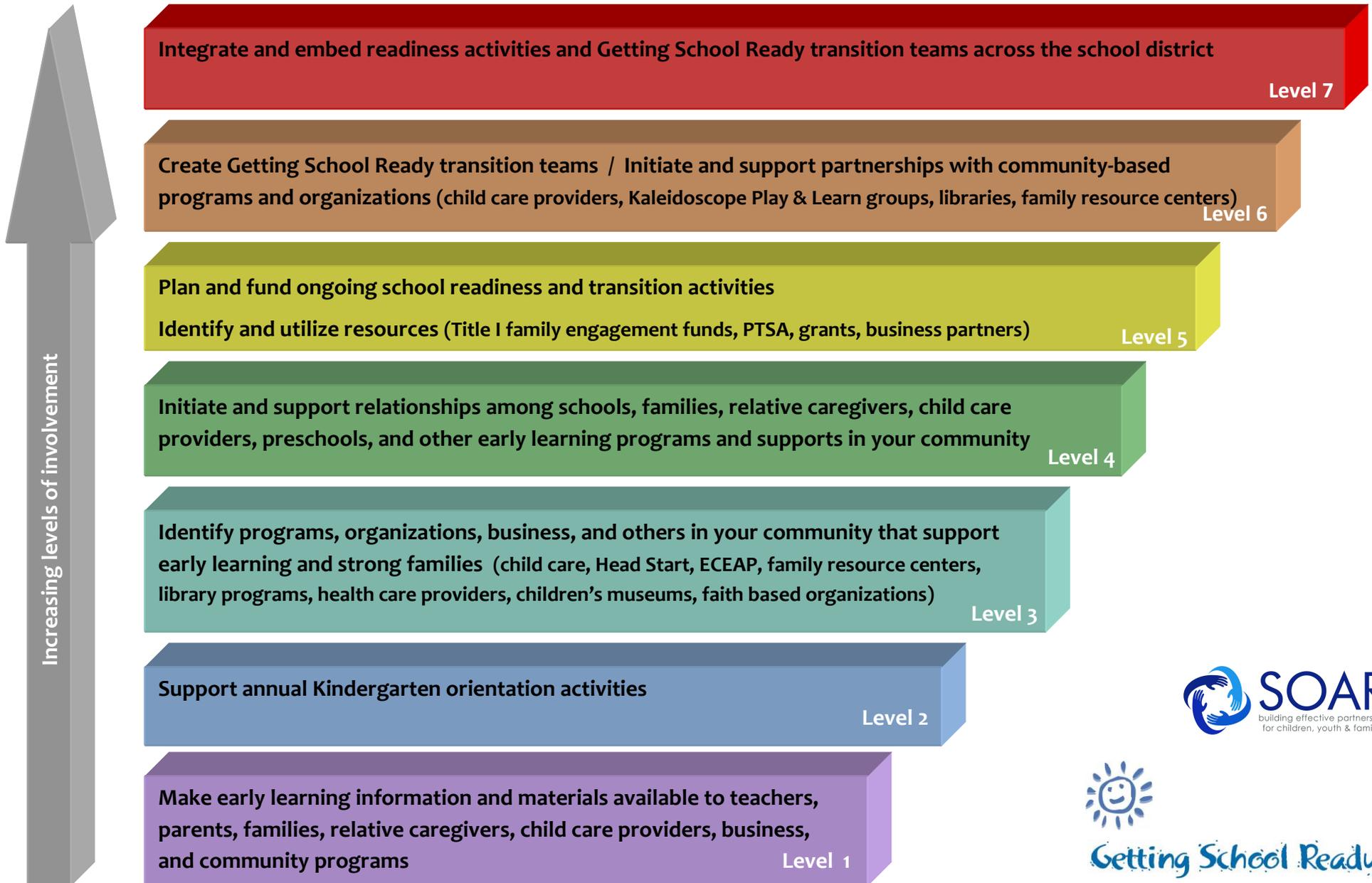


## Levels of Participation in Early Learning

*Ways elementary schools, school districts, early learning providers, community organizations and business can partner to create a seamless prenatal through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education system*



## Introduction

This handbook was created by the SOAR Getting School Ready Action Team to help elementary schools and their community partners identify different ways to support Early Learning. It can serve as a guide for discussion of possible roles and developing partnerships. Each of the following pages corresponds to one of the seven different strategy levels illustrated on the cover page. The examples of different strategies and actions are designed to help you start thinking broadly about ways to support school readiness and transition. These are suggestions - each school and community will determine their best course of action.

