

The School Readiness Playbook



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The School Readiness Playbook

A GUIDE FOR
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Dana E. Friedman, EdD and Nina Sazer O'Donnell, MEd

<http://www.nassauboces.org/schoolreadinessplaybook>

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Preface Dana Friedman



This Playbook is a labor of love. It embodies the work of The Early Years Institute, a regional nonprofit serving as a catalyst for community partnerships that help children thrive on Long Island, which I founded eight years ago and which will cease as this Playbook is published. I hope you sense the energy emitted from this ambitious organization in the advice provided throughout the Playbook and in the case study of Westbury at the end, our pilot site for audacious innovation. In addition, the Playbook reflects

the principles of my 40-year career in the field of early childhood, rooted in a holistic, comprehensive view of children and the world they live in. I was blessed to have been a research assistant to Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner while an undergraduate at Cornell. I didn't know his ecological model of human development was novel. It made inherent sense. I have always had a vision of a world where not only families, child care centers, and schools are helping child learn, but where everyone from the parents' employers to the police chief to the park ranger understands why the five years before children get to kindergarten are so important and how they can enhance those years. Dr. Bronfenbrenner's model is found in the Playbook. And finally, this Playbook was a labor of love because I was able to partner with a dear friend and colleague, Nina Sazer O'Donnell with whom I first worked in Washington, D.C. in 1976 organizing "Birthday Parties are for Kids," a public education campaign around the bicentennial for the Day Care and Child Development Council of America. We've come a long way and the time is right for a broader, bolder community effort to help children reach their potential.

Dana E. Friedman



Dana and Nina at the Equal Rights March in 1978

Preface Nina Sazer-O'Donnell



In 1965 sophomore students at John Marshall High School in Los Angeles, were invited to volunteer in a new program called Head Start over the coming summer. I raised my hand. Little did I know then that my raised hand set a path for my future work and life. Not only was I completely captivated by the pleasure of teaching young children, but I became convinced that the best way to change the world for the better is to help all young children get the best possible start in life.

I reasoned that if young children got a great start, with the love, care, health, and stability they all need, fewer people would grow up with a desire to hurt or exert unjust power over others. I still know this to be true, yet have learned that making this aspiration real is more complicated and takes more time and effort than I ever imagined.

After founding and directing a still thriving child care center in Norwich, Vermont, I was drawn to working on a larger scale — to help more children across the state and country, not just in one community. As Director of New Hampshire Children '76, a bicentennial public engagement campaign decades ahead of its time, I met Dana Friedman, then working at the Day Care and Child Development Council of America, national sponsor of Child Care '76.

We both recognized the need for and opportunities inherent in engaging diverse sectors in early childhood development, which has fueled our mutual and individual professional directions ever since. Dana went on to become expert in business engagement and work-life issues, followed by leading and promoting visionary, holistic community-and-state level early childhood system building efforts in New York. I took on a series of positions in many different sectors — media, philanthropy, government, research, and community building—to learn, influence, and share how positive early childhood development fits in each of these worlds. I then worked with national, state, and local groups to share what I was learning and help others do the same.

Over the past 50 years, our country has made amazing progress in recognizing the importance of the early years. Yet there remains a huge gap between what we know and what we do. This guide aims to address that gap and spur on the next 50 years of progress. It has been an enormous honor and pleasure to work with Dana once again as we share what we (and so many others) across the country have learned about how to put what we know into action.

I am still convinced that helping all young children get the best start in life can change the world for the better. It is my deepest hope that this Playbook will help light the way.

Nina Sazer O'Donnell

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Thank you also to the incredible staff at The Early Years Institute who helped create a vibrant community coalition in Westbury: Helen Dorado Alessi; Johanna Rotta; Colleen Multari; Briana Charleton; Toni Riedel; Trish Manzi; and Stella Miller. A special thanks to Helen and Johanna who contributed to the Westbury case study. This Playbook could not have been written without the commitment and energy of the members of the Westbury Early Learning Leadership Team who inspired all of us with their collaborative spirit and the implementation of so many wonderful new opportunities for the children and families of Westbury, NY.

An enormous thank you to those who thoughtfully answered our questions in video recordings included in the Playbook: Steven Bellone, Suffolk County Executive, NY; Tonda Brown, Manor Independent School District, Austin, TX; Kathy Deerr, Family Place Libraries, Middle Country, NY; Lucinda Hurley, Nassau BOCES, specifically Barbara Behrens, Janet Sluka and Ray Andreasen, Garden City, NY; Meg Poag, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas; Jacqueline Porter, Boston Public Schools; Angie Sullivan, Second Grade Teacher, Las Vegas, NV; Nellie Taylor Walthrust, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center, Westbury, NY; Sheila Umberger, Roanoke Public Libraries, VA;

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Special thanks to the William and Maude Pritchard Charitable Trust for their ongoing support of The Early Years Institute and the grant to develop the School Readiness Playbook.

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Please double click the citation or the URL of the organization and copy it into your browser if you have a problem connecting.

1. Introduction

In the case of school readiness, the African proverb *it takes a village to raise a child* couldn't be more true.

To grow and thrive before they reach school age, young children need: strong families, good health, and positive early learning opportunities. This mix of school readiness ingredients requires that many community partners—from family support, education, health, home visiting, and high quality early learning programs to schools, libraries, museums, parks, employers, media, and others—play a role in increasing school readiness for all young children.

Recent advances in neuroscience show how quickly human brains grow in the first years of life and underscore the importance of the early years' impact on children's future success in school and life.

School readiness affects the economic well-being of every child, family, and neighborhood. Communities, employers, and local governments all benefit from more children entering school ready — from reduced costs for remedial education and juvenile delinquency programs to increased tax revenues from a productive current and future workforce.

When more students enter school ready, teachers and schools can more easily help them learn and succeed. This also affects school test scores, rankings, and funding. Most importantly, being ready for school has dramatic consequences on a child's life trajectory, impacting everything from high school graduation to long-term health outcomes.

Many economists now recommend public and private funding for early childhood development and school readiness programs. It is one of the best investments that communities, states, and the nation can make to insure a more prosperous future.

Nobel Laureate in Economics, James Heckman, contends, "It is imperative to change the way we look at education. We should invest in the foundation of school readiness from birth to age 5." <http://heckmanequation.org/content/>

Community-wide school readiness depends on many local players, programs, and resources. Communities must establish inclusive, creative leadership as well as fresh ideas about how all of these players can be more successful working together than alone.

This approach is at the heart of federal Promise and Choice Neighborhood initiatives and other national, state, and local efforts such as the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, New York State Cradle to Career Alliance at SUNY, Smart Start in North Carolina, Boston's Thrive in 5, and many others throughout the country. These efforts all use shared goals and evidence-based strategies that help people work together to achieve results. Success requires everyone to use and contribute knowledge to the messy science of strengthening communities.

The good news is that not everyone needs to be an expert in early childhood health and development to play a key role in promoting school readiness.

What all players do need to know, however, is what it takes to create *win-win* relationships. They need to master the art of collaboration, working in ways that enable all partners to contribute and benefit more from working together than by going it alone.



How to Use This Playbook

This Playbook is a compendium of the latest thinking and best practices on community-level, collaborative efforts to increase school readiness for all young children. It builds on the knowledge and experiences of many communities throughout the country that are weaving together networks of formal and informal resources and funding to increase the number of young children who are ready to succeed in school.

The contents of this Playbook are designed to equip diverse community players with knowledge and resources about how communities can work together to increase school readiness for young children. It includes:

- what school readiness is and why it matters;
- how communities can work together to increase school readiness;
- how school readiness is a win for each potential player;
- actions diverse players and allies can take;
- examples and advice from communities successfully working together to increase school readiness;
- a case study of Westbury, New York's school readiness efforts;
- ongoing issues and recommendations; and
- links to research, reports, and over 150 website links to school readiness organizations and information. These resources are identified throughout each chapter so URLs can be clicked on while reading online. They also appear alphabetically at the end.

All of the content is intended for communities to borrow, adapt, or use as-is in presentations, reports, proposals, with coalitions, partners, funders, policy makers, and in social, print, and electronic media.

The Playbook is also sprinkled with examples of successful school readiness efforts. Readers can explore these strategies and adapt them to meet the needs of their communities. The ultimate hope is that this guide inspires learning and action among people everywhere who care about helping all young children get a great start in school and life.

2. Why School Readiness Matters

While many people understand what children need to be ready for school, others think school readiness means that young children know their letters, numbers, and colors. For some, it means new school shoes and backpacks. School readiness includes these things, but is also more than that. Among schools, teachers, researchers, and early childhood experts, school readiness refers to the conditions, skills, knowledge, and behaviors children need when they start kindergarten. These typically include:

- **Physical health and well-being** — Do children come to school physically ready? Have they been screened for developmental delays and have any delays been addressed? Are they physically independent, e.g. can they tie their shoes and hang up their jackets? Do they have gross and fine motor skills, e.g. can they manipulate large blocks and small beads?
- **Language and communication** — Can children use language to express their thoughts and feelings or to follow simple oral instructions? Do they know what common words mean?
- **Social-emotional development** — Are children able to both express and control their thoughts, feelings, and emotions? Are they able to understand that others have thoughts, feelings, and emotions that are different than their own and can they express empathy or compassion?
- **Cognitive development** — Are children able to solve problems, follow the logic in a story, think, and make decisions?
- **General knowledge** — Do children know the days of the week, letters, and basic shapes? Do they know that books are opened and read from left to right, that you pay for things in a store, or that red lights mean stop and green lights mean go?
- **Approaches to learning or life skills** — Are children able to focus, communicate, take on challenges, control their emotions, and persist at challenging tasks?

The language used in the school readiness world can be very confusing. It is useful to notice how the language reflects ways our thinking about what happens in early childhood has changed over time.

Some of the strangest or most cumbersome language (like “early care and education”) was coined to combat or clarify misunderstandings, i.e. child care is not babysitting.

It is important to understand that each of these programs are typically funded and/or regulated by a different government agency and have different requirements for how services must be provided, to whom and what must be reported. These realities often prevent programs serving the same age children from working together.

It is also important to note that the benefits of early education accrue **ONLY** when the services offered are high quality with required staff-child ratios and group sizes, levels of teacher education, use of research-based curriculum and assessment. Unfortunately, quality varies across the different types and within types of early childhood programs. Quality is expensive and beyond the reach of many parents and programs. Furthermore, there are only limited resources available from government, businesses, and foundations to help offset these costs for parents

School Readiness Matters to Children and Families

There is a tremendous amount of research about what it takes to prepare young children for success in school. Decades of compelling, scientific evidence detail the many human and economic benefits of investing in early childhood development and learning.

All children are learning from the moment they are born. During the first three years of life the brain creates at least 700 new connections among brain cells every second (Harvard University, 2015). This provides the foundation for all later learning and is created through children's consistent relationships and experiences with caring adults. Through these experiences children learn to understand and function in the world around them in ways that set the stage for learning throughout their lives.

Common terms used for early childhood education programs:

- **Preschool** describes the age range of children before they go to school. That said, many programs serving children this age call themselves preschools and subsequently many people now use the word preschool to mean a place, rather than an age range.
- **Pre-k or pre-kindergarten**, similarly, used to mean an age range, but with the advent of many public pre-k or pre-kindergarten programs, these terms have increasingly come to mean a specific place and program, which might be part- or full-time.
- **Nursery school** usually describes very part-time (2-4 hours) programs for 3-5 year olds focused on enabling young children to learn to get along with other children. Some programs traditionally known as nursery school, such as Montessori schools, have expanded to full-day programs for working families.
- **Day care and child care** are terms that evolved to describe a wide variety of programs that care for and educate young children before school. Sometimes these are misunderstood to describe only custodial care, mistakenly referred to as "babysitting." Early learning takes place all day in the context of consistent caring relationships with adults; care and learning can't be separated.
- **Head Start** is a federally-funded program launched in 1965 with the goal of providing vulnerable preschool children and their families with comprehensive services to help them be ready for school. It serves very low income children and families with comprehensive services and has expanded to include programs for families with infants and toddlers (Early Head Start). Although only 42% of eligible children and families are served in Head Start and only 4% of those eligible are served in Early Head Start due to funding limitations, Head Start's performance standards, training infrastructure, and national reach make it an essential player in all community school readiness efforts.

Communities working on school readiness must be as clear as possible and communicate about school readiness in ways that the people in their communities best understand.

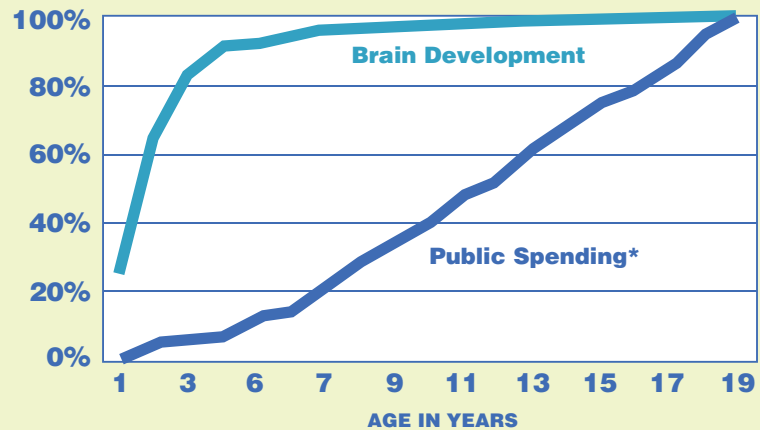
Many states and communities have their own definitions of school readiness and readiness indicators for parents and community programs. Examples can be found in the resource section of this guide.

A series of short videos on the importance of early experiences on the developing brain and children's learning can be accessed through Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child: http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/three_core_concepts/serve_and_return.

Scientists at the Harvard Center have also shown that during these early years each child's experiences determine the strength of their foundation for learning. Consistent, nurturing relationships with families and other caregivers and the learning opportunities they provide all influence development of essential learning skills. These skills include curiosity, persistence, attentiveness, the ability to form new relationships, the ability to use language to communicate, and other capacities that set young children on the path to later school and life success.

It is clear that a child's path toward school and life success begins at birth, long before school entry. And yet, because public schools and state-supported higher education structures and funding were established more than 100 years ago, communities and states are trying to rebalance public funding in ways that support the entire education pipeline, from early childhood through post-secondary learning. This doesn't mean that support needs to be taken from existing education budgets. Rather, communities and states must leverage existing funds through partnerships and create new resources for the early childhood portion of an education system.

Just like a car that won't work properly when all four tires are not balanced, an education system which is missing one of its elements likewise cannot function effectively.

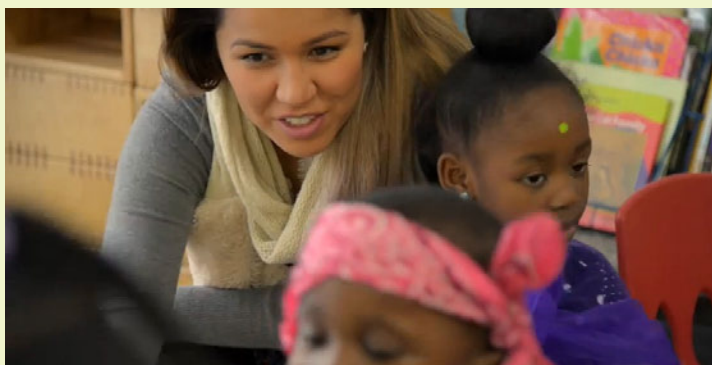


*Portion of total public investment in children being spent during indicated year in children's lives.

School Readiness Matters to Communities, States, and the Nation

School readiness can reduce achievement gaps and improve long-term school success. Children who start school behind tend to stay behind and continue to lose ground as they progress through elementary school and beyond.

It is no accident that in most schools, the percentage of children who come to school not ready is the same percentage as the number of students who can't read by the end of third grade, disengage in middle school, and eventually drop out of high school. Typically, about 40-60% of children are considered not ready for kindergarten, with children of color and children living in poverty having significantly lower readiness rates. And school readiness challenges are greatest for children with disabilities, children who experience ongoing stress, such as living in poverty or with abuse.



National

invest in us Better Futures

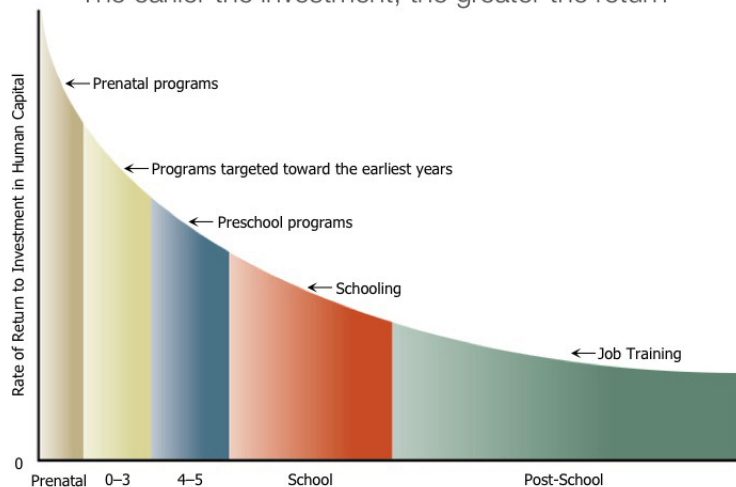
(with John Legend) 1:00

“Children are the future teachers of this world, doctors and scientists, architects, entrepreneurs, artists, and astronauts. I’m John Legend, and I want all children to achieve their full potential.”

Click here to watch video

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IS A SMART INVESTMENT

The earlier the investment, the greater the return



Source: James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics

Helping Children Succeed

Looking ahead, labor experts say that widespread failure to prepare children to succeed in school threatens the strength and viability of the future workforce. This failure creates a drag on U.S. competitiveness and productivity and is a source of costly social problems; investing in early childhood education is a strategy that offers the best rates of economic and social returns — for children and for society. (See Heckman curve at left.)

Employers increasingly seek employees who are problem — solvers, team players, and innovators. Increasingly, they understand that the foundation for these qualities is created in the first years of life. In addition,

the U.S. Department of Defense considers school readiness essential to the readiness of our armed forces and our national defense.

<http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/heckman-curve>

School readiness yields a strong return on investment (ROI) over the long term. Several economic studies have shown that every dollar invested in effective early learning programs can yield \$7 to \$10 in return from increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health, and criminal justice system expenditures.

<http://businessroundtable.org/resources/early-childhood-education-a-call-to-action-from-the-business-communit>

A 40-year study following a group of young children in the Perry Preschool Project (PPP) found that these children were more likely to get married, have better jobs, earn higher incomes, and take a more active role in their communities than a group of children who did not experience the PPP.

http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/specialsummary_rev2011_02_2.pdf

Early childhood investments substantially boost health, even into adulthood. In a long-term follow-up study of the North Carolina Abecedarian Project, disadvantaged young children who participated in high quality early childhood programs had significantly fewer risk factors for heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other diseases in their mid-30s.

<http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/BenefitCostAbecedarian.pdf>

No matter which lens one uses, supporting positive early development pays off for children, families, communities, and the nation.

This *Business Champion Toolkit* was created by United Way to help state and local United Ways deploy business leaders already committed to early learning as public champions for early childhood education. It's part of United Way's ongoing business leader engagement work which helps state and local United Ways identify, educate, persuade and mobilize private sector volunteers around education, income, and health.

<https://www.bornlearning.org/campaign-central/mobilize/business-champion-toolkit>



3. Promoting School Readiness Across The Community

The recipe for children’s school readiness is not mysterious, but it isn’t entirely simple either. Any and all environments where children spend time can and do affect school readiness.

Supporting school readiness requires strategies that:

- provide parents and families with information about how they can promote positive development at home;
- weave together local school readiness programs, services, activities, and initiatives in ways that are welcoming, supportive, and effective;
- promote equitable availability of school readiness resources for children and families from diverse cultures and with varying economic, transportation, and housing resources; and
- deploy all possible means to broadly share school readiness information throughout the community as you would for any a public health issue, and for the public good.

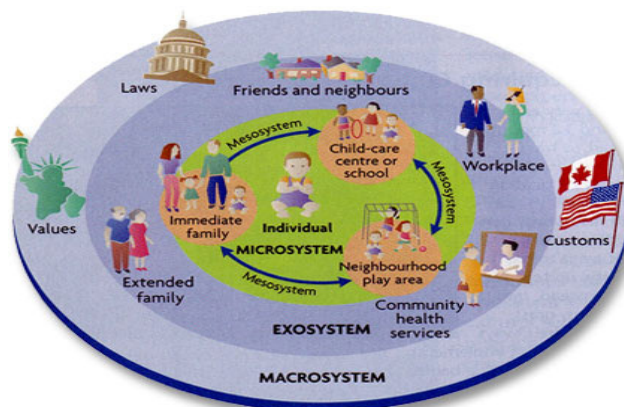
Because school readiness requires the involvement of many community players whose work is part of much larger human service systems — health, education, child care, etc. — most communities working to increase readiness use some version of the following equation:



This concept embodies the ecological model of child development created by Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner. The child is at the center of concentric rings of influence — from family, culture, and community to policy — that all affect, and/or support the child’s well-being.

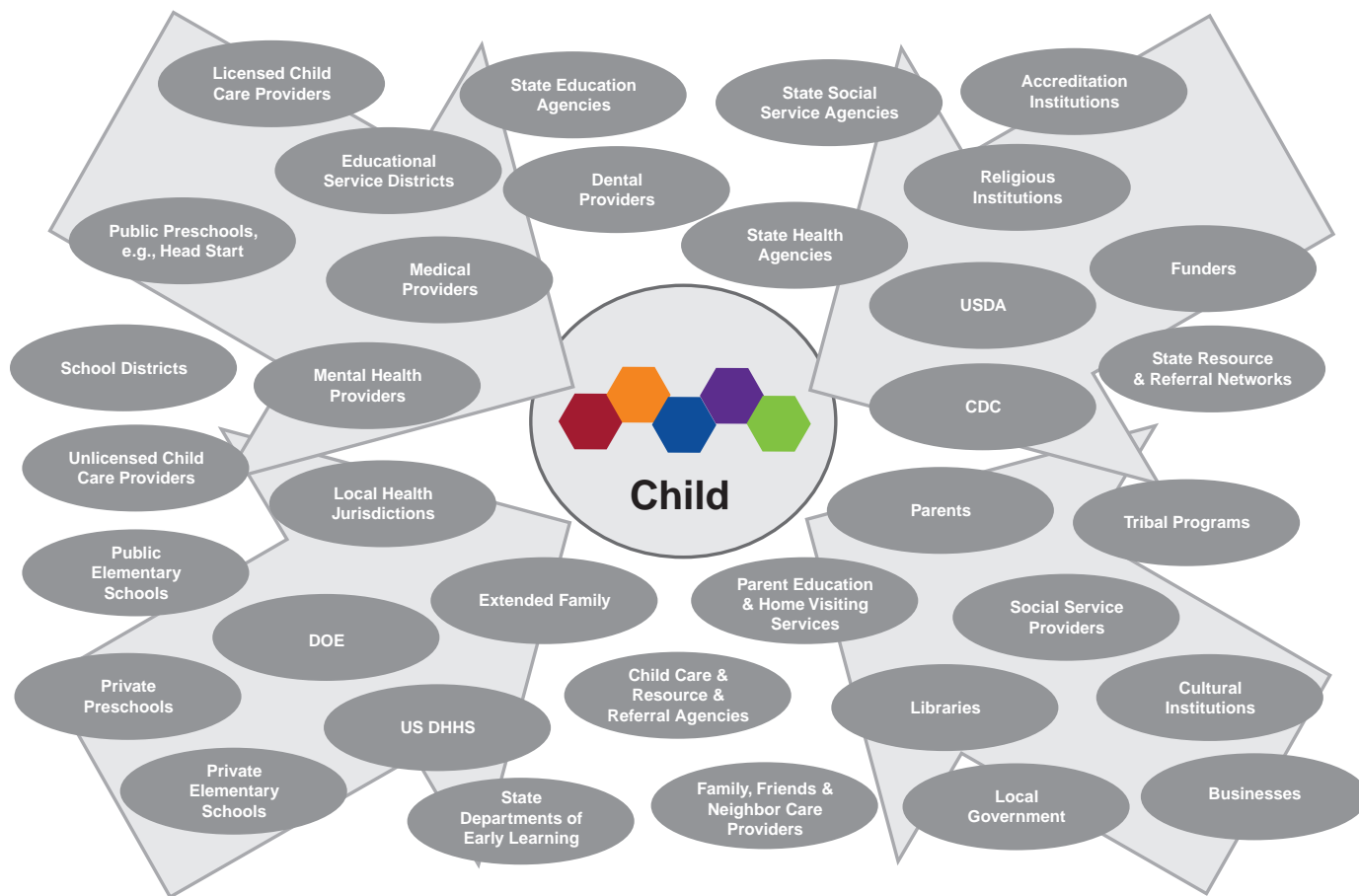
The graphic on the next page, FSG’s *Markers that Matter* Report, illustrates the complex set of influences on children’s school readiness, which becomes the components of a comprehensive school readiness system.

