

Rochester Area Foundation - News & Publications**Quote of the Moment...**

By failing to prepare, you
are preparing to fail.

~Benjamin Franklin ~

First Steps gives children a leg up on school

By [Joshua Lynsen](#)

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 [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)

First Steps, an initiative that helps prepare children for kindergarten, will debut this fall with an awareness campaign. Created by the Rochester Area Foundation, the First Steps initiative coordinates and expands services available to children 5 and younger. It aims to prepare all children for school. First Steps will cost \$4 million across five years.

Kevin Ewing, the initiative's director, said statistics show 61 percent of local students aren't "secure" in their school preparedness. First Steps aims to help these "developing" and "at-risk" students. "There is a group of kids who are being cared for by loving people, but who aren't ... really ready to do kindergarten," he said. "This is our target."

Ewing said First Steps prepares children for school through several methods. The initiative makes school readiness a community priority while strengthening family participation in early learning. First Steps also measures local early care and education systems, and then creates incentives that encourage those systems to become more integrated.

Ewing said events scheduled for August, September and October will introduce First Steps to the community. An initiative brochure will be mailed to parents next month. Other details will be given during a Sept. 1 news conference.

The popular Teddy Bear Band will perform at Century High School in September. Speakers in September and October will discuss the importance of school readiness.

"This raises public awareness of the concern and the opportunity we have to help children," he said. "We're trying to reach the whole gamut."

Ewing said the initiative's goal isn't teaching precise skills like reading, but imparting abstract abilities such as patience. "We don't expect the kids will be reading before they get to kindergarten but that they have the capacity -- not just academically but behaviorally -- to be in a classroom," he said. "They can take turns, or they can stand in line for a few minutes, or (demonstrate) those other kinds of skills that are school readiness."

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