

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to school readiness; creating
3 s. 411.01, F.S.; establishing the Florida
4 Partnership for School Readiness for purposes
5 of administering the School Readiness Program;
6 providing legislative intent; providing for the
7 program to be phased in; providing
8 responsibilities and duties of the partnership;
9 providing membership and meeting requirements;
10 providing that members are subject to certain
11 ethics requirements; authorizing partnership
12 members to be reimbursed for per diem and
13 travel expenses; providing for hiring certain
14 employees; requiring that the partnership
15 prepare a system for measuring school
16 readiness; specifying objectives to be measured
17 by such system; requiring that the partnership
18 adopt performance standards and measures;
19 requiring the partnership to make
20 recommendations to the Governor and the State
21 Board of Education; requiring reports to the
22 Legislature; authorizing the partnership to
23 adopt rules; requiring the establishment of
24 school readiness coalitions; specifying
25 services to be provided by the coalitions;
26 requiring coalitions to develop reimbursement
27 schedules; providing for designation and
28 approval of a fiscal agent; providing for
29 grants to be provided to coalitions to develop
30 school readiness plans; providing requirements
31 for school readiness plans; providing for

1 incentive bonuses to be awarded; requiring
2 evaluations and an annual report; providing
3 eligibility criteria; providing for parental
4 choice with respect to child care arrangements
5 and payments; providing for evaluation and
6 performance measures; providing requirements
7 for funding school readiness programs;
8 requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis
9 and Government Accountability to make certain
10 reports; providing responsibility for
11 implementation; creating s. 229.567, F.S.;
12 requiring the Department of Education to adopt
13 the school readiness uniform screening
14 developed by the Florida Partnership for School
15 Readiness and to require their use by the
16 school districts; amending s. 216.136, F.S.;
17 creating the School Readiness Program
18 Estimating Conference; requiring the conference
19 to develop estimates and forecasts of students
20 eligible for school readiness programs;
21 specifying the principals of the conference;
22 amending s. 414.026, F.S.; requiring the
23 chairperson of the Florida Partnership for
24 School Readiness to serve on the WAGES Program
25 State Board of Directors; amending s. 624.91,
26 F.S.; providing legislative intent that the
27 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation work
28 cooperatively with the School Readiness
29 Program; amending s. 411.222, F.S.; abolishing
30 the State Coordinating Council for Early
31 Childhood Services; establishing the State

1 Coordinating Council for School Readiness
2 Programs; requiring the State Coordinating
3 Council for Early Childhood Services to submit
4 a final report; repealing s. 411.222(4), F.S.,
5 relating to the State Coordinating Council for
6 Early Childhood Services; amending s. 240.115,
7 F.S.; requiring that the Commissioner of
8 Education establish a career path for
9 school-readiness-related professions;
10 authorizing the Governor to transfer funds;
11 requiring that the Florida Partnership for
12 School Readiness recommend appropriations and
13 positions; authorizing the Inter-University
14 Consortium of Child and Family Studies to
15 develop a model to demonstrate best practices;
16 providing that the act does not impede the
17 state's ability to receive federal funds;
18 providing an appropriation; providing effective
19 dates.

20
21 WHEREAS, the voters of the State of Florida, in the
22 November 1998 General Election, amended Section 1 of Article
23 IX of the State Constitution to state that it is "a paramount
24 duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education
25 of all children residing within its borders," and

26 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the primacy of
27 parents as their children's first teachers and the importance
28 of children entering the education system ready to learn, and

29 WHEREAS, the Legislature seeks to assist parents by
30 providing opportunities for the state's at-risk
31 birth-to-kindergarten population to enhance their chances for

1 educational success by participating in quality school
2 readiness programs that can better prepare them for school,
3 NOW, THEREFORE,

4
5 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

6
7 Section 1. Section 411.01, Florida Statutes, is
8 created to read:

9 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness;
10 school readiness coalitions.--

11 (1) SHORT TITLE.--This section may be cited as the
12 "School Readiness Act."

13 (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

14 (a) The Legislature recognizes that school readiness
15 programs increase children's chances of achieving future
16 educational success and becoming productive members of
17 society. It is the intent of the Legislature that such
18 programs be developmentally appropriate, research-based,
19 involve parents as their child's first teacher, serve as
20 preventive measures for children at risk of future school
21 failure, enhance the educational readiness of eligible
22 children, and support family education. Each school readiness
23 program shall provide the elements necessary to prepare
24 at-risk children for school, including health screening and
25 referral and an appropriate educational program.

26 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that school
27 readiness programs be operated on a full-day, year-round basis
28 to the maximum extent possible to enable parents to work and
29 become financially self-sufficient.

30 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that school
31 readiness programs not exist as isolated programs, but build

1 upon existing services and work in cooperation with other
2 programs for young children, and that school readiness
3 programs be coordinated and funding integrated to achieve full
4 effectiveness.

5 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that the
6 administrative staff at the state level for school readiness
7 programs be kept to the minimum necessary to carry out the
8 duties of the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, as the
9 school readiness programs are to be locally designed,
10 operated, and managed, with the Florida Partnership for School
11 Readiness adopting a system for measuring school readiness;
12 developing school readiness program performance standards,
13 outcome measurements, and data design and review; and
14 approving and reviewing local school readiness coalitions and
15 plans.

16 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature that
17 appropriations for combined school readiness programs shall
18 not be less than the programs would receive in any fiscal year
19 on an uncombined basis.

20 (f) It is the intent of the Legislature that the
21 school readiness program coordinate and operate in conjunction
22 with the district school systems. However, it is also the
23 intent of the Legislature that the school readiness program
24 not be construed as part of the system of free public schools
25 but rather as a separate program for children under the age of
26 kindergarten eligibility, funded separately from the system of
27 free public schools, utilizing a mandatory sliding fee scale,
28 and providing an integrated and seamless system of school
29 readiness services for the state's birth-to-kindergarten
30 population.