Understanding that school readiness embraces a wide range of public and private services and supports, many communities work towards creating a coherent



Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (in Berk & Roberts, 2009, p. 28)

system of school readiness programs and services. Unfortunately, current systems for young children and families across the U.S. look like this:



Many leaders working to promote school readiness refer to *early childhood* or *school readiness systems* to mean a set of coordinated and connected programs, services, and activities that together promote various aspects of school readiness.

Some see these systems through a micro lens, working in one community or neighborhood to align or coordinate specific sets of local services. For instance, a micro effort might be reaching out to all pediatricians in town to make sure they are doing developmental screenings, offering Reach Out and Read, a national program to give free books at every child's visit, or sharing immunization records with local early childhood programs. Another micro effort could be bringing together teachers from all types of early childhood settings for shared training and peer sharing that helps them all improve the quality of their services.

Convening a Mayor's School Readiness Task Force, serving on a county-level school readiness coalition to increase pre-k enrollment or advocating for more funding for early childhood teacher training across the state are macro-level systems efforts.

Working at both the micro and macro levels is essential to creating sustainable and effective school readiness systems that address specific community needs and deploy specific local assets.



A challenge for communities is that many micro, or local community efforts are affected by macro municipal, county, state, and federal efforts. For example, programs that receive funding from different government funding agencies, such as education and human services, may face restrictions on blending funds within the same program or with community partners. At the same time, many communities launching public pre-kindergarten programs that use both school- and community-based programs face the challenge of blending the human and financial resources needed to achieve the same high levels of quality for all children in all programs.

This is why it is usually necessary for communities to work at both the micro and macro levels as they increase school readiness.



Salt Lake, Utah

High Quality Preschool Changes the Odds! 5:45

“When we educate our youngest children and connect them to school, we are building a strong community for all of us.”

Click here to watch video

4. Communities Working Together to Increase School Readiness

A community-wide partnership to increase school readiness is an exciting, but complex undertaking. To navigate and choreograph this important work, many communities are using a way of working together called **collective impact**. This flash mob video offers an excellent example of collective impact:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbJcQYVtZMo>

Flash Mob — Ode an die Freude (Ode to Joy) Beethoven Symphony No.9 classical music

(Note: sections of this video can be used as a dramatic and unexpected example of collective impact.)



Each player has a unique part to play, and as more players join, the music becomes richer. There is a leadership structure with a conductor, orchestra manager, and players who work together in sections and practice, rehearse, evaluate, and plan their performances. It is this combination of individual contribution and group effort that results in beautiful music. This is similar to the process of communities that come together across sectors, with leaders and players who all know their parts and make something extraordinary by working as an ensemble.



Quality early childhood education is crucial to school readiness and future success.

Fairfax County, VA

Neighborhood School Readiness Project 6:24

“Our focus is always on how we can improve our students’ achievement and with that, how can we support our families by empowering them in the community to support us in that mission.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Getting Going

In most communities there's a spark — an incident, a policy change, or new knowledge that galvanizes community members to address a common problem. The spark might be ignited by an energetic retired teacher upset about a drop in third grade reading scores, by a surge of immigrant families who speak many different languages at home, or by an elementary school principal who realizes too few young children are arriving at school ready to succeed. Once a spark has ignited, it can lead to exciting results for children when different parts of a community come together, understand the challenges and opportunities, and, like an orchestra, act together.

This section presents key principles that are shared among various models of community action used around the world: Ready By 21 and StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network approaches; collective action as defined by the Stanford University's Center for Social Innovation; and the work of Tamarack, Promise Neighborhood Institute Policy Link, National Smart Start Technical Assistance Center, and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, to name a few. They are based on the experiences of hundreds of local innovators who have successfully customized these principles in very different types of communities. They have *all* found that working together helps school readiness gain more attention, money, and expertise than any group could leverage on its own. (The websites, studies, books, and guides from these successful partnering organizations and community initiatives are throughout this Playbook and in the Resources section.)

These common key principles include effective partnership, leadership, and creating effective plans and strategies. They also include using information and shared measurement to inform strategies, drive results, and communicate about results over time.

Collaboration

The most successful school readiness initiatives attribute their progress to the ability of different players — from families to institutions — to partner effectively with one another. The effectiveness of those partnerships is built out of those partners' mutual knowledge about and respect for each other. They use respectful and inclusive leadership to create a culture of learning, and tap technical assistance and advice from partners and others who have successfully increased school readiness.

The organization of these efforts vary, depending on current and historical community conditions — both assets and needs — and what various players are able to bring to the table. Within that variety, they all seem to have the following elements, which are part of a framework for *collective action* developed by Stanford University's Center for Social Innovation:

http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Ten Steps to Increasing School Readiness

Collective impact principles are typically activated differently in each community, based on the needs, assets, leadership, and other resources needed to increase school readiness. The basic process involves the following ten steps, which may or may not occur in the order listed here, and that's okay:

1. Identify leadership/backbone organization.
2. Respectfully engage families as full partners.
3. Identify, recruit, and convene community players.

4. Create a baseline of where children are now and what targets you hope to reach (Also see section 5: Using Data to Inform Action).
5. Understand the conditions of families and the community.
6. Understand the obstacles to success and the underlying issues that create them.
7. Develop a strategic plan to achieve school readiness goals.
8. Based on data, develop strategies to improve all domains of school readiness.
9. Create a culture of continuous improvement by evaluating what's working, what's not working, and changing course to increase results.
10. Communicate progress to all partners and the broader community.

While these steps make the process seem neat and linear, it is more often evolving, messy, and cyclical. As strategies are activated and measured, they may change, expand and/or trigger new cycles of data gathering, communication, and strategic planning. The process may often pause or take a step backward due to leadership changes, elections, vacations or the natural rhythm of the work. A new school superintendent might change the school district's priorities. Or a key player might lose funding and be less able to commit resources to the effort. These changes require groups to continuously revisit goals and priorities, based on emerging realities and capabilities. Many community-wide school readiness initiatives experience this "two steps forward, one step back" process, celebrating successes and using pauses to reflect on and refine strategies.

Some communities start by updating an outdated strategic plan; others start with data about community needs and assets. The order is less important than making sure all players at the table share a common vision, goals, language, and definitions, that leadership facilitates players' engagement, and that the coalition uses data to create solutions that improve school readiness.

Leadership

Consistent and effective leadership is key to the success of community partnerships. It is essential to identify who can best play role of the backbone organization, which is often a neutral convener and the primary facilitator of the coalition. It is also important to recognize those who can play other critical and supporting roles.

Collective Action Models

Several national efforts to increase educational success from cradle to career are in play throughout the country, including Promise Neighborhoods Institute, place-based work that adapts the Harlem Children's Zone model, and initiatives using frameworks developed by StriveTogether, Ready By 21, or United Way. In New York, the entire State University of New York (SUNY) system is focusing on promoting school readiness and increasing high school graduation rates. These links provide information about how to find existing collaborative efforts that may already be addressing or may be willing to expand to address school readiness:

StriveTogether: www.strivetgether.org

Ready By 21: www.readyby21.org

Promise Neighborhoods Institute:
www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org

United Way: www.unitedway.org

According to the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations that can plan, manage, and support the initiative through on-going facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 40).

These roles can be played by one organization or by a core group of leaders. Whether an individual organization or a group of organizations serve as the backbone, leadership must be credible and reliable and have a track record and the capacity to serve as a neutral convener that can keep diverse groups at the table. In some communities, the school district might be the right convener. In others, a neutral intermediary organization, such as a community foundation, United Way, library, university or hospital foundation may take the lead, depending on local dynamics and capabilities. Governmental leadership, such as a City or County School Readiness Advisory Committee, can also be effective and can also attract other senior leaders to the table.

It can also be helpful to build on existing efforts. A community may have taken on a literacy campaign or have a long-standing child care coalition. Or there may be an existing community-wide group focused on other issues, such as economic development, high school graduation rates, housing, or maternal and child health, that is ready to expand to include a school readiness focus and can bring new players and allies to the effort.

Players

Partnership

This Playbook provides a list of more than 22 possible players or partners who have assets to contribute and solid reasons to care about school readiness. In addition, there are often unexpected hidden gems, or assets, in every community. An effective process for identifying both organizational and individual assets is called Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).

“Unfortunately, many leaders and even some neighbors think that the idea of a strong local community is sort of nice, a good thing if you have the spare time, but not really important, vital or necessary. However, we know strong communities are vital and productive. But, above all they are necessary because of the inherent limitations of all institutions.” John McKnight, July 8, 2009

ABCD is based on the notion that helping organizations are much more powerful community players when they are not only focused on needs, problems, and deficiencies but are effectively connected to the resources, or assets, of a local community. Researchers at the Asset-Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University’s Center for Civic Engagement find that both communities and individual players are equally strengthened when they connect to those community assets.

<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>

ABCD helps communities see groups of people such as welfare recipients, elders, youth, and minorities as contributing citizens within their community, rather than as marginalized problems. The ABCD approach considers all citizens “co-producers of their community’s well-being, not just consumers of public services.” This is a helpful perspective to use to form truly diverse and meaningful community partnerships.



The ABCD Institute recommends a process in which communities ask themselves:

- What are the things that only citizens can do?
- What are the things that citizens can do with help?
- What are the things that only institutions can do?

Plans and Strategies

Shared Vision and Goals

An essential ingredient to working together productively is to agree on a shared vision and goals for the effort, defining the end result of the effort as specifically as possible.

Groups can start with a broad vision statement, such as, *all children are ready for school*. For example, Boston's Thrive in 5 organizes its work around a shared mission statement: *To ensure that children of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond.*

The group should use some or all of the information described in section five of this guide to help identify and prioritize specific goals, strategies, and timetables for reaching the shared result or completing the mission.

Most successful efforts use a specific strategic planning discipline, such as *Outcomes-Focused Strategic Planning (OFSP)* or *Results-Based Accountability (RBA)*. RBA includes an online scorecard to monitor progress and results. OFSP uses theories of change and strategy maps to document and monitor plans and results. Both of these approaches involve a process that includes:

1. Defining desired results.
2. Understanding underlying issues and obstacles to achieving those results.
3. Identifying strategies to change the underlying issues.
4. Deciding on roles partners will play.
5. Identifying indicators of progress.
6. Agree on deadlines.
7. Create a culture of continuous improvement that uses these indicators to keep moving towards the desired results.

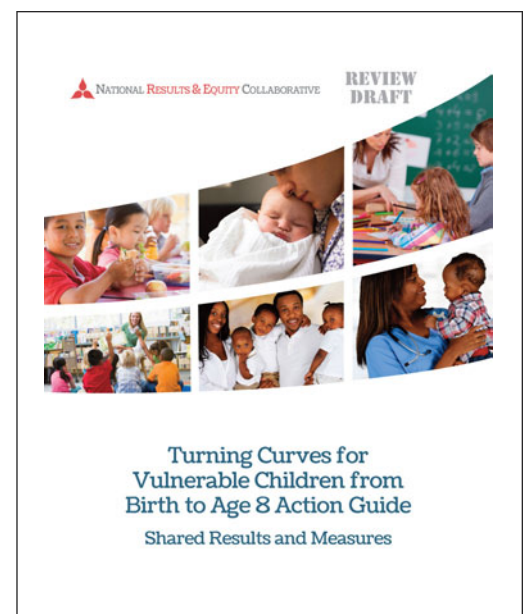
Resources

- **United Way Outcomes Focused Strategic Planning Guide:** Outcome-focused strategic planning addresses the challenges of defining, influencing, and measuring community-level results. <http://studio.unitedway.org/CILresources08/files/community%20outcomes/Outcome-focused%20planning%20for%20Community%20mob.pdf>
- **National Results and Equity Collaborative:** NREC is a newly formed organization and approach to accelerating positive and equitable results for children, youth, families, and communities through the U.S. <http://resultsandequity.org>
- **Guide to Results-Based Planning and Facilitation: Achieving Results and Equity for Vulnerable Children and Youth:** http://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27896/documents/By_Division/DCHP/RFP/RBAGuide.pdf

Readers are also invited to review the Turning Curves for Vulnerable Children from Birth to Age 8 Action Guide: Shared Results and Measures. Follow the same link to access that action guide. It recommends a set of core results and indicators for communities working on improving results for children from birth to age 8.

Twelve Guiding Principles for Community Development: ABCD in Action

- Everyone has gifts.
- Relationships build a community.
- Citizens are at the center.
- Leaders involve others as active members of the community.
- Everyone cares about something.
- What they care about is their motivation to act.
- Listening conversations to discover passions and gifts.
- Asking questions rather than giving answers invites stronger participation.
- Ask, ask, ask.
- A citizen centered organization is the key to community engagement.
- Institutions have reached their limits in problem-solving.
- Institutions act as servants.



The tool is offered as a launching point to align common results and track progress across multiple initiatives. This guide was created by NREC partners as a working draft now being shared for review by researchers, experts, policymakers, leaders, funders, and others to learn how it can best be used and how it can be improved before it is issued in final form.

It grows out of a recognition that:

- at the community level, focusing on a concise, manageable set of results and indicators leads to greater progress;
- each community can move more rapidly to action by using a core set of indicators that are grounded in strong research; and
- as national organizations committed to improving results for young children, agreeing on an initial set of results and indicators to focus on can benefit the networks of all NREC partners.

Please review this draft and add your ideas and comments on the website. And feel free to share this invitation to review the draft with colleagues!

Groups can also begin working together on shared activities while developing a more rigorous strategic planning process.

A range of strategies can help partners get to know each other and accomplish “easy wins” while building a culture of successful teamwork. For instance, partners could jointly host a listening and learning event for and with families to learn more about families’ needs. Or, it may be easy to get libraries, health clinics, bookstores, schools, and early education programs to all promote reading to young children, using the same messages, tweets, posters, or flyers.

Helping a group find common ground is more likely to happen when people know and respect each other. Working on an event or activity can bring people together without other issues getting in the way and may be an excellent way to start a deeper planning and partnership process.

At a minimum, however, it is helpful to know how many children are not ready for school. Knowing the domains of school readiness, a community can start

Key RBA Planning Principles

- Make sure all players are using the same definitions as the work evolves.
- Start with what the community hopes to accomplish. Then work backwards to create a plan and elect strategies.
- Make sure everyone knows who is responsible for what. Who has accountability for different parts of the plan?
- Identify the most powerful measures of school readiness and determine how school readiness services are working.
- Get from “Talk to Action” using the “Turn the Curve” question process.
 - How are we doing?
 - What is the story behind the current curve?
 - What partners are involved?
 - What works?
 - What strategies/plan will work best?

For more detailed information about this process, access the Guide to Results-Based Planning and Facilitation: Achieving Results and Equity for Vulnerable Children and Youth

http://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27896/documents/By_Division/DCHP/RFP/RBAGuide.pdf

Outcomes-focused strategic planning

(OFSP) uses a similar approach. RBA includes an online scorecard to monitor progress and results, and OFSP uses theories of change and strategy maps to document and monitor plans and results.

The full framework and more information on Results-Based Accountability can be found in *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough* by Mark Friedman.

gathering data about the health of newborns, the income and education levels of parents, and the number of child care and pre-k slots, given the number of preschool aged children and working parents.

Data should drive more specific goal setting and strategic planning. The next section explains why information and data are so critical to the success of efforts to increase school readiness, as well as where to find the information that can help define the extent of the problem and guide specific targets for action.

- **Education Research Overview, United Way Worldwide:** This Education Research Overview is designed to give state and local United Ways and their partners a more detailed picture of the research grounding our cradle-to-career education continuum.
http://unway.3cdn.net/59533b0250e4d88684_y9m6iq5bs.pdf
- **Perry Preschool Study:** HighScope Educational Research Foundation, HighScope Press: From 1962-1967, at ages 3 and 4, the subjects of the study were randomly divided into a program group that received a high quality preschool program based on HighScope's participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program.
<http://www.highscope.org/content.asp?contentid=219>
- **UWW Outcomes Focused Strategic Planning Guide:** Outcome-focused strategic planning addresses the challenges of defining, influencing, and measuring community-level results.
<http://studio.unitedway.org/CILresources08/files/community%20outcomes/Outcome-focused%20planning%20for%20Community%20mob.pdf>
- **The Children's Campaign:** The Children's Campaign exists to persuade policy makers, citizens, and advocates to adopt proven strategies that lead to positive outcomes for Florida's children.
<http://iamforkids.org/our-5-promises-to-children/promise-3-child-care-and-early-learning>



5. Using Information and Data for Action

In collective action, just like in a baseball game or an orchestra, everyone needs to know the score, their own parts, and how the combination of all the players' contributions leads to a positive result — a winning game or beautiful music. In order to know the score about school readiness, community groups working together need to know:

- where they are starting — children, family, and community needs and assets (*baseline information*);
- where they are going (*end results or goals*);
- what obstacles and underlying issues they face (*strategy guidance*);
- what strategies will lead to desired results, how do all players contribute and gain, and who will do what by when (*strategic plan*); and
- what success looks like starting out and along the way (*measuring progress and results*).

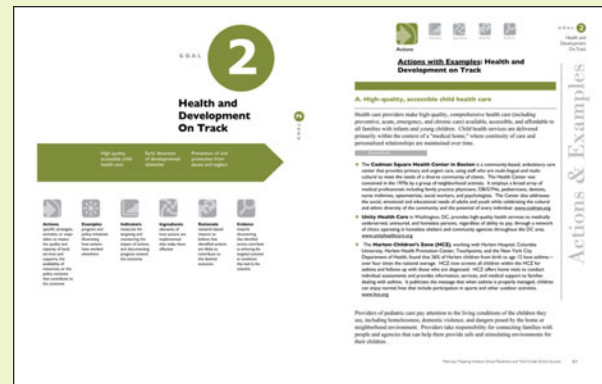
All of these data are essential to mobilizing community players, strengthening coalitions, gaining public and press attention for successes, and demonstrating accountability to funders, policy-makers, the public, and partners.

These varied data points become the ingredients for success by revealing realities about life for young children in the community and clear strategies for helping more children be ready for school.

Pathways Mapping

The research-based Pathways Mapping Initiative provides a framework for such a system, along with a set of results for vulnerable young children and pathways to achieving them that include:

- healthy births;
- on-track health and development;
- supported and supportive families;
- high quality early learning opportunities in early care and education programs; and
- continuity in early childhood experiences.



<http://www.cssp.org/pathways>

<http://www.cssp.org/publications/pathways-to-outcomes/3rd-grade-pathway-pdf-9-07.pdf>

Types of Information Needed

There are several types of information, or data, that are needed for an effective school readiness effort:

- *school readiness* data, about individual children's readiness and the readiness of all children across the community to help teachers and others know both how to help each child learn and progress and how all young children in the community are faring;
- *family and community conditions* data that provide a snapshot of the whole community, which can range from how many babies are born prematurely or at low birth weight (to anticipate and prevent later learning delays) to what languages families speak at home, family income or transportation needs; and
- *program-level data*, to understand how strategies, partners, and programs are working, whether or not they are achieving desired results, and to refine strategies where they are not working.

Data Are...

da-ta \ 'dā-tə, 'da- also 'dā-\

Data provide information, facts and statistics. Data are collected for reference or analysis.

Datum is singular, meaning one piece or bit of information.

Data are plural, meaning many pieces or bits of information.

Measuring School Readiness

One of the most challenging kinds of data to collect is school readiness data. Part of why it is so challenging is that in the U.S. in 2015, there is not one agreed-upon method of measuring school readiness. And the vast majority of school readiness assessments that are being used focus only on individual child-level data and too often only measure academic skills, not equally important social, emotional, and communication skills.

With the rapid increase in the use of assessments with young children, it is important to understand the various types and purposes of school readiness assessments and how the results are to be used. All assessments should be appropriate to the age and development level of the child and reflect their language and culture. This [Child Trends summary](#) shows various assessment tools and approaches and how they can be used. This report also summarizes research on which strategies work in response to specific deficits in school readiness (pages 74-79).

Individual Child-Level School Readiness Data

Child-level assessments focus directly on individual children's status or progress and take many forms. Results are typically used to:

- identify children's needs, levels of development, and progress;
- plan instruction for individual and groups of children;
- identify program improvement and professional development needs; and
- evaluate how well a program is meeting goals (Epstein, et al., 2004).

Because there are many aspects of school readiness — health, social/emotional development, cognitive and intellectual foundations, general knowledge, and approaches to learning — measures of children’s school readiness are most effective when they move beyond a narrow focus on academic skills and look instead at all areas of children’s development. Data about individual children’s learning and development are most valuable when they come from a variety of sources and are collected over time. It is also important to remember that families are experts about their children’s growth and development and should be part of any effort to assess readiness.

As school readiness becomes a more visible need for states and communities and as more school districts are being charged with establishing pre-kindergarten programs, using assessments to understand and make decisions about children’s learning and development has become an integral part of education. As a result of new federal and state policies, individual-level Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEA’s) are quickly being created throughout the country.

While some of these assessments are excellent, they all measure individual children and are not designed to provide population-level information. Yet in the absence of widely used population-level school readiness tools, many communities use these individual child school readiness tools as population-level data — a purpose they were never designed to fulfill. Another way to estimate school readiness is to use the percentage of students not reading proficiently at the end of third grade, which is measured by every school. Where studied, researchers found the percentage of children not ready for kindergarten was the same as the percentage of third graders not reading at grade level. This percentage is considered a safe estimate until more precise measures are found.