We have learned through working with many schools that it is important to think through this process carefully, and to Prepare, Set Goals, and Determine Outcomes as you consider your school's approach to supporting school readiness. As in the following pages, the bullet points below are offered as examples.

### ASSESS

- Review the Levels of Involvement in Early Learning. At what Level is your school now?
- What would it take to move to the next Level?
- What is the need for more intentional school readiness support in the communities served by your school?
- What could be different for Kindergarten students – and their teachers and families – if your school district were at Level 7?

### PREPARE

- Determine the amount of support present or likely from administration, teachers, counselors, family support workers, etc.
- Think through the process: establish short and long term goals, desired outcomes, strategies, and action steps.
- Consider what role programs, relationships, activities, and community partnerships can play in helping children arrive at school ready to succeed. Think outside the usual education stakeholders: nearly every sector has at least one intersection with parents, grandparents, families, or young children.
- Consider what you want to give and get out of relationships with community based organization and business partners.

- Designate leadership at your building: individual, team or committee.
- Determine staffing at the school: Principal, Preschool or Kindergarten teachers, counselor, family support staff, PTSA or other parent volunteer, etc.
- Have a conversation within your school district or building about collaboration.
- Consult with Child Care Resources about involving child care providers and relative caregivers in transition teams.
- Consult with your local library about having a children’s librarian on your team.

### **SET MEASURABLE GOALS**

- Develop full support for this work from administration, teachers, counselors, family support workers, parents, etc.
- Establish relationships with families of preschool aged children (birth-5).
- Increased access to by families to early learning resources.
- Increased ability by families to support children’s school readiness.
- Create relationships between Preschool teachers & child care providers and Kindergarten teachers.
- Gain allies in the community across sectors who can help support child development.

### **CONSIDER DESIRED OUTCOMES**

- School culture transformed and aligned with school-based and community-based readiness efforts
- Improved alignment of Early Learning and elementary school practice and curricula
- More parents and caregivers understand elements of school readiness and how to support young children’s development
- More children experience positive transition into Kindergarten
- Decreased preparation and achievement gaps
- Greatly increased support in the community for Early Learning

**Make Early Learning information and materials available to teachers, parents, families, relative caregivers, child care providers, business, and community programs**



STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
<p>Become an Early Learning resource for your neighborhood and the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify sources* for research based information on Early Learning, child development, and school readiness</li> <li>▪ Display Early Learning materials in school library, office, bulletin board, or parent center</li> <li>▪ Encourage PTSA to include parents of preschool aged children in membership and activities; Include Early Learning information in PTSA newsletter</li> <li>▪ Submit articles about Early Learning and school readiness to neighborhood newspapers</li> <li>▪ Distribute Early Learning resources to child care providers</li> </ul>
<p>Engage administration, teachers, counselors, family support workers, parent liaisons, and others to become involved in supporting Early Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct in-service trainings on the relationship between Early Learning and school success</li> <li>▪ Keep teachers and staff informed about on-site Early Learning materials and community programs that support early child development</li> <li>▪ Encourage staff and teachers to refer families to these resources and programs</li> </ul>
<p>Devote time and resources to reaching children in informal care settings or at home with parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify community locations frequented by parents and grandparents and distribute or post Early Learning resources</li> <li>▪ Distribute Early Learning information through parent leaders and their networks</li> </ul>
ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Display Early Learning information in public areas, employee break rooms, etc. and to clients/customers when appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Include knowledge of Early Learning issues and resources in Human Resources portfolio.</li> </ul>	