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1 (g) It is the intent of the Legislature that the
2 federal child care income tax credit be preserved for school
3 readiness programs.

4 (3) SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM.--The school readiness
5 program shall be phased in on a coalition-by-coalition basis.
6 Each coalition's school readiness program shall have available
7 to it funding from all the coalition's early education and
8 child care programs that are funded with state, federal,
9 lottery, or local funds, including but not limited to Florida
10 First Start programs, Even-Start literacy programs,
11 prekindergarten early intervention programs, Head Start
12 programs, programs offered by public and private providers of
13 child care, migrant prekindergarten programs, Title I
14 programs, subsidized child care programs, and teen parent
15 programs, together with any additional funds appropriated or
16 obtained for purposes of this section. These programs and
17 their funding streams shall be components of the coalition's
18 integrated school readiness program, with the goal of
19 preparing children for success in school.

20 (4) FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS.--

21 (a) There is created the Florida Partnership for
22 School Readiness with responsibility for adopting and
23 maintaining coordinated programmatic, administrative, and
24 fiscal policies and standards for all school readiness
25 programs, while allowing a wide range of programmatic
26 flexibility and differentiation. The partnership is assigned
27 to the Executive Office of the Governor for administrative
28 purposes.

29 (b)1. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness
30 shall include the Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee,
31 the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of Children and

1 Family Services, the Secretary of Health, the chairperson of
2 the Child Care Executive Partnership Board, and the
3 chairperson of the WAGES Program State Board of Directors.

4 2. The partnership shall also include 10 members of
5 the public who shall be business, community, and civic leaders
6 in the state who are not elected to public office. These
7 members and their families must not be providers in the early
8 education and child care industry. The members must be
9 geographically and demographically representative of the
10 state. Each member shall be appointed by the Governor. Eight
11 of the members shall be appointed from a list of 10 nominees,
12 of which five must be submitted by the President of the Senate
13 and five must be submitted by the Speaker of the House of
14 Representatives. Members shall be appointed to 4-year terms of
15 office. However, of the initial appointees, two shall be
16 appointed to 1-year terms, two shall be appointed to 2-year
17 terms, three shall be appointed to 3-year terms, and three
18 shall be appointed to 4-year terms. The members of the
19 partnership shall elect a chairperson annually from the
20 nongovernmental members of the partnership. Any vacancy on the
21 partnership shall be filled in the same manner as the original
22 appointment.

23 (c) The partnership shall meet at least quarterly but
24 may meet as often as it deems necessary to carry out its
25 duties and responsibilities. Members of the partnership shall
26 participate without proxy at the quarterly meetings. The
27 partnership may take official action by a majority vote of the
28 members present at any meeting at which a quorum is present.
29 The partnership shall hold its first meeting by October 1,
30 1999.

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1 (d) Members of the partnership are subject to the
2 ethics provisions in part III of chapter 112, and no member
3 may derive any financial benefit from the funds administered
4 by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.

5 (e) Members of the partnership shall serve without
6 compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem
7 and travel expenses incurred in the performance of their
8 duties as provided in s. 112.061, and reimbursement for other
9 reasonable, necessary, and actual expenses.

10 (f) For the purposes of tort liability, the members of
11 the partnership and its employees shall be governed by s.
12 768.28.

13 (g) The partnership shall appoint an executive
14 director to serve at its pleasure who shall perform the duties
15 assigned to him or her by the partnership. The executive
16 director shall be responsible for hiring, subject to the
17 approval of the partnership, all employees and staff members,
18 who shall serve under his or her direction and control.

19 (h) For purposes of administration of the Federal
20 Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. Parts 98 and 99,
21 the partnership may be designated by the Governor as the Lead
22 Agency, and if so designated shall comply with the Lead Agency
23 responsibilities pursuant to federal law.

24 (i) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness is
25 the principal organization responsible for the enhancement of
26 school readiness for the state's children, and shall:

27 1. Be responsible for the prudent use of all public
28 and private funds in accordance with all legal and contractual
29 requirements.

30 2. Provide final approval and periodic review of
31 coalitions and plans.

1 3. Provide leadership for enhancement of school
2 readiness in this state by aggressively establishing a unified
3 approach to the state's efforts toward enhancement of school
4 readiness. In support of this effort, the partnership may
5 develop and implement specific strategies that address the
6 state's school readiness programs.

7 4. Safeguard the effective use of federal, state,
8 local, and private resources to achieve the highest possible
9 level of school readiness for the state's children.

10 5. Provide technical assistance to coalitions.

11 6. Assess gaps in service.

12 7. Provide technical assistance to counties that form
13 a multicounty coalition.

14 8.a. By July 1, 2000, adopt a system for measuring
15 school readiness that provides objective data regarding the
16 expectations for school readiness, and establish a method for
17 collecting the data and guidelines for using the data. The
18 measurement, the data collection, and the use of the data must
19 serve the statewide school readiness goal. The criteria for
20 determining which data to collect should be the usefulness of
21 the data to state policymakers and local program
22 administrators in administering programs and allocating state
23 funds, and must include the tracking of school readiness
24 system information back to individual school readiness
25 programs to assist in determining program effectiveness.

26 b. By December 31, 2000, the partnership shall also
27 adopt a system for evaluating the performance of students
28 through the third grade to compare the performance of those
29 who participated in school readiness programs with the
30 performance of students who did not participate in school
31

1 readiness programs in order to identify strategies for
2 continued successful student performance.

