

By Senator Kirkpatrick

5-9-99

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to school readiness; creating
3 the "School Readiness Act"; providing
4 legislative intent; creating s. 411.01, F.S.;
5 creating the Florida Partnership for School
6 Readiness, Inc.; defining school readiness
7 programs; creating the School Readiness
8 Governing Board to operate as the board of
9 directors of the School Readiness Partnership;
10 providing responsibilities and duties of the
11 partnership and of the board; providing
12 membership of the governing board and meeting
13 requirements; providing for reimbursement for
14 expenses; providing that the partnership is not
15 a unit of state government but is subject to
16 public records and public meeting requirements;
17 providing for hiring certain employees;
18 providing powers of the corporation; requiring
19 the partnership to prepare a system for
20 measuring school readiness; specifying the
21 objectives that are to be measured; requiring
22 the partnership to contract with an independent
23 entity to evaluate the measurement system;
24 requiring the partnership to make
25 recommendations to specified entities;
26 requiring annual reports; authorizing the
27 partnership to adopt rules; providing for
28 voluntary establishment of county school
29 readiness coalitions; specifying services to be
30 provided by coalitions; providing for the
31 designation and approval of a fiscal agent;

1 providing for coalition grants to finance the
2 development of school readiness plans;
3 providing requirements for such plans;
4 providing for the award of incentive bonuses;
5 providing for parental choice; providing for
6 evaluation and performance measures; providing
7 responsibility for implementation; creating s.
8 411.05, F.S.; requiring the Department of
9 Education to adopt the school readiness
10 screening instruments developed by the School
11 Readiness Partnership and to require their use
12 by the school districts; creating s. 411.06,
13 F.S.; recognizing the nationwide Parents as
14 Teachers Program; establishing the Florida
15 Parents as Teachers Program under the
16 jurisdiction of the School Readiness
17 Partnership; providing program requirements;
18 providing that federal requirements control in
19 case of conflict; exempting family child care
20 providers from increased standards; providing
21 for a School Readiness Program Needs Assessment
22 Conference; amending s. 414.026, F.S.;
23 requiring the chair of the Florida Partnership
24 for School Readiness, Inc., to serve on the
25 WAGES Program State Board of Directors;
26 amending s. 624.91, F.S.; requiring the Healthy
27 Kids Corporation to work cooperatively with the
28 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc.;
29 abolishing the State Coordinating Council for
30 Early Childhood Services; repealing s.
31 411.222(4), F.S., relating to the State

1 Coordinating Council for Early Childhood
2 Services; providing appropriations; providing
3 for special readiness grants to be awarded in
4 pilot programs in two counties; providing an
5 effective date.

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7 WHEREAS, the bridge to opportunity for every child must
8 be anchored in a healthy body and a healthy mind and must lead
9 to the child's readiness to learn in school, and

10 WHEREAS, it is widely acknowledged that entering school
11 ready to learn is crucial to a child's success both in school
12 and in life, and

13 WHEREAS, the state's system of public education could
14 better perform its mission of educating its K-12 students if
15 more students enter school healthy and ready to learn, and

16 WHEREAS, as emphasized by the Governor, the President
17 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
18 Representatives, a child's health in both body and mind is
19 essential to the child's ability to learn, and

20 WHEREAS, the state can make great strides to improve
21 school readiness by addressing child care, child health, and
22 school readiness education in one single, accountable
23 continuum, NOW, THEREFORE,

24
25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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27 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "School
28 Readiness Act." This act is not intended to impede or curtail
29 the state's ability to receive federal funds.

30 Section 2. Section 411.01, Florida Statutes, is
31 created to read:

1 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc.;
2 school readiness coalitions.--

3 (1) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

4 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature that the early
5 childhood health care, child care, and education of children
6 from birth to 5 years of age or until the child attains school
7 readiness, whichever is later, become a top priority.

8 (b) Recognizing that high-quality early childhood
9 health care, child care, and education experiences increase
10 children's chances of educational success and reduce the need
11 for costly future intervention and remediation, it is the
12 intent of the Legislature that all children in Florida, from
13 birth until they are ready for school, have access to quality
14 early childhood health care, child care, and education to
15 enhance their readiness to succeed in school.

16 (c) Recognizing that parents are responsible for the
17 early childhood health care, child care, and education of
18 their children, but also recognizing that the condition of
19 children in Florida must be improved, it is the intent of the
20 Legislature that local communities offer assistance to
21 families to improve the early childhood health care, child
22 care, and education of children under 5 years of age and the
23 school readiness of all children who enter the state's public
24 school system. High-quality early childhood experiences and
25 care should be provided with a minimum of governmental
26 interference.