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Comprehensive developmental screenings are another important tool for measuring children’s strengths and needs. Often confused with assessments of learning or “achievement,” a comprehensive developmental screening is used to identify children who may have or may be at risk of having a developmental delay or disability. Early identification followed by further evaluation and supports can go a long way to ensure that children start school without delays that could impede their learning success. Additionally, addressing developmental delays early is more effective and less costly than waiting until kindergarten or later to identify problems when remediation is more difficult and expensive.

- The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has developed [Ensuring Early and Appropriate Screenings and Intervention Resource Guide](http://gradelevelreading.net/resource-guide-ensuring-early-and-appropriate-screenings-and-intervention) <http://gradelevelreading.net/resource-guide-ensuring-early-and-appropriate-screenings-and-intervention>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed [Early Childhood Developmental Screening: A Compendium Of Measures For Children Ages Birth To Five](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/compendium_2013_508_compliant_final_2_5_2014.pdf). http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/compendium_2013_508_compliant_final_2_5_2014.pdf
- Docs for Tots provides tools for early childhood practitioners on developmental screening. <http://docs-fortots.org/early-childhood-practitioners/early-childhood-practitioners-developmental-screening/>

Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

CEELO published a review of the state policy assessment landscape that includes a list of common in-use assessment tools and measures. www.ceelo.org

Reading Rockets includes useful online resources for understanding assessments used primarily to measure language and early reading development. See “Early Reading Assessment: A Guiding Tool for Instruction.” <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/14510>

- The American Academy of Pediatrics provides materials to support improvement in developmental and behavioral screening, surveillance, and identification of disabilities. <https://www2.aap.org/sections/dbpeds/screening.asp>

EXAMPLE: Boston's Thrive in 5 Initiative offers training to parents to conduct simple developmental screenings with and for other parents using the Ages & Stages Questionnaires and linking families to needed resources when appropriate. www.thrivein5boston.org

Population-Level School Readiness Data

Using a common set of learning and development indicators, population-level assessments of school readiness can provide information on children's learning across a broad geographic area such as a neighborhood or entire community. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is one such population measure. Results are reported for groups or populations, rather than for individual children, on localized maps that show children's strengths and vulnerabilities across seven domains. Information collected can be:

- compared across geographies;
- related to other environmental, social, or economic conditions for the same area;
- used to identify specific community resources needed to support readiness; and
- used for community engagement and action.

The community maps not only democratize data, but also provide actionable information that enable communities to laser focus strategies and resources where they are needed. <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi/>

The EDI is one of the few tools that helps communities strengthen available supports before children enter school and precisely measure the effectiveness of community school readiness strategies. It is being used in more than 40 U.S. communities as well as statewide in Texas and countrywide in Australia, Canada, and other countries. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) was developed to inform population-level school readiness planning and created at the Offord Center in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Offord Center maintains all of the EDI data collected around the world. <http://offordcentre.com/>

The University of British Columbia's Human Early Learning Partnership has been studying use of the EDI with diverse populations and is now developing similar tools for children aged 18 months and 10 years. <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi/>

Learn how the EDI was used by The Early Years Institute in Westbury, New York in a case study at the end of this Playbook.

Data About Community Conditions

Indicators of Community Conditions

An indicator is an observable measure of the condition of a child, family, school or other setting, or a community. Indicators are usually framed as percentages and support collaboration among diverse stakeholders in several ways. Indicators can:

- inform the planning and delivery of services that increase school readiness, such as where programs and services are needed or which target populations or neighborhoods to focus on first, second, and third;
- provide a common language so that all partners are clear on goals and strategies; and

- serve as a measure of ongoing progress so that coalitions can use the indicators to map progress, identify where progress is stuck, and revise strategic plans.

No two communities are alike and goals and indicators must be tailored to the specific conditions in each community. Leaders should be clear about:

- how each indicator should be adapted for each community;
- what each indicator measures;
- why each indicator is important;
- where to find or get the information; and
- who can help find the needed data (people and organizations).

Some communities may start by measuring and monitoring only a few indicators. Others may use one or more indicators from various categories (children, families, community). Regardless, what these indicators reveal is critical to any collaborative school readiness effort and essential to creating viable and effective strategies.

The National Results and Equity Collaborative drafted key evidence-based indicators that can be used to align school readiness work across various initiatives and/or collective efforts. <http://resultsandequity.org/tools-and-resources/>

The following list of questions is intended to help leaders and partners select indicators to assess how children, families, and the community are doing in terms of school readiness, currently. Answers to some or all of these questions can be used to create a baseline that can be used as a reference point as these same indicators are measured over time to see if and how strategies are working. They can also be used by coalitions to decide what the coalition and partners will measure over time.

Information About Children

- How many children aged birth to five are in the community?
- Are children born healthy? What is the infant mortality rate in the community? How many low-birth weight babies are born in the community?
- Have the demographics of the community changed recently? What are the races and ethnicities of children birth to 5? What were they 10 years ago?
- What early learning experiences have children had? How many children attend early learning programs before kindergarten, e.g. child care, Head Start, pre-k?
- What is the language spoken at home for these children?
- Where do young children live in the community? Are there concentrations of children living in poverty in some areas?
- How many children are victims of child abuse and neglect?
- How many children are in foster care?
- How many children have been immunized before school?

Information About Families

- What are the income levels of parents with young children?
- How many teens give birth each year?
- How many single parent families live in the community?
- What is the employment status of parents who have children ages birth to five? Full-time, part-time, multiple jobs, hours of work?
- What are the housing arrangements of families with young children? How many family members live together? Are families moving frequently, switching children between schools during the year?
- What is the language status and literacy level of parents?
- What are the educational levels of the parents of young children?
- How many books are in children's homes?
- How many mothers experience maternal depression?
- How many families are covered by health insurance?

Local organizations working with families can contribute knowledge about the level of need, whether it is being met, and if not, what they think are the obstacles. And families will have even more to say about access to services and can shed light on the quality of the services provided. Community Cafés or focus groups can be organized by any local group willing and skilled to allow parents to speak up about their concerns and needs.

Getting Started

Use data about children, families, and the community to decide on a target group of children to focus on with initial school readiness efforts. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has placed a priority on addressing the school readiness needs of a community's most at-risk students, which could require looking at children in specific neighborhoods.

1. **Set the baseline:** How many children start kindergarten ready for school in various neighborhoods? What are their strengths and vulnerabilities?
2. **Gather supporting evidence:** What's happening in the community that could be impacting readiness?
3. **Analyze results:** What are the biggest areas of need and what do they mean for school readiness? What are the biggest challenges? What are the underlying issues that cause those challenges?
4. **Make a plan:** Based on all that is known, what will increase school readiness? Who will be targeted? On what timeline? Who else is needed (people and organizations) and what roles will each play?
5. **Monitor progress:** How will progress be measured and communicated? How often will plans be evaluated and revised or refined?

Information About Community Conditions

Children's school readiness is influenced by the people and settings surrounding them, including the services and supports that are available to them, the early learning programs and schools they attend, and the culture of the community in which they live.

The school readiness formula used by many communities illustrates how all of these influences work together.

Ready Families + Ready Communities + Ready Early Childhood Programs + Ready Schools + Ready Systems = Children Ready for Success in School and Life

The group best able to answer the questions below are families themselves. One of the best ways to build a community coalition that is respectful of families is to engage them in the data collection process. Several communities have used "Photo Voices," as a strategy that asks families to walk throughout the community with disposable cameras to create a visual representation of some aspect of community life. <https://photovoice.org/>

For example, in Roosevelt, New York, school readiness efforts focused on health, and partners took pictures of abandoned gas stations, broken windows, health clinics in unseemly buildings, and the presence of fast food restaurants. The resulting slide show presented to the community was quite powerful and was the impetus behind a new Health Task Force to improve community health.

In Hartford, Connecticut, the Commission for Children created a traveling photography show and book titled *Every Grownup Is a Famous Storyteller*. This booklet, created by the Commission and sponsored by the state Department of Education, uses a photo exhibit to make basic points about the importance of reading to children. Dr. Alice S. Carter of Yale University's Department of Psychology provides an introduction. Download the PDF https://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/PDFs/earlychildhood/every_grownup_10-30-07.pdf at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/reading.htm>.

These questions can help reveal the community conditions in which young children live:

- Do young children and families have access to and use pediatricians who serve as a medical home (a patient-centered doctor's office or clinic where a team provides comprehensive and continuous medical care to maximize health outcomes)?
- Do young children get developmental screenings every six months, starting at six months of age, to detect possible delays that could be addressed with interventions before school starts?
- How many families are served or underserved by parent and family support organizations?
- How many families are served or underserved by literacy and language support organizations?
- How well are programs for children and families used at the library or local museums?
- How well do the early childhood programs in the community provide high quality, culturally competent, and literacy-rich early environments?
- How affordable is this care?
- How many families are served or underserved by home visiting programs?
- How many safe parks and outdoor play spaces exist in the community?
- How many families are served by faith-based community programs and services?

- Where are community services located throughout the community? Do all families have access to them?
- How adequate are transportation services?
- Do employers allow flexible work arrangements, paid family leave, or help finding or paying for child care programs?
- How philanthropic are the employers in the community? Do they give to children's causes?
- Are community and school boards reflective of the population living in the community? Are interpreters provided at public meetings where some community members speak a language other than English?

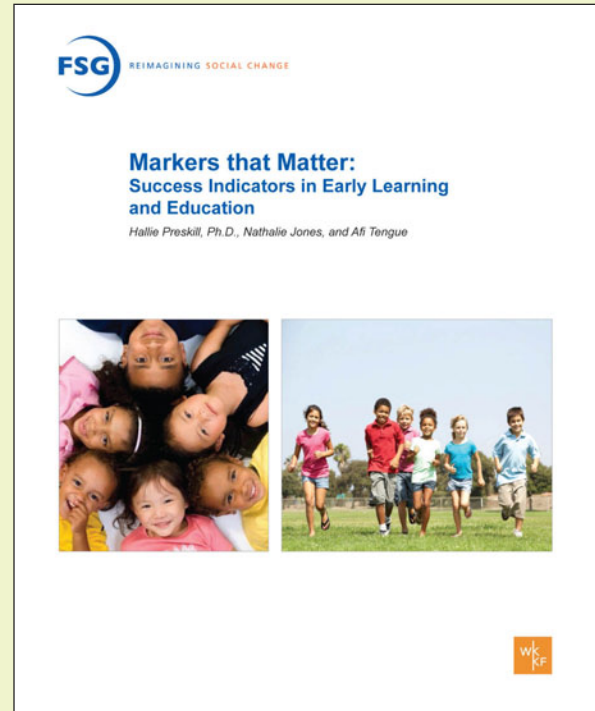
Finding Information

There are many ways to gather needed information. Some information is readily available, such as county birth rates or numbers of children in kindergarten. Other data can be more challenging to find and may require longer-term strategies and expert help to gather reliably. For instance, what is the quality of child care services or how many parents have employers that give them time off to participate in their children's school activities?

Some data collection efforts may involve asking a group of parents for their opinion at a PTA meeting or in a focus group. As with everything in building community partnerships in support of school readiness, asking families what they need and want is always the best place to start. Other data collection strategies may require hiring a research firm to poll a representative sample of the community in a phone survey on a topic. Government data sources such as the federal census <http://www.census.gov/>, county public health information, and local employment reports can provide recent facts about children and families in a community. Helpful information can also be generated by aggregating data from a group of service providers about the children and families they serve.

Colleges and universities are another great data resource. Some, like the University of Texas at San Antonio or the University of Richmond, have community data warehouses where they collect and share community data with teaching coalitions and organizations and help them use data effectively. In other places university-affiliated research centers and researchers may have data on specific topics or populations, such as use of public preschool programs or racial equity in the quality of those programs.

Many national organizations collect data on a number of child and family indicators and make information available as online report cards and data summaries (check out Child Trends, Kids Count, Children's Defense



Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education

FSG recently created an exhaustive compendium of school readiness indicators in use throughout the U.S.

<http://www.fsg.org/publications/markers-matter>

Fund, Zero to Three, and Foundation for Child Development; www.resultsaccountability.com also has links to websites providing report card data).

Government Data Sources

Federal, state, regional, county, and local government agencies all regularly collect and use data that can be useful to community school readiness efforts.

For example, health departments track how many babies are born, how many are born alive, how many prematurely, how many young children are immunized, and how many receive early developmental screenings. School districts and/or state education departments can provide data on how many young children are enrolled in public pre-kindergarten programs and economic development agencies may be able to provide information on parental employment status.

Statewide data are usually available from public health, education, transportation, workforce development, and human service agencies. Other data may also be available from government agencies that monitor county health rankings, child support enforcement, economic development, and labor programs. And some states have data centers that collect and provide census tract data on requested indicators.

National information is collected every 10 years by the federal census. Reports from the census can inform local school readiness efforts with data such as how many and what age children live in various neighborhoods <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

Specific local information, including school district and neighborhood data can be more difficult to find. Often states collect data that can be analyzed at the local level, but this information is not always accessible. Local United Ways, city and county government, and community foundations often collect local school readiness, community needs, and resource information, as do local child care resources and referral agencies.

The Results Accountability website offers a set of tips on how community leaders can request data from state agencies. <http://raguide.org/2-8-where-do-we-get-the-data-for-indicators-how-do-we-get-better-data/>

The National Neighborhood Indicators Project <http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org> is an initiative designed to build neighborhood information systems (currently in 35 cities).

<http://www.nassauboces.org/schoolreadinessplaybook>

Boston's Thrive in 5



This initiative invites families to join and provides them with a loyalty swipe card that not only tracks what events and resources families are participating in, but also provides valuable ongoing information to service providers about what programs and services families want and need. (Insert graphic)

When information is hard to find online or in government databases or when new information is needed, a range of community agencies that employ researchers, such as libraries and colleges, can help find existing data or help create the data by developing surveys, conducting polls, or hosting focus groups.

Data About Kids

- Live and premature births
- Census
- County Health Rankings
- Kids Count
- Employment organizations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Head Start
- School Districts
- City, County, and/or State Government
- Employment and Economic Development Commissions

<http://thrivein5boston.org/>

Demographers can translate data to a neighborhood level; they can often be found at colleges, universities, and in government agencies. For very local data, consider:

- geo-mapping — county or municipal agencies and mayors' offices frequently include a demographer who may be mapping services and supports as well as demographic data by neighborhood or zip code, and community foundations are also a good source of these data;
- colleges and universities often have multiple types of data expertise and can be a source of volunteer or graduate student talent for community data work; and
- many local coalitions and organizations regularly conduct state or local surveys, environmental scans, or community needs assessments, and it can be useful to find out what other groups have already learned about community needs and assets.

Community Data Sources

- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
- United Way
- Chamber of Commerce
- Public Health Department
- County Health Rankings
- School Districts
- City, County, and/or State Government, and
- Early Development Instrument (EDI)

Resources

- **Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education (2013)** includes two community examples of how the use of indicators supported identifying and addressing school readiness needs. <http://www.fsg.org/publications/markers-matter>
- **The Results and Equity Collaborative** is a resource that identifies core results and indicators that communities can use to align multiple initiatives. <http://resultsandequity.org>
- **The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Results Scorecard:** <https://app.resultsscorecard.com/Scorecard/Embed/559>
- **School Readiness Resource Guide and Toolkit: Using Neighborhood Data to Spur Action:** <http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/School%20Readiness%20Toolkit.pdf>

Data collection should help the community understand the following:

- What are the biggest needs?
- Where are the greatest needs in the community?
- Are there different needs in different areas?
- Have these needs changed over time?
- What populations live in those areas?
- What more data are needed and which data should we track over time?
- What solutions should be implemented to help address identified needs?

In order for data to help answer the last question, everyone must work together to understand *why* those needs exist. For example, research is clear that parents should be reading, rhyming, singing, and talking to their babies from birth. Suppose the research shows that very few parents and caregivers in a community are doing this. The question is why. Do parents know they should be doing this? If not, a public education campaign might be effective. Do the parents know how to read? A literacy program could help. Can the parents afford to have books at home? Do they know about the library? Giving away free books and publicizing the library could be two different strategies that might address that data point.

Suppose the data identify one neighborhood in a community where children have very poor health. The coalition needs to figure out why that is occurring: Are there enough doctors nearby? If not, is there transportation to doctors a little farther away? Do the doctors speak the language of the families in the neighborhood? Do they take the insurance that most families have? Families in that neighborhood are best equipped to identify the root causes of the problem. Their expertise must inform the strategies employed to improve their children's health.

Or suppose the community learns that the school district's pre-k program has empty slots. What is preventing more families from using this public resource? Do parents know about the program? Is the school working with community groups and churches to help publicize the program? Is transportation provided? Is the program half day or does it have flexible hours for working parents? Can parents afford the cost of before- and after-pre-k or another part-time program? Without knowing these underlying issues affecting pre-k enrollment, it is difficult, if not impossible, to create a strategy that will effectively solve the problem.

Local neighborhood leaders, clergy, elected officials, community service providers, content experts, and families can all help identify underlying issues and ensure that data analyses have appropriately considered the language, culture, and ethnic differences among children and families in the community. It is well worth the time and effort to continually explore underlying issues, checking with those affected about their needs and developing possible strategies to prevent false starts and efforts that don't lead to desired results.

Questions to Help select the Best strategies

- Are there specific neighborhoods or areas we should be targeting?
- Are there specific populations of children and families we should be targeting?
- What is necessary to increase school readiness for the target population(s)?
- What has not worked in the past?
- Do we know what is working well and why?
- What are best practices in other communities?
- What strategies will lead to the best and most sustainable results?
- What does research say?
- Have we double checked our strategies with parents, families, and other stakeholders?
- If our strategies require system or organizational change, how will we choreograph the process?

- Do strategies leverage multiple results (e.g. a summer program focused on readiness can help reinforce the importance of attendance in school.)?
- How often will strategies be reviewed, refined, and revised?
- What are the desired results? What conditions need to change?
- If we are successful, what will the result look like?
- Who should we ask to help us do this?
- How do we move from a set of strategies to a unified plan?
- What are our goals, objectives, action steps, and tracking and evaluation tools? Who will carry out each action step? Who is responsible for tracking and evaluation?
- Getting Ready: National School Readiness Indicators Report contains references to research on supports for school readiness. <http://www.gettingready.org/matriarch/d.asp?PageID=303&PageName2=pdfhold&p=&PageName=Getting+Ready+%2D+Full+Report%2Epdf>
- United Way has developed a compendium of research findings including these focused on school readiness. http://unway.3cdn.net/59533b0250e4d88684_y9m6iq5bs.pdf
- CWLA is a coalition of hundreds of private and public agencies serving children and families that are vulnerable since 1920. <http://www.cwla.org/>

Both OFSP and Results-Based Accountability (RBA) are well tested strategic planning methods used by many school readiness coalitions. Both processes start by identifying a goal or end result and then using data to create and monitor strategic plans. This section details those effective techniques for moving from data to action.

- ResultsAccountability.com — Mark Friedman's Fiscal Policy Studies Institute: <http://resultsaccountability.com>
- RAGuide.org — The RBA Online Implementation Guide: <http://raguide.org>
- Results-Based Accountability Guide for Facilitators and Leaders: <http://resultsleadership.org/results-based-accountability-rba-guide-for-facilitators-and-leaders/>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy promoting a result-based approach to public policy: www.policyforresults.org

The full framework and more information on Results-Based Accountability can be found in *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough* by Mark Friedman.

Using Data for Communication

The best way to harness the power of data is to share it. Finding creative ways to capture the findings in a catchy graphic can help a lot. A picture really is worth a thousand words. Sharing all of the data, from baselines to progress and results, is essential to:

- building public awareness and the will to act;
- demonstrating and celebrating success; and
- maintaining momentum by showcasing continuing work, notable progress, and the value of partners' contributions to the community's school readiness efforts.

In each instance, widespread distribution of clear and compelling data brings community players to the table and keeps them invested, focused, and continually evaluating progress to ensure the coalition is as effective as possible.

Communicating about data in a visual way, such as maps, info-graphics, or photos, is often more impactful than narrative and is also easier to share broadly through print, social, and electronic media, especially in communities where people speak multiple languages. Such tools can also be shared with organizations that publish newsletters — from employers and businesses to faith communities, schools, hospitals, and diverse local organizations

Resources

- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation.** (2010) *Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- **Center on the Developing Child.** *Child Development Fact Sheet*. Retrieved June, 2014. http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/factsheet_vulnerable.pdf.
- **National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.** (2007) *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do*. Harvard University. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/the-science-of-early-childhood-development-closing-the-gap-between-what-we-know-and-what-we-do/>.
- **Heckman, James.** (2007) *Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children is Good Economics and Good Public Policy*. Statement presented to the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress, 110th Congress, First Session, June 27, 2007.
- **Snow, C. & Van Hemel, S.** (2008) *Early Childhood Assessments: Why, What, and How*. Washington DC: National Research Council of the National Academies.
- **Schilder, D. & Carolan, M.** (2014) *State of the States Policy Snapshot: State early childhood assessment policies*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- **Riley-Ayers, S., Stevenson-Garcia, J., Frede, E., Brenneman, K.** (2012) *The Early Learning Scale*. Carson, CA: Lakeshore Learning Materials. (as cited *ibid*)
- **Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A., Roben, K.B.** (2004) *Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach*. (NIEER Policy Brief, Issue 7). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education and Research (NIEER).
- **National Education Goals Panel.** (ND) *Reconsidering Children's Early Development and Learning: Toward Common Views and Vocabulary*. Retrieved June, 2014. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED3915769>.
- **Rhode Island Kids Count.** (2005) *Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative*. www.gettingready.org.
- **Preskill, H., Jones, N., Tengue, A.** (2013) *Markers that Matter: Success Indicators for Early Learning and Education*. FSG. <http://www.fsg.org/publications/markers-matter>.
- **Bruner, C., Stover-Wright, M., Tirmizi, S.N., and School Readiness, Language and Culture Working Group of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.** (2007) *Village Building and School Readiness: Closing Opportunity Gaps in a Diverse Society*. Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) http://www.cfpciowa.org/documents/news/VBSR_28BD615D7FCCA.pdf.
- **United Way.** (2011) Education Research Overview. Accessed online June 3: http://unway.3cdn.net/59533b0250e4d88684_y9m6iq5bs.pdf
- **Trying Hard is Not Good Enough** by Mark Friedman. <http://resultsleadership.org/product/trying-hard-is-not-good-enough-by-mark-friedman/>

- **Administration for Children and Families.** (2011) *Putting the Pieces Together: Community Efforts to Support our Youngest Children 0-8.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- **National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. (ND)** *Early Childhood Needs and Resources Community Assessment Tool.* Washington, DC: National League of Cities. www.nlc.org/iyef.
- **Bruner, C.** (2007) *School Readiness Resource Guide and Toolkit: Using Neighborhood Data to Spur Action.* Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network. <http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/School%20Readiness%20Toolkit.pdf>.
- **Institute of Museum and Library Services.** (2013) *Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners.* Washington DC: www.ims.gov.



6. Family Engagement and Leadership

A common mantra among early childhood education and family support professionals is that parents are their children's first teachers. Yet many families are unaware of how much their young children are learning before they are old enough to go to school. Many parents are also often unaware of what school readiness is, how to encourage it, and where to find resources they need to play this important role.

Many of the programs, services, and institutions that use this mantra don't really know how to engage with families in ways that make a difference — from understanding school readiness and the role parents play to co-designing or co-creating programs and services parents need.