3 9. By June 1, 2000, develop and adopt performance
4 standards and outcome measures.

5 10. In consultation with the Postsecondary Education
6 Planning Commission and the Education Standards Commission,
7 assess the expertise of public and private Florida
8 postsecondary institutions in the areas of infant and toddler
9 developmental research; the related curriculum of training,
10 career, and academic programs; and the status of articulation
11 among those programs. Based on this assessment, the
12 partnership shall provide recommendations to the Governor and
13 the Legislature for postsecondary program improvements to
14 enhance school readiness initiatives.

15 (j) The partnership may adopt rules necessary to
16 administer the provisions of this section which relate to
17 preparing and implementing the system for school readiness,
18 collecting data, approving local school readiness coalitions
19 and plans, providing a method whereby a coalition can serve
20 two or more counties, awarding incentives to coalitions, and
21 issuing waivers.

22 (k) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall
23 have all powers necessary to carry out the purposes of this
24 section, including, but not limited to, the power to receive
25 and accept grants, loans, or advances of funds from any public
26 or private agency and to receive and accept from any source
27 contributions of money, property, labor, or any other thing of
28 value, to be held, used, and applied for the purposes of this
29 section.

30 (l) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall
31 be an independent, nonpartisan body and shall not be

1 identified or affiliated with any one agency, program, or
2 group.

3 (m) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall
4 have a budget, shall be financed through an annual
5 appropriation made for this purpose in the General
6 Appropriations Act, and shall be subject to compliance audits
7 and annual financial audits by the Auditor General.

8 (n) The partnership shall coordinate the efforts
9 toward school readiness in this state and provide independent
10 policy analyses and recommendations to the Governor, the State
11 Board of Education, and the Legislature.

12 (o) By July 1, 2000, the partnership shall prepare and
13 submit to the State Board of Education a system for measuring
14 school readiness. The system must include a uniform screening,
15 which shall provide objective data regarding the following
16 expectations for school readiness which shall include, at a
17 minimum:

18 1. The child's immunizations and other health
19 requirements as necessary, including appropriate vision and
20 hearing screening and examinations.

21 2. The child's physical development.

22 3. The child's compliance with rules, limitations, and
23 routines.

24 4. The child's ability to perform tasks.

25 5. The child's interactions with adults.

26 6. The child's interactions with peers.

27 7. The child's ability to cope with challenges.

28 8. The child's self-help skills.

29 9. The child's ability to express his or her needs.

30 10. The child's verbal communication skills.

31 11. The child's problem-solving skills.

1 12. The child's following of verbal directions.

2 13. The child's demonstration of curiosity,
3 persistence, and exploratory behavior.

4 14. The child's interest in books and other printed
5 materials.

6 15. The child's paying attention to stories.

7 16. The child's participation in art and music
8 activities.

9 17. The child's ability to identify colors, geometric
10 shapes, letters of the alphabet, numbers, and spatial and
11 temporal relationships.

12 (p) The partnership shall prepare a plan for
13 implementing the system for measuring school readiness in such
14 a way that all children in this state will undergo the uniform
15 screening established by the partnership when they enter
16 kindergarten. Children who enter public school for the first
17 time in first grade must undergo a uniform screening approved
18 by the partnership for use in first grade. Because children
19 with disabilities may not be able to meet all of the
20 identified expectations for school readiness, the plan for
21 measuring school readiness shall incorporate mechanisms for
22 recognizing the potential variations in expectations for
23 school readiness when serving children with disabilities and
24 shall provide for communities to serve children with
25 disabilities.

26 (q) The partnership shall recommend to the Governor,
27 the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of
28 Education rules, and revisions or repeal of rules, which would
29 increase the effectiveness of programs that prepare children
30 for school.

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1 (r) The partnership shall conduct studies and planning
2 activities related to the overall improvement and
3 effectiveness of school-readiness measures.

4 (s) By February 1, 2000, the partnership shall work
5 with the Office of the Comptroller for electronic funds
6 transfer.

7 (t) By February 1, 2000, the partnership shall present
8 to the Legislature a plan for combining funding streams for
9 school readiness programs into a School Readiness Trust Fund.

10 (u) The partnership shall establish procedures for
11 performance-based budgeting in school readiness programs.

12 (v) The partnership shall submit an annual report of
13 its activities to the Governor, the executive director of the
14 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation, the President of the Senate,
15 the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the minority
16 leaders of both houses of the Legislature. In addition, the
17 partnership's reports and recommendations shall be made
18 available to the State Board of Education, other appropriate
19 state agencies and entities, district school boards, central
20 agencies for child care, and county health departments. The
21 annual report must provide an analysis of school readiness
22 activities across the state, including the number of children
23 who were served in the programs and the number of children who
24 were ready for school.

25 (w) The partnership shall work with school readiness
26 coalitions to increase parents' training for and involvement
27 in their children's preschool education and to provide family
28 literacy activities and programs.

29
30 To ensure that the system for measuring school readiness is
31 comprehensive and appropriate statewide, as the system is

1 developed and implemented, the partnership must consult with
2 representatives of district school systems, providers of
3 public and private child care, health care providers, large
4 and small employers, experts in education for children with
5 disabilities, and experts in child development.

6 (5) CREATION OF SCHOOL READINESS COALITIONS.--

7 (a) School readiness coalitions.--

8 1. If a coalition's plan would serve less than 400
9 birth-to-kindergarten age children, the coalition must either
10 join with another county to form a multi-county coalition,
11 enter an agreement with a fiscal agent to serve more than one
12 coalition, or demonstrate to the partnership its ability to
13 effectively and efficiently implement its plan as a
14 single-county coalition and meet all required performance
15 standards and outcome measures.

