



School Readiness Symposium

Investing in the future: Ensuring All Children Enter School Ready to Succeed

featuring

Dr. Frances Bond

May 21, 2002

Introduction

Investing in the Future: Ensuring All Children Enter School Ready to Succeed is the second in a series of symposia designed to heighten the dialogue in Maryland around the importance of early care and education among key stakeholders—parents, early childhood professionals, elementary school staff, legislators, community service providers, public libraries staff, advocates, and the business and faith communities.

Dr. Frances Bond, the Director of Professional Development at PBS Ready To Learn in Alexandria, Virginia served as the keynote speaker. Dr. Bond's remarks

Bond began her career at Towson State University as a kindergarten teacher in the Lida Lee Tall Laboratory School. She then moved to the College of Education where she taught early childhood graduate and undergraduate courses, and subsequently became chair of the department and Associate Dean in the College of Education. While at Towson State University, Bond produced, in partnership with Baltimore County Public Schools, a video series for parents of young children. This thirty-two part series, entitled **First Steps**, includes a variety of topics, such as: "The Importance of Reading To Your Child," "Fostering Literacy Learning," "The Two Sides of Television," and "Fostering Young Children's Learning." The First Steps series is marketed across the country and has been aired on the Baltimore County educational channel and the College of the Air on Maryland Public Television. She has also written articles on teacher education, early childhood, parenting, and volunteerism.

Following a 30-year career at Towson State University, Dr. Bond became the Assistant Director of Domestic Programs for the Peace Corps. In addition to her primary assignment of working with returned volunteers, she traveled to Romania, Kazakhstan, Tashkent, Nepal, and India, providing training for new Peace Corps Volunteers. Prior to joining the Ready To Learn staff in April 2001, Bond was Special Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Education and Coordinator of the America Reads Challenge.

Among her awards, she ranks the Frances T. Bond Distinguished Service Award, established by the Towson State University community at the time of her retirement, as the most gratifying. Each year the Distinguished Service Award is presented to an undergraduate and graduate student in the College of Education. Fran is a Maryland resident. She is the mother of four adult sons and has six grandchildren.

Following is an abstract of Dr. Bond's remarks.

Abstract

Overview

- Helping all children start school ready to learn is critical to their future success and to the well-being of society
- Equally important is the need for schools to be ready for all children
- Schools should provide learning experiences/curricula that meet the background and needs of all children
- The issues of a child's success in school and the well being of society are directly related and must be of concern for all citizens: including, teachers, administrators, supervisors, teacher education faculty, parents, grandparents seniors, civic and government leaders, the business community, health care agencies, the media and, libraries
- Community partners MUST work together to reach the goal of ensuring children's readiness for school
- Parenting is multi-dimensional therefore no one group/agency can provide all of the support needed; assistance to parents must come from many sources through an integrated and collaborative effort.
- What we must ask ourselves about the WWS data:
 - ! What will it take to improve the data – move it to 80 and 90 percent?
 - ! What are the trends we have found for children not fully ready for school?
- We must extend our efforts for all children and especially children living in poverty, low birth weight babies, adolescent mothers, and mothers with substance abuse;
- Readiness begins during the prenatal and birth periods
- There are people and factors throughout children's lives -- from prenatal to age 5 that influence their readiness for school success

Factors Affecting a child's readiness for school

- **Prenatal and Birth**
 - **Parents and Significant Others**
 - **Health care and well child clinics**
 - **Out of home care and schooling**
 - **Child care, head start, pre-kindergarten**
 - **Media**
 - **Community services**
 - **Faith communities, libraries, parks**
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- Prenatal and Birth
 - ! Consider the importance of prenatal care
 - ! Educate adolescents and others about the importance of proper health care during the prenatal period
 - ! Provide parent education during prenatal period
 - ! Distribute parenting materials/kits at the hospital at the time of infant's birth
 - ! Show parenting videos on hospital closed circuit TV
 - ! Distribute a children's book to each new born at the hospital
 - ! Provide home visits that instruct parents on ways to observe children, developmental milestones, parenting skills, and setting realistic expectations for their child
 - Parents and significant others
 - ! Support families and work with them so that they assume the responsibilities of their child's first teacher
 - ! Provide a variety of meeting times and places for the convenience of the parent
 - ! Emphasize to parents the importance of talking with babies, and toddlers

- ! Talk with parents about the importance of engaging young children in activities around the house and in the neighborhood; such as setting the table, folding laundry, writing a grocery list, walks in the neighborhood
 - ! Talk with parents about the importance of reading to children, singing to them, asking open-ended questions when reading to them
 - ! Talk about the importance of reading or telling a story to their child every day
 - ! Give parents the tools and confidence to read or tell stories
 - ! Assist parents to get a library card and feel comfortable going to the library
 - ! Help parents who do not have time or feel comfortable reading to get a designated reader for their child
- Health Care and Well-Baby Clinics
 - ! Well child clinics provide support for families and can be a partner in the literacy initiative
 - ! Use well child clinics as a depository for distributing children's books to parents
 - ! Engage work-study students from Colleges and Universities to read to children at the clinic
 - ! Engage AmeriCorps and VISTA members to assist in well child clinics
 - ! Offer parenting classes at the clinic
 - ! Use parenting videos in the clinic reception area while parents are waiting for the doctor's appointment
- Child Care
 - ! Help parents to select quality childcare for their child, selecting quality childcare is important for the health, safety and cognitive growth of the child
 - ! Share the research that states the importance of quality care: Children in second grade who were cared for in high-quality childcare settings displayed better language and math skills, better cognitive and social skills and better relationships with classmates than children who were in low quality care.
 - ! Encourage parents to visit childcare centers to determine the quality of the program; look for books, reading materials, exploratory materials, many opportunities for children and teacher to engage in talking, singing, and reading; a caring staff, children's work on display, high regard for safety and health conditions.
- Children and TV
 - ! Help parents to judge good television for their children:
 - ! Television is a **Good Thing** when it is developmentally appropriate – a match between the child and his growing needs
 - ! Television is good when it encourages creativity and critical thinking
 - ! Television is good when it models ways to solve problems, to cooperate, and to get along with others
 - ! Television is good when it helps children to appreciate their own families and other families, communities, and cultures
 - ! Television is good when it encourages children to want to learn more and read.