27 (d) The Legislature finds that for families to move
28 toward and maintain economic self-sufficiency, this state must
29 have an efficient way for these families to access quality
30 early childhood health care, child care, and education
31 services. The Legislature recognizes that significant benefits

1 will accrue to children and families who have efficient access
2 to quality early childhood health care, child care, and
3 education arrangements.

4 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature that all early
5 childhood health care, child care, and education programs and
6 services that serve the children of this state in the first 5
7 years of life or until the child attains school readiness,
8 whichever is later, are considered school readiness programs.
9 The Legislature finds that despite the efforts of hundreds of
10 thousands of state residents and increased collaboration among
11 service providers, services for young children remain
12 uncoordinated, uneven in quality, and inaccessible to many. It
13 is the intent of the Legislature that a true continuum of
14 high-quality, coordinated, and comprehensive early childhood
15 health care, child care, and education be available to all
16 children from birth to 5 years of age or until the child
17 attains school readiness, whichever is later.

18 (f) The Legislature recognizes that recent research on
19 brain development emphasizes the critical importance of the
20 first years of life in children's emotional, social, and
21 cognitive development, and that these scientific discoveries
22 create an opportunity to apply the findings to all programs
23 and services for children from birth to 5 years of age. The
24 Legislature also recognizes that the period of time from birth
25 to 3 years of age is an optimal time for learning in the areas
26 of motor development, emotional control, vision, social
27 attachment, vocabulary, second language, and logic.

28 (g) Publicly funded early education and child care
29 programs are defined as prekindergarten early intervention
30 programs, Head Start programs, programs offered by public or
31 private providers of child care, preschool programs for

1 children with disabilities, programs for migrant children,
2 Title I programs, subsidized child care programs, teen parent
3 programs, and other services.

4 (2) SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS.--For purposes of this
5 chapter, all early childhood health care, child care, and
6 education programs that are funded with state, federal,
7 lottery, or local public funds and that provide services to
8 children from birth to 5 years of age or until the child
9 attains school readiness, whichever is later, are school
10 readiness programs and must work to achieve their part of the
11 goal of children entering school with healthy bodies and
12 healthy minds, ready to succeed in school.

13 (3) SCHOOL READINESS GOVERNING BOARD.--

14 (a) There is created the School Readiness Governing
15 Board, which is the board of directors of the Florida
16 Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., and which shall adopt
17 and maintain coordinated programmatic, administrative, and
18 fiscal policies and standards for all school readiness
19 programs, while allowing a wide range of programmatic
20 flexibility and differentiation.

21 (b)1. In order to receive funds appropriated to the
22 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., the School
23 Readiness Governing Board must include as members the
24 Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of
25 Children and Family Services, the chair of the WAGES Program
26 State Board of Directors, and the chair of the Florida Council
27 of 100.

28 2. The governing board must also include 10 members of
29 the public who are business, community, and civic leaders in
30 the state, who are not elected to public office, and who do
31 not earn their income in the early education and child care

1 industry. The members must be geographically and
2 demographically representative of the state. Each member shall
3 be appointed by the Governor. Eight of the members shall be
4 appointed from a list of 10 nominees, of which 5 must be
5 submitted by the President of the Senate and 5 must be
6 submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
7 Members shall be appointed to 4-year terms of office. However,
8 of the initial appointees, two shall be appointed to 1-year
9 terms, two shall be appointed to 2-year terms, three shall be
10 appointed to 3-year terms, and three shall be appointed to
11 4-year terms. The members of the governing board shall elect a
12 chairperson annually. Any vacancy on the governing board shall
13 be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

14 (c) The governing board shall meet quarterly and may
15 meet as often as it considers necessary for carrying out its
16 duties and responsibilities. Members of the governing board
17 shall participate without proxy at the quarterly meetings. The
18 governing board may take official action by a majority vote of
19 the members present at any meeting at which a quorum is
20 present. The governing board shall hold its first meeting by
21 August 1, 1999.

22 (d) Members of the governing board are subject to the
23 ethics provisions in part III of chapter 112, and no member
24 may derive any financial benefit from the funds administered
25 by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc.

26 (e) Members of the governing board shall serve without
27 compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem
28 and travel expenses incurred in the performance of their
29 duties as provided in s. 112.061.

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1 (f) For the purposes of tort liability, the members of
2 the governing board and its employees are governed by s.
3 768.28.

4 (g) The governing board shall appoint an executive
5 director to serve at its pleasure who shall perform the duties
6 assigned to him or her by the governing board. The executive
7 director shall hire and supervise other employees and staff
8 members, as needed.