No company would bring a product to market — a car, a toy, furniture, a phone — without testing it with potential customers and using their ideas to improve the product. Yet in education and social services, those using the product — child care, pre-k, family support, and many others — are rarely consulted in its design. There is an outdated sense among many professionals that they alone know best what others need; this sense has permeated many of the public and private systems that serve families.

Working together to build, expand, or improve school readiness systems provides an opportunity to change this dynamic.

There are five key ways that school readiness efforts can and should engage with families:

1. Ask families what they think, what they need, and what would make programs and services work best for them.

This can be done through surveys, focus groups, and individual or group interviews. An especially effective approach for consulting with families is the World Café model.

The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds created a Community Café model and guide, using the world café model. http://www.ctfalliance.org/initiative_parents-2.htm

Family consultation resources include:

- World Café www.theworldcafe.com/
- UWW Community Café Guide <http://strengtheningfamilies.unitedway.org/index.cfm>
- Harwood Institute Community Conversation resources www.harwoodinstitute.org

2. Inform families (and early childhood programs) about what school readiness entails.

Countdown to Kindergarten engages families, educators, and the community in a citywide effort to enhance early learning opportunities and to support the transition into kindergarten.

<http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org/>

3. Ask families to the table on a regular basis, to plan and evaluate programs and services designed for them.

- Meet when and where it is convenient for families.
- Listen to what families say and be transparent about what will result from their participation.
- Provide ongoing professional development to enable professionals in diverse settings to work respectfully and effectively with families.
- Create paid roles for parents as program leaders and designers.
- In San Antonio, parents are encouraged to go to school and progress on a parent leadership career track. Many parent leaders have received training and even AA and BA degrees, which then qualifies them to become parent room facilitators and coaches in area preschool programs, as well as in elementary, middle and high schools. This peer recruitment and support approach has led to economic gains for families and for the community as well as learning gains for children and adults.

4. Help families grow as leaders and use their powerful voices.

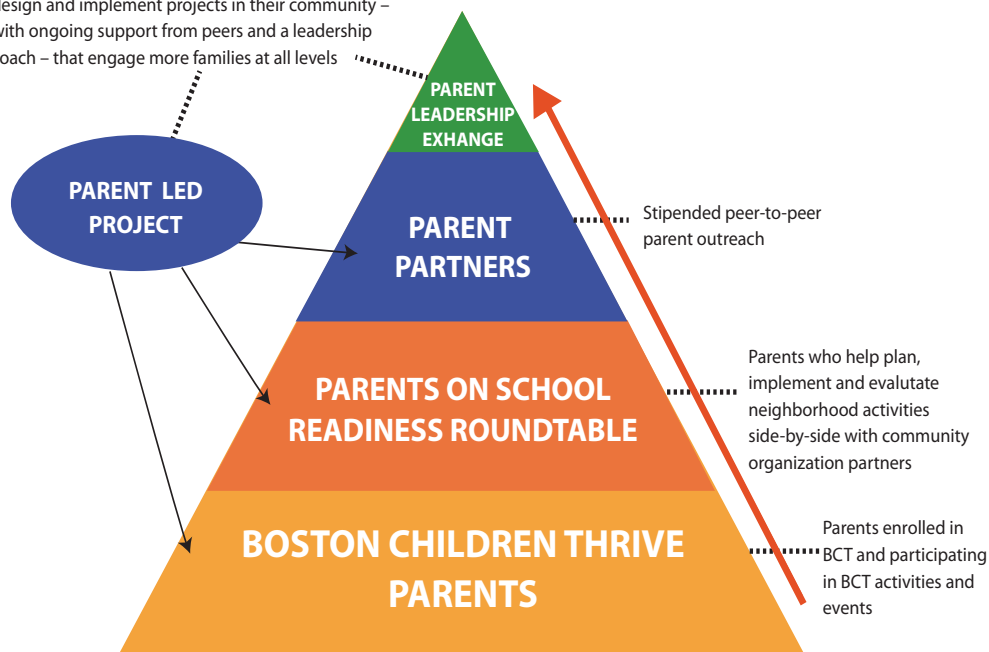
There are a variety of powerful and effective models for helping parents gain the knowledge and confidence they need to be their children's first teacher and to advocate for the programs and services they and other families may need. Make sure that public meetings offer interpreters so non-English speaking community members can participate.

Boston's Thrive in 5 uses a parent development model to guide their work:

- Boston's Thrive in 5: Thrive in 5 is Boston's citywide movement to ensure children from families of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond. <http://thrivein5boston.org/>

Boston Children Thrive Parent Leadership Pathway

Neighborhood-based teams of parents who identify, design and implement projects in their community – with ongoing support from peers and a leadership coach – that engage more families at all levels



- Parent Leadership Training Institute: The PLTI program is a two-generation strategy to bolster parental involvement while promoting the lifelong health, safety, and learning of children. The program integrates child development leadership and democracy skills into a parent curriculum. <http://www.nationalpli.org/>
- COFI (Chicago): For nearly 20 years, COFI has been building the leadership, power, and voice of low-income parents (primarily mothers and grandmothers) to improve opportunities for children and families. <http://www.cofionline.org/>
- Abriendo Puertas: Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors is the nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0-5. <http://ap-od.org/>

5. Support peer family networks.

Peer family networks need support to enable families to engage with and share information with their peers. In both San Antonio and Boston, parent leaders are given training and support to increase their education and skills and move into paid parent leader and facilitator positions. This not only increases the well-being of families, but also contributes to the economic well-being of communities. This video describes the San Antonio Parent-Community Partnership (<https://vimeo.com/102525024>, password: sanantonio) (Note: Password must be all lowercase letters).

7. Communicating About School Readiness

There are many groups and organizations that have researched which messages about school readiness resonate best with different audiences.

For example, when communicating with families, messages should be framed in language and ideas that families can relate to, such as their hopes and desires for their children. When communicating with employers, it is more effective to present the short- and long-term benefits to their bottom line, such as increasing employee productivity and preparing more qualified future employees.

The good news is that many school readiness communications tools exist and are available as models. Many coalitions include communications and media partners and can tap their expertise.

SATURATION IS KEY

Example: Australian policy makers and community leaders have learned from decades of early childhood community system building that saturation and redundancy are key. When the community conveys its shared commitment to school readiness, families receive the same effective message in the library, at school, at the pediatrician's office, in the park, at the store, and on television.

There are five key steps to effective communication about school readiness:

1. **Know your audiences**, including preferred languages, how they get information, literacy levels, technology use and preferences, including social media, etc. The best way to know your audiences is to ask them these and other relevant questions.
2. **Frame and test messages** in response to what you know about your audiences. Focus groups and interviews are essential to this process.
3. **Maintain language discipline.** Use language that is understood by each audience (both school readiness language and native languages).
4. **Use the most strategic communications vehicles**, based on how each audience receives and uses information. This may be newspapers, radio, or television (English and other languages), text messages, social media, in-person or word of mouth or through trusted messengers.
5. **Use the most strategic messengers for each audience.** Some research shows that pediatricians are the most trusted messengers about children's development and that peers are often equally powerful messengers. Youth, business, faith, and other community leaders can have great impact as unexpected messengers. The most important element for the greatest impact that the messenger be trusted and that both messages and messengers be tailored for each audience.

Example: San Antonio leaders engaged two youth to present the community's school readiness data to the Mayor, School Superintendent, and other community leaders and partners. One of the youth had a positive pre-school experience. The other didn't. They each related the data to their own experiences.

Resources:

Many of these and other national organizations have created school readiness communications tools for use by and with their members.

- **Frameworks Institute:** FrameWorks Institute advances the nonprofit sector's communications capacity by identifying, translating, and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing the public discourse about social problems. <http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>
- **Communications Consortium Media Center:** CCMC works to empower diverse and underrepresented communities to participate more fully in decisions about their lives. We believe collaboration among nonprofit groups sharing policy goals is an effective and efficient way to gain credibility and to influence public policy. <http://www.ccmc.org/>
- **Center on the Developing Child:** The Center on the Developing Child's diverse activities align around building an R&D (research and development) platform for science-based innovation, and transforming the policy and practice landscape that supports and even demands change. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- **Alliance for Early Success:** The Alliance for Early Success is a catalyst for bringing state, national, and funding partners together to improve state policies for children, starting at birth and continuing through age eight. <http://earlysuccess.org/>
- **BUILD Initiative:** The BUILD Initiative works with early childhood leaders within states and nationally to better prepare young children to thrive and succeed. <http://www.buildinitiative.org/Home.aspx>
- **National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Families, and Communities:** The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC), helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families>

8. The Players and How They Can Contribute

In order to help communities identify and leverage all possible community assets to increase school readiness, this section contains key information about 21 types of players, including:

- why school readiness matters to each player;
- what each sector has done and can do to promote school readiness; and
- additional resources, information, and advice.

These suggestions are not an exhaustive list, but rather are intended to inspire strategies and action that might work in other communities. While the action ideas are somewhat specific to each type of player, many of these action ideas can be used and/or adapted by a variety of players, alone or together.

Families

Children, Parents, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and Others Who Are Part of Children's Home and Family Life

Children are loved and supported by more than parents and in many different ways. One beautiful example:

“Families define themselves. Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. As family members, we nurture, protect, and influence each other. Families are dynamic and are cultures unto themselves, with different values and unique ways of realizing dreams. Together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. Each family has strengths and qualities that flow from individual members and from the family as a unit. Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states and nations...”

Developed and adopted by the New Mexico Legislative Young Children's Continuum and New Mexico Coalition for Children. <http://www.fv-ncfpp.org/quality-health-care1/family-centered-care/>

How families win:

- Children's emerging readiness skills — from language and communication to problem solving and impulse control — can contribute to a more positive family life.
- Children who are ready for kindergarten will be more successful throughout their school years.
- Families who are active in community-wide school readiness efforts amplify their voices and capacity to advocate for their children. Families gain knowledge about their children's education, leading to stronger relationships with schools, teachers, and other community school readiness partners.
- Ready children contribute to a more positive classroom, enabling kindergarten teachers to help *all* students learn and advance more quickly, rather than having to focus on helping some children catch up while also trying to challenge students who arrive ready.

How families can play:

At home:

- **Commit to developing the skills** and knowledge needed to prepare children for school.
- **Read, sing, and tell stories to children from birth on.**
- **Limit the amount of time children watch TV or play video games.**
- **Encourage children to tell stories.**
- **Join a parent support** or learning organization in the community or online.
- **Share special skills or knowledge with young children.**
- **Take children to the library** often for special programs and to enjoy and borrow books, puzzles, and music.
- **Take children to museums, parks, or the zoo.**
- **Take children outside** as often as possible and allow them to play freely.
- **Talk to children** — ask them questions, listen, respond, and ask more questions.

In networks (neighborhoods, faith communities, circles of friends, etc.):

- **Attend, ask for, and/or organize school readiness workshops** or learning events.
- **Ask early childhood providers what they know about parenting** information and resources in the community.
- **Share what is learned with other families and caregivers.**
- **Share special skills** or knowledge with other families or with young children.
- **Share information about school readiness** or host speakers about school readiness in faith communities.
- **Help a young family with a new baby** learn about school readiness.
- **Take children to a museum, park, or zoo** with a neighbor, friend, or group in a faith community.

In the community:

- **Participate in food, clothing, and school supply drives** for young children.
- **Help distribute literature** about events and resources that can help young families.
- **Volunteer** at or serve on the board of an early childhood learning, health or nutrition program, or parent group.
- **Help repair or maintain playgrounds,** parks, and other facilities used by young children and families.
- **Speak out by writing letters to the editor** or to elected officials urging them to support community efforts to improve school readiness.



Stokes County, NC

Outreach for School Readiness 2:22

"I know that literacy doesn't start at school. It starts at birth. Children must have the opportunity to hear their stories read and have books in their hands at a very, very early age."

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Join with others to protect good early childhood programs** that are threatened with budget cuts.
- **Join with others to address school readiness** on a neighborhood or community-wide level by joining an existing early coalition or getting together informally around specific issues.
- **Ask candidates running for office** at all levels what they plan to do to increase school readiness for all children and offer to help them if they don't know what to do.
- **Vote for candidates or ballot initiatives that support school readiness resources.**
- **Contribute to or raise money** for school readiness efforts.

Advice for partnering with families – don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- It can be hard to know where to start. Begin by contacting a local child care program, library, or child care resource and referral organization to find out what might already be going on. Talk with others in faith communities, schools, and neighborhoods to see if other families with young children know about and/or would like to know more about how to help their children be ready to succeed in school.
- Some professionals may not know how to engage parents and get their input. Be persistent, as families are the best experts about their children. Professionals may not have experience partnering respectfully with parents so be patient as people learn that parents have valuable skills and knowledge and not just needs, and that they have much to contribute to their own and other children's readiness for school.
- Many programs working with families don't know about each other. Very few local programs have funds to publicize their programs and they often rely on families coming to them through word of mouth. When programs know about each other, they may be willing to share effective practices so all programs are stronger. These organizations could also create lists of all family literacy programs, for example, to help them know about each other and let parents know their choices.

Resources

- **Boston's Thrive in Five:** Thrive in 5 is Boston's citywide movement to ensure children from families of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond. www.thrivein5boston.org
- **COFI (Chicago Parent Engagement Organization):** For nearly 20 years, COFI has been building the leadership, power, and voice of low-income parents (primarily mothers and grandmothers) to improve opportunities for children and families. <http://www.cofionline.org/>
- **San Antonio Family-Community Partnership:** <https://vimeo.com/102525024> Password: sanantonio (all lowercase).



Early Childhood Programs

Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care, Early Care and Education, Preschools, Pre-kindergarten, Parent-Child Interaction Programs, Nursery Schools, Play and Learn Groups, and Other Programs That Promote Positive Early Development and Learning

Many young children spend time in the care of others while their parents work and/or go to school. Others attend programs that may be full- or part-time, in centers or home settings that help prepare children for success in school. All of these programs are key elements in a school readiness system and can benefit children, families, and communities. Currently, there is an inadequate supply of high quality early childhood programs for all children throughout the country, primarily due to costs and inadequate public and private resources invested in school readiness, especially when compared to the investments of all other industrialized nations. *See infographic from the Center for American Progress.*

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/news/2013/05/02/62048/infographic-were-getting-beat-on-preschool/>

How early childhood programs win:

- Programs with data showing that children are ready for school after participating in their programs are more likely to be able to secure needed funding from government, philanthropic, and civic groups.
- Programs preparing young children for school benefit from collaborative community efforts and partnerships that link young children and families to other community resources such as health and mental health.
- Good quality programs that generate loyalty and a positive reputation among families are more able to keep enrollment stable, filling vacancies quickly, which creates a more stable financial footing for programs.
- Programs can also benefit from engaging families as volunteers, which adds to their ability to provide high quality services based on true family engagement.

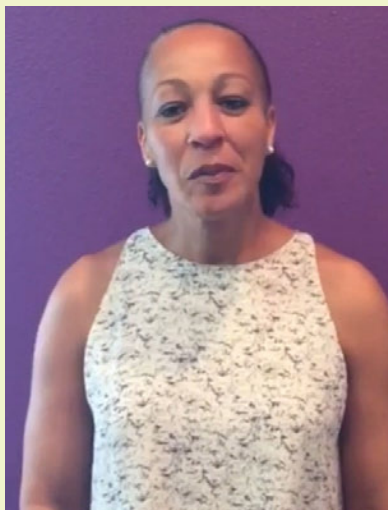
How early childhood programs can play:

In programs:

- **Provide families with information about what school readiness** is and how parents can promote school readiness at home.
- **Use all available professional development resources** to enable teachers to become and remain learners about their own and others' learning (the definition of good teaching).
- **Provide a curriculum that is evidence-based** and proven to result in increased school readiness.
- **Create portfolios** and other documentation of young children's work that can be shared with parents and kindergarten teachers.
- **Provide proactive programming for children** and their families that facilitates smooth transitions from the early childhood program to school and that is reflective of the particular school systems they will enter.
- **Introduce young children and their families to the idea of kindergarten** through books, videos, conversations, visits to schools, or visits from kindergarteners and/or kindergarten teachers.
- **Include a school readiness feature in every issue of program newsletters** and on the program website.

In the community:

- **Partner with schools, parks, museums, libraries, health,** mental health and family support programs, business leaders, faith communities, and others to share information about the benefits and availability of community early childhood programs.
- **Partner with other early childhood programs** and schools to provide pre-service and in-service staff training and to leverage resources such as shared administrative services or joint field trips and special programs for children and/or families.
- **Identify and recruit natural family or neighborhood leaders** to share school readiness information — how to promote positive early learning and development and the value of pre-kindergarten programs, for instance — with peers and throughout the community.
- **Offer staff- and family-led presentations** in many venues to talk about the importance of school readiness and community actions needed to make progress on school readiness for all children.
- **Provide information about early childhood development** and school readiness to community partners who can use and/or disseminate the information.
- **Write and publish articles about school readiness** for local papers, social media, and newsletters.
- **Provide testimony to policy makers** about the benefits of school readiness and what is needed to get all young children in the community ready for school.



**Tonda Brown, Early Childhood Director,
Curriculum and Instruction,
Manor Independent School District 1:32**

“We try to reach children at age 3 so we can get to them as early as possible. We have two years of actual pre-k, so we have them ready for kindergarten.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Austin, TX

*Advice for partnering with early childhood programs—
don't worry (or be surprised) if:*

- Early childhood programs are very underfunded and staff are overworked. It can be difficult for early childhood teachers and directors to participate in community efforts because of their typical ten-hour days. But they are terrific conduits of information for parents they see every day.



Mississippi Early Learning Collaboratives

Preparing Pre-K Students for Success in School and Life 6:39

“Four-year-olds, to me, are just like a building. You have to have a foundation. Once you have that foundation, you are supporting a building that can go as high as a skyscraper.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- Because teachers and directors of early childhood programs often see parents each day as they drop off or pick up their children, they hear a lot about children’s needs and how the program could better meet those needs. They are a useful source of information.
- Early childhood programs are competitive with each other. It can be difficult for players who are resource-poor to understand that working collaboratively can increase resources for all players.

Resources:

- **Countdown to Kindergarten** engages families, educators, and the community in a citywide effort to enhance early learning opportunities and to support the transition into kindergarten. <http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org/>
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** promotes high quality learning for all children, birth to age 8, by connecting policy, practice, and research. www.naeyc.org
- **Council for Professional Recognition (CDA)** works to ensure that all professional early childhood educators and caregivers meet the developmental, emotional, and educational needs of our nation’s youngest children. <http://www.cdacouncil.org/>
- **National Head Start Association (NHSA)** is the voice for more than 1 million children, 200,000 staff, and 1,600 Head Start grantees in the United States and works for policy changes that ensure all at-risk children have access to the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family, and the community. <https://www.nhsa.org/>
- **National Association for Child Care (NAFCC)** is dedicated to promoting quality child care by strengthening the profession of family child care. <http://www.nafcc.org/>
- **National Center for Children in Poverty:** New understanding of how the quality of various early childhood settings affects child outcomes has led to increased attention regarding quality at the state and federal levels and prompted policymakers, researchers, and parents to ask more careful questions about the quality of care across settings, including FFN care. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1010.html

Parent Educators

Home Visitors, Group-Based Parent Educators, Social Workers, Family Navigators, and Others Who Help Families With Young Children

Families all have different assets, and support can be found from a variety of resources to enhance those assets. Parent Educators can help families increase children's school readiness, encourage caregivers to remain engaged in their child's education and well-being, and help guide families to keep children safe, happy, and healthy. Not all parent education begins with a call to Child Protective Services (CPS). Most families want the best for their children. Many families seek Parent Educators voluntarily and look for classes, information, and other guidance that helps them know how to help their children be ready to succeed when they go to school.

How Parent Educators win:

- Children who are ready for kindergarten will be more successful throughout their school years.
- Parent Educators can help caregivers understand milestones and set realistic goals for their children and families, which can lead to measureable results and increased support for sponsoring organizations.
- Caregivers who are engaged while the child is young are more likely to stay engaged and advocate for their children, extending the potential benefits of parenting education and engagement efforts.
- Parent Educators can help keep children safe, happy, and healthy by discussing healthy eating, discipline, appropriate milestones, and ways to interact with young children. These results can lead to increasing support to continue such efforts.

How Parent Educators can play:

In networks (neighborhoods, faith communities, circles of friends, etc.):

- **Organize parent education workshops** or learning events.
- **Act as a case manager and navigator of resources** for the community to increase trust and help connect families to services.
- **Share what is learned with other families**, caregivers, and parent educators.
- **Increase the capacity for residents and caregivers to enhance their skills** and incomes by hiring them as Parent Educators.
- **Share information about home visiting, parent education**, and assets-based family support approaches, such as Strengthening Families, with neighborhood and civic associations, churches, and schools.

In the community:

- **Participate in and provide information at community events** about parent education and home visiting.
- **Educate Child Protective Services workers about the programs offered in the community.** Work with Child Protective Services to help decrease the stigma around parent education and home visiting services.

- **Partner with other assets-based early childhood efforts** focusing on parent education to increase overall awareness and avoid duplicated efforts.
- **Partner with local child care centers**, Head Start, and elementary schools to provide parent education in the languages of local families.
- **Join with others to protect good early childhood programs** that are threatened with budget cuts.
- **Join existing early coalitions** to increase the awareness about home visiting and parent education services currently offered and/or the need to increase services.
- **Ask candidates running for office at all levels what they plan to do to increase home visiting** and parent education efforts and offer to help them if they don't know what to do.
- **Vote for candidates or ballot initiatives that support home visiting resources.**
- **Contribute to or raise money** for home visiting efforts.

Advice for partnering with Parent Educators— don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Parent Educators are viewed as an extension of Child Protective Services (CPS), who officially monitor abuse and neglect and are not trusted in some communities. Families fear Parent Educators will accuse parents of maltreatment and remove children from their families.
- Some parents feel a stigma associated with parent education because it suggests they are stupid or bad parents if parenting classes or home visiting are needed.
- Families' schedules are often busy. It can be difficult for Parent Educators to visit the home or for caregivers to attend classes weekly or biweekly.
- The lack of funding for home visiting and parent education continues to leave many communities with very limited services.

Resources:

- **Strengthening Families** is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five protective factors:
 - Parental resilience
 - Social connections
 - Knowledge of parenting and child development
 - Concrete support in times of need
 - Social and emotional competence of children

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>
- **The New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP)** helps professionals — and the parents and primary caregivers of children whom they serve — obtain the skills, tools and support needed to raise healthy, nurtured children. <http://nyspep.org/>

- **The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting** supports pregnant women and families and helps at-risk parents of children from birth to kindergarten entry tap the resources and hone the skills they need to raise children who are physically, socially and emotionally healthy, and ready to learn. <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/>
- **Zero to Three:** A community planning guide for home visiting that will take you through key elements of program planning, enable you to customize your approach to your community's unique and evolving needs, and align work at the local level with state efforts. <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/home-visiting-community-planning-tool-fillable-pdf.pdf>
- **HRSA Community Health Workers Evidence-Based Models Toolbox** offers background research and implementation options for community health workers — often referred to as the Promotora model. <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/pdf/chwtoolkit.pdf>



Schools

Pre-K to 12 Schools, Colleges, and Universities

Each school district, and sometimes the schools within it, have a unique culture and priorities that may or may not include early childhood education or its integration into or coordination with the school system. Effective partnerships with schools start with leaders communicating about critical issues impacting school success. School boards, administrators, and faculty are all key to the districts' involvement with school readiness, depending on their place in the community. Is the school a powerful institution that calls the meetings and finds groups that can help them meet their goals? Or, do school leaders see themselves as one of many community entities concerned about children's success and is at the table willing to listen and adopt shared goals among all players? Are school leaders feeling pressure from their state funders to promote pre-k but don't know how? Regardless of how schools choose to play in the school readiness arena, these are important questions for schools and the community to reflect on to determine the best roles for schools in community-wide efforts.