## SOURCES FOR MATERIALS\*

- Foundation for Early Learning ([www.earlylearning.org](http://www.earlylearning.org))
  - ◇ **Getting School Ready booklet** – available in 9 languages (English, Spanish, Cambodian, Russian, Chinese, Somali, Korean, Vietnamese and Oromo). Up to 25 print copies are free.
  - ◇ **Ten Simple Ways to Encourage Learning booklet** – available in English and Spanish. Can be purchased or downloaded free from the website.
  - ◇ **Early Words** - a quarterly newsletter for families with young children. Sign up at the website.
  - ◇ **Ready to Read, Ready to Learn brochure** – an introduction to libraries, produced in partnership with public libraries in the state.
- CHILD Profile – Department of Health ([www.doh.wa.gov/childprofile](http://www.doh.wa.gov/childprofile)) **Child Development Newsletters** – A total of 17 CHILD Profile newsletters are sent by the Department of Health to new parents in Washington State. The newsletters are sent from birth to age 6 and provide information about growth, development, safety, nutrition and other parenting issues. All newsletters can be downloaded from the website and families or caregivers not receiving the letters (e.g., for a child born outside of Washington) can sign up at the website to be added to the mailing list.
- King County Library System ([www.kcls.org/programs](http://www.kcls.org/programs)) **Story Times for Children and Early Literacy Programs** – The library offers story times for children at many of its branches. At the website you can sign up to receive e-mail reminders about these programs. Print copies of story time schedules are available at library branches.
- Seattle Public Library ([www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org)) **Story Times and More** – The library offers story times for children at many of its branches. At the website home page, click on “Using the Library” and then click on “Sign up for e-mail newsletters and podcasts” to receive schedules by e-mail. Print copies of the *Story Times and More* publication are also available at library branches.
- Parent Map ([www.parentmap.com](http://www.parentmap.com)) **Family Events and Activities** – Available free at the website or by subscription.

## Support annual Kindergarten orientation activities

Level 2

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
<p>Welcome families with young children into your school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have Early Learning information available in different languages, with specific activities parents and caregivers can do at home (see Level 1 for resources).</li> <li>▪ Hold school-based Kindergarten welcome activities during school year.</li> <li>▪ Hold school-based activities for parents and caregivers in coordination with Kindergarten registration and throughout the school year.</li> <li>▪ Prepare and distribute home-learning activities, including providing summer booklists and other literacy activities for the summer months prior to Kindergarten entry.</li> <li>▪ Arrange a time for parents to meet with Preschool and Kindergarten teachers to discuss the expectations of Kindergarten and their children’s specific skills and needs.</li> <li>▪ Organize an informal dinner with parents and Kindergarten teachers in conjunction with school open house or back-to-school event.</li> </ul>
<p>Devote time and resources to reaching children in informal care settings or at home with parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform the community about events and activities through parent leaders and cultural liaisons.</li> <li>▪ Distribute Early Learning resources in different languages, with specific activities parents and caregivers can do at home, and information on child development and school readiness.</li> <li>▪ Invite parents of primary grade students to bring their younger children with them to school events – and set up the events to include activities for the preschool aged children.</li> <li>▪ When established on-site, or run in collaboration with an elementary school, Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn can be integrated into Kindergarten orientation activities. Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn groups are listed on the Child Care Resources website. <a href="http://www.childcare.org">www.childcare.org</a></li> </ul>

<p>Create opportunities for child care providers, Preschool teachers, and Kindergarten teachers to meet each other, develop relationships, and learn about each others' practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Host regular, informal conversations between Early Learning educators and Kindergarten teachers.</li> <li>▪ Coordinate school visits by preschools and child care providers.</li> <li>▪ Encourage/support Kindergarten teachers to visit preschools and child care providers.</li> <li>▪ Invite the broader Early Learning community to school readiness/Kindergarten welcome events.</li> </ul>
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**ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

- Post information on Kindergarten orientation activities.
- Participate in Kindergarten orientation activities by hosting a table about your organization or business.
- Employers can allow parents release time from work to attend orientation or registration when it takes place during business hours.
- Provide or fund interpreters to assist with Kindergarten registration and orientation activities.