9 (h) The governing board has complete fiscal control
10 over the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., and
11 is responsible for all corporate operations. The governing
12 board is responsible for the prudent use of all public and
13 private funds and shall ensure that the use of such funds is
14 in accordance with all legal and contractual requirements.

15 (4) FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS, INC.
16 (SCHOOL READINESS PARTNERSHIP).--

17 (a) There is created the Florida Partnership for
18 School Readiness, Inc. (School Readiness Partnership), a
19 public-private nonprofit organization that must be registered,
20 incorporated, organized, and operated in compliance with
21 chapter 617. The School Readiness Partnership is not a unit or
22 entity of state government. The Legislature determines,
23 however, that public policy dictates that the School Readiness
24 Partnership must operate in the most open and accessible
25 manner consistent with its public purpose. To this end, the
26 Legislature specifically declares that the School Readiness
27 Partnership is subject to chapter 119, relating to public
28 records, and to those provisions of chapter 286 which relate
29 to public meetings and records.

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1 (b) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
2 Inc., shall establish one or more corporate offices, at least
3 one of which must be located in Leon County.

4 (c) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
5 Inc., is the principal organization responsible for the
6 enhancement of school readiness for the state's children, and
7 shall work actively with each school readiness coalition to
8 achieve its mission. The School Readiness Governing Board
9 shall provide leadership for the enhancement of school
10 readiness in this state by aggressively establishing a unified
11 approach to state efforts toward the enhancement of school
12 readiness; by aggressively seeking potential new school
13 readiness programs; and by aggressively assisting in the
14 retention and expansion of effective existing school readiness
15 programs. In support of this effort, the Florida Partnership
16 for School Readiness, Inc., may develop and implement specific
17 programs or strategies that address the creation, expansion,
18 and preservation of this state's school readiness programs,
19 including recommendations to move agency staff from the
20 Department of Education or the Department of Children and
21 Family Services to the partnership. This approach must ensure
22 the effective use of federal, state, local, and private
23 resources in reducing the need for school readiness programs.

24 (d) The governing board and staff of the Florida
25 Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., shall have specific
26 responsibility for implementing policies, monitoring progress
27 toward achievement of the established goals, assessing gaps in
28 current early childhood health care, child care, and education
29 statewide, recommending quality standards and monitoring their
30 implementation, assisting the formation of and approving plans
31 of school readiness coalitions created in this act,

1 facilitating local implementation, providing technical
2 assistance to school readiness coalitions, and recommending
3 common eligibility requirements for similar programs while
4 seeking a diversity of programs to meet the varieties of need,
5 within the established guidelines.

6 (e) The School Readiness Partnership shall have all
7 powers necessary to carry out the purposes of this section,
8 including, but not limited to, the power to receive and accept
9 grants, loans, or advances of funds from any public or private
10 agency and to receive and accept from any source contributions
11 of money, property, labor, or any other thing of value, to be
12 held, used, and applied for the purposes set forth in this
13 section.

14 (f) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
15 Inc., shall be an independent nonpartisan body and may not be
16 identified or affiliated with any one agency, program, or
17 group.

18 (g) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
19 Inc., shall have a budget, shall be financed through an annual
20 appropriation made for this purpose in the General
21 Appropriations Act, and is subject to compliance audits and
22 annual financial audits by the Auditor General.

23 (h) The partnership shall coordinate the efforts
24 toward school readiness in this state and provide independent
25 policy analyses and recommendations to the Governor, the State
26 Board of Education, and the Legislature.

27 (i) The partnership shall prepare and submit to the
28 State Board of Education a system for measuring school
29 readiness. The system must include a screening instrument or
30 instruments that provide objective data regarding the
31 following expectations for school readiness:

- 1 1. The child's necessary immunizations and other
2 health requirements.
- 3 2. The child's display of physical development
4 appropriate for kindergarten.
- 5 3. The child's compliance with rules, limitations, and
6 routines.
- 7 4. The child's successful engagement in kindergarten
8 tasks.
- 9 5. The child's demonstration of appropriate
10 interactions with adults.
- 11 6. The child's demonstration of appropriate
12 interactions with peers.
- 13 7. The child's effective coping with challenges and
14 frustrations.
- 15 8. The child's demonstration of appropriate self-help
16 skills.
- 17 9. The child's ability to express his needs
18 appropriately.
- 19 10. The child's demonstration of verbal communication
20 skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.
- 21 11. The child's demonstration of problem-solving
22 skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.
- 23 12. The child's following of verbal directions.
- 24 13. The child's demonstration of curiosity,
25 persistence, and exploratory behavior.
- 26 14. The child's demonstration of an interest in books
27 and other printed materials.
- 28 15. The child's paying attention to stories.
- 29 16. The child's participation in art and music
30 activities.
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1 (j) The partnership shall prepare a plan for
2 implementing the system for measuring school readiness in such
3 a way that all children in this state have the opportunity to
4 undergo the screening in the year before their entry into
5 kindergarten. Participants in publicly funded school readiness
6 programs and children whose family income is at or below 150
7 percent of the federal poverty level shall undergo the
8 screening at no cost. Other children may undergo the screening
9 if their parents pay a nominal fee. The plan must include a
10 way to make the screening instrument and the training required
11 to administer it available to public and private providers of
12 preschool and child care programs, and a way to make the
13 screening available to children who do not participate in such
14 programs. Because children who have disabilities may not be
15 able to meet all of the identified expectations for school
16 readiness, the plan for measuring school readiness must
17 incorporate mechanisms for recognizing the potential
18 variations in expectations for school readiness when serving
19 children who have disabilities and may provide for communities
20 to serve children who have disabilities.

