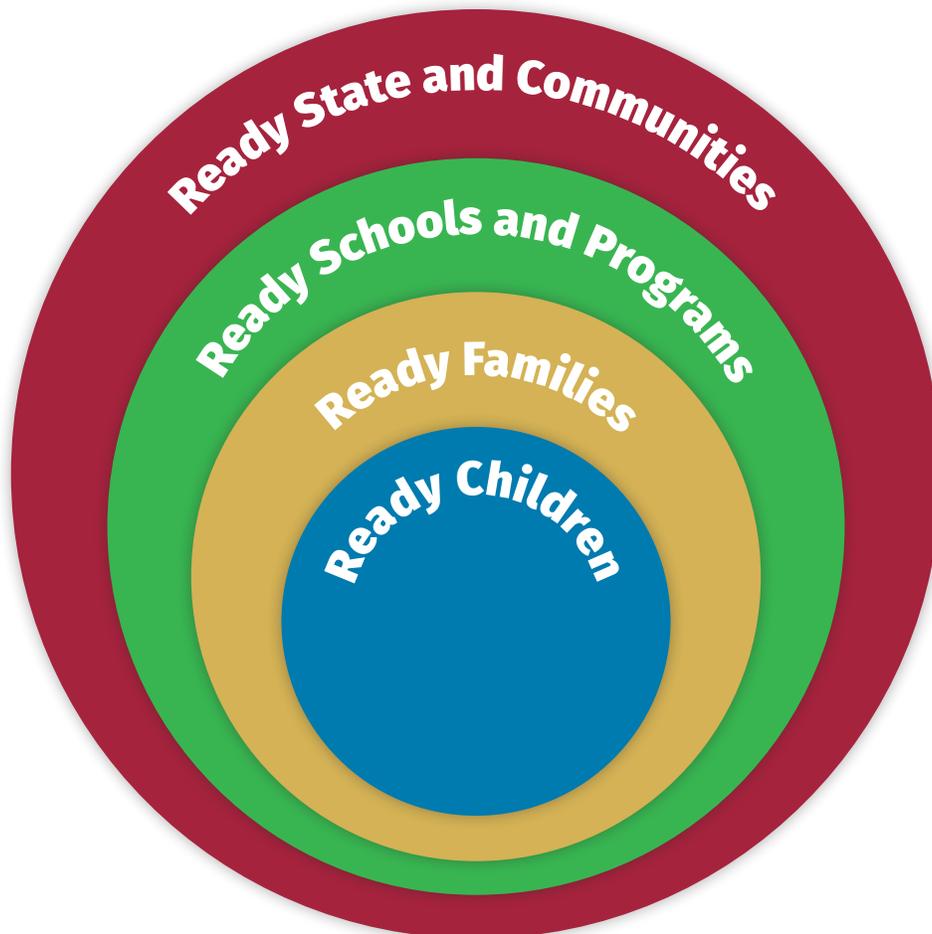
Ready, Set, Go! WV Resources to Support School Readiness and Transitions in WV

- Ready, Set, Go! WV Homepage: *www.readysetgowv.com*
- WV Department of Education Office of Early & Elementary Learning: *http://wvde.us/early-and-elementary-learning/*
- Find a WV Universal Pre-K Program near you: *http://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/map-web/*
- WV Head Start and Early Head Start: *www.wvheadstart.org*
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources (Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child, and Family Health), WV Birth to Three: *http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/*
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Children and Families, Division of Early Care and Education: *www.dhhr.wv.gov*
- Early Childhood Advisory Council of West Virginia: *http://earlylearning.wv.gov*
- National Association for the Education of Young Children: *http://naeyc.org/*
- Federal Head Start and Early Head Start: *eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc*
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Public Health, Immunization Program: *http://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/Pages/default.aspx*
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau fof Public Health, Healthcheck Program: *http://dhhr.wv.gov/healthcheck/Pages/default.aspx*
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Public Health, Oral Health Program: *http://dhhr.wv.gov/oralhealth/Pages/default.aspx*
- West Virginia Home Visiting Programs: *http://homevisitwv.org*
- WV Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources: *http://www.wvearlychildhood.org*

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit

This toolkit is provided to assist early childhood professionals, including county collaborative early childhood teams and classroom teachers, in supporting children and families as they transition into and out of a variety of settings. Successful transitions should not be left to chance; rather, successful transitions should be thoughtfully planned to ensure that the experience of going to school is a positive one. There are many choices that programs, schools, educators, and families can make to support successful transitions for all children. This toolkit identifies key activities for such transitions which reflect effective practice. Users are encouraged to review the activities and potential experiences to determine which best meet the needs of the children and families in their community.

Effective practices for successful transitions are outlined in this toolkit, which should serve as a guidance document to assist with the selection and implementation of transition practices. The experiences are categorized by components of the Ready, Set, Go! WV Framework. A suggested timeframe for implementation is also provided for potential experiences.

