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What is School Readiness?

School Readiness is defined as the state of early development that enables a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences. The five areas of child development that make up readiness are health and physical development, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development and communication, and cognition and general knowledge.

Everything that a child experiences in his/her years prior to school contributes to readiness. Ready Children will be prepared socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Ready Children live in nurturing families, will have high quality early care and health services, will be supported by enriching and caring communities and will enter schools that provide high quality learning environments.

To cultivate Ready Children in our community, parents, schools, local governments and others invested in early childhood have come together to develop the Regional Plan for Children’s School Readiness: Creating Smart Beginnings for Children from Birth to 5. This regional plan defines strategies to reach the following goals:

1. **Ready Families** ensure safe and stable environments, promote the health of their children, identify themselves as their child’s first teacher, and provide steady and supportive relationships.

2. **Ready Early Care and Education Services** are affordable and accessible, providing high-quality learning environments for young children (including children with unique developmental and other special needs).

3. **Ready Health Services** are affordable and accessible, providing high-quality preventive and intervention care to meet the physical, dental and behavioral health needs of all young children.

4. **Ready Schools** provide a seamless transition to high-quality learning environments that are led by highly qualified teachers who recognize children’s strengths and are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.

5. **Ready Communities** work effectively across all sectors to support families, recognize the importance of early childhood development, and act to support policies and investments to help children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

All of these goals require a collaborative effort among countless organizations, individuals and agencies; but together, we can achieve the vision that all children, ages 0 - 5, in Greater Richmond and Petersburg will be healthy, well-cared for and ready to succeed in school and in life.

To learn more about The Regional Plan for Children’s School Readiness or Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond, visit: [www.readychildren.net](http://www.readychildren.net).
Early Childhood Development Initiative Fall Training Series

The Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative offers training to City of Richmond early childhood professionals and vendors in center-based and family child care programs.

Special recruiting announcement:

ECDI is now recruiting for Building Blocks for Early Learning Programs

This is your invitation to have one preschool teacher working in a child care center participate in Building Blocks for Early Learning Programs, a four-part training series on curricula development that prepares children to enter school ready to succeed.

This is a free training opportunity for teachers that regularly work with children who are 3-and 4-years old.

Participants will receive in-depth training by early education experts in the areas of Curricula Development, Program Planning, Literacy, Mathematics and Science Education. Exciting topics include School Readiness, the Creative Curriculum, PALS Pre-K, Creating Outdoor Learning Environments and Intentional Planning. Special guest presenters are from the Richmond Public Library, PBS, The Literacy Institute at VCU and Project WILD.

Each participant will also receive resources, materials and classroom supplies that will allow the teacher to come back to the center and immediately implement strategies learned in each session.

Teachers will participate in four full-day sessions held every 3 to 4 weeks over 3 months, starting in September.

Each participant must attend all sessions and certificates will be issued upon completion of the series. Space is limited, immediate registration is recommended. Call Mickie McInnis, Quality Child Care Coordinator, 804-646-3331, to reserve a spot.

Revised Kindergarten Transition Plan Webinar

The Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative will host its first webinar Your Kindergarten Transition Plan: A Guide for Early Childhood Programs on Thursday, August 19, 2010 from 2:00 - 3:00 PM. Over the past 18 months, programs in Richmond have participated in Ready, Set, Go! Helping Children and Families Make Seamless Transitions to Kindergarten training. In those sessions, professionals learned about the importance of transitions and how to implement a transition plan. The plan includes phased activities for children and families during the year before a child enters kindergarten. Participants receive an easy-to-follow plan and the resources to implement the plan which includes letters for parents, developmental checklists and DVD’s for family events. To join the webinar, call Mickie McInnis, Quality Child Care Coordinator, 804-646-3331, to reserve a spot.

Save the Date - Director’s Networking Group

Did you know that more than 80% of what a child learns in a normal classroom setting is through vision and that auditory learning accounts for 75% of a child’s normal school day? At the upcoming August Richmond Area Director’s Networking Group sponsored by RECA, Richmond ECDI, Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond and The Richmond Association of Directors, director’s will learn more about a new exciting service for early childhood programs called W.H.E.E.L.S. - Where Healthy Eyes and Ears Lead to Success. This new program is a mobile vision and hearing screening program for preschools that includes education for students, parents and teachers on the importance of starting school with healthy vision and hearing. Directors will have the opportunity to enroll their schools in this program offered free through generous support from the Richmond Eye and Ear Foundation. This event will be held at Reveille Weekday School, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, Virginia, 23221 on Thursday, August 12, 2010, from 6 - 8 PM. This event, including dinner, is free for all Richmond area program directors. To participate, you must register by August 9, 2010 by contacting Mickie McInnis at 804-646-3331.
Shining Stars Early Childhood Conference - July 14 - 16, 2010

Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today’s Children, Virginia’s Seventh Annual Early Childhood Conference, will be held July 14 - 16, 2010 at the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The conference is sponsored collaboratively by the Partnership for People with Disabilities, the Virginia Head Start Collaboration Office, Virginia Division for Early Childhood and the Virginia Department of Education’s Training/Technical Assistance Centers.

This statewide conference will focus on how to work collaboratively to support quality inclusive practices for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with and without disabilities. To learn more about this conference visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/uploadedFiles/Dionne5182010110347am/SS_brochure_2010-2.pdf.