21 (k) The partnership shall establish a method for
22 collecting data from the screening instrument and shall
23 establish guidelines for using the data so that the
24 measurement, the data collection, and the use of the data
25 serve the statewide goal that all children will be ready for
26 school. The criteria for determining which data to collect
27 must be the usefulness of the data to state policymakers and
28 program administrators in administering programs and
29 allocating state funds.

30 (l) The partnership shall contract with an independent
31 entity for an evaluation of the measurement system. The

1 evaluation must provide the information that local and state
2 agencies, the Governor, and the Legislature need to provide
3 for the effective administration of programs that serve
4 preschool children. The evaluation must provide information
5 that will assist providers of private preschool and child care
6 programs in assessing the success of preschool and child care
7 programs and making decisions about improving program services
8 to prepare children for school.

9 (m) The partnership shall recommend to the Governor,
10 the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of
11 Education rules and revisions or repeal of rules that will
12 increase the effectiveness of programs that prepare children
13 for school.

14 (n) The partnership shall conduct studies and planning
15 activities related to the overall improvement and
16 effectiveness of school-readiness measures.

17 (o) The partnership shall work with the Department of
18 Management Services to arrange for electronic funds transfer.

19 (p) The partnership shall recommend to the Legislature
20 the feasibility of combining funding streams for school
21 readiness programs into a School Readiness Trust Fund.

22 (q) The partnership shall submit an annual report of
23 its activities to the Governor, the executive director of the
24 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation, the President of the Senate,
25 the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the minority
26 leaders of both houses of the Legislature. In addition, the
27 partnership's reports and recommendations shall be made
28 available to the State Board of Education, other appropriate
29 state agencies and entities, district school boards, central
30 agencies for child care, and county public health units.

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1 To ensure that the system for measuring school readiness is
2 comprehensive and appropriate statewide, as the system is
3 being developed and implemented, the partnership must consult
4 with representatives of district school systems, providers of
5 public and private child care, health care providers, large
6 and small employers, experts in education for children with
7 disabilities, and experts in child development.

8 (r) The partnership may adopt rules necessary to
9 administer the provisions of this section relating to
10 preparation and implementation of the system for school
11 readiness, data collection, approving local coalition plans,
12 providing a method whereby a coalition could serve two or more
13 counties, awarding incentives to coalitions, and contracting
14 for an evaluation.

15 (5) CREATION OF OPTIONAL PROGRAM; EXEMPTIONS.--The
16 school readiness program consisting of publicly funded
17 programs listed in paragraph (1)(g) is established. The school
18 readiness program is an optional program.

19 (a) School readiness coalitions.--

20 1.a. Each school readiness coalition must consist of
21 at least 9 and no more than 15 members. Two members shall be
22 appointed by the district school board, two members shall be
23 appointed by the county commission, and two members shall be
24 appointed by the Department of Children and Family Services
25 district administrator. The six members thus appointed shall
26 appoint the remaining members of the coalition.

27 b. School readiness coalition membership shall
28 include, in addition to private-sector business leaders, the
29 local public and private leaders in health care, education,
30 disabilities, and child welfare systems in each county. Three
31 members of the coalition must be administrators from each of

1 the following entities: The central agency for child care, the
2 district school board, and the Head Start program. School
3 readiness coalition membership must include representatives
4 from programs serving children in the early education and
5 child care programs, must include a representative from the
6 Department of Health, and may include representatives from
7 organizations such as Children's Services Councils, Central
8 Agencies for Child Care, Healthy Start Coalitions, district
9 school boards, child care licensing boards, local WAGES
10 Coalitions, Head Start, municipal and county governments, the
11 Department of Children and Family Services, the county public
12 health unit, and chambers of commerce. Thirty percent of the
13 coalition members must be from the private sector.