Ready State and Communities

Ready Schools and Programs

Ready Families

Ready Children

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline
Ready Families	Provide families with information about school entry programs and/or services including enrollment requirements and registration (e.g., certificate of live birth, immunizations, dental examination, HealthCheck by a medical provider, etc.).	
	POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:	
	· Develop and broadcast public service announcements for radio, newspaper, and/or television.	Spring-Summer
	· Create a sample packet of the school entry requirements to be distributed to all community settings.	Spring
	· Utilize a "School Messenger" tool to communicate school and/or program enrollment.	Spring
	· Disseminate a combined Pre-K/K survey for current school families to identify eligible children.	Spring
	· Distribute information regarding school and/or program enrollment requirements, ensuring utilization of a valid HealthCheck, immunizations, dental examination, and other pertinent data.	Spring-Summer
	· Distribute information regarding school readiness and the value of early childhood learning and experiences.	Spring-Summer
	· Post information on the county/program/school website.	Ongoing

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline
Ready State and Communities / **Ready Programs and Schools**	Communicate with public school staff to facilitate continuity of programming and/or services. **POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:**	
	· Arrange visits to early childhood settings for children, families, and staff from the sending program or service.	Spring-Summer
	· Schedule teacher visits to programs where children who will be in his/her room during the coming year currently attend.	Spring
	· Offer a collaborative meeting with Pre-K, kindergarten, and/or first grade teachers.	Spring-Summer
	· Offer an administrator training to share the activities that are coming up for transitions and school enrollment.	Spring-Summer
	· Coordinate with other agencies to transfer relevant records to the public schools.	Spring-Summer
	· Develop a procedure to ensure relevant records (including, but not limited to, the WV Pre-K Child Assessment System Kindergarten Transition Report) are transferred appropriately.	Spring-Summer
	· Post class lists as early as possible so teachers can access Transition Reports as soon as possible.	Spring-Summer
	· Ensure transition planning for children with high needs and/or special needs that may require accommodations.	Spring-Summer

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline
Ready Programs and Schools / **Ready Families**	Provide transition-related training to prepare staff: a. To follow appropriate procedures; b. To support children and families in the transition process; and, c. To discuss strategies to help children become successful. **POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:**	
	• Create a professional development session to be delivered as part of new teacher orientation.	Summer
	• Create a county early childhood collaborative team mentoring project among county early childhood programs.	Year-round
	• Develop and integrate interagency professional development on transitions.	Spring-Summer-Fall
	• Utilize vertical teaming to create shared understanding regarding transitions, programming, and/or standards.	Year-round

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline
Ready Families	Provide training for families regarding transition processes and future options. Include interagency partners in the training. **POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:**	
	· Utilize county resources (ex: Family and Community Engagement Resource Centers) to assist with family training.	Spring-Summer-Fall
	· Include grade-to-grade transition offerings as part of the required Title I parent training component.	Spring-Summer-Fall
	· Offer a parent academy that includes a transition training component.	Spring-Summer

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline

Ready Families / **Ready Children**	Involve parents in transition planning:
	  a. To advocate for children;
	  b. To communicate with public school personnel; and
	  c. To discuss strategies to help children be successful.
	
	POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:	

	• Conduct a "parent chat" event where families have the opportunity to talk and ask questions with the next grade level teacher (ex: families of kindergarteners get to speak with a first grade teacher).	Spring-Summer
	• Schedule family forums for individual schools or programs to provide an opportunity for teachers to talk with family groups.	Spring-Summer
	• Develop an informational newsletter with ideas for transitions, including activities to do with their child during the summer, reminders about health information, tips for helping their child prepare to start school, etc.	Spring
	• Conduct orientation events to allow families to meet with their child's teacher.	Summer
	• Invite families to join the Parent Teacher Association/Parent Teacher Organization (PTA/PTO) at the school their child will attend—schools generate an invitation to welcome families and encourage them to join.	Summer-Fall
	• Offer opportunities for PTA/PTO participation. Offer activities for children so more families can attend.	Year-round
	• Encourage families whose children will start in the fall to come to PTA/PTO during the spring prior to school entry.	Spring

WV Early Childhood Transitions Toolkit (continued)

Ready, Set, Go! WV Component	Activity	Suggested Timeline
Ready Families / **Ready Children**	Plan activities to support children during the school entry process. **POTENTIAL EXPERIENCES:**	
	• Teacher conducts a visit to the child's home before and/or after school starts.	Summer-Fall
	• Teacher and/or school sends a letter to the child's parents before and/or after school starts.	Summer-Fall
	• Teacher writes a letter to the child before and/or after school starts.	Summer-Fall
	• Teacher makes telephone calls to the parents and children before and/or after school starts.	Summer-Fall
	• Encourage a natural integration of grade to grade experiences throughout the school year.	Year-round
	• Provide children the opportunity to practice riding buses to and from the school site.	Spring
	• Provide children the opportunity to participate in a cafeteria/public school lunch.	Spring

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