16 2. Each coalition shall have at least 18 but not more
17 than 25 members and such members must include the following:

18 a. A Department of Children and Family Services
19 district administrator.

20 b. A district superintendent of schools.

21 c. A regional workforce development board chair or
22 director, where applicable.

23 d. A county health department director or his or her
24 designee.

25 e. A children's services council or juvenile welfare
26 board chair or executive director, if applicable.

27 f. A child care licensing agency head.

28 g. One member appointed by a Department of Children
29 and Family Services district administrator.

30 h. One member appointed by a board of county
31 commissioners.

- 1 i. One member appointed by a district school board.
2 j. A central child care agency administrator.
3 k. A Head Start director.
4 l. A representative of private child care providers.
5 m. A representative of faith-based child care
6 providers.

7
8 More than one-third of the coalition members must be from the
9 private sector, and neither they nor their families may earn
10 an income from the early education and child care industry. To
11 meet this requirement a coalition must appoint additional
12 members from a list of nominees presented to the coalition by
13 a chamber of commerce or economic development council within
14 the geographic area of the coalition.

15 3. No member of a coalition may appoint a designee to
16 act in his or her place. A member may send a representative to
17 coalition meetings, but that representative will have no
18 voting privileges.

19 4. The school readiness coalition shall replace the
20 district interagency coordinating council required under s.
21 230.2305.

22 5. Members of the coalition are subject to the ethics
23 provisions in part III of chapter 112.

24 6. Multicounty coalitions shall include representation
25 from each county.

26 7. The terms of all appointed members of the coalition
27 must be staggered.

28 (b) Program participation.--The school readiness
29 program shall be established for children from birth to 5
30 years of age or until the child enters kindergarten. The
31 program shall be administered by the school readiness

1 coalition. Within funding limitations, the school readiness
2 coalition, along with all providers, shall make reasonable
3 efforts to accommodate the needs of children for extended-day
4 and extended-year services without compromising the quality of
5 the program.

6 (c) Program expectations.--

7 1. The school readiness program must meet the
8 following expectations:

9 a. The program must prepare preschool children to
10 enter kindergarten ready to learn, as measured by criteria
11 established by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.

12 b. The program must provide extended-day and
13 extended-year services to the maximum extent possible to meet
14 the needs of parents who work.

15 c. There must be coordinated staff development and
16 teaching opportunities.

17 d. There must be expanded access to community services
18 and resources for families to help achieve economic
19 self-sufficiency.

20 e. There must be a single point of entry and unified
21 waiting list.

22 f. As long as funding or eligible populations do not
23 decrease, the program must serve at least as many children as
24 were served prior to implementation of the program.

25 g. There must be a community plan to address the needs
26 of all eligible children.

27 h. The program must meet all state licensing
28 guidelines, where applicable.

29 2. The school readiness coalition must implement a
30 comprehensive program of readiness services that enhance the
31 cognitive, social, and physical development of children to

- 1 achieve the performance standards and outcome measures
2 specified by the partnership. At a minimum, these programs
3 must contain the following elements:
- 4 a. Developmentally appropriate curriculum.
 - 5 b. A character development program to develop basic
6 values.
 - 7 c. An age-appropriate assessment of each child's
8 development.
 - 9 d. A pretest administered to children when they enter
10 a program and a posttest administered to children when they
11 leave the program.
 - 12 e. An appropriate staff-to-child ratio.
 - 13 f. A healthful and safe environment.
 - 14 g. A resource and referral network to assist parents
15 in making an informed choice.
- 16 (d) Implementation.--
- 17 1. The school readiness program is to be phased in.
18 Until the coalition implements its plan, the county shall
19 continue to receive the services identified in subsection (3)
20 through the various agencies that would be responsible for
21 delivering those services under current law. Plan
22 implementation is subject to approval of the coalition and the
23 plan by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.
 - 24 2. Each school readiness coalition shall develop a
25 plan for implementing the school readiness program to meet the
26 requirements of this section and the performance standards and
27 outcome measures established by the partnership. The plan must
28 include a written description of the role of the program in
29 the coalition's effort to meet the first state education goal,
30 readiness to start school, including a description of the plan
31 to involve the prekindergarten early intervention programs,

1 Head Start Programs, programs offered by public or private
2 providers of child care, preschool programs for children with
3 disabilities, programs for migrant children, Title I programs,
4 subsidized child care programs, and teen parent programs. The
5 plan must also demonstrate how the program will ensure that
6 each 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded
7 school readiness program receives scheduled activities and
8 instruction designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten
9 ready to learn. Prior to implementation of the program, the
10 school readiness coalition must submit the plan to the
11 partnership for approval. The partnership may approve the
12 plan, reject the plan, or approve the plan with conditions.
13 The plan shall be reviewed, revised, and approved biennially.

14 3. The plan for the school readiness program must
15 include the following minimum standards and provisions:

16 a. A sliding fee scale establishing a co-payment for
17 parents based upon their ability to pay, which is the same for
18 all program providers, to be implemented and reflected in each
19 program's budget.

20 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,
21 registered, religious-exempt, or school-based programs to be
22 provided to parents.

23 c. Instructional staff who have completed the training
24 course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who
25 have additional training or credentials as required by the
26 respective program provider. The plan must provide a method
27 for assuring the qualifications of all personnel in all
28 program settings.

29 d. Specific eligibility priorities for children within
30 the coalition's county pursuant to subsection (6).

31

1 e. Performance standards and outcome measures
2 established by the partnership or alternatively, standards and
3 outcome measures to be used until such time as the partnership
4 adopts such standards and outcome measures.

5 f. Reimbursement rates that have been developed by the
6 coalition.