To register for this conference visit: http://spedsurvey.gmu.edu/snap/shining_stars_2009/.

New Family Day Home Regulations - July 1, 2010

This past spring, the Virginia Department of Social Services Division of Licensing Programs offered forums throughout the state to review the changes in the Licensed Family Day Home regulations, effective July 1, 2010.

Changes in those regulations include increased training hours, increased health and safety standards, documentation for completing references and orientation for assistants, additional medication requirements and documentation for a variety of administrative tasks associated with operating a family day home.

To review or print these new regulations visit:

To review the PowerPoint used at the forums this spring that highlights the changes visit:

Developing Child Portfolios - Presented by the Richmond Public Library

Come join the library on Wednesday, August 4, 2010 from 6:00 - 8:00 PM at the Ginter Park Library, 1200 Westbrook Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23227 for a free workshop on how to start assembling portfolios for the children in your class. A child portfolio is compiled throughout the year and is an important support tool to use in parent/teacher conferences. Bring pictures, art work and observation notes to help you build portfolio pages. This make-it-take-it program is for professionals that work with children birth - school age.

To register contact Krista Dawson, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Richmond Public Library, (804) 646-4147. Participants will receive training certificates for annual training hours. Please bring a snack or dinner with you. Workshop space is limited to 25 participants.

Additional Drop-side Cribs Recalled - CPSC Crib Information Center

While cribs, bassinets and play yards are the safest places to place a baby to sleep, nearly 9 million cribs and numerous bassinets and play yards have been recalled since 2007. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) technical staff has determined drop-side cribs generally have a tendency to be less structurally sound than cribs with four fixed sides. Drop-side hardware is prone to break, deform or experience other problems during normal or foreseeable use. The older the crib, the more problems can be expected. When drop-side hardware breaks or deforms, the drop-side can detach in one or more corners from the crib. If an infant or toddler rolls or moves into the space created by a partially detached drop side, the child can become entrapped or wedged between the crib mattress and the drop side and suffocate. Infants can also strangle in the “V” shape formed by a drop side that detaches in an upper corner. Visit the CPSC Crib Information Center at http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html to verify that the cribs you use are safe.
What is Nature Deficit Disorder?

Nature Deficit Disorder is not a medical condition; it is a description of the human costs of alienation from nature. This alienation damages children and shapes adults, families and communities. There are solutions, though, and they’re right in our own backyards. The term Nature Deficit Disorder was coined by author Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods* to explain how our societal disconnect with nature is affecting today's children. Louv says we have entered a new era of suburban sprawl that restricts outdoor play, in conjunction with a plugged-in culture that draws kids indoors. But, as Louv presents in his book, the agrarian, nature-oriented existence hard-wired into human brains isn’t quite ready for the over-stimulating environment we’ve carved out for ourselves. Some children adapt. Those who don’t develop the symptoms of Nature Deficit Disorder, which include attention problems, obesity, anxiety and depression.

How do we prevent Nature Deficit Disorder?

- **Understand What Drives Creativity** - Studies show that nature fosters creativity and calms children struggling with information overload. Water, trees, bushes, flowers, woods and streams are the best kind of toys because unlike action figures or collectables, trees and bushes can be anything when left up to the imagination.

- **Allow for Controlled Risk** - In a media-saturated culture where parents hear about a new child abduction almost every day, how do we let our kids wander freely outside? Try going outside with your kids while also letting them experience unencumbered time to roam. Don’t forget to weigh the risk of what happens to a child’s imagination and inner life if we keep her indoors because we are afraid.

- **Focus on Nature-Oriented Camps and Schools** - Many parents enroll their kids in summer camps, many of which focus on technology and indoor classes. Before you sign your children up for computer summer school, consider camps that focus on unstructured time in the environment, where children are free to use all their senses and play as they wish.

- **Schedule Outdoor Time** - In a parenting culture chock-full of driving from one structured activity to another, it’s time to stop and literally smell the roses. If that means writing “gone outside” on the family calendar each week or (ideally) each day, then get that pen out! There are lots of great activities for getting outside, even in your own backyard.

Getting children outside in nature is also good for their health.

An increase in sedentary indoor lifestyles has contributed to a corresponding increase in chronic conditions in childhood, such as childhood obesity and obesity-related diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease; asthma; sleep apnea; vitamin D deficiency; attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); and depression.

At the same time, a growing body of evidence suggests that outdoor activity in natural environments may directly benefit children’s health. These benefits include:

- building and maintaining healthy bones and muscles
- reducing the risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- reducing feelings of depression and anxiety, and
- promoting psychological well-being

Article information provided by [www.education.com](http://www.education.com) and Suz Lipman’s article *Important New Research Links Nature with Children’s Health*, May 2010.

**Important Notice to ALL Early Childhood Professionals**

Due to statewide budget restrictions, the Professional Development Catalog for Child Care Professionals published by the Virginia Department of Social Services will no longer be mailed to you. The Fall 2010 catalog will soon be available in the beginning of August. This catalog includes class schedules, registration information and additional professional development information. Visit [http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.cgi](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.cgi) (click on Professional Development Catalog). For more information, please call (804) 523-2298 or email VDSPclasses@ccwa.vccs.edu.