How pre-k to 12 schools, colleges, and universities win:

- Kindergarten teachers can spend less class time on remedial work and help all students learn and advance more quickly.
- Teachers can build on positive relationships with families of ready children to reinforce learning at home.
- School test scores improve when more children arrive ready, which improves school standing and can demonstrate effectiveness that may create opportunities for increased funding.
- Fewer classes for children with special needs may be needed, especially if potential learning or developmental delays were identified and resolved before age five.
- Schools can reduce costs and increase services by partnering with community organizations that already provide needed services.
- More students graduate from high school and complete post-secondary education, eliminating or reducing the need for costly efforts to rescue failing or disengaged students and potentially freeing up funds for other purposes.

How pre-k to 12 school administrators can play:

In schools:

- **Create a welcoming environment** for families that offers multiple ways to listen to parents' needs and expectations as part of the school system's culture. Host focus groups, community cafés, or other gatherings that accommodate family work schedules.
- **Partner with other organizations** to share school readiness and kindergarten registration information with families in their primary languages and have interpreters at parent and community meetings so that all families can be included in school activities.
- **Inform all school personnel and parents about school readiness.** Make this information available to parents who are not fluent in English and may need to be reached in nontraditional settings, e.g. grocery stores, laundromats, fast food places, churches, etc. Ask diverse parents how they get information and tailor efforts to what is learned.

- **Use school registration events** to introduce families to other community organizations that can help their children succeed, e.g. libraries.
- **Help immigrant parents** understand how the school system works and how they can best help their children succeed.
- Work with community groups to **help publicize the availability of pre-k**, making sure all populations are reached.
- Invite pre-k families to **join PTAs**.
- Provide opportunities for **pre-k through third grade teachers** to create a professional learning community where curricula, assessments, and professional development are aligned across the grades.
- **Offer relevant professional development opportunities** to all community-based early childhood programs.



Jacquie Porter, Early Childhood Coordinator, Boston Public Schools 1:25

“Children who come to us ready for school do better academically, do better socially and in all areas of their life.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Boston, MA

- **Involve high school student groups** like the Honor Society, Environmental Club, Student Government, Future Teachers of America, Student United Ways, and others in opportunities to volunteer with and support community groups working to improve school readiness.
- **Publicize school efforts** to improve early childhood development and school readiness in school libraries and encourage older youth with young siblings to share this information with their families.
- **Offer indoor and outdoor meeting space** to community organizations that support early childhood learning, health, nutrition, and/or family needs.
- Include early care and education and family-centered facilities in **new school construction projects** and/or reallocate vacant classrooms for such programs.
- **Teach students about brain development** and human development throughout their school years. Not only will they better understand themselves throughout their lives, they will eventually be much better parents.

- **Incorporate information about parenting and child development**, including new insights about early brain development, into the curricula of various content areas at all grade levels.
- **Use Title I and other available funds** to support school readiness, family engagement, and family literacy initiatives for parents in schools.



Pittsburgh, PA

Dr. Linda Lane, Deputy Superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Responds to Aligning Early Childhood Education 2:41

“What can we do to take that interest and engagement we see in our Head Start parents and get them linked into their new school so they are highly engaged?”

[Click here to watch video](#)

How pre-k to 12 school teachers can play:

- **Learn from colleagues about promising practices** for engaging children and families. Visit each other’s classrooms and meet informally to share ideas.
- **Respect families’ knowledge** about their children and learn about their needs and expectations.
- **Develop multiple opportunities for families to come to class** to share their strengths, interests, and cultures.
- Develop multiple ways to **send information home**, including text messaging, email, and/or social media, acknowledging the language spoken at home, as well as barriers that some families have with literacy, computers, and internet connections.
- **Find and connect parents who can help other parents** understand how best to work with teachers.
- **Join early childhood groups in the community**, for example National Association for the Education of Young Children has many local satellites, as does 0 to 3, Infant and Toddler Resource Groups.

In the community:

- **Invite current and retired teachers to read to and mentor children** who need extra help.
- Build partnerships with neighborhood early childhood programs to create **effective transitions** to schools.



**Meg Poag, Executive Director,
Literacy Coalition of Central Texas 2:24**

“In American schools, the cultural expectations are really different than that of the majority of immigrants who are largely from Latin and South America... We have to help parents navigate that.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Austin, TX

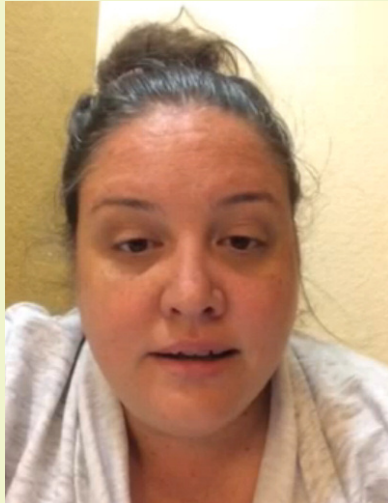
- **Listen to community groups** to better understand their work and how they can and do help children in the district.
- **Invite other early childhood programs to join school teachers** in professional development activities and training.
- Invite families and early childhood teachers to visit and **talk with teachers about school readiness.**
- **Have elementary school teachers visit early childhood programs** to see what goes on.
- **Provide information in multiple languages about school readiness** to programs focused on early learning, health, and nutrition to share with families.
- **Co-sponsor and/or collaborate with evidence-based parenting**, health, literacy, and other programs such as Parents as Teachers, HIPPIY, and family literacy programs that include home visiting such as the Maine Family Literacy Program, Parent-Child Home Program and others recommended by HRSA Maternal and Child Health
- **Provide programs that help teen parents finish school** and learn parenting skills.

Example: In San Antonio’s Eastside Promise Neighborhood, a group of first graders visited 4-year-olds in community early childhood programs to tell them all about kindergarten and what to expect.

How colleges and universities can play:

On campuses:

- **Listen to students, faculty, and employees who are parents** about their challenges and hopes for their children and craft appropriate responses.
- **Create campus parenting and school readiness/early learning programs** for students and staff and ensure that facilities are safe and inviting.

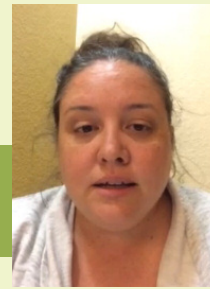


**Angie Sullivan,
Second Grade Teacher 2:01**

"I'm a school teacher. I'm really not built to be an activist or a crazy person that goes around talking to people about things. But my kids are the center of my life."

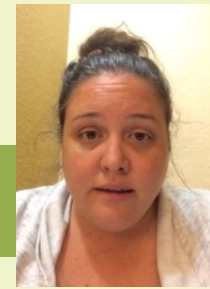
[Click here to watch video 1](#)

Las Vegas, NV



1:40

[Click her to
watch video 2](#)



2:03

[Click her to
watch video 3](#)

- **Establish curricula that encourage learning about family-centered** and collaborative practices among educators, health and family educators, social workers, and other family support professionals.
- **Review early childhood offerings and that of other four- and two-year colleges** to see if systems are in place for students to maintain their credits when moving from a two-year to a four-year institution.
- **Provide supports to first-generation college students** studying early childhood development and education, who may struggle in college.
- **Offer in-kind research support** and graduate student volunteers to local organizations working to improve school readiness.
- **Gather faculty and students across various disciplines and departments to share resources,** research, and develop interdisciplinary programs and courses that support school readiness community efforts.
- **Encourage faculty to include school readiness in their research and to share their research with the community,** for example, consider conditions of early childhood as a variable in later outcomes — income, home ownership, college completion, arrest records, and so forth — or complete evaluation studies to determine whether a new initiative or intervention is achieving its intended outcomes.
- **Provide courses and education programs for leaders** and staff of early learning, health, nutrition, family support, and other readiness programs at convenient times and places.
- **Enable faculty and staff to attend and present papers** at early childhood conferences of early childhood experts to learn more about the latest research, policies, and practices.
- **Include information about school readiness in professional and trade association** publications and conferences on campus.

In the community:

- Invite others to the table.
- Publicize others' meetings and events.
- Allow others to help market meetings and events.
- Offer meeting space.
- Ask for meeting space.
- Look for a partner when applying for a grant. Partnerships often are valued funding priorities.
- Host well-publicized state and community public policy seminars and events that showcase and inform the public and policy makers about school readiness and early learning research.
- Take an active part in local, regional, state, and national school readiness efforts.

Advice for partnering with pre-k to 12 schools, colleges, and universities—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Schools don't have time for early childhood education. There is so much current re-forming of education, it is dizzying at the local level to deal with many new standards and measures to be implemented quickly with little training or preparation time. While most educators are aware that young children need help getting ready for kindergarten, they are often not prepared or able to make it a top priority given other demands. Even if the full weight of the district cannot get behind early childhood, there are often individual board members, administrators, teachers, and parents who feel passionately about school readiness and are willing to participate in a community-wide effort.
- Colleges and universities may not offer early childhood coursework. A number of higher education institutions do not offer early childhood programs because they know that most of the available jobs in child care programs will not pay livable wages, and surely not enough to live and pay back college loans. Furthermore, when local community colleges offer early childhood courses, the credits are not often recognized at a four-year institution. This can be addressed locally if all local two- and four-year colleges sit down together and develop courses that are acceptable to all. It's been done.

Resources:

- **National Association of Elementary School Principles (NAESP) Report for Elementary Principals on Partnering to Promote School Readiness:** In 2010 convened a task force of leading researchers, advocates, policymakers and practitioners to examine how to promote efforts to provide high quality learning experiences for the youngest children. This report details those efforts. <http://www.naesp.org/transforming-early-childhood-education-pre-k-grade-3>
- **American Association of School Administrators (AASA)** is the premier association for school superintendents and serves as the national voice for public education and district leadership on Capitol Hill. They have an advocacy campaign called "Educating the Total Child". <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=118>
<http://www.aasa.org/>

- **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** promotes high quality learning for all children, birth to age 8, by connecting policy, practice, and research. www.naeyc.org
- **Mind in the Making Essential Life Skills:** The seven essential life skills every child needs in a series of videos and trainings. <http://www.mindinthemaking.org/7-essential-skills/>
- **Teachers Unions, such as AFT and NEA:** A growing number of child care providers have become unionized. Their unions are successful in raising dollars for professional development for their members. <http://www.aft.org/> <http://nea.org>
- **National Association of PTAs:** National PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. <http://www.pta.org/>
- **National Association of School Superintendents:** Great school systems are the result of great leadership. NASS ensures successful school systems by advancing superintendent achievement. <http://nass.us/~schools/>
- **Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)** is committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship. CCSSO's promise is to lead chiefs and their organizations in this effort by focusing on those state-driven leverage points they are uniquely positioned to address and increasing their capacity to produce students ready to succeed as productive members of society. <http://www.ccsso.org/>



Human Services

Child Welfare, Family Support, Home Visiting, Housing, Transportation, Nutrition, and Other Programs That Help Children and Families Succeed in School and Life

Families rely on a multitude of programs and services to help them provide a healthy environment for young children. Many of these programs have years of experience working with the families in their communities and are glad to partner with other organizations to increase results for young children and families. Whether a school readiness coalition needs to tap their expertise, borrow space, or help expand services that increase school readiness, these diverse organizations are often safe havens for families and can become trusted resources for both families and partners.

How human services win:

- Helping more young children be ready to succeed in school helps these organizations fulfill their missions of helping their communities.
- Contributing to school readiness results can help these organizations attract and sustain supporters and funding.
- Preparing children for school is effective prevention work compared with more difficult and expensive remediation.

How human services can play:

- **Consider how each agency includes families in designing needed services** and how those services contribute to school readiness. Share this information with public and private organizations and funders.
- **Share school readiness information with community partners**, families, staff, and the public.
- **Respectfully include those who are not fluent in English** or are isolated from the community by geographic, cultural, social, or economic factors.
- **Encourage other community groups and individuals to explore** how they can improve school readiness and what steps they can take together.
- **Collaborate with other service providers** and community partners on an ongoing basis to expand, coordinate, and improve school readiness programs and services. Develop shared newsletters, shared staff training, and other joint efforts.
- **Work with community partners** (United Way, schools, colleges and universities, service providers, government, media, philanthropy, faith communities, schools, libraries, employers, etc.) to expand, improve, and build public will for school readiness supports.
- **Create, support, and/or host multi-generational learning programs** and opportunities in which adults and children are all learning.

Advice for partnering with human services—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Social service programs focus on problems and deficits. Much of the training that social workers and other human service disciplines receive is focused on the problems that people have and not their assets. There may need to be a fundamental shift in some organizational thinking to embrace true family support principles.
- These programs don't already know each other. Bringing human services together helps these organizations learn from one another and may also help identify which parts of town have an abundance of services and which have limited services.

Resources:

- **Family Support Principles: Strengthening Families** is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors:
 - Parental resilience
 - Social connections
 - Knowledge of parenting and child development
 - Concrete support in times of need
 - Social and emotional competence of children

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>



Nellie Taylor Walthrust, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center 1:57

“Our goal as a [mental health agency] is to prepare these children for school readiness by the time they are in pre-k and kindergarten. They will be better prepared to increase their academic learning.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Westbury, NY

- **National Human Services Assembly (NHSA)** focuses on shaping public dialogue, increasing the business practices of nonprofits, and building capacity for the human services sector. NHSA's priority is to strengthen collaborative practice and policy that promote equality of opportunity and upward mobility for all. <http://www.nassembly.org/>
- **United Way** focuses on cradle-to-career education strategies that provide a firm foundation at an early age and continue to help develop our children into successful adults who can contribute to their communities. www.unitedway.org
- **Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)** leads and engages its network of public and private agencies and partners to advance policies, best practices, and collaborative strategies that result in better outcomes for children, youth, and families who are vulnerable. <http://www.cwla.org/>
- **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. <https://www.socialworkers.org/>
- **National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS)** educates and recognizes home economics Extension professionals who improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. <http://www.neafcs.org/>



Health Care

Professionals, Practitioners, Clinics, Hospitals, and Public Health

The one place that just about every child visits in their earliest years is a pediatrician's office or clinic. Parents often indicate that their most respected source of information about their children is a pediatrician. Doctors' waiting rooms provide ample time to review educational materials or videos. Hospitals and clinics can create environments that model good child development, from the kinds of toys in the waiting room to hosting Reach Out and Read to encourage reading. Visiting nurses can reach the neediest populations with health and parenting tips. As the earliest and most universal of services with which young children interact, the health community can be critical for reaching a large segment of families with young children.

How health care professionals, clinics, and hospitals win:

- Families focused on school readiness are more likely to seek preventive and well-child health care.
- Getting involved in collaborative community readiness efforts enables health care professionals, clinics, and hospitals to connect with other public and private organizations to share early childhood health information.
- Community organizations provide places to disseminate public health messages.
- Research shows that children who succeed in school have healthier lifestyles throughout their lives.

How health care professionals, clinics, and hospitals can play:

With residents:

- **Include topics of brain development and child development into pediatric and family practice resident training** as well as Grand Rounds presentations.
- **Create opportunities for pediatric interns and residents** to spend time in early childhood environments.
- **Provide opportunities to listen to parents** by having residents roam around children's libraries to engage parents in discussion and answer questions. This provides residents with a realistic view of the challenges parents face in helping their children get ready for school.

With patients:

- **Educate families, patients, and staff** about the importance of early brain development for later school success and how health is a critical component of school readiness.
- **Model the behaviors that stimulate brain development** so parents can see the best ways to interact with their babies and preschoolers.
- **Urge parents to turn off the TV** for children under age two and limit it for older children.
- **Tell parents about the health benefits of children spending time in nature** and the social benefits of free play outdoors.

- **Promote the importance of every child having a consistent primary health care provider** or “medical home” that will help children be physically ready for school.
- **Include information about local resources** and the importance of school readiness starting at birth in baby baskets given to new parents at delivery hospitals and clinics.
- **Join with local early childhood organizations** to promote school readiness campaigns in health care facilities by putting up posters, displaying educational material in waiting and exam rooms, and running PSAs, parenting, and informational videos on a loop on the TV in waiting rooms.
- **Frequently provide expectant and new parents with information** about maternal health, including mental health, and school readiness.
- **Know pre-k and kindergarten registration dates** and encourage parents to get children’s physicals on time, preventing children from starting school late.

In practices:

- **Ensure that receptionists, who have contact with all patients, are equipped to share** school readiness information with families.
- **Have parents complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)** while waiting for their appointment. This can help identify any delays and track progress over time. <http://agesandstages.com/about-asq/how-asq-works/>
- **Share ASQ results with school readiness coalitions** and partners to create aligned community responses to the needs of families with children who have developmental delays.
- **Collaborate with other community partners** to expand and improve locally available health and school readiness programs. Don’t forget farmers’ markets and the opportunity to provide nutrition tips and child-friendly recipes.
- **Provide facilities and materials for prenatal and parenting classes**, early care and education programs, and other services that support healthy early childhood development and school readiness.
- **Use professional and trade association publications, websites, and conferences** to increase awareness of the societal benefits of positive early childhood development and school readiness.
- **Encourage professional association lobbying** efforts to address school readiness issues.

In the community:

- **Promote the importance of health** as a component of school readiness. Have a table at early childhood conferences to reinforce this idea. Introduce school readiness at health conferences and local health fairs.
- **Work with community-based organizations**, the media, and early childhood professional organizations to promote and provide preventive care such as immunizations and health exams for young children.
- **Participate in “Screen-Free Week” campaigns** that urge parents to reduce all screen time — TV, computers, video games — for one week to take stock of how much time families are engaged with technology instead of other healthier things, especially for young children.
- **Sponsor and provide meeting space for school readiness forums** and community gatherings with the public, policy makers, and the media.



New York

**Dr. Elizabeth Isakson,
Pediatrician, Docs for Tots,
Early Learning Day of Action -
Long Island 2:13**

“We can’t have education without health. And guess what? High quality education leads to better health outcomes. You can’t separate them in the early years or later as well.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Promote** [Text4baby](#), or [VROOM](#) and other electronic resources for parents.
- **Partner with local literacy organizations** such as [Reach Out and Read](#) to promote and model reading to young children and provide young children and families with books to take home.

Advice for partnering with health care professionals, clinics, and hospitals—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Doctors don't have much time, so work with physician assistants or nurses. Receptionists are also key communicators in most practices and clinics.
- Some hospitals and health agencies are large corporations; it may be difficult to find the right connection. The best places to begin are pediatrics and community health departments. Obstetrics departments can also be helpful in getting information to parents before babies are born.

Resources:

- **Reach Out and Read** is an evidence-based nonprofit organization of medical providers who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by integrating children's books and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud into well-child visits. <http://www.reachoutandread.org/>
- **AAP Bright Futures** supports primary care practices (medical homes) in providing well-child and adolescent care according to *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. <https://brightfutures.aap.org/>
- **Raising Readers** provides tips and resources for healthcare providers to use during well-child visits. http://www.raisingreaders.org/healthcare_providers/
- **American Academy of Family Physicians:** <http://www.aafp.org/patient-care/public-health/child-literacy.html>

- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** Their report on the importance of play is a powerful statement about what's important during the early years. <http://www2.aap.org/pressroom/playfinal.pdf>
- **Docs for Tots** provides tools for early childhood practitioners on developmental screening. <http://docsfortots.org/>
- **Community Health Professionals'** public-health campaigns can serve as models for school readiness campaigns. This guide highlights what has made public health campaigns successful. http://www.thecommunityguide.org/uses/programs_services.html
- **HRSA Maternal and Child Health:** As the only governmental program responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of the entire population of women, infants, and children, the Title V program plays a critical role in coordination, capacity building, and quality oversight at the community and state levels. <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/>



Libraries

Public, School, Corporate, University, Health Center, and Other Libraries

Libraries are transforming as technology reduces the demand for books and hard copy. Enterprising libraries are beginning to function more as community centers, partnering with and offering space to many community organizations, particularly those that enhance offerings for children and families, such as, Family Place Libraries. Librarians are also out in the community collaborating with and offering support to other organizations with the shared goal of early literacy and school readiness. This is an unusually good time to reconsider what libraries can offer to support community-wide school readiness goals. Family Place Libraries is a national initiative that includes a network of over 400 libraries in 29 states that has transformed what libraries look and feel like. They are no longer quiet “shushing” places but vibrant, hands-on, exploration spaces that provide a range of early learning opportunities.

How libraries win:

- Promoting school readiness helps libraries fulfill their mission of cultivating lifelong learning and providing knowledge and learning resources to children, beginning at birth, as well as to families, schools, and the community.
- Literacy can be incorporated into a host of parenting and family activities that increase library attendance and nurture the joy of reading and early learning among young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Increased community support can lead to increased funding.
- Increased numbers of future productive citizens build a strong future economy that can sustain support for libraries.

How libraries can play:

Inside the library:

- **Publicize the importance of the first years of life and school readiness throughout the library**—in the adult and young adult sections as well as the children’s section. Partner with a local early childhood organization that may have promotional, marketing, and educational materials available at little or no cost, or download free materials from the organizations listed at the end of this section.
- **Create early childhood activity spaces** including developmentally appropriate toys and materials for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as well as materials for parents and caregivers.
- **Offer a preschool or kindergarten reading club** and/or story time for parents and young children.
- **Provide meeting space to community groups** working to increase school readiness.
- **Sponsor or host parenting and family literacy classes** and school readiness learning programs and events.
- **Host public forums** on school readiness needs and resources.
- **Be an information source** about all school readiness community, child, and family resources, activities, and initiatives.

- **Set up a school readiness kiosk in the children’s section** with resources, events, and educational materials for caregivers of young children. Check with local nonprofits to see if they have existing materials to include.
- **Create outdoor play space** to reinforce the benefits of nature for children's health and development.
- **Create a welcoming library** that follows the Family Support and *Wakanheza* principles where parents are not judged and staff is trained to diffuse difficult situations between parents and children at the library. *Wakanheza* (pronounced wa-kine-ja) means child, or literally translated, “*Sacred Being*” in the language of Dakota. This training program created by the Ramsey County Department of Health in Minneapolis is offered to those who interact with families and young children in public situations and offers techniques for reaching out to parents in non-threatening and non-invasive ways. We have all witnessed a parent struggling with their child in a public venue and lacked the proper approach to assist that parent. The *Wakanheza* Project offers gentle and non-judgmental ways to help.

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/health-medical/public-health-initiatives/wakanheza-project>

- **Establish family reading rooms** for community groups.
- **Hold story times** and Mother Goose or Family Place Workshops for the youngest children and their caregivers, including sessions designed for grandparents.
- **Host Play Fairs** with a pile of recycled products (paper towel rolls, string, paper plates, ribbon, etc.) that children can use to create whatever is in their imaginations. This helps parents realize that they don’t need to buy expensive toys to entertain or educate their children.
- **Promote and provide access to online resources** about school readiness, parenting, and child development.