7 g. Systems support services, including a central
8 agency, child care resource and referral, eligibility
9 determinations, training of providers, and parent support and
10 involvement.

11 h. Direct enhancement services to families and
12 children. System support and direct enhancement services shall
13 be in addition to payments for the placement of children in
14 school readiness programs.

15 i. A business plan, which must include the contract
16 with a school readiness agent if the coalition is not a
17 legally established corporate entity. Coalitions may contract
18 with other coalitions to achieve efficiency in multiple-county
19 services, and such contracts may be part of the coalition's
20 business plan.

21 j. Strategies to meet the needs of unique populations,
22 such as migrant workers.

23
24 As part of the plan, the coalition may request the Governor to
25 apply for a waiver to allow the coalition to administer the
26 Head Start Program to accomplish the purposes of the school
27 readiness program. If any school readiness plan can
28 demonstrate that specific statutory goals can be achieved more
29 effectively by using procedures that require modification of
30 existing rules, policies, or procedures, a request for a
31 waiver to the partnership may be made as part of the plan.

1 Upon review, the partnership may grant the proposed
2 modification.

3 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching
4 certificate may provide support and supervision to other staff
5 in the school readiness program.

6 5. The coalition may not implement its plan until it
7 submits the plan to and receives approval from the
8 partnership. Once the plan has been approved, the plan and the
9 services provided under the plan shall be controlled by the
10 coalition rather than by the state agencies or departments.
11 The plan shall be reviewed and revised as necessary, but at
12 least biennially.

13 6. The following statutes will not apply to local
14 coalitions with approved plans: ss. 125.901(2)(a)3.,
15 228.061(1) and (2), 230.2306, 411.204, 411.221, 411.222, and
16 411.232. To facilitate innovative practices and to allow local
17 establishment of school readiness programs, a school readiness
18 coalition may apply to the Governor and Cabinet for a waiver
19 of, and the Governor and Cabinet may waive, any of the
20 provisions of ss. 230.2303, 230.2305, 230.23166, 402.3015,
21 411.223, and 411.232, if the waiver is necessary for
22 implementation of the coalition's school readiness plan.

23 7. Two or more counties may join for the purpose of
24 planning and implementing a school readiness program.

25 8. A coalition may, subject to approval of the
26 partnership as part of the coalition's plan, receive
27 subsidized child care funds for all children eligible for any
28 federal subsidized child care program and be the provider of
29 the program services.

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1 9. Coalitions are authorized to enter into multiparty
2 contracts with multi-county service providers in order to meet
3 the needs of unique populations such as migrant workers.

4 (e) Reimbursement rate.--Each coalition shall develop
5 a reimbursement rate schedule that encompasses all programs
6 funded by that coalition. The reimbursement rate schedule
7 must take into consideration the relevant market rate, must
8 include the projected number of children to be served, and
9 must be submitted to the partnership for information. Informal
10 childcare arrangements shall be reimbursed at not more than 50
11 percent of the rate developed for family childcare.

12 (f) Requirements relating to fiscal agents.--If the
13 local coalition is not a legally established corporate entity,
14 the coalition must designate a fiscal agent, which may be a
15 public entity or a private nonprofit organization. The fiscal
16 agent shall be required to provide financial and
17 administrative services pursuant to a contract or agreement
18 with the school readiness coalition. The fiscal agent may not
19 provide direct early education or child care services,
20 however, a fiscal agent may provide such services upon written
21 request of the coalition to the partnership and upon the
22 approval of such request by the partnership. The cost of the
23 financial and administrative services shall be negotiated
24 between the fiscal agent and the school readiness coalition.
25 If the fiscal agent is a provider of early education and care
26 programs, the contract must specify that the fiscal agent will
27 act on policy direction from the coalition and will not
28 receive policy direction from its own corporate board
29 regarding disbursement of coalition funds. The fiscal agent shall
30 disburse funds in accordance with the approved coalition
31 school readiness plan and based on billing and disbursement

1 procedures approved by the partnership. The fiscal agent must
2 conform to all data-reporting requirements established by the
3 partnership.

4 (g) Coalition initiation grants; incentive bonuses.--

5 1. School readiness coalitions that are approved by
6 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness by January 1,
7 2000, shall be eligible for a \$50,000 initiation grant to
8 support the school readiness coalition in developing its
9 school readiness plan.

10 2. School readiness coalitions that are approved by
11 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness by March 1, 2000,
12 shall be eligible for a \$25,000 initiation grant to support
13 the school readiness coalition in developing its school
14 readiness plan.

15 3. School readiness coalitions that have their plans
16 approved by July 1, 2000, shall receive funding from the
17 Florida Partnership for School Readiness in fiscal year
18 2000-2001, and each year thereafter.

19 4. Upon approval by the Florida Partnership for School
20 Readiness of any coalition's plan that clearly shows
21 enhancement in the quality and standards of the school
22 readiness program without diminishing the number of children
23 served in the program, the partnership shall award the
24 coalition an incentive bonus, subject to appropriation.

25 5. In fiscal year 2000-2001, and each year thereafter,
26 any increases in funding for school readiness programs shall
27 be administered through school readiness coalitions.

28 6. In fiscal year 2001-2002, the Florida Partnership
29 for School Readiness shall request proposals from government
30 agencies and nonprofit corporations for the development and
31

1 operation of a school readiness coalition in each county that
2 does not have an approved coalition by March 1, 2001.

3 (h) Evaluation and annual report.--Each school
4 readiness coalition shall conduct an evaluation of the
5 effectiveness of the school readiness program, including
6 performance standards and outcome measures, and shall provide
7 an annual report and fiscal statement to the Florida
8 Partnership for School Readiness. This report must conform to
9 the content and format specifications set by the Florida
10 Partnership for School Readiness. The partnership must include
11 an analysis of the coalition reports in its annual report.

