



Smart Start Update --- July 2014

www.SmartStartAlabama.org

Child Care: Keeps Alabama Working Video Series

Last summer, the Alabama Partnership for Children commissioned M. Keivan Deravi, Ph.D. and Professor of Economics at Auburn University at Montgomery, to determine the economic impact of the early care and education industry on the economy of the state of Alabama. Findings from the report and the implications for the state are being detailed in a series of informational videos. Below is the fourth video in the series, featuring Susie White, Employee Relations and Training Manager for ALFA Insurance. Ms. White speaks about ALFA's on-site child care center and the impact that it has on their employees and the children who attend. To read the full report and view other videos in the series [click here](#).



Partner Focus:

Alabama Works to Improve School Readiness

Zero to Five Matters

*~A newsletter
focused on our most
valuable
investment~*

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Don't Forget
to follow us on [Facebook](#) and
[Twitter](#). The APC launched a
social media campaign in
November that targets
parents, early childhood
professionals, business
leaders and our partners in
the state. 'A Tweet a Day for
Learning and Play' provides
early education tips and
research, including
information on our initiatives
and partners.
Check it out today!

July FOCUS

Check out this month's Smart
Start FOCUS [Packet](#) on School
Readiness Matters!

Mark Your Calendars:

[Alabama Association of
Licensed Early Care and
Education Conference](#)

Allison de la Torre
Executive Director
Alabama School Readiness Alliance



Alabama School Readiness Alliance

Exciting progress is being made in statewide efforts to improve school readiness. In the recently completed legislative session, state leaders approved and the governor signed into law a \$10 million increase in state funding for Alabama's First Class Pre-K program. This additional investment will allow approximately 1,800 more four-year-olds to

attend Alabama's high quality, voluntary pre-k program in the upcoming school year.

In the last two years, lawmakers have more than doubled the amount of funding available for First Class Pre-K from \$19.1 million to \$38.5 million; growing the program from 217 classrooms in the 2012-2013 school year to approximately 410 this year.

Much of this progress has been made possible because more than 1,000 individuals, organizations and businesses are advocating for pre-k expansion with the [Alabama School Readiness Alliance](#) (ASRA). ASRA works to ensure that high-quality pre-k is a continuing priority for Alabama's children, parents, community leaders and governing officials.

ASRA is a joint effort of [Alabama Giving](#), [Alabama Partnership for Children](#), [A+ Education Partnership](#), and [VOICES for Alabama's Children](#). In 2011, ASRA pulled together a statewide Pre-K Task Force of business and community leaders to develop recommendations for expanding high-quality, voluntary pre-k in Alabama. The Pre-K Task Force has recommended - and ASRA is working to achieve - a decade-long expansion of Alabama's state-funded First Class Pre-K program so that all families in the state have the opportunity to enroll their four-year-olds.

First Class Pre-K is working in Alabama, but even with the recent expansion, just 12 percent of four-year-olds will be able to enroll. The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama recently found that First Class Pre-K closes the academic achievement gap between low-income children and their higher income peers by 25 percent.

Imagine the impact that Alabama's First Class Pre-K program could have if it were available to all children in our state. Sign up to become a pre-k advocate at www.alabamaschoolreadiness.org.

Initiative Focus:

Parent's Guide to Kindergarten Success

Parents are children's first and most important teachers and help set the tone for school success. Working with your school and your child's teachers, you can ensure a successful beginning when your child enters school in kindergarten. With your support and encouragement, your child learns that school is important and that you look forward to a successful and fun year! With everyday activities, you can help your child be ready for success!

July 17-19, 2014
Orange Beach, AL

[37th Annual Stepping Stones Conference](#)

Saturday, July 19, 2014
Jefferson State Community College

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- I go to my child's school for a visit or open house before the first day. I take my child for a visit if this is possible.
- I make sure I know everything I need to enroll my child so that he can start on the first day.
- I make sure the school knows how to reach me during the day, including updating any changes during the year.
- I read and respond to the school letters sent home to parents and display the school calendar.
- I make sure we have routines for daily activities including bedtime, tooth-brushing, bathing, mealtimes, reading together, and talking about her daily activities.
- I let my child know that his learning is important and that I want him to do well.
- I have guidelines about how she should behave so that she can do her best.
- I limit the amount of TV and screen time and check the types of programs and games my child views.
- I read with my child and help my child in a learning activity for at least 15 minutes each day.
- I see that my child gets:
 - 8-10 hours of sleep on school nights
 - at least an hour of active play each day
 - 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day (and limit sugary drinks/food)
- I send my child to school in comfortable play clothes and label all clothing and belongings to help her learn to take care of her things.
- I show a positive attitude about school and show an interest in school projects.
- I make sure my child is **at school every day and on time**, unless he is sick.
- I make sure that my child has health insurance, regular health and dental checkups, and I follow up on any referrals and recommendations.
- I communicate regularly with my child's teacher about any special concerns, needs, or possible problems.

This Parent's Guide was taken from the [Blueprint for School Readiness Transition Materials](#), developed by the 2012 Blueprint for School Readiness Transition Teams and the Alabama Partnership for Children.

Our Mission: To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

Phone: 866-711-4025 | social@smartstartalabama.org

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