14 2. The school readiness coalition will replace the
15 district interagency coordinating council in any county where
16 a school readiness program is implemented.

17 (b) Program eligibility.--The school readiness program
18 shall be established for children from birth to 5-1/2 years of
19 age. The program shall consist of the programs listed in
20 paragraph (1)(g), shall be administered by the school
21 readiness coalition, and shall receive state funds. Within
22 funding limitations, the school readiness coalition, along
23 with all providers, shall make reasonable efforts to
24 accommodate the needs of children for extended-day and
25 extended-year services without compromising the quality of the
26 program.

27 (c) Standards; outcome measures.--

28 1. Each publicly funded school readiness program must
29 meet the following performance standards and outcome measures
30 developed by the Department of Education and the Department of
31 Children and Family Services:

1 a. It must help prepare preschool children to enter
2 kindergarten ready to learn, as measured by criteria
3 established by the School Readiness Partnership or, in the
4 absence of such criteria, by the School Readiness Checklist of
5 the Department of Education.

6 b. It must provide extended-day and extended-year
7 services to the maximum extent possible.

8 c. It must offer coordinated staff development and
9 teaching opportunities.

10 d. It must expand access to community services and
11 resources that assist families in achieving economic
12 self-sufficiency.

13 e. It must have a single point of entry and a unified
14 waiting list.

15 f. If funding remains constant, it must serve at least
16 as many children as were served before the program was
17 implemented.

18 2. Each participating publicly funded school readiness
19 program must implement a comprehensive program of children and
20 family services which enhances the cognitive and physical
21 development of children to achieve the performance standards
22 and outcome measures specified in paragraph (a). At a minimum,
23 each program must contain the following elements:

24 a. Developmentally appropriate curriculum.

25 b. An appropriate staff-to-child ratio, as required by
26 the respective participating programs.

27 c. A healthy and safe environment.

28 d. A resource and referral network to assist parents
29 in making an informed choice under s. 402.27.

30 (d) Implementation.--
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1 1. The school readiness program may be implemented in
2 any county by a school readiness coalition with agreement of
3 the district school board and the Department of Children and
4 Family Services district, and with approval of the School
5 Readiness Partnership. Approval by the School Readiness
6 Partnership must be based on a plan of implementation prepared
7 and submitted by the school readiness coalition.

8 2. Each school readiness coalition shall develop a
9 plan for implementing the school readiness program to meet the
10 requirements of this section. The plan must include a written
11 description of the role of the program in the district effort
12 to meet the first state education goal, readiness to start
13 school, including a description of the plan to involve
14 prekindergarten early intervention programs; Head Start
15 programs; programs offered by public or private providers of
16 child care; preschool programs for children who have
17 disabilities; programs for migrant children; Title I programs;
18 subsidized child care programs; and teen parent programs. The
19 plan must also demonstrate how the program will ensure that
20 each 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded
21 early education and child care program receives scheduled
22 activities and instruction designed to prepare children to
23 enter kindergarten ready to learn. Before implementing the
24 program, the school readiness coalition must submit the plan
25 to the School Readiness Partnership for approval. The plan
26 shall be reviewed and revised as necessary, but not less than
27 every 3 years.

28 3. The plan for the school readiness program must
29 include the following minimum standards and provisions:
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1 a. A sliding fee scale that is the same for all
2 programs must be implemented and reflected in each program's
3 budget.

4 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,
5 registered, religious exempt, or school-based programs to be
6 provided to parents.

7 c. Instructional staff who have completed the training
8 course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who
9 have additional training or credentials as required by the
10 respective programs.

11 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching
12 certificate may provide support and supervision to other staff
13 in the early education and child care program.

14 (e) Reimbursement rate.--The school readiness
15 coalition shall develop a reimbursement rate schedule that
16 encompasses all publicly funded early education and child care
17 programs and complies with applicable state and federal laws
18 and regulations. The reimbursement rate schedule must include
19 the projected number of children to be served and must be
20 submitted to the School Readiness Partnership for approval.
21 Informal child care arrangements shall be reimbursed at not
22 more than 50 percent of the rate developed for family child
23 care. A school readiness program may not expend more than 15
24 percent of program funds in any one fiscal year for
25 administrative costs.