12 (6) PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY.--The school readiness program
13 shall be established for children under the age of
14 kindergarten eligibility. Priority for participation in the
15 school readiness program shall be given to children who meet
16 one or more of the following criteria:

17 (a) Children under the age of kindergarten eligibility
18 who are:

19 1. Children determined to be at risk of abuse,
20 neglect, or exploitation and who are currently clients of the
21 Children and Family Services Program Office of the Department
22 of Children and Family Services.

23 2. Children at risk of welfare dependency, including
24 economically disadvantaged children, children of participants
25 in the WAGES program, children of migrant farmworkers, and
26 children of teen parents.

27 3. Children of working families whose family income
28 does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

29 (b) Three-year-old children and 4-year-old children
30 who may not be economically disadvantaged but who have
31 disabilities, have been served in a specific part-time or

1 combination of part-time exceptional education programs with
2 required special services, aids, or equipment, and were
3 previously reported for funding part time with the Florida
4 Education Finance Program as exceptional students.

5 (c) Economically disadvantaged children, children with
6 disabilities, and children at risk of future school failure,
7 from birth to 4 years of age, who are served at home through
8 home visitor programs and intensive parent education programs
9 such as the Florida First Start Program.

10 (d) Children who meet federal and state requirements
11 for eligibility for the migrant preschool program but who do
12 not meet the criteria of economically disadvantaged.

13
14 An "economically disadvantaged" child means a child whose
15 family income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty
16 level. Notwithstanding any change in a family's economic
17 status, but subject to additional family contributions in
18 accordance with the sliding fee scale, a child who meets the
19 eligibility requirements upon initial registration for the
20 program shall be considered eligible until the child reaches
21 kindergarten age.

22 (7) PARENTAL CHOICE.--

23 (a) The school readiness program shall provide
24 parental choice pursuant to a purchase service order that
25 ensures, to the maximum extent possible, flexibility in school
26 readiness programs and payment arrangements. According to
27 federal regulations requiring parental choice, a parent may
28 choose an informal child-care arrangement. The purchase order
29 must bear the name of the beneficiary and the program provider
30 and, when redeemed, must bear the signature of both the
31 beneficiary and an authorized representative of the provider.

1 (b) If it is determined that a provider has provided
2 any cash to the beneficiary in return for receiving the
3 purchase order, the coalition or its fiscal agent shall refer
4 the matter to the Division of Public Assistance Fraud for
5 investigation.

6 (c) The Office of the Comptroller shall establish an
7 electronic transfer system for the disbursement of funds in
8 accordance with this subsection. School readiness coalitions
9 shall fully implement the electronic funds transfer system
10 within 2 years after plan approval unless a waiver is obtained
11 from the partnership.

12 (8) STANDARDS; OUTCOME MEASURES.--All publicly funded
13 school readiness programs shall be required to meet the
14 performance standards and outcome measures developed and
15 approved by the partnership. The Office of Program Policy
16 Analysis and Government Accountability shall provide
17 consultation to the partnership in the development of the
18 measures and standards. These performance standards and
19 outcome measures shall be adopted by June 1, 2000, and shall
20 be applicable on a state-wide basis.

21 (9) FUNDING; SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM.--

22 (a) It is the intent of this section to establish an
23 integrated and quality seamless service delivery system for
24 all publicly funded early education and child care programs
25 operating in this state.

26 (b) All state funds budgeted for a county for the
27 programs specified in subsection (3), along with the pro rata
28 share of the state administrative costs of those programs in
29 the amount as determined by the partnership, all federal funds
30 and required local matching funds for a county for programs
31 specified in subsection (3), and any additional funds

1 appropriated or obtained for purposes of this section, shall
2 be transferred for the benefit of the coalition for
3 implementation of its plan, including the hiring of staff to
4 effectively operate the coalition's school readiness program.
5 As part of plan approval and periodic plan review, the
6 partnership shall require that administrative costs be kept to
7 the minimum necessary for efficient and effective
8 administration of the plan, but total administrative
9 expenditures shall not exceed 5 percent unless specifically
10 waived by the partnership. The partnership shall annually
11 report to the Legislature any problems relating to
12 administrative costs.

13 (c) By February 15, 2000, the partnership shall
14 present to the Legislature recommendations for combining
15 funding streams for school readiness programs into a School
16 Readiness Trust Fund. These recommendations must include
17 recommendations for the inclusion or noninclusion of
18 prekindergarten disabilities programs and funding.

19 (d) The partnership shall annually distribute all
20 eligible funds as block grants to assist coalitions in
21 integrating services and funding to develop a quality service
22 delivery system. Subject to appropriation, the partnership may
23 also provide financial awards to coalitions demonstrating
24 success in merging and integrating funding streams to serve
25 children and school readiness programs.

26 (e) State funds appropriated for the school readiness
27 program may not be used for the construction of new facilities
28 or the purchase of buses. By February 15, 2000, the
29 partnership shall present to the Legislature recommendations
30 for providing necessary transportation services for school
31 readiness programs.

1 (f) All cost savings and all revenues received through
2 a mandatory sliding fee scale shall be used to help fund the
3 local school readiness program.

4 (10) REPORTS.--The Office of Program Policy Analysis
5 and Government Accountability shall assess the implementation,
6 efficiency, and outcomes of the school readiness program and
7 report its findings to the President of the Senate and the
8 Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 1, 2002.
9 Subsequent reviews shall be conducted at the direction of the
10 Joint Legislative Auditing Committee.

11 (11) CONFLICTING PROVISIONS.--In the event of a
12 conflict between the provisions of this section and federal
13 requirements, the federal requirements shall control.