## Identify programs, organizations, business, and others in your community that support Early Learning and strong families

Level 3

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
Build upon existing relationships that parents, teachers and staff have in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify existing connections of parents, teachers or staff with Early Learning and family support programs and services.</li> <li>▪ Identify interest by parents, teachers or staff in representing your school with existing connections, or by making new connections with Early Learning and family support programs and services.</li> <li>▪ Determine ways to support parent leaders, teachers or staff in making connections and developing relationships; this is an effective method for reaching service organizations such as Kiwanis or Rotary.</li> </ul>
Identify Early Learning stakeholders; define these stakeholders broadly as organizations that serve children, youth, families, parents, and grandparents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify organizations in the community that work to support early childhood, parents, families, and caregivers, such as, health care providers (Public Health, pediatricians, , family support centers, PEPs, etc.</li> <li>▪ Identify service organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks, Moose, Grange).</li> <li>▪ Gather information about local human services, school readiness, and Early Learning activities such as child care, preschool, libraries, early intervention, Reach Out and Read (a program in which pediatricians support early literacy), etc.</li> <li>▪ Add new contacts to school mailing list.</li> </ul>
Identify immigrant/ refugee community and service providers	<p><b>Why this is important:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early childhood services are often the first point of contact with mainstream culture for immigrant families; this presents an opportunity to bring essential information to parents of young children.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immigrant/Refugee service providers can help your school develop a deeper understanding of the background and lived experiences of the families.</li> <li>▪ The ability to access parents’ understanding of the cultural beliefs that guide them may be key to working with families in a culturally sensitive way.</li> <li>▪ Families want and need equitable access to culturally relevant supports, services, programs.</li> <li>▪ Children born to immigrant parents are less likely to participate in early education programs.</li> <li>▪ Unequal access perpetuates the preparation gap and leads to the achievement gap in school.</li> </ul>
<p>Prioritize identified stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a plan for making contact and developing partnerships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Familiarize yourself with Early Learning issues that touch your employees or customers.</li> <li>▪ Join local Early Learning or school readiness coalitions such as SOAR. <a href="http://www.childrenandyouth.org">www.childrenandyouth.org</a></li> <li>▪ Raise awareness with families you serve about early child development and expectations for children entering Kindergarten.</li> <li>▪ Become an advocate for Early Learning within your own business, professional, and community networks.</li> </ul>	

## Initiate and support relationships among schools, families, relative caregivers, child care providers, preschools, and other Early Learning programs and supports in your community

Level 4

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
<p>Support Family/School connections</p> <p>Approach Kindergarten readiness as a process beginning at birth and important to support in all home and care settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learn about and prepare for the cultures and languages of the children and families in your neighborhood.</li> <li>▪ Host community activities that support families (such as Community Cafés); provide interpreters.</li> <li>▪ Encourage families to engage their children in literacy activities at home, such as reading together.</li> <li>▪ Partner with PTSA to support parent involvement in their child’s child care, preschool and Kindergarten setting.</li> <li>▪ Through PTSA, parent leaders, or other means, connect new families with families currently enrolled in their school.</li> <li>▪ Place children with Kindergarten teachers who taught their older siblings to build upon pre-existing family-teacher bonds.</li> </ul>
<p>Support Child/School connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage Kindergarten support staff to visit preschool children.</li> <li>▪ Provide opportunities for children to interact directly with their anticipated Kindergarten teachers by arranging visits to classrooms during story time, center time, recess, or a special school function.</li> <li>▪ Familiarize children with their Kindergarten teachers by reviewing their names, showing their pictures and discussing what the Kindergarten classroom will be like.</li> </ul>
<p>Support Early Learning/School connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish regular communication with local child care providers and preschool programs.</li> <li>▪ Host regular conversations among local child care providers, preschool programs and Kindergarten teachers to build relationships and improve understanding of each others’ roles.</li> <li>▪ Arrange discussions between preschool and Kindergarten personnel about classroom practices and specific needs of individual children.</li> </ul>