26 (f) Requirements relating to fiscal agents.--The
27 fiscal agent may be a public entity or a private nonprofit
28 organization. A private, for-profit organization may serve as
29 a fiscal agent if at least 50 percent of the organization's
30 governing board members live in the coalition's service area.
31 The fiscal agent shall provide all administrative and direct

1 funding services as determined by the school readiness
2 coalition. The cost of these services shall be negotiated
3 between the fiscal agent and the school readiness coalition.
4 The fiscal agent shall be responsible for monitoring all
5 providers to ensure that coalition funds are expended in the
6 manner and for the purpose required by the funding source.
7 Funds from the School Readiness Trust Fund may not be paid to
8 a provider unless the provider agrees to allow the fiscal
9 agent access to fulfill its monitoring responsibilities.

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

11 1. Each school readiness coalition that is approved by
12 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., by October
13 1, 1999, is eligible for a \$25,000 initiation grant to support
14 the school readiness coalition in developing its school
15 readiness plan. Upon approval by the School Readiness
16 Partnership of any coalition's plan that clearly shows
17 enhancement in the quality and standards of the school
18 readiness programs without diminishing the number of children
19 served in the programs, the School Readiness Partnership shall
20 award the coalition an incentive bonus on a per-student-served
21 basis, subject to appropriation.

22 2. Each school readiness coalition that has its plan
23 approved by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
24 Inc., by March 1, 2000, shall receive incentive bonus funding
25 on a per-student basis, with a minimum amount of \$25,000 per
26 coalition. Funds must be made available to a coalition 30 days
27 after its plan is approved.

28 3. In fiscal year 2001-2002, and each year thereafter,
29 any increases in funding for the prekindergarten early
30 intervention program and the subsidized child care program
31 shall be administered through school readiness coalitions, if

1 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., approves
2 this method of funding.

3 (h) Parental choice; payment arrangement.--The school
4 readiness program must be provided in a manner that ensures,
5 to the maximum extent possible, parental choice through
6 flexibility in early education and child care arrangements and
7 payment arrangements. Payment arrangements must conform to all
8 federal and state laws that govern the respective
9 participating programs.

10 (i) Evaluation and annual report.--Each school
11 readiness coalition shall conduct an evaluation of the
12 effectiveness of the school readiness program, including
13 performance standards and outcome measures, and shall provide
14 an annual report and fiscal statement to the School Readiness
15 Partnership, the Governor, and the President of the Senate and
16 the Speaker of the House of Representatives for review by the
17 Legislature. This report must conform to the content and
18 format specifications set by the School Readiness Partnership.

19 (7) CONFLICTING PROVISIONS.--If there is a conflict
20 between this section and federal requirements, the federal
21 requirements control.

22 Section 3. Section 411.05, Florida Statutes, is
23 created to read:

24 411.05 School readiness screening instruments.--The
25 Department of Education shall adopt the school readiness
26 screening instruments developed by the Florida Partnership for
27 School Readiness, Inc., and shall require that:

28 (1) All school districts administer the kindergarten
29 screening instrument to each kindergarten student in the
30 district school system.

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1 (2) Each school district that operates preschool
2 programs administer the age-appropriate screening instrument
3 to each preschool student in the district's preschool
4 programs.

5 Section 4. Section 411.06, Florida Statutes, is
6 created to read:

7 411.06 Florida Parents as Teachers Program.--

8 (1) The Legislature recognizes that the nationwide
9 Parents as Teachers Program has demonstrated that it is a
10 cost-effective program that produces outstanding results and
11 long-term cost savings. There is established the Florida
12 Parents as Teachers Program under the jurisdiction of the
13 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., which shall
14 make funding for the program available to each school
15 readiness coalition.

16 (2) The purposes of the Florida Parents as Teachers
17 Program are:

18 (a) To provide parents with the latest information on
19 child development from birth to 5 years of age and suggest
20 learning opportunities, based on the latest brain development
21 research, which encourage language and intellectual growth and
22 the development of physical and social skills.

23 (b) To provide all families within the jurisdiction of
24 the school readiness coalition with the opportunity to have
25 their children screened for school readiness, either through
26 the child's participation in a children-first plan program or
27 by payment of a nominal fee, at the ages of 3-1/2 years and
28 4-1/2 years.

29 (3) The Florida Parents as Teachers Program must
30 include personalized home visits by certified parent educators
31 who are trained in child development, which visits are

1 designed to help parents understand what to expect during each
2 stage of their child's development and to offer practical tips
3 on how to encourage learning, manage behavior, and promote
4 strong parent-child relationships. The program must also
5 include group meetings, periodic screenings, a resource
6 network, and followup studies, including tracking the school
7 readiness screenings administered after the child is in
8 kindergarten, to measure school readiness outcomes.