Roanoke Public Libraries, VA

**Sheila Umberger,
Director of Libraries 5:58**

“My kids are at risk. There is very limited literacy in the home. It’s not because parents don’t care; they don’t know how.”

[Click here to watch video](#)



**Kathy Deerr, Coordinator,
National Family
Place Libraries 1:58**

“Literacy begins at home. It’s the parents and caregivers we need to nurture and support and partner with if we are to ensure that all children are ready and able to learn when they enter school.”

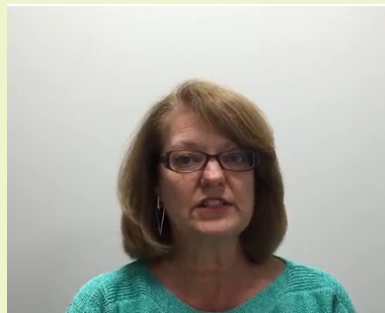
[Click here to watch video](#)

Middle Country Library, NY



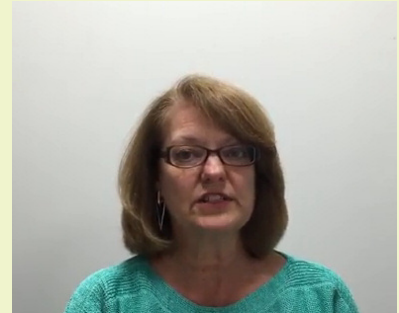
1:43

[Click here to watch video](#)



2:00

[Click here to watch video](#)



1:53

[Click here to watch video](#)

In the community:

- **Publicize the availability of school readiness and parenting materials** and resources and books for young children.
- **Talk to the media and policy makers about the benefits of school readiness** and the important roles that libraries play.
- **Offer family literacy programs** in early childhood, health, family resource centers, and other community settings.
- **Encourage families to read to their children** several times a week beginning at birth and throughout childhood.
- **Share online library services** with early learning, health, nutrition, family support, and other early childhood programs.
- **Create satellite reading rooms** at community locations where many parents spend many hours, for example, in government services such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, Consulates, retail locations, and in neighborhoods where public transportation to the library is limited. Pocket libraries are boxes of books that can be left near bus stops and park benches.

Example: Roanoke's Books on Buses Program

http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/roanoke/roanoke-puts-books-on-buses-to-encourage-kids-summer-reading/article_f98e87c5-90d5-5e71-91d6-1c9ca5f557ec.html

Advice for partnering with libraries—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Librarians aren't always eager to participate in collaborative work. As one librarian admitted on a panel about her participation in a school readiness coalition, "I became a librarian because I liked books. I didn't like people. This committee has taken me out of my comfort zone." Children's librarians are often more willing to participate as they understand the impact of early literacy experiences for young children and become enthusiastic cheerleaders for reading.
- Libraries are really government agencies. There is a bureaucracy, public funding that is voted on by the public, and a lot of tradition. Change is coming slowly, but the libraries are one of the most credible players in a campaign for school readiness.

Resources:

- **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Growing Young Minds Report** from the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, calls upon policy-makers, practitioners, and parents to make full use of libraries and museums, and the skills and talents of those who work in them, to close knowledge and opportunity gaps and give all children a strong start in learning. <https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/growingyoungminds.pdf>
- **Family Place Libraries** is a network of children's librarians nationwide who believe that literacy begins at birth, and that libraries can help build healthy communities by nourishing healthy families. <http://www.familyplacelibraries.org/>
- **American Library Association** provides association information, news, events, and advocacy resources for members, librarians, and library users. <http://www.ala.org/>



Museums

Children's Museums, Art Museums, Aquariums, Natural History, Outdoor, and Other Museums

Museums are places of wonder where children can explore and learn through carefully designed, educational exhibits. They are ideal for stimulating school readiness. Going to museums offers so many learning opportunities, but is out of reach for some families due to travel, economic, or other challenges. That is why it is very helpful for museums to go out into the community with their educational exhibits. Museum educators have a different way of looking at the world and understand what children get out of experiences. They can be very valuable partners when mounting local school readiness initiatives.

How museums win:

- School readiness activities help museums fulfill their missions.
- School readiness activities help expand museum attendance and reach new populations.
- School readiness activities can help museums attract support.
- School-ready children will be more productive future adults who can contribute to community institutions such as museums.

How museums can play:

Inside the museum:

- **Create engaging exhibits that promote school readiness** for children and inform adults about how to foster school readiness at home.
- **Provide learning areas and exhibits** that inform parents, caregivers, and the public about positive child development and school readiness.
- **Help local school teachers with curriculum ideas** and host forums with teachers that help them learn effective ways to teach specific literacy, science, engineering, math, and art subjects.
- **Create parent education kiosks** in places outside of the museum frequented by parents (where they play, pray, pay, and get paid), displaying posters, educational materials, and parent education videos on closed-circuit TV. Partner with a local nonprofit that may already have these materials available at no or little cost.
- **Host community forums** on school readiness needs and resources.
- **Offer summer institutes for immigrant families** to explain the school system and how they can participate and enrich the school experience for their children.



Milwaukee, WI

Betty Brinn Children's Museum — An Early Learning Resource 6:36

“As Board President and a member of this community, I am most proud of the museum’s work to ensure that families who face difficult personal circumstances have access to a resource that can make an incredible difference in helping their children develop.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

In the community:

- **Partner with school districts for field trips**, professional development, and parenting activities, especially around transitioning to kindergarten for immigrant and low-income families.
- See Long Island Children’s Museum “Together to Kindergarten” (Juntos Al Kinder) program http://www.licm.org/community_kinder.php
- **Work with local civic groups** such as [United Way](#), [Rotary](#), [Junior League](#), local businesses, and other employers to provide scholarships to help families and educators visit museums.
- **Inform policy makers and the media about the importance of school readiness** and positive early childhood development.
- **Host developmental health screenings** in neighborhoods and bring educators and off-site displays to areas that may not have resources to visit museums.
- **Partner with public and private transportation providers** and community school readiness programs to provide transportation for families to visit museums.

Advice for partnering with museums—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Museums are struggling. During the recession, many museums had a tremendous downturn in funding. However, they are being recognized as an untapped source of expertise about children’s learning that make them indispensable partners in any school readiness initiative.
- Not all communities have museums. Those communities that could benefit most from the extra creativity and learning that museums offer children rarely have museums in their communities. A “satellite” museum program brought to the community may be an important strategy to consider.

Resources:

- **Countdown to Kindergarten** engages families, educators, and the community in a citywide effort to enhance early learning opportunities and to support the transition into kindergarten. <http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org/>
- **Association of Children's Museums (ACM)** supports children's museums to be essential community assets by: establishing standards for professional practice; convening InterActivity conferences; collecting research and best practices; and initiating national and international partnerships with opportunities for local collaboration. <http://www.childrensmuseums.org/>
- **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)** has a mission to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. IMLS provides leadership through research, policy development, and grant making. <https://www.ims.gov/>



Parks and Environmental Organizations

Municipal, County, State, and National Parks, Preserves, and Other Outdoor-Focused Organizations

School readiness can be enhanced by the amount of time children play outside. While some children have nice backyards, others can rely on public parks. Some communities have a limited number of parks or they are unusable because of unsafe conditions. Where they exist, parks provide opportunities for children to reap the health, social/emotional, and educational benefits of free play in large outdoor spaces. There are a host of outdoor educators and experts at various environmental centers, parks, preserves, marine centers, and Audubon societies that are all committed to protecting the environment and land use. They are also becoming committed to increasing the amount of time children spend outside in nature, beginning in early childhood. They came to realize that **children will not save what they do not love**, and they need to spend time in nature to love it.

How parks, preserves, and environmental organizations win:

- School readiness enables parks to fulfill their mission to provide community-wide physical activity and recreation opportunities.
- School readiness activities can attract more park users which can lead to greater community support and funding for parks and recreation activities.
- A productive future workforce that spent time in nature will support parks in the future.

How parks, preserves, and environmental organizations can play:

- **Help attendees better understand the benefits of nature and outdoor play** with flyers, events, and tours.
- **Retrain outdoor educators** to understand how young children learn, for example, not in a lecture, but by doing. Create activities especially for preschoolers.
- **Offer space for community groups** to have meetings. It may be the first time they visit your park. It is particularly helpful to have teacher training outdoors. Teachers quickly realize how de-stressed they become and that the same would be true for their children if they let them play outside more.
- **Repair broken play equipment** and promote park safety.
- **Host a community-wide campout** with families sleeping under the stars.
- **Host a treasure hunt using geo mapping** equipment to find small treasures that make being outside especially fun. <https://www.geocaching.com/play>
- **Join any one of a host of national campaigns** around connecting children and nature which have local membership action kits.

- **Children and Nature Network** is an organization created by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, which identified and defined “nature deficit disorder” in children. <http://www.childrenandnature.org>
- **Dimensions Educational Research Foundation** created the Outdoor Nature Explore Classrooms. <http://www.natureexplore.org/>
- **Wildlife Federation** has worked to connect children and youth with nature for decades, inspiring children through *Ranger Rick* magazine, working with educators to get kids [learning outdoors](#), and helping parents find new ways to [engage their children outside](#). <https://www.nwf.org/What-We-Do/Kids-and-Nature.aspx>
- **Growing Up Wild** connects young learners to the outdoors. <http://www.projectwild.org/GrowingUpWILD/-links.htm>
- **Earth Force** focuses on cooperative efforts between children and their communities. <http://earthforce.org/>
- **Ecology** offers fantastic multimedia resources and articles, including a special section for kids. <http://www.ecology.com/ecology-kids/>
- **Kids for a Clean Environment** provides information on environmental issues to children, to encourage and facilitate youth’s involvement with effective environmental action and to recognize those efforts which result in the improvement of nature. <http://www.kidsface.org/pages/thefacts.html>
- **Kids for Saving Earth** has curriculum resources for parents and educators. <http://www.kidsfor-savingearth.org/>
- **Children of the Earth United** offers a variety of interactive online resources, as well as school programs. <http://www.childrenoftheearth.org/>
- **Roots & Shoots** is Jane Goodall’s global humanitarian and environmental program for youth. <https://www.rootsandshoots.org/>
- **Earth Day Network** <http://www.earthday.org/> Earth Day is a wonderful opportunity for families of young children to celebrate and learn together. In addition, Earth Day Network offers resources for schools. <http://www.earthday.org/edunetwork/schoolyard-outdoors/>
- **Mud Month** is another opportunity for outdoor learning for families of young children. <http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/nature/international-mud-day/>
- **Fairy Houses** offers children the simple challenge of creating a fairy house, a unique activity that encourages them to go outside and connect with the natural world, nurturing care and respect for the environment. Build your own fairy houses! <https://www.fairyhouses.com/>

Advice for partnering with parks, preserves, and environmental organizations—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Outdoor educators and park rangers often don't understand that children under age five learn differently than older children. They are very willing to offer family-friendly activities, but must learn new ways of creating exhibits and activities for preschoolers.
- There are many organizations interested in helping children spend more time outdoors and in nature. Don't forget to think about: Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, high school environmental clubs, Student United Way, local gardening associations, local farmers, pediatricians, landscape architects, Cooperative Extension Services, physical education teachers, science teachers, and more.

Resources:

- **Arbor Day Foundation's Nature Explore:** Working with advocates, Nature Explore transforms children's lives through research-based outdoor classroom design services, educator workshops, and natural products. <http://www.natureexplore.org/>
- **North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)** is a national membership organization dedicated to strengthening the field of environmental education and increasing the visibility and effectiveness of the profession. <http://www.naaee.net/>
- **National Recreation and Park Association:** The leading non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks, recreation, and conservation. <http://www.nrpa.org/>
- **National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. <http://www.nps.gov/kids/>
- **The Nature Conservancy** offers programs to engage youth in the wild world of nature that sustains us all. <http://www.nature.org/about-us/youth/index.htm>
- **Sierra Club:** The nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization — with more than two million members and supporters. <http://www.sierraclub.org/>
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) outdoor education programs
- College and university recreation and physical education programs
- Town, county, and/or regional parks departments

Philanthropists

Community, Family, Corporate, and Public Foundations, Individual Donors, and Fundraising Organizations Such as United Way

Those who give money can affect organizational practices by providing incentives to incorporate a school readiness component or to partner with other organizations working to improve school readiness. Their priorities and the way they partner with other funders can help model the benefits of collaboration for community groups.

How philanthropists win:

- School readiness requires integrating a range of human and social services, which makes it easy to align with existing philanthropic priorities.
- More school-ready children can provide and demonstrate a measurable focus for investments.
- More school-ready children can lead to more productive future citizens who will contribute to community productivity and philanthropy.

How philanthropists can play:

In funding and programming:

- **Align funding to truly support expected impact**, both in terms of how much can be accomplished and how long it will take to achieve results.
- **Fund only initiatives that are authentic** in their efforts to engage parents and base their plans on what families say they need.
- **Fund and co-fund efforts that shift funding from remedial or crises services to preventive efforts** and reward results (pay for success).
- **Fund school readiness efforts** for the long term (8-10 years). Realize it takes at least eight years and a lot of agencies working in concert for culture change to take hold. Consider collaborative funding with other philanthropists.
- **Fund initiatives that focus on the whole child**, including health and social-emotional development, not just cognitive achievement.
- **When a project is funded, use evaluation to improve results**, rather than to limit funds allocated. For complex, multi-service initiatives look into emergent evaluation, which takes into account a range of goals, players, and outcomes. This approach begins with a loose framework used to define the roles and interactions of those involved, but not to prescribe the evaluation process as a whole.
- **Fund, sponsor, and convene community mobilization efforts** to equitably expand and improve the quality of school readiness programs and services.
- **Fund projects that demonstrate or replicate successful school readiness initiatives.**



Annie E. Casey Foundation,
Providence, Rhode Island

How Evidence2Success is Making a Difference for Kids and Families 4:32

“Prevention science is really this whole idea that we can move upstream and make a difference in the lives of young people earlier, before things get so bad.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Incentivize partnerships** by raising funding limits for grantees working together. Form funding partnerships with peers to leverage or generate new resources for school readiness programs and services.
- **Use funding programs creatively** to meet the wide spectrum of needs experienced by families with young children that result in increased school readiness.
- **Fund or co-fund public awareness efforts to promote parent and caregiver education** about how to promote school readiness.
- **Fund or co-fund public awareness efforts that promote a common understanding** of school readiness across the community.
- Provide long-term support for school readiness system development, especially those with a **focus on equity**.
- **Provide low- or no-interest loans** for quality improvements in school readiness programs, including renovation of facilities.
- **Provide long-term funds for building public will** for school readiness.

In the community:

- **Provide neutral space for community groups** to come together to explore options for working together.
- **Initiate and participate in partnerships with other sectors** that improve and expand programs and services for young children and their families.
- As a credible messenger, **inform policy makers about the importance of the first years of life**, local needs and conditions, and ways to improve the quality and coordination of services for young children and their families.

Advice for partnering with philanthropists—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Funders' priorities change. It is difficult to find funders who can sustain funding over many years on one issue.
- Funders don't typically work together. They often have different focus areas and different boards that may or may not want to do things differently or share the credit for any successes.

Resources:

- **Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states, and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation — grade-level reading by the end of third grade. <http://gradelevelreading.net/>
- **Council on Foundations** is a nonprofit leadership association of grantmaking foundations and corporations. It provides the opportunity, leadership, and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance, and sustain their ability to advance the common good. <http://www.cof.org/>
- **Foundation Center** is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. <http://foundationcenter.org/>
- **The Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative (ECFC)** is an affiliation of individuals who serve as staff at foundations or corporate giving programs that have substantial grantmaking portfolios in early childhood care and education. ECFC was formed by grantmakers to provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, and strategic grant making, and it sponsors the **BUILD Initiative**. www.buildinitiative.org www.ecfc.org
- **United Way** focuses on cradle-to-career education strategies that provide a firm foundation at an early age and continue to help develop children into successful adults who can contribute to their communities. www.unitedway.org

Employers

Public, Private, Large, Small, All Industries, For-Profit, and Nonprofit Employers

Local economies depend on early childhood services in several ways: they can draw down state and federal dollars to the local level; parents who can work because they have reliable child care pay more taxes and consume more in the local economy. The longer-term impact of school readiness is a more competitive future labor force, fueling stable future economies. Employers can play many roles through human resources, philanthropy, government relations, and community affairs. They can provide financial and in-kind contributions and a volunteer corps of employees through employer sponsored volunteerism.

How employers win:

- Current employees with young children may be more productive when they know their children are in stable programs that help them develop school readiness skills.
- Long-term results of studies on school-ready children show that quality early education programs lead to a more effective future workforce.
- Enhanced public and brand image of the employer may result from public support of school readiness efforts.
- The local economy benefits in the long term when children are ready for kindergarten, college, and the future workforce.

How employers can play:

For employees:

- **Listen to employees' needs** regarding finding reliable services and ensuring that their young children are ready for school by kindergarten. Inform employees about the importance of school readiness and provide child development and parenting information using such communication vehicles as break room and restroom bulletin boards, lobby and elevator posters, in-house newsletters, intranets, all-employee emails, paycheck inserts or attachments, and many forms of social media.
- **Set up break rooms** as family education kiosks with posters, school readiness and educational information, and a closed-circuit monitor running a PSA or PBS Kids that provides tips for parents and phone numbers for local resources.
- **Provide private space for breast feeding.**
- **Offer paid family leave** to new and adoptive parents.
- **Contract with a child care resource and referral service** to help parents find early childhood services.
- **Provide space for on-site early childhood programs.**
- **Offer vouchers or Dependent Care Plans** to help parents afford high quality early childhood programs.



Pittsburgh, PA

PNC Grow Up Great 3:00

“This program came along and it was a shot in the arm. People were really interested in the kids’ learning. It felt good to be rejuvenated, and I know we are bringing that energy into the classroom.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Sponsor school readiness and parenting workshops** and seminars with local speakers during lunch breaks or before and after work hours for employees.
- **Ask vendors to donate school, safety, nutrition or other products and supplies** to area early childhood programs and families at special events.
- **Honor and reward employees who volunteer** to provide or improve school readiness with public recognition, time off, or other premiums or incentives.
- **Offer employees access to online school readiness and parenting information** and resources through your internal website and HR system. Implement workplace flexibility that allows parents to participate in their child’s education.

In the community:

- **Work with media** to publicize how local early childhood programs contribute to increased productivity.
- **Provide in-kind support** such as meeting space, copying, faxing, language translation services, mailing, and printing, to local early childhood health, education and care, and family support programs.
- **Inform the public about the importance of school readiness in company ads, promotions, and products.**
- **Communicate concern about the importance of school readiness to policy makers and the media.**
- **Encourage employees at all levels to serve on community school readiness planning and public policy committees.**
- **Share expertise** such as accounting skills, management training, and public relations with early care and education programs and health and family support programs. Volunteer to serve on boards of early childhood groups.
- **Honor state and community leaders** and organizations that are making a difference in school readiness.



Minnesota Early Learning Foundation

The Solutions: MELF's Reform Recommendations 4:40

“Over 50 percent of the children are not ready for kindergarten in Minnesota. It’s a problem that is bigger than the business community can solve on its own. It’s going to take partnership and a lot of hard work. But it’s possible.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Host or co-sponsor community and legislative forums** on school readiness issues.
- **Author op-eds or give testimony** on key early childhood policy issues.

With customers:

- Inform customers about the importance of school readiness and provide child development information to families using existing communication vehicles such as receipts, notices on utility or bank bills, points of purchase, e-blasts, public awareness campaign slogans printed on products for sale, or promotional cloth bags featuring ideas for games to play with preschool children.
- Sponsor school readiness seminars in the community or in stores, branches, or offices.

In specific industries or fields of service:

- Include information in trade and professional publications, websites, and conferences about the importance of school readiness to current and future national, state, local, and business economic success and what business leaders can do to share this information with policy makers.
- Work with community partners (United Way, service providers, government, media, philanthropy, faith communities, schools, libraries, unions, etc.) to expand and improve systems of school readiness programs and services.

Advice for partnering with employers—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Employers don't act unless they understand how school readiness supports or connects to their business interests. It is important to know what the company is most concerned about, such as selling a product, employee productivity, attendance, or hiring more women. Early childhood solutions need to be tied to those concerns to get the attention of business allies and champions.



We are the country's
youngest generation

Oklahoma

Smart Start & OKCEO Invest in US 3:54

“Those seeking to reduce deficits and strengthen the economy should make significant investments in early childhood education. You can pay a little now or spend a fortune later to fix problems that could have been prevented by early childhood education.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- Support inside companies can come from a variety of sources, e.g. Human Resources, Community Social Responsibility, Community Affairs, Employee Assistance Program, Women’s Affinity Group, or the CEO. It might come from a concerned working parent or grandparent in an unrelated department or from a CEO hearing about the importance of school readiness from a family member who teaches kindergarten.
 - Example: David Lawrence, leader of the Children’s Movement of Florida took early retirement as publisher of the *Miami Herald* to champion school readiness after hearing his daughter, a kindergarten teacher, talk about the children in her classes who lacked readiness skills.
- There is sensitivity to bringing different levels of corporate leaders together. It’s best not to mix CEOs, who can make decisions on the spot and are accustomed to quick action, and other employees who can be great coalition members but need permission from someone higher to make decisions or act and who may have more patience with time-consuming planning or meetings.

Resources:

- **ReadyNation** is the preeminent business leader organization working to strengthen business through better policies for children and youth. <http://www.readynation.org/>
- **Born Learning at Publix** is a partnership to promote early literacy in which shopping and learning can go hand in hand. Publix grocery stores teamed with Born Learning, a national campaign to give parents and caregivers information about early learning. Born Learning’s mission is to help parents and caregivers turn everyday moments into learning experiences for their children. www.bornlearning.org
- **Born Learning Business Champion Toolkit** was created by United Way to help state and local United Ways deploy business leaders already committed to early learning as public champions for early childhood education. It’s part of United Way’s ongoing business leader engagement work, which helps state and local United Ways identify, educate, persuade, and mobilize private sector volunteers around education, income and health. <https://www.bornlearning.org/campaign-central/mobilize/business-champion-toolkit>
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** is the world’s largest business organization representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions. <https://www.uschamber.com/>

- **Committee for Economic Development (CED)** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions to our nation’s most critical issues. <https://www.ced.org/>
- **Business Roundtable** is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies working to promote sound public policy and a thriving U.S. economy. <http://businessroundtable.org/>
- **The Conference Board** is a global, independent business membership and research association working in the public interest. <https://www.conference-board.org/>
- **Families and Work Institute** is a nonprofit center dedicated to providing research for living in today’s changing workplace, changing family, and changing community. <http://www.familiesandwork.org/>



Unions

Advocates of workers' rights unions also promote more family-friendly workplaces and benefits. Several unions have enrolled early childhood workers as members. These unions provide training and support to their early childhood workforce members as well adding their political clout to advocacy campaigns. Relationships among employers and union leaders may affect who is invited to the table in each community and how they work together to promote school readiness.

How unions win:

- Promoting school readiness helps unions fulfill their mission of service to their members.
- Working parents with family-friendly workplaces are more loyal and productive.
- School-ready children will become potential future workers and members.