<p>Support the improved capacity of child care providers and Preschool teachers to prepare young children for Kindergarten</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Given good relationships between your school and preschool and child care settings, encourage Early Learning educators to practice Kindergarten rituals with the children in their care.</li> <li>▪ Work with them to align curriculum and practice to support continuity with elementary school.</li> <li>▪ Orient preschool children and their families to Kindergarten expectations (rules for learning and behaving, such as walking in a Kindergarten line, raising hands, taking turns, riding the bus, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>Support Community/School connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer meeting space for community activities and events.</li> <li>▪ Provide expertise to support Early Learning activities, such as Preschool or Kindergarten teachers facilitating Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn groups.</li> <li>▪ Arrange meetings with organizations, groups or individuals identified in Level 3 to determine interest in partnering; examples of key partnerships follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop working relationships with <b>immigrant/refugee community and service providers</b> (see Level 3). Support them in learning to navigate the American school system - what kids need to know, what Kindergarten is all about, what school readiness is, filling out forms, school lunch, transportation, expectations schools have of children and parents - so that they can provide this information to parents and caregivers. Research indicates the earlier this process begins, the more involved parents are, and the easier transition is for all.</li> <li>▪ Develop working relationships with local community leaders such as Chambers of Commerce, city government, service organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.), and faith based organizations. Inform them of the important role they can play in supporting school readiness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate on behalf of schools and Early Learning.</li> <li>▪ Purchase and distribute backpacks filled with school supplies.</li> <li>▪ Fund Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn or other early learning or readiness/transition activity.</li> <li>▪ Raise awareness with families about early child development and expectations of children entering Kindergarten.</li> <li>▪ Provide cultural navigation to immigrant and refugee families about the expectations of American school system for children and parents.</li> </ul>	

- Plan, fund and engage in ongoing school readiness and transition activities
- Identify and utilize resources to support and sustain transition activities



STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
Plan and engage in community-based transition activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Form a leadership team focused on supporting transition; include parents, other caregivers, child care providers, Preschool and Kindergarten teachers, and community partners</li> <li>▪ Develop a transition plan</li> <li>▪ Identify and support parent leaders</li> <li>▪ Identify roles for partner programs and organizations (see Level 3) to participate in implementing transition plan</li> <li>▪ Develop calendar of school readiness activities and events</li> </ul>
Secure funding to support school readiness activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Approach local community organizations and business to secure financial or in-kind support of your transition plan</li> <li>▪ Identify and apply for grant funding</li> <li>▪ Develop a plan to engage parents and caregivers of preschool aged children</li> <li>▪ Utilize Title 1 parent engagement funding to support transition activities</li> <li>▪ Support inclusion of pre-school focus within your PTSA</li> </ul>
ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serve on elementary-school-based transition team</li> <li>▪ Participate in local Early Learning Coalition</li> <li>▪ Support transition activities with in-kind services or donations, or through direct funding</li> </ul>	

- Assist schools in locating grant opportunities or other resources
- Assist schools in writing grants to fund Early Learning, school readiness, and transition activities
- Advocate on behalf of early learning and school readiness within your networks
- Employers convey information to parent employees.

- **Create Getting School Ready transition teams**
- **Initiate relationships and partner with community-based organizations, business, and other programs and supports**