9 Section 5. School Readiness Program Needs Assessment
10 Conference.--

11 (1) DUTIES.--

12 (a) The School Readiness Program Needs Assessment
13 Conference shall develop official information relating to the
14 state's system of school readiness program services, including
15 forecasts of school readiness program needs, as the conference
16 determines is needed for the state planning and budgeting
17 system. Such official information must include, but need not
18 be limited to, facts about subsidized child care, Head Start,
19 prekindergarten early intervention, prekindergarten
20 disabilities, Even-Start literacy, First Start, migrant
21 prekindergarten, and Title I prekindergarten needs.

22 (b) In addition, the School Readiness Program Needs
23 Assessment Conference shall estimate the unduplicated count of
24 children eligible for school readiness program services.

25 (c) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
26 Inc., shall provide timely information on needs and waiting
27 lists for school readiness program services requested by the
28 School Readiness Program Needs Assessment Conference or
29 individual conference principals.

30 (2) PRINCIPALS.--The Executive Office of the Governor,
31 the Director of Economic and Demographic Research, and

1 professional staff who have forecasting expertise from the
2 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., the Department
3 of Children and Family Services, the Department of Education,
4 the Senate, and the House of Representatives, or their
5 designees, are the principals of the School Readiness Program
6 Needs Assessment Conference. The principal who represents the
7 Executive Office of the Governor shall preside over sessions
8 of the conference.

9 Section 6. Subsection (2) of section 414.026, Florida
10 Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

11 414.026 WAGES Program State Board of Directors.--

12 (2)(a) The board of directors shall be composed of the
13 following members:

- 14 1. The Commissioner of Education, or the
15 commissioner's designee.
- 16 2. The Secretary of Children and Family Services.
- 17 3. The Secretary of Health.
- 18 4. The Secretary of Labor and Employment Security.
- 19 5. The Secretary of Community Affairs.
- 20 6. The Secretary of Transportation, or the secretary's
21 designee.
- 22 7. The director of the Office of Tourism, Trade, and
23 Economic Development.
- 24 8. The president of the Enterprise Florida workforce
25 development board, established under s. 288.9620.
- 26 9. The chair of the Florida Partnership for School
27 Readiness, Inc.

28 ~~10.9.~~ The chief executive officer of the Florida
29 Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, established under s.
30 288.1226.

1 11.10. Nine members appointed by the Governor, as
2 follows:

3 a. Six members shall be appointed from a list of ten
4 nominees, of which five must be submitted by the President of
5 the Senate and five must be submitted by the Speaker of the
6 House of Representatives. The list of five nominees submitted
7 by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of
8 Representatives must each contain at least three individuals
9 employed in the private sector, two of whom must have
10 management experience. One of the five nominees submitted by
11 the President of the Senate and one of the five nominees
12 submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives must
13 be an elected local government official who shall serve as an
14 ex officio nonvoting member.

15 b. Three members shall be at-large members appointed
16 by the Governor.

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

20
21 The members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed to
22 4-year, staggered terms. Within 60 days after a vacancy occurs
23 on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy of a member
24 appointed from the nominees submitted by the President of the
25 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the
26 remainder of the unexpired term from one nominee submitted by
27 the President of the Senate and one nominee submitted by the
28 Speaker of the House of Representatives. Within 60 days after
29 a vacancy of a member appointed at-large by the Governor
30 occurs on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy for
31 the remainder of the unexpired term. The composition of the

1 board must generally reflect the racial, gender, and ethnic
2 diversity of the state as a whole.

3 (b) The board of directors shall annually elect a
4 chairperson from among the members appointed by the Governor.
5 The board of directors shall meet at least once each quarter.
6 A member appointed by the Governor may not authorize a
7 designee to attend a meeting of the board in place of the
8 member. The Governor may remove an appointed member for cause,
9 and an absence from three consecutive meetings results in
10 automatic removal, unless the member is excused by the
11 chairperson.

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

15 Section 7. Subsection (2) of section 624.91, Florida
16 Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

17 624.91 The Florida Healthy Kids Corporation Act.--

18 (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

19 (a) The Legislature finds that increased access to
20 health care services could improve children's health and
21 reduce the incidence and costs of childhood illness and
22 disabilities among children in this state. Many children do
23 not have comprehensive, affordable health care services
24 available. It is the intent of the Legislature that the
25 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation provide comprehensive health
26 insurance coverage to such children. The corporation is
27 encouraged to cooperate with any existing health service
28 programs funded by the public or the private sector and to
29 work cooperatively with the Florida Partnership for School
30 Readiness, Inc.

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1 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the
2 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation serve as one of several
3 providers of services to children eligible for medical
4 assistance under Title XXI of the Social Security Act.
5 Although the corporation may serve other children, the
6 Legislature intends the primary recipients of services
7 provided through the corporation be school-age children with a
8 family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level,
9 who do not qualify for Medicaid. It is also the intent of the
10 Legislature that state and local government Florida Healthy
11 Kids funds, to the extent permissible under federal law, be
12 used to obtain matching federal dollars.