How unions can play:

With union members:

- **Listen to member needs** related to ensuring their young children are ready for school.
- **Provide members with information** about school readiness and community resources.
- **Advocate for readily available school readiness and parenting information** in work places.
- Create times and places, at or away from work sites, for school readiness support, learning, or **discussion groups for members with children**.
- **Advocate for a fund to help parents afford high quality child care.**
- **Partner with groups to offer professional development** for child care workers who are union members.
- **Provide community meeting space** to organizations helping young children get ready for school.
- **Create community resource rooms** where books, toys, and educational materials about school readiness are available to union members and the community.
- **Sponsor events** to demonstrate early learning activities that promote school readiness.
- **Hold book drives** and encourage members to read to their own children and volunteer to read to others' children.
- **Include information about the importance of positive early childhood development** and nmschool readiness in union trade publications, websites, and conferences.
- **Partner with others to obtain high quality school readiness child development**, early learning, health, parenting, and literacy information and materials to share with members.

As an organization:

- **Convene, support, and work in public-private partnerships** to enlist broad support for school readiness programs and services.
- **Recognize and celebrate members and employers who contribute** to school readiness issues and causes.
- **Look for win-win solutions** for members and employers for providing flexibility and leave policies for taking care of sick children, medical appointments, and other early childhood-related family needs.
- Address school readiness and parenting support issues as **part of the union's political agenda**.
- **Ask political candidates at all levels how they plan to address school readiness** needs and share candidate views on the subject.
- **Write to policy makers and publish editorial columns** and letters to the editor in area newspapers in support of school readiness programs and services.
- **Include messages about school readiness in paid advertising.**
- **Become a school readiness champion** at the community, state, or national level, with partners, national allies, and affiliates.

Advice for partnering with unions—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Unions have considerable political influence. Having them on your side can help win important school readiness policies and resources.
- Different unions have different commitments to family and children's issues.

Resources:

- **AFSCME** is a union comprised of a diverse group of people who share a common commitment to public service. <http://www.afscme.org/>
- **The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)** is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. UAW-represented workplaces range from multinational corporations, small manufacturers and state and local governments to colleges and universities, hospitals and private non-profit organizations. <http://uaw.org/>
- **National Fund for Workforce Solutions** highlights several workforce partnerships in which organized labor has played a significant role. It demonstrates why such a role should be encouraged within, and beyond, traditionally unionized industries, and suggests how policymakers and practitioners can support an expansion of that role for unions. http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/NFWS_UnionsAsPartners_111110.pdf
- **AFL-CIO:** Two research reports show that unions are playing a big role in helping child care providers bring the highest level of care to the children and families they serve. Another study calls for more effective public investment in early childhood education. <http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Community-Services-Early-Childhood-Unions-Take-Big-Role-in-Advancing-Good-Outcomes>

Retirees

Individuals and Members of Retiree Groups, From Corporate Retiree Organizations to Nonprofits Such as AARP, or Adult Sororities, Grandparents, and Retirees With a Special Affinity for Children—Retired Teachers, Scientists, Librarians, and Others With Skills and Knowledge That Can Help Prepare Children for School

A principle of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is to not only look for organizational assets, but also to look for individual gifts. ABCD is an approach to seeing everyone and all institutions large and small in a community as having assets to contribute to civic efforts. More details about ABCD can be found on pages 14-16 of this Playbook. Retirees have many gifts to offer including their years of experience and wisdom as well as time. Retirees can be found in all settings, from organized volunteer groups or senior centers to schools, museums, parks, hospitals, and other places where retirees are served as clients and serve as volunteers.

How retirees win:

- School-ready children grow up to be positive family members more able to care for their elders.
- School-ready children grow up to be productive adults who contribute to stable communities.
- Stable and prosperous communities enable children and grandchildren to live near their retired parents.
- Intergenerational activities help children understand aging and develop long-term respect for the elderly.

How retirees can play:

With young children and their families:

- **Read, tell stories, and sing with grandchildren** and other young children whenever possible.
- **Volunteer to read to young children at libraries, hospitals, clinics, schools, early care and education programs, and family resource centers.**
- **Volunteer to hold and nurture premature infants** in neonatal care.
- **“Adopt” or “mentor” young families.**
- **Use non-English language skills** to help recent immigrants gain access to school readiness resources for their young children.

In the community:

- **Volunteer to assist school readiness community organizations, agencies, and programs.**
- **Serve on the boards of nonprofit organizations** that provide school readiness programs and services for young children, grandchildren and their families.
- **Learn and share information about school readiness.**
- **Share stories with the media** about helping grandchildren and/or other young children get ready for school.
- **Let elected officials know of retiree support** for resources and policies that increase school readiness.

Advice for partnering with retirees—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Retirees are actually quite busy. If they are committed to the project, they can invest hours throughout the day that are very helpful.
- Retirees like to work in groups. It helps to make the volunteer experience a social experience for retirees who may interact less with others.

Resources:

- **AARP** is a membership organization leading positive social change and delivering value to people age 50 and over through information, advocacy, and service. <http://www.aarp.org/>
- **Generations United's** mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through inter-generational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. <http://www.gu.org/>
- **Senior Corps** connects today's 55+ with the people and organizations that need them most. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>



Young People

Elementary, Middle, High School, and College Students, Service Clubs—YMCA, YWCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, Future Professionals Groups, Student United Ways, and Others

With the proliferation of “character building” programs in schools today, many young people are required to participate in community activities. Many others, including older siblings of young children, have joined civic groups or school clubs to give them access to volunteer opportunities. Involvement in school readiness coalitions can provide youth with valuable lessons about how communities work, how agencies are funded to do their work, what collaboration means, how hard it is to make change, and how good it feels to help others. These young people become a valuable community asset as unexpected messengers and players with valuable strategy ideas.

How young people win:

- Young people can learn a lot about themselves and their community by providing local services.
- Leadership skills are developed through participation in community service.
- Young people can contribute valuable ideas about how to stimulate community support for school readiness and benefit from sharing their voices.
- Learning about school readiness as they participate can help young people become better future parents.
- Young people can benefit from helping others.

How young people can play:

At school:

- **Have school clubs take on the issue of school readiness** as a volunteer effort, a publicity campaign, or a debate topic.
- **Develop projects that send older students into pre-k classes**, for example, to read, jump rope, or build robots with young children.

At home:

- **Spend time talking, reading, singing, or playing outside with younger siblings** and relatives. Take younger children to a park, library, or museum.
- **Be a role model** for younger siblings and other young children in the neighborhood.

With friends:

- **Take early childhood development, CPR, or babysitting classes** and share the information with friends and family.
- Get together with friends and **raise money to buy and donate children’s books** to school readiness and early childhood programs. Check out resources like Reading Is Fundamental (www.rif.org), Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (www.imaginationlibrary.com), First Book (www.firstbook.org), and Scholastic (www.scholastic.com).

- **Suggest that youth clubs or organizations take on school readiness projects.**
- **Read books to children at the local library, family resource center, community center, pre-k program, or child care center, and encourage friends to do the same.**

In neighborhoods:

- **Read to younger children** in preschools, family child care homes, libraries, churches, temples, mosques, schools, family centers, and hospitals.
- **Help non-English-speaking families** and caregivers learn about and participate in school readiness as interpreters, tutors, and homework helpers.
- **Spend a weekend day with friends helping fix up early childhood environments**, such as repairing or making toys, checking on and refreshing smoke alarm batteries, and building or painting fences or outdoor play equipment.
- During vacations, **volunteer with friends at school readiness and early childhood programs**, summer school, or day camps.
- **Be a role model for young children** in the neighborhood by reading, going to school every day, getting good grades, volunteering, and helping others.
- **Develop fundraising efforts** that support school readiness.

In the community:

- **Lead an effort to gather and donate school supplies** to a school readiness or early childhood program or library.
- **Work through youth service groups** (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire U.S.A., Girls and Boys Clubs, 4-H Youth Development and Mentoring Programs, Kiwanis, settlement houses, etc.) to volunteer at child care, pre-k, or Head Start programs or other parent and family support programs related to school readiness.
- **Help clean up, repair, or maintain playgrounds**, parks, or other facilities used by young children and families.
- **Create public art** promoting school readiness and community efforts to meet the needs of families with young children.
- **Be a *Youth Venturer* and create a club or organization to increase** awareness about early childhood development and community needs or resources. Visit www.youthventure.org to get started.
- **Write a letter to the media or a policy maker** in support of early childhood programs and services.
- **Participate in PhotoVoice**, where students explore their communities taking pictures of the opportunities and obstacles for children to learn. <https://photovoice.org/vision-and-mission/>
- **Share opinions about school readiness** and early childhood issues with media, policy makers, and other opinion leaders.
- **Apply to intern or volunteer with AmeriCorps VISTA** in your local community or through [United Way](http://www.unitedway.org).

Advice for partnering with young people—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Youth are best suited to short-term activities. There are so many school responsibilities and other organizations that students are involved with, and many youth rely on others for transportation, that things can change quickly and some students cannot participate as planned. Always have back-up, or more volunteers than needed.
- Youth demand respect. It's best to give young people some say in why or how they are doing the jobs they've been given. Asking young people for their opinions early makes them feel they are a valuable part of the team and they will be more likely to engage for a longer period of time.

Resources:

- **Student United Way** develops passionate student leaders who are committed to improving lives and strengthening communities. <http://www.unitedway.org/get-involved/groups/student>
- **Girl Scouts of America** focuses on building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. <http://www.girlscouts.org/>
- **Boy Scouts of America** is one of the nation's largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of active citizenship, and develops personal fitness. <http://www.scouting.org/>
- **Boys and Girls Clubs'** programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. <http://www.bgca.org/>
- **Local YWCA/YMCA:** www.ymca.net www.ywca.org



Civic, Community, Trade, and Professional Organizations

Junior League, Rotary, Lions, Professional Associations, Chambers of Commerce Including Hispanic, Asian, African American, and Other Specialized Chambers, Civic Groups, Cultural Organizations, and Other Organized Groups Focused on Community or Neighborhood Improvement

Members of these organizations typically meet on a regular basis and welcome breakfast speakers on a range of topics. They often have large numbers of members, many of whom are influential in the community. Always include these groups in school readiness coalitions to tap their broad influence, networks, and people power.

How civic, community, trade, and professional organizations win:

- Children who are successful in school are more likely to become future productive citizens, workers, and professionals.
- Supporting school readiness is a way to reach and potentially interest children in a variety of trades and professions early on.
- A focus on supporting community school readiness efforts helps civic and community organizations fulfill their service missions.

How civic, community, trade, and professional organizations can play:

With members:

- **Seek regular meetings** to educate members about the importance of school readiness and its impact on future civic life.
- **Offer to make a luncheon or breakfast presentation** to a local children's organization about how each civic or cultural organization sees community issues facing young children.
- **Invite school readiness experts to speak at organization meetings.**
- **Organize volunteers to build or refurbish neighborhood playgrounds** or improve early childhood and child health facilities.
- **Adopt a child care, pre-kindergarten, Head Start,** or family support program and encourage members to volunteer regularly.
- **Recruit and train volunteers** to work in early childhood programs, mentor young children, or read stories to children in libraries, early education settings, clinics, and hospitals.
- **Include information about the importance of school readiness in professional and trade association publications,** websites, and conferences.

In the community:

- **Collect and publish information** about state and local school readiness needs and resources to clients, the public, and policy makers, or offer in-kind support for another organization's efforts to create and share such information.
- **Convene business leaders** to explore ways to finance early childhood programs and services.
- **Host or co-sponsor community and legislative forums** on school readiness related topics such as early childhood brain development, parenting programs that work, improving the quality of early care and education, or expanding access to health care.
- **Support programs that address the cultural and linguistic needs and preferences of the community** and help eliminate obstacles to the use of available school readiness services.
- **Honor state and community leaders and organizations** that are making a contribution to increasing school readiness for all children.

Advice for partnering with civic, community, trade, and professional organizations—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- They don't immediately see their role in school readiness. It is important to orient or educate civic groups about school readiness to help members see how it advances their goals.
- There is a history of a previous community effort that didn't work—a common excuse for why people decline to participate in new initiatives. If this is the case, make sure to distinguish the new effort from others that may have occurred in the past.

Resources:

- **The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.** Has local Junior Leagues that are educational and charitable women's organizations aimed at improving their communities through volunteerism and building their members' civic leadership skills through training. <https://www.ajli.org/>
- **Rotary International** consists of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, and community leaders who come together to create positive, lasting change in our communities and around the world. <https://www.rotary.org/>
- **Lions Club International** empowers volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace, and promote international understanding. <http://www.lionsclubs.org/>
- **National Council of Negro Women's (NCNW)** mission is to lead, develop, and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities. <http://ncnw.org/>
- **North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC)** works to advance the fraternal movement through advocacy, collaboration, and education. These educational offerings reach a cross-section of stakeholders in the fraternal movement. <http://www.nicindy.org/>
- **100 Black Men of America, Inc.** serves as a beacon of leadership by utilizing their diverse talents to create environments where children are motivated to achieve, and to empower people to become self-sufficient shareholders in the economic and social fabric of communities. <http://www.100blackmen.org/>

Faith Communities

Churches, Temples, Mosques, and Other Places of Worship Serving Diverse Denominations

Churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship are home to the largest number of early childhood programs in the country, largely because they often have space that can be and is used during the day to accommodate young children. They also have an audience and a platform from which faith leaders can help members understand the importance of school readiness in their sermons and teaching. Faith communities are often highly trusted by families and immigrants and are centers of supportive community. Faith communities may already be providing a range of family supports, family literacy, and early childhood programs and can be important partners in reaching diverse and otherwise isolated families.

How faith communities win:

- Supporting or promoting school readiness enables faith communities to fulfill their service missions.
- School readiness efforts provide opportunities for church members to become more involved in the community.
- Children who are successful in school contribute to strong families and congregations.
- Children who succeed in school and life become future leaders and congregants.

How faith communities can play:

Faith leaders:

- **Use the bully pulpit** to remind parents they are their child's first teacher.
- **Provide a safe place for parents** to share their needs and concerns about helping their children get ready for school. An important role of clergy is to help families through transitions. Offering workshops when moms are pregnant is a critical time to share parenting information before the baby is born and a great way to help families through the transition of welcoming a baby into the home. Share information with congregations about the importance of the first years of life and emphasize the important role that parents play as their children's first teachers.
- **Encourage community service** to promote school readiness and develop ways faith communities can take community-wide action.
- **Share examples of successful children and school readiness programs** and how they contribute to community life.

Congregations:

- **"Adopt" school readiness programs**, offering financial support and other resources, use of facilities, and/or volunteers.
- **Include information about healthy early childhood development and school readiness in professional training** and education programs for clergy and lay leaders, hospital chaplains, and seminary students.
- **Mobilize retired, senior, and youth congregation members** to volunteer in hospitals, early care and education programs, libraries, and family support centers and other school readiness programs.

- **Encourage older members to “adopt” or mentor young families.**
- **Encourage members to share information** about the importance of school readiness with policy makers and peers.
- **Work with schools and libraries** to help families get their children registered for pre-k and school or to get a library card.
- **Host school readiness or health fairs** that offer families information and a fun day outdoors that exposes families to many local resources.

In the community:

- **Host forums and events** for the public and policy makers that enable members to share their ideas about how to increase school readiness.
- **Make sure local civic and school meetings are well-publicized** and that there are interpreters as needed.
- Establish or **participate in community-wide interfaith councils** of child and family ministries that focus on the needs of new and expectant parents and promote school readiness.
- **Include school readiness, parenting, and children’s books in the congregation’s library.**
- **Publicly honor families raising young children** and children who are ready to succeed when they start school. Also, support and acknowledge children who are struggling in school and their families. Create a culture in which children, young people, and adults continually learn and grow together.
- **Convene groups of citizens to address school readiness issues.**
- **Create a community garden** and recipe books involving children and families in good nutrition practices.
- **Host summer and school vacation nutrition programs** such as [Roanoke’s Feed and Read](#) program in which children receive lunch along with literacy instruction.
- **Sponsor parenting and school readiness classes** and provide child care to parents or grandparents who attend.
- **Sponsor or donate space** for school readiness—parenting, family support, health care, early care and education, and other programs.

Advice for partnering with faith communities—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- A faith-based group is able to reach many people with limited resources. They have large volunteer corps who are active throughout the community and can bring community members to the house of worship for parenting programs.
- Faith groups are uniquely able to reach immigrant families whose home language is not English, but who need information about school readiness and kindergarten enrollment.
- Some groups have religious beliefs that require them to work in a certain way. For instance, certain Orthodox Jewish organizations will not work with women. There may need to be creative ways to accommodate all of the practices of different religious groups, including who they are willing to work with.

Resources:

- **National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA** is a leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/>
- **National Human Services Departments of various denominations:** (e.g. Catholic Charities, etc.).
- **Local, regional, or statewide ecumenical councils and groups.**
- **Corporation for National and Community Service's Faith-Based and Other Community Initiatives and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP)** helps connect faith-based and other community organizations to CNCS, ensuring that these groups have the capacity, tools, and volunteer resources they need to help our communities maximize their full potential. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/communities/faith-based-and-other-community-initiatives-and-neighborhood>
- **PICO National Network** is a national network of faith-based community organizations working to create innovative solutions to problems facing urban, suburban, and rural communities. <http://www.piconetwork.org/>



Government and Military

State, National, Regional, and Local Governments, Jurisdictions, and Municipalities

Government has expertise, data, facilities, and a public service mission. Government leaders understand policy, share important data, and can often help local coalitions figure out how to braid and blend public funds. They can also influence other policy leaders about local needs and make the case for increased school readiness investments.

How governments win:

- Children who are ready for school grow up to contribute to positive economic development for communities, states, and the nation.
- Children who succeed in school require less public spending on costly remedial services, from child welfare to prisons.
- Children who succeed in school are more likely to become productive future employees.

How state and national governments can play:

In budgets:

- **Increase investments in school readiness efforts**, tying new investments to research on effective school readiness policies and practices.
- **Create results-based incentives for grantees** and other organizations in the public and private sectors to expand and improve school readiness programs and services.
- **Document and share information on the effectiveness of school readiness programs** and benchmark the results of these efforts over time.
- **Provide low- or no-interest loans to school readiness and early childhood programs** to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- **Establish meaningful tax advantages for family-friendly businesses.**
- **Support collection and use of population-level school readiness and health data.**
- **Collect and share population-level school readiness and health data.**

In policies and regulations:

- **Ensure that family and community representatives are involved** in designing any school readiness-related services intended for their use.
- **Develop bottom-up policies** that allow local communities to identify their needs and then receive government support to address them.
- **Support research that holds promise for improving school readiness** results for young children and their families.



Washington, DC

Congresswoman Mazie Hirono Champions Strong Support for Quality Early Education in House Bill 2:14

“Early childhood education is the most powerful investment we can make in our children.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

- **Collect and share data** about school readiness and the conditions of young children and their families with school readiness coalitions, service providers, other policy makers, and the public.
- **Institute appropriate quality control mechanisms** to ensure the safety and healthy development of young children in school readiness programs and provide technical assistance to promote quality and positive results.
- **Require and fund ongoing collaboration** and coordination among school readiness programs and services.
- **Sponsor and participate in public media campaigns** that build public will for school readiness programs, services, and resources.

With constituents:

- **Inform the public about the importance of school readiness** and resources available to assist families with young children.



Omaha, NE

Mission: Readiness News Conference 1:47

“As a society, we have a choice. We can put money in early on, or we can put money into correction facilities. One of these is much better than the other one.”

[Click here to watch video](#)



Lawrence, KS

Barack Obama pushes child care initiatives in conservative Kansas 1:38

“It is time we stopped looking at child care as a side issue or a ‘women’s issue.’ This is a family issue and a national economic priority for all of us. We can do better than we are doing now.”

[Click here to watch video](#)

How local governments can play:

In budgets:

- **Develop legislation, public policies, budgets, taxes, and financing mechanisms** that support school readiness.
- **Increase investments in school readiness**, tying new investments to research on effective policies and practices.
- **Create results-based incentives for grantees** and in other public-private initiatives to expand and improve school readiness services.
- **Measure the school readiness results of initiatives**, programs, and services. Share information about the effectiveness of school readiness. Benchmark the results of these efforts over time.

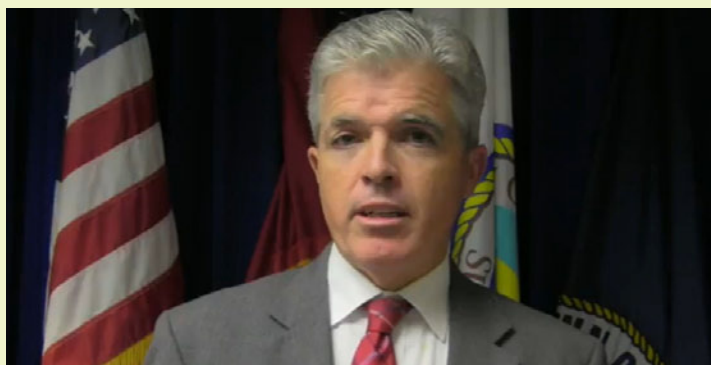


Sacramento, CA

Assemblymember McCarty Leads Rally for Preschool 4:22

“We know that invest in children will not only reduce the chances they will enter the juvenile justice system, but we also know it will reduce the chance of them becoming a victim of child abuse and neglect.”

[Click here to watch video](#)



Long Island, NY

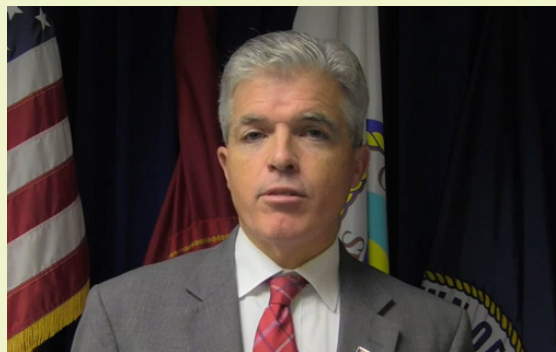
“As County Executive, I can provide support to those community coalitions with technical assistance and resources.”

[Click here to watch video 2](#) **0:17**

**Steven Bellone,
County Executive of
Suffolk County, NY 0:22**

“I see early childhood as a long-term crime prevention strategy.”

[Click here to watch video 1](#)



- **Provide low- or no-interest loans to school readiness programs** to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- **Establish meaningful tax advantages** for family-friendly businesses.
- **Include resources for school readiness programs and facilities in parks** and recreation, health and human services, education, library, and senior services departments.
- **Work to ensure that school readiness resources and policies promote equal opportunities for all children.**
- **Conduct public education campaigns about the importance of school readiness** and effective parenting.

In policies and regulations:

- **Ensure that family and community representatives are involved** in designing any school readiness related programs and services.
- **Require ongoing collaboration and coordination** among school readiness programs and services.
- **Collect and share school readiness data with public** and private partners. Issue reports using government data that shed light on barriers to school readiness, or the progress made after a school readiness initiative has been implemented.
- **Sponsor and participate in public media campaigns** that build public will for school readiness programs, services, and resources.

