



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School Readiness: The Language of Learning

Children need many skills to be ready to succeed in school. Literacy and language development is a critical element to help children be prepared. A child's ability to understand, communicate and synthesize language is a main predictor of his or her academic, social, and life success. The School Readiness Program implements and sponsors a wide variety of activities that help children learn this important skill and benefit from language rich environments.

The School Readiness Program has had the wonderful opportunity to plan, develop, and coordinate services and activities supporting early literacy development with parents, children and staff. Our program addresses four key elements of language development.

- Reading: which allows children to access information and learning
- Writing: which allows children to communicate with the future, and
- Speaking and Listening: which allows children to connect with people all over the world.

Teaching children to use and enjoy the power of language is a shared responsibility. The School Readiness Program provides a "Literacy Specialist" in the early care and education programs, within the five targeted School Readiness school communities. The specialist visits classrooms bi-monthly, and supports the early childhood educators by implementing fresh and exciting language curriculum. The Program has initiated and supported activities that engage children and support and encourage language acquisition through fun activities.

Children thoroughly enjoyed one of the literacy activities beginning with the story Stone Soup. The children prepared the soup while the story was shared and read to them. Children were delighted to hear the story, prepare the ingredients, and eat the soup. By connecting their language acquisition with a fun and sensory activity, children were engaged and interested. When children are excited with an activity, better retention and attention to learning occurs. The School Readiness Program has become a valued resource for both parents and early childhood educators, by providing successful hands-on experiences for children and family members. Anecdotal records demonstrate that parents report growth in their children's vocabularies and improved interest and motivation to read and experience the joy of language.

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Living in the information age is making the importance of reading a critical skill for children. Information surrounds us and is at our fingertips, presented at an incredible rate. The task of reading to children is more important than ever before. The goal of School Readiness is to create lifetime readers, not just school time readers.

The second annual KinderCamp programs demonstrated another example of the School Readiness Program focus on literacy. This Summer Kindergarten Transition Program supports children and families as they prepare for the next step in their educational process. During the week long 2006 Program, enrolled children became "Backyard Detectives" experiencing authentic and meaningful learning activities revolving around a nature and science theme. In collaboration with Kindergarten teachers from Rosedale, Chapman and Oakdale Heights Elementary Schools, School Readiness Program staff developed the curriculum, lesson plans, and materials. The theme-based curriculum is aligned with CA State learning standards and addresses the needs of individual students. In concert with the curriculum and learning activities, classroom environments that are planned, purposeful, and playful are supported and sustained.

Schools that participated in the collaboration will benefit from enhanced classroom supplies and materials, as well as a group of brand new kindergarteners who already have a week of school under their belts. Children who participated in KinderCamp learned basic school rules and guidelines, practiced new skills, were immersed in a language rich environment, met new friends and classmates, and enjoyed a smooth and gentle transition in to school.

Parents of children attending KinderCamp had the opportunity to meet daily with parent educators, learn about their unique and valuable role as their child's first teacher. They were able to create educational materials and games to use in the home, meet other parents in their child's grade, and benefit from a gentle and supportive transition in to being the parent of a school-aged child.

Please feel free to contact the School Readiness Program staff at (530) 879-7450 if you would like more information about the literacy and transition programs, or would like to visit. You too will be engaged with the experience and will find yourself immersed and caught up in children's enthusiasm and excitement for learning.

About First 5 Butte County Children and Families Commission

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 Butte County Children and Families Commission distributes approximately \$2 million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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