13 Section 8. Special readiness grants.--

14 (1)(a) The School Readiness Partnership shall make
15 available to parents whose 4-year-old child experiences
16 difficulty in achieving readiness objectives a special
17 readiness grant for up to 12 months of early childhood
18 education services from a provider that meets applicable
19 licensure or registration requirements and that offers an
20 education program that is appropriate to fulfill the child's
21 need for remediation. Each special readiness grant will carry
22 a value of no more than \$3,500. This amount will remain
23 constant regardless of the rate charged by the alternative
24 provider.

25 (b) The special readiness grant is not intended to
26 provide an additional year of early childhood services, but,
27 rather, is intended to give options to parents as to the
28 setting in which early childhood services will be delivered.
29 For that reason, each 4-year-old child whose parents elect to
30 receive a special readiness grant is expected to enter

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1 kindergarten ready to learn upon expiration of this special
2 readiness grant.

3 (c) The special readiness grants shall be available in
4 pilot programs in two counties where school readiness
5 coalitions have been formed, one of which is a large, urban
6 county and one of which is a small, rural or suburban county.
7 The pilot program shall begin September 1, 1999, and continue
8 through August 31, 2000. No more than 200 special readiness
9 grants must be made available in the large county and no more
10 than 100 special readiness grants must be made available in
11 the small county.

12 (d) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and
13 Government Accountability shall assess both the implementation
14 and the outcome of the pilot project and shall report its
15 findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the
16 House of Representatives by January 1, 2001.

17 (2) The sum of \$1,050,000 is appropriated from the
18 tobacco-settlement revenues to the Executive Office of the
19 Governor for use by the School Readiness Partnership in
20 creating two pilot programs for special readiness grants. This
21 is a nonrecurring appropriation for the 1999-2000 fiscal year.

22 Section 9. This act is not intended to raise the
23 standards that must be met by family child care providers;
24 however, children who receive child care services from family
25 child care providers must participate in school readiness
26 assessment upon entering public or private kindergarten or the
27 first grade.

28 Section 10. By December 31, 1999, the State
29 Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services shall submit
30 to the School Readiness Governing Board a final report of
31 recommendations regarding early childhood health care, child

1 care, and education programs. The State Coordinating Council
2 for Early Childhood Services shall cease to exist after
3 December 31, 1999.

4 Section 11. Effective July 1, 1999, subsection (4) of
5 section 411.222, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

6 Section 12. Except as otherwise expressly provided in
7 this act, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

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SENATE SUMMARY

Provides for school readiness. Creates the "School Readiness Act." Provides legislative intent. Creates the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc. (also known as the School Readiness Partnership). Defines school readiness programs. Creates the School Readiness Governing Board to operate as the board of directors of the School Readiness Partnership. Provides responsibilities and duties of the partnership and of the board. Provides membership of the governing board and meeting requirements. Provides for reimbursement for expenses. Provides that the partnership is not a unit of state government but is subject to public records and public meeting requirements. Provides for hiring certain employees. Provides powers of the corporation. Requires the partnership to prepare a system for measuring school readiness. Specifies objectives to be measured. Requires the partnership to contract with an independent entity to evaluate the measurement system. Requires the partnership to make recommendations to the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education. Requires annual reports. Authorizes the partnership to adopt rules.

Provides for the voluntary establishment of a school readiness coalition in each county. Specifies services that are to be provided by such coalitions. Provides for the designation and approval of a fiscal agent. Provides for coalition initiation grants to finance the development of school readiness plans. Provides requirements for such plans. Provides for awarding incentive bonuses. Provides for parental choice. Provides for evaluation and performance measures. Provides responsibility for implementation.

Requires the Department of Education to adopt the school readiness screening instruments developed by the School Readiness Partnership and to require their use by the school districts. Recognizes the nationwide Parents as Teachers Program. Establishes the Florida Parents as Teachers Program under the jurisdiction of the School Readiness Partnership. Provides program requirements. Provides that federal requirements control in case of conflict. Exempts family child care providers from meeting increased standards. Provides for a School Readiness Program Needs Assessment Conference. Requires the chairperson of the Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., to serve on the WAGES Program State Board of Directors. Requires the Healthy Kids Corporation to work cooperatively with the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc. Abolishes the State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services, effective December 31, 1999. Repeals s. 411.222(4), F.S., relating to the State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services. Provides for special readiness grants to be awarded in pilot programs in two counties. Provides an appropriation.