14 Section 2. Section 229.567, Florida Statutes, is
15 created to read:

16 229.567 School readiness uniform screening.--The
17 Department of Education shall adopt the school readiness
18 uniform screening developed by the Florida Partnership for
19 School Readiness, and shall require that all school districts
20 administer the kindergarten uniform screening to each
21 kindergarten student in the district school system upon the
22 student's entry into kindergarten. Children who enter public
23 school for the first time in first grade must undergo a
24 uniform screening approved by the partnership for use in first
25 grade.

26 Section 3. Subsection (11) is added to section
27 216.136, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, to read:

28 216.136 Consensus estimating conferences; duties and
29 principals.--

30 (11) SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM ESTIMATING CONFERENCE.--

31 (a) Duties.--

1 1. The School Readiness Program Estimating Conference
2 shall develop such estimates and forecasts of the number of
3 individuals eligible for school readiness programs in
4 accordance with the standards of eligibility established by
5 state or federal statute or administrative rule as the
6 conference determines are needed to support the state
7 planning, budgeting, and appropriations processes.

8 2. In addition, the School Readiness Program
9 Estimating Conference shall estimate the unduplicated count of
10 children who are eligible for services under the school
11 readiness program.

12 3. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall
13 provide information on needs and waiting lists for school
14 readiness program services requested by the School Readiness
15 Program Estimating Conference or individual conference
16 principals in a timely manner.

17 (b) Principals.--The Executive Office of the Governor,
18 the Director of Economic and Demographic Research, and
19 professional staff who have forecasting expertise from the
20 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, the Department of
21 Children and Family Services, the Department of Education, the
22 Senate, and the House of Representatives, or their designees,
23 are the principals of the School Readiness Program Estimating
24 Conference. The principal representing the Executive Office of
25 the Governor shall preside over sessions of the conference.

26 Section 4. Subsection (2) of section 414.026, Florida
27 Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

28 414.026 WAGES Program State Board of Directors.--

29 (2)(a) The board of directors shall be composed of the
30 following members:
31

- 1 1. The Commissioner of Education, or the
2 commissioner's designee.
- 3 2. The Secretary of Children and Family Services.
- 4 3. The Secretary of Health.
- 5 4. The Secretary of Labor and Employment Security.
- 6 5. The Secretary of Community Affairs.
- 7 6. The Secretary of Transportation, or the secretary's
8 designee.
- 9 7. The director of the Office of Tourism, Trade, and
10 Economic Development.
- 11 8. The chairperson of the Florida Partnership for
12 School Readiness.
- 13 ~~9.8.~~ The president of the Enterprise Florida workforce
14 development board, established under s. 288.9620.
- 15 ~~10.9.~~ The chief executive officer of the Florida
16 Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, established under s.
17 288.1226.
- 18 ~~11.10.~~ Nine members appointed by the Governor, as
19 follows:
- 20 a. Six members shall be appointed from a list of ten
21 nominees, of which five must be submitted by the President of
22 the Senate and five must be submitted by the Speaker of the
23 House of Representatives. The list of five nominees submitted
24 by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of
25 Representatives must each contain at least three individuals
26 employed in the private sector, two of whom must have
27 management experience. One of the five nominees submitted by
28 the President of the Senate and one of the five nominees
29 submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives must
30 be an elected local government official who shall serve as an
31 ex officio nonvoting member.

1 b. Three members shall be at-large members appointed
2 by the Governor.

3 c. Of the nine members appointed by the Governor, at
4 least six must be employed in the private sector and of these,
5 at least five must have management experience.

6
7 The members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed to
8 4-year, staggered terms. Within 60 days after a vacancy occurs
9 on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy of a member
10 appointed from the nominees submitted by the President of the
11 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the
12 remainder of the unexpired term from one nominee submitted by
13 the President of the Senate and one nominee submitted by the
14 Speaker of the House of Representatives. Within 60 days after
15 a vacancy of a member appointed at-large by the Governor
16 occurs on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy for
17 the remainder of the unexpired term. The composition of the
18 board must generally reflect the racial, gender, and ethnic
19 diversity of the state as a whole.

20 (b) The board of directors shall annually elect a
21 chairperson from among the members appointed by the Governor.
22 The board of directors shall meet at least once each quarter.
23 A member appointed by the Governor may not authorize a
24 designee to attend a meeting of the board in place of the
25 member. The Governor may remove an appointed member for cause,
26 and an absence from three consecutive meetings results in
27 automatic removal, unless the member is excused by the
28 chairperson.

29 (c) Members of the board shall serve without
30 compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem
31 and travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

1 Section 5. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section
2 624.91, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

3 624.91 The Florida Healthy Kids Corporation Act.--

4 (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

5 (a) The Legislature finds that increased access to
6 health care services could improve children's health and
7 reduce the incidence and costs of childhood illness and
8 disabilities among children in this state. Many children do
9 not have comprehensive, affordable health care services
10 available. It is the intent of the Legislature that the
11 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation provide comprehensive health
12 insurance coverage to such children. The corporation is
13 encouraged to cooperate with any existing health service
14 programs funded by the public or the private sector and to
15 work cooperatively with the Florida Partnership for School
16 Readiness.

17 Section 6. Subsection (4) of section 411.222, Florida
18 Statutes, is amended to read:

19 411.222 Intraagency and interagency coordination;
20 creation of offices; responsibilities; memorandum of
21 agreement; creation of coordinating council;
22 responsibilities.--

23 (Substantial rewording of subsection. See

24 s. 411.222(4), F.S., for present text.)