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
Create a Getting School Ready Transition Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply to the SOAR Getting School Ready Action Team for a grant <a href="http://www.childrenandyouth.org">www.childrenandyouth.org</a></li> <li>▪ Support parent leaders, grandparents, and child care providers to participate on the GSR team by scheduling meetings when they can attend, providing stipends, providing interpreters.</li> </ul>
Partner with Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find out where Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn groups are located in your neighborhood (<a href="http://www.childcare.org">www.childcare.org</a>); meet with the facilitator, offer to display flyers at your school, PTSA meetings, or GSR events.</li> <li>▪ Arrange for school staff (such as Head Start, ECEAP or preschool) to visit a local Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn group.</li> <li>▪ Invite the Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn facilitator and families to your GSR events.</li> <li>▪ Host a Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn group in your school or neighborhood.</li> </ul>
Partner with your local library and/or children’s librarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invite the local children’s librarian to be part of your GSR team.</li> <li>▪ Display information about library story times and early literacy programs for preschool aged children on bulletin boards, and in school and PTSA newsletters.</li> </ul>
Work with your local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet with City recreation center staff to describe what you are doing for children birth-5 in your school; ask how to collaborate on city sponsored activities such as farmer’s markets or wellness fairs.</li> <li>▪ Invite city staff to serve on your GSR team. Human Services or Community Services Departments can be good fits with Early Learning activities. They may have access to</li> </ul>

	<p>discounts or connections to activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop relationships with city staff so you can send GSR and other transition materials to be displayed at local community centers, city halls, aquatic centers.</li> </ul>
Cultivate local businesses as access points to communities, and possible resources for donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create relationships with local businesses; neighborhood and multicultural Chambers of Commerce are good avenues.</li> <li>▪ Ask businesses to post information on GSR events, and to encourage families to attend.</li> <li>▪ Ask businesses for donations to support GSR events, such as snacks and take home gifts.</li> </ul>
Partner with faith communities which have preschools or child care centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invite members of faith communities to GSR events, including: families attending preschools and child care centers, early childhood educators, or the leader of the faith-based Early Learning Association.</li> <li>▪ Ask faith community partners to post and distribute Early Learning information to families.</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serve on elementary-school-based transition team</li> <li>▪ Participate in local Early Learning Coalition such as SOAR</li> <li>▪ Post and distribute Early Learning information to clients, employees, community</li> </ul>	

**Integrate and embed readiness activities and GSR transition teams across the school district**

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS	ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS
<p>Integrate transition into District Preschool-Grade 3 Alignment (beyond curriculum)</p> <p>Approach Kindergarten readiness as a process beginning at birth and able to be supported in all home and care settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families of young children are welcomed into elementary school prior to Kindergarten.</li> <li>▪ Support school-based parent leaders in being ambassadors for Early Learning in their neighborhoods and communities.</li> <li>▪ Make Early Learning resources and information readily available to parents, caregivers, and child care providers through partnerships with a broad array of community-based organizations and businesses.</li> </ul>
<p>District level commitment to supporting Early Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early Learning support models are supported and implemented by District (e.g., Mission statement and Instructional Directors).</li> <li>▪ District commits financial resources and staff toward Early Learning components.</li> <li>▪ District system is referred to as P-12.</li> <li>▪ Financial commitment of District toward Early Learning components.</li> <li>▪ All District health-related services offer quality Early Learning information.</li> <li>▪ Assign leadership and staff responsible for coordinating school readiness/transition activities at District level.</li> </ul>
<p>District curriculum alignment includes pre-Kindergarten (when appropriate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District and Early Learning program staff meet together and confer on regular basis.</li> <li>▪ District curriculum specialists are fully knowledgeable of pre-Kindergarten developmental stages.</li> <li>▪ Staff supports community-based Early Learning educators in aligning curriculum</li> </ul>

Support professional development for Early Learning educators

- Early Learning staff have access to and knowledge of District resources (e.g., Child Find and ECE programming)
- Provide professional development to Early Learning professionals in District.

**ACTION STEPS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

- Advocate for P-12 focus at school district
- Serve on elementary-school-based transition team
- Participate in local Early Learning coalition such as SOAR



# SOAR

building effective partnerships  
for children, youth & families

The Getting School Ready Action Team is a project of SOAR, the King County Early Learning Coalition, in partnership with the King County Library System, Child Care Resources, the City of Bellevue, Seattle Public Schools, United Way of King County, Puget Sound Educational Service District, FACES Coalitions, Washington Alliance for Better Schools, and Shoreline Public Schools

For information contact SOAR (206) 336-6930, [www.childrenandyouth.org](http://www.childrenandyouth.org)