25 (4) STATE COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL READINESS
26 PROGRAMS.--

27 (a) Creation; intent.--The State Coordinating Council
28 for School Readiness Programs is established to ensure
29 coordination among the programs that serve preschool children
30 in order to support the first state education goal, readiness
31 to start school; to facilitate communication, cooperation, and

1 the maximum use of resources; and to promote high standards
2 for all programs that serve preschool children in this state.

3 It is the intent of the Legislature that the coordinating
4 council be an independent nonpartisan body and not be
5 identified or affiliated with any one agency, program, or
6 group.

7 (b) Membership.--The council shall be composed of the
8 following 15 members:

9 1. The seven current members of the 1998-1999 State
10 Coordinating Council Executive Committee.

11 2. Eight additional members, appointed by the
12 executive committee, including a representative of each of the
13 following: subsidized child care programs; prekindergarten
14 early intervention programs; Head Start programs; health care
15 programs; private providers; faith-based providers; programs
16 for children with disabilities; and parents of preschool
17 children.

18 (c) Term.--The State Coordinating Council for School
19 Readiness Programs shall terminate on July 1, 2002.

20 (d) Organization.--

21 1. The council shall adopt internal organizational
22 procedures or bylaws necessary for the efficient operation of
23 the council. The council may establish committees that are
24 responsible for conducting specific council programs and
25 activities.

26 2. The council shall have a budget and be financed
27 through an annual appropriation made for this purpose in the
28 General Appropriations Act. Council members are entitled to
29 reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses as provided in
30 s. 112.061 while carrying out official business of the
31 council. When appropriate, parent representatives shall

1 receive a stipend for child care costs incurred while
2 attending council meetings. For administrative purposes only,
3 the council is assigned to the Florida Partnership for School
4 Readiness.

5 3. The coordinating council shall hold quarterly
6 meetings that are open to the public, and the public shall be
7 given the opportunity to comment at each such meeting. The
8 coordinating council shall notify persons of the date, time,
9 and place of each quarterly meeting upon request.

10 (e) Duties.--The coordinating council shall recommend
11 to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness methods for
12 coordinating public and private school readiness programs and
13 procedures to facilitate communication, cooperation, and the
14 maximum use of resources to achieve the first state education
15 goal, readiness to start school. In addition, the council
16 shall:

17 1. Advise the Florida Partnership for School Readiness
18 concerning criteria for grant proposal guidelines, the review
19 of plans and proposals, and eligibility for services of school
20 readiness programs.

21 2. Recommend to the Florida Partnership for School
22 Readiness methods to increase the involvement of public and
23 private partnerships in school readiness programs in order to
24 maximize the availability of federal funds and to effectively
25 use available resources through cooperative funding and
26 coordinated services.

27 (f) Reporting requirements.--The coordinating council
28 shall submit its final report to the Florida Partnership for
29 School Readiness by July 1, 2002.

30 Section 7. Effective July 1, 2002, subsection (4) of
31 section 411.222, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

1 Section 8. Paragraph (e) is added to subsection (1) of
2 section 240.115, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, to read:

3 240.115 Articulation agreement; acceleration
4 mechanisms.--

5 (1)

6 (e) The Commissioner of Education, in conjunction with
7 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, the
8 Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, and the Education
9 Standards Commission, shall conduct a statewide assessment to
10 determine the extent and nature of instruction for those who
11 work or are training to work in the fields of child care and
12 early childhood education, as well as an assessment of the
13 market demand for individuals trained at various levels. Based
14 on this assessment, the Articulation Coordinating Committee
15 shall establish an articulated career path for school
16 readiness-related professions, which shall lead from
17 entry-level employment in child care and early childhood
18 education to a baccalaureate degree. The career path shall
19 provide for the articulation of:

20 1. Vocational credit to college credit for associate
21 in science degrees;

22 2. Credit earned in associate in science or associate
23 in arts degree programs to credit in baccalaureate degree
24 programs;

25 3. Credit awarded by public and private institutions;
26 and

27 4. Credit for experiential learning associated with
28 minimum training requirements for employment. The Articulation
29 Coordinating Committee shall ensure that the articulation of
30 such credit does not jeopardize the receiving institution's
31 accreditation status.

1
2 Before the printing of the catalog for the fall semester 2002,
3 the articulation agreement must guarantee the statewide
4 articulation of appropriate coursework as established in the
5 career path.

6 Section 9. In accordance with the provisions of
7 chapter 216, Florida Statutes, the Governor is authorized to
8 transfer funds from the relevant state departments or agencies
9 to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to fund local
10 school readiness coalitions during the phase-in period.

11 Section 10. The Florida Partnership for School
12 Readiness shall recommend to the Legislature by February 15,
13 2000, whether the current appropriations and positions for
14 Department of Children and Family Services contract managers
15 and Department of Education Prekindergarten Early Intervention
16 and School Readiness personnel should be phased out, or
17 transferred in whole or in part to the partnership to provide
18 for school readiness program staffing. If, before such time as
19 its own staff is in place, the Florida Partnership for School
20 Readiness needs staff assistance in reviewing and approving
21 local coalition plans, the Department of Children and Family
22 Services and the Department of Education shall provide such
23 staff assistance.

24 Section 11. Subject to appropriation by the
25 Legislature, the Inter-University Consortium on Child and
26 Family Studies is authorized to design and develop the concept
27 for a child care and development center, which may be used as
28 a model for demonstrating best practices in children's
29 readiness for school.

30 Section 12. This act is not intended to impede or
31 curtail the state's ability to receive federal funds.

1 Section 13. The recurring sum of \$330,000 is
2 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Executive
3 Office of the Governor for the purpose of implementing this
4 act in fiscal year 1999-2000.

5 Section 14. Except as otherwise expressly provided in
6 this act, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

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