- **Use planning and zoning data** about children and families to create appropriate regulations and facilities (parks, sidewalks, child care centers, family child care homes, housing, etc.) that promote school readiness.
- **Link economic development and job creation with school readiness initiatives.**
- **Institute appropriate quality control mechanisms** to ensure the safety and healthy development of young children in school readiness programs and provide technical assistance to those that need to improve quality.
- **Link maternal and child health**, immunizations, early developmental screening and treatment, and other child health and development resources with school readiness programs and services for young children and their families.
- **Make sure municipal regulations on fire, safety, and buildings are complementary** when applied to school readiness facilities for young children.
- **Collaborate with community partners** such as other local and regional governments, schools, and nonprofits to expand and improve school readiness programs and services.

With constituents:

- **Inform the public** about the importance of local school readiness needs and resources.
- **Convene a commission for a thorough look at impediments** to school readiness and to develop a plan for improving outcomes for children.
- **Convene groups of citizens** to address school readiness issues.
- **Convene business leaders** to investigate how to finance school readiness programs and services.

Advice for partnering with governments—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Things move slowly in government in bureaucracies. It often takes extended amounts of time to get all of the approvals necessary for action. Involving a senior government leader as an ally or champion can help shorten time needed for action.
- It is hard to find the data needed from a government agency. Finding the right person or researcher can help identify and decipher government information.

Resources:

- **National League of Cities (NLC)** is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. <http://www.nlc.org/>
- **National Governors Association (NGA)** is where governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy and develop innovative solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism. <http://www.nga.org/>
- **Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity** (see Fairfax County and others working on B-8 Equity policies) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. <http://racialequityalliance.org/>

Media

Print, Electronic, Radio, Television, Film, Communications Professionals, and Professional Associations

All forms of media can help communities spread the word about the importance of school readiness, announce events or fundraising efforts, and showcase useful resources and best practices. It is worthwhile having a media or marketing expert help you make the most of media coverage.

How media leaders win:

- School readiness issues provide a wealth of possible stories to publish or broadcast.
- School-ready children are likely to succeed in school and become productive future media leaders and media consumers.
- Promoting school readiness wins public support for media leaders' organizations because of its benefits to the whole community.

How media leaders can play:

In programming or news coverage:

- **Create and disseminate messages** that inform the public about the importance of school readiness.
- **Make sure coverage includes the state of school readiness** in the community, highlighting problems and solutions under way.
- **Create a school readiness beat** that lets viewers or listeners know what's happening in the community to increase school readiness.
- **Report on state and local efforts to expand and improve school readiness** programs and services.
- **Serve on school readiness boards** and coalitions and volunteer in community efforts to increase school readiness.

In community relations:

- **Publicize local school readiness resources.**
- **Highlight state and community champions** of children—individuals, organizations, and businesses improving school readiness programs and services.
- **Organize and/or participate in state or local school readiness efforts.**
- **Lend a voice to advocacy** efforts supporting school readiness.
- **Sponsor “Screen-Free Week,”** especially through radio to encourage parents to turn off the TV and go outside to play.

Advice for partnering with people in the media—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Journalists need background information on the issue of school readiness. Have a one-pager available to educate them quickly.
- Interviewers sometimes ask questions that don't make sense. Come prepared with three key points that need to be made and weave them into responses no matter what questions are asked.
- Timing or current events kill the school readiness story. It is important to understand the news cycle and what time of day and week will most likely result in getting media attention.
- All media outlets don't reach all people. This may be especially important to reach English Language Learners who often listen to radio in their home language. In addition, younger parents and students may respond only through text messages or social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. It is critical to know how different audiences receive media information to connect the right messages to the right media.

Resources:

The following resources provide examples of successful early childhood or socially-focused initiatives that have strong communications, messaging, and media components.

- **Attendance Works, Attendance Awareness Month** has as its goal to mobilize schools and communities to promote the value of good attendance and to take concrete steps toward reducing chronic absenteeism. Resources for this campaign provide high-quality examples of how to promote important education-focused issues. <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/>
- **Ad Council** identifies a select number of significant public issues and stimulates action on those issues through communications programs that make a measurable difference in our society. <http://www.ad-council.org/Our-Campaigns>
- **Text4Baby** is the first mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health through text messaging. <https://partners.text4baby.org/>
- **VROOM**, a new texting and website service dedicated to helping parents improve early learning. <http://www.joinvroom.org/>
- **Erikson Institute** video teaches that “All It Takes is H.E.A.R.T.” (Hug, Engage, Ask, Read, Talk) to guide parents with the message that interaction between children and their parents is critically important to stimulating healthy brain development from infancy through adolescence. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpeBlz1ec18>

Law Enforcement

Police, Attorneys General, Courts, Judges, Parole Officers, and Other Justice System Players

Of all the public savings from children having received a high quality early education, the largest portion comes from the reduction in juvenile delinquency and incarceration. Law enforcement, especially through such organizations as Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, has played a critical role in drawing attention to the long-term consequences and costs of children not having a healthy and supportive start in life.

How law enforcement wins:

- School-ready children are more likely to become law-abiding adolescents and future citizens, which increases public safety.
- Prevention efforts such as school readiness are less costly than future incarceration.
- School readiness is a key crime prevention strategy.

How law enforcement can play:

In an agency:

- **Develop and/or reinforce a vision of law enforcement** that regards school readiness efforts—family support and parent education, voluntary home visits, and other services to families with young children—as crime prevention strategies.
- **Use professional and trade association journals**, social media, conferences, and meetings to inform law enforcement professionals about key school readiness issues, including new research on brain development and the societal benefits of school readiness.
- **Include information about school readiness**, early childhood development, and strengthening families to prevent child abuse in training programs for all law enforcement professionals.
- **Require and train officers to work collaboratively with social workers**, health care providers, and other school readiness professionals who interact with young children and their families.

In the community:

- **Inform other community members about the importance of focusing on the early years** and school readiness as a crime prevention strategy.
- **Help the community understand the needs in different neighborhoods**, where law enforcement spend considerable time.
- **Promote public policies and legislation designed to encourage school readiness.**
- **Collaborate with other community partners**—schools, health care providers, early care and education programs, libraries, parks, museums, and family support and parent education programs—ilto expand and improve school readiness services.
- **Participate in public forums** that share information about the importance of the early years and school readiness and their connection to crime prevention.



Edward Flynn, Chief of Police, Milwaukee Police Dept.
“Orange is Not Your Color” 2:52

“I’m a policy chief...but I know from research and my own experience that our streets will be a lot safer if we can keep more people from turning to crime in the first place. Home visiting is a smart intervention...”

[Click here to watch video](#)

Advice for partnering with law enforcement—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Law enforcement has focused on youth and not necessarily preschoolers. Once they understand that gang behavior has its roots in a childhood lacking in strong support, law enforcement can be a powerful player.
- The District Attorney’s Office at the local level is a strong advocate for school readiness because of two key issues on which they spend time: reducing juvenile delinquency and the number of babies born to teens. It is very helpful to have the formidable resources of the District Attorney focused on school readiness.
- Women’s and minority (African American, Asian, Latino, etc.) bar associations often have small grants programs, which may focus on children and families.

Resources:

- **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorneys general and other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America. <http://www.fight-crime.org/>
- **National Association of Attorneys General** fosters interstate cooperation on legal and law enforcement issues, conducts policy research and analysis of issues, conducts trainings, and facilitates communication between the states’ chief legal officers and all levels of government. <http://www.naag.org/>
- Various bar associations
- Local Attorneys General

Architects, Developers, and Building Trade Professionals

Contractors, Carpenters, Electricians, Painters, Plumbers, etc.

As individuals inspired by their own families and experiences, or as professionals being asked to work on a specific project or participate in a professional network, there are opportunities for people involved in creating the spaces in our communities to help improve school readiness. As part of a professional network, there are things they can do as a group, e.g. donating in-kind time, raising funds, or advocating for kids. As professionals, they can make sure projects keep in mind the needs of families and children, e.g. paths are wide enough for strollers and wheelchairs, and lighting doesn't overstimulate children in classrooms. On Long Island, a group of landscape architects were convened to let them know about how to build an all-natural playground that was being promoted. First, they had to know how children play. What an eye opening experience! They had designed many playgrounds and never really understood children's natural inclinations for play and the best way for space to allow for exploration and discovery.

How architects, developers, and building trade professionals win:

- Supporting school readiness programs and services can lead to valuable building and design projects as communities construct additional early childhood program facilities.
- Supporting school readiness projects provides community service and recognition that increases public appreciation for contributors.
- Children who succeed in school may be more likely to enter future professional fields such as architecture, development, and building trades.

How architects, developers, and building trade professionals can play:

With clients:

- **Encourage clients to create rooms for family classes** and meetings, areas for mothers to nurse their infants, and school readiness facilities in workplaces, parks, housing and commercial developments, and other public places.

In the community:

- **Learn about how children play** and develop before building a playroom, a child care center, or a playground.
- **Build or refurbish neighborhood playgrounds.**
- **Create Outdoor Nature Explore Classrooms** that use all natural products in a safe and stimulating play space.
- **Build or improve early childhood school readiness and child health facilities.**

- **Inform policy makers** about the benefits of building playgrounds and early childhood facilities according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Standards for Playground Safety.

In the industry:

- **Include instruction about early childhood facility design** and construction in the curricula of architecture schools as well as in training and apprenticeships in the building trades.
- **Inform trade and professional publications, websites, and conferences about the importance of school readiness** and how a wide range of individuals and groups in the building trades can make a difference.

Advice for partnering with architects, developers, and building trade professionals—don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Trade organizations already have a charitable arm that looks for causes to invest in each year. For example, Contractors for Kids picks an annual construction project benefitting a children's program where they donate the labor to help.

Resources:

- **KaBoom! Build a Playground Toolkit** is designed to walk you through the process of how to create a community-build playspace. From fundraising to volunteer recruitment, the Toolkit can help you take your project from start to finish with over a decade's worth of KaBOOM! knowledge, advice, and best practices in building playspaces. https://kaboom.org/resources/build_playground_toolkit
- **United Way Born Learning Trails.** In partnership with local United Ways, Born Learning Trails are valuable community resources for early childhood learning and offer opportunities for visibility and volunteer engagement. These fun, physical learning activities are designed for parents or caregivers to play with young children in both outdoor and indoor settings (permanent or mobile styles). Connect with your local United Way to find out about trail installation. <http://www.unitedway.org/find-your-united-way>
- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management Guide for Establishing a Federal Nursing Mother's Program** defines both the Affordable Care Act legislation in reference to breast feeding, and provides guidance for high quality implementation of programs. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/reference-materials/nursing-mother-guide.pdf>

Women's Organizations

Professional, Networking, Social, Political, Grant Making, and Others

This includes a host of professional and networking organizations that have “women’s issues” at the heart of their efforts. Interestingly, child care, early childhood education, and school readiness may not be included on their agendas. For example, several national women business owner organizations opposed the Family and Medical Leave Act which provided job-protected maternity leave for 12 weeks. Their priority was the extra costs that this policy would mean for their businesses, over the maternity leave that some women need. However, there are many local women’s groups that are interested in young children and can offer expertise, volunteer support, and funding to school readiness campaigns.

How women's organizations win:

- Helping increase the availability of quality early childhood programs enables women to work and have peace of mind while on the job.
- Mothers and their partners benefit from the parenting support resources that are often created during school readiness initiatives.
- Women feel more confident in their parenting skills and ability to manage their family and work responsibilities.

How women's organizations can play:

- **Women’s groups can host workshops** on school readiness and collect information about family needs that then can be shared with community coalitions.
- Women’s funds can **make school readiness a priority** in their grant making.
- Working women can **bring the resources of their employers to the table**.
- Women’s groups can **provide volunteers** to various community events around school readiness. Of particular help may be alumni from women’s sororities and colleges, Junior League, National Council of Jewish Women, and American Association of University Women.
- Older women can **share their expertise with younger women**—how to succeed in school, college, work, and family life.
- Organizations such as the League of Women Voters or the Junior League can **help publicize school readiness** issues in communities and make sure that school readiness questions are asked at candidate forums they host.
- **Women’s studies programs at local colleges and universities may have data** and information about the status of women and their supports at work and in the community.

Advice for partnering with women's organizations— don't worry (or be surprised) if:

- Early childhood issues are not on the agendas of women organizations. The case should still get made.
- Corporate women often do not feel comfortable raising a children's or motherhood issue at work. This would be perceived as a "women's issue," and some corporate cultures would prefer not to focus on those issues.

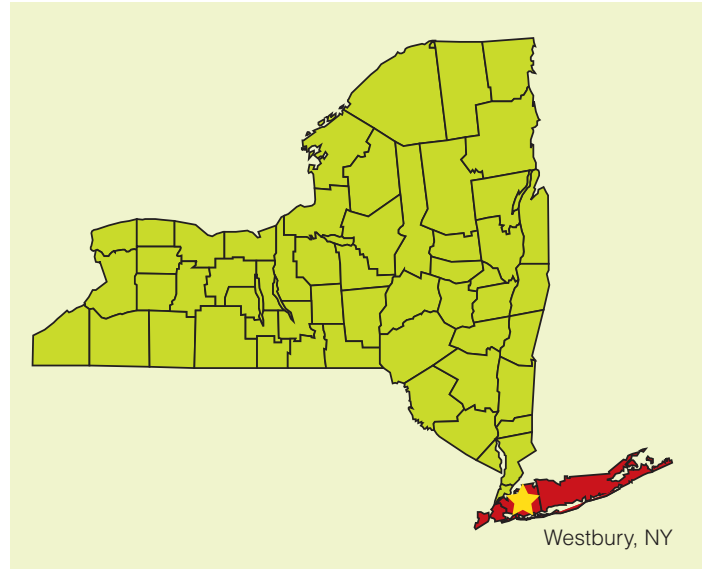
Resources:

- **National Organization for Women** is the grassroots arm of the women's movement, the National Organization for Women is dedicated to its multi-issue and multi-strategy approach to women's rights. <http://www.now.org/>
- **Ms. Foundation for Women** has a mission to build women's collective power to realize a nation of justice for all. <http://forwomen.org/>
- **Women's Funding Network**. With more than 100 women's funds and foundations engaged, Women's Funding Network is the largest philanthropic network in the world devoted to women and girls. <http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/>
- **The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.** has local Junior Leagues that are educational and charitable women's organizations aimed at improving their communities through volunteerism and building their members' civic leadership skills through training. <https://www.ajli.org/>
- **National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)** is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. <http://www.ncjw.org/>
- **American Association of University Women (AAUW)** has been empowering women as individuals and as a community since 1881. AAUW works as a national grassroots organization to improve the lives of millions of women and their families. <http://www.aauw.org/>
- **League of Women Voters** is a citizens' organization that has fought since 1920 to improve the government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. <http://lwv.org/>
- **National Council of Negro Women (NCRW)** has a mission is to lead, develop, and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities. <http://ncnw.org/>
- Faith women's groups
- Local professional development and networking organizations.

9. School Readiness at the Community Level: The Story of Westbury, New York

The Impetus

The Early Years Institute (EYI) is a regional nonprofit organization focused on two counties on Long Island. Its mission is to be a catalyst for community partnerships that invest in young children. Though it began with the goal of improving the quality of child care, leadership realized early on that half of the children under 5 years of age were not in formal market of care, e.g. child care and Head Start centers, family child care homes, pre-k and nursery schools. Instead, they were with family members, neighbors, and/or co-workers. EYI then embraced the frame of the “family, friend, and neighbor care movement” and began looking at where parents pay, play, and pray or are paid. These are the places where families congregate and where there is an opportunity to provide information and/or services to families and children. With this lens, EYI began approaching libraries, pediatrician’s offices, churches, parks, employers, and a host of human service agencies to explore opportunities. EYI began offering “Play Fairs” in libraries to help parents understand the importance of play, creating Outdoor Nature Explore Classrooms in parks, designing pediatric resident training for new residents at three LI hospitals. After piloting these and other early childhood interventions in these various institutions across Long Island, EYI realized that the impact would be greater if these could all be introduced and coordinated within one community. EYI also knew that such an effort required a way to measure progress over time. After gathering over 30 different early childhood assessment tools, the regional EYI Advisory Committee of 60 intermediary organizations serving children and families reviewed the instruments and selected the Early Development Instrument (EDI).



The next task was to select the pilot community for this comprehensive school readiness initiative. Westbury, NY, an under-resourced community in Nassau County, was chosen for several reasons: the Superintendent was on the EYI Board, all kindergarten children were in one school, which significantly simplified the collection of EDI data from all kindergarten teachers, and finally, the President of EYI grew up there and had some familiarity with the community and several residents.

The Context

Despite Long Island's reputation as a wealthy, highly-taxed region, it includes 11 communities where the majority of children receive free or reduced lunches, an indication of low family income. These communities are also largely communities of color, which reflects decades of institutional racism. The influx of immigrants to the region has exposed this reality and shown LI to be less than welcoming to these families. This is an important

backdrop for explaining why school readiness efforts in Westbury often required attention to social justice issues, which is further discussed at the end of the story.

Westbury is one of these 11 communities where household income is 22 percent below the county-wide average. Demographic data in Westbury point to a dramatic community transformation over the past 20 years. While the community's total population has remained nearly the same, the proportion of white families has decreased by 16 percent, the number of African American and Afro-Caribbean families has climbed by 22 percent, and the number of Hispanic families has tripled. The Westbury Union Free School District's student population has followed these demographic trends, with more than 98 percent of its students identified as ethnic minorities (59 percent Hispanic, 39 percent African American). Seventy-nine percent of Westbury students qualify for free or reduced price lunches and the trend in this direction is rapidly accelerating as the Westbury student demographic moves from being a majority African American, native-born student population to a majority Hispanic and immigrant population. While only 61 percent of Westbury High School students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program, more than 85 percent of Westbury Elementary School students qualify for the program. With large concentrations of Salvadoran, Mexican, and Haitian immigrant populations, nearly 40 percent of Westbury families currently speak a primary language other than English, a trend that is projected to reach as much as 50 percent by 2020, increasing the challenges of teaching English Language Learners and reaching their parents.

National demographic trends are readily apparent in Westbury, as they are in the other underserved communities on Long Island. With a dramatically increasing population of immigrant families, LI school districts are finding themselves unprepared to welcome these families or provide the array of social supports they need to help their children succeed. Many communities have more than 50 percent of families speaking a primary language other than English, which creates challenges for helping English Language Learners and reaching their parents. Most importantly, while the overall population of children 0-5 is shrinking on Long Island, it is increasing in every one of Long Island's 11 high needs districts.

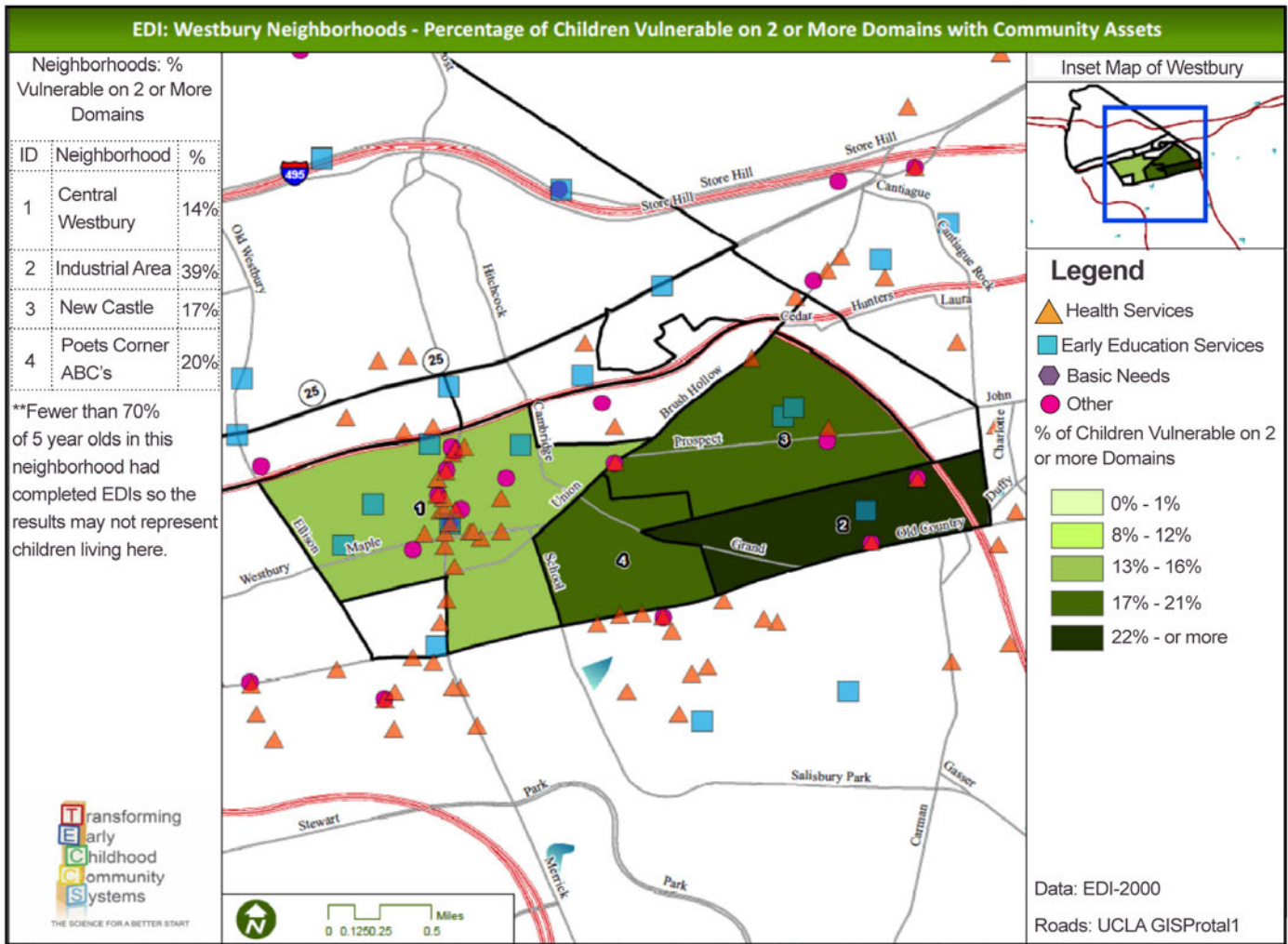
Early Development Instrument



EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Since its development in 1998, the EDI has been successfully used or adapted for use in over a dozen countries, including: Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, Holland, New Zealand, Indonesia, Jamaica, and Mexico. It is now being used in 60 U.S. communities. Data show the EDI is a valid indicator of school readiness and can predict basic skills performance through fifth grade. In addition, EDI results help communities identify neighborhoods where children are most vulnerable and the resources that exist (or do not) to help them.

The EDI is an online survey with a 120-item checklist that is completed by Kindergarten teachers for each child in their class about five months into the school year. EDI focuses on the whole child and includes all of the domains of school readiness, e.g. health, social, emotional and cognitive development, general knowledge, and approaches to learning. What is most unique about EDI is that data are not reported back by child or classroom, but rather by neighborhood. With colorful maps pinpointing vulnerabilities with darker shaded areas, the community can then target neighborhoods with the greatest needs. It also allows other population-based data to be aligned with EDI data and overlaid onto the maps. (*See map on the next page.*)



**Used with permission from Dana Friedman, The Early Years Institute. (c) McMaster University, The Offord Centre for Child Studies.

This is a map of Westbury and the four neighborhoods where kindergarten students in the sample lived. The darker the green area, the more children were found to be **not ready for kindergarten** in at least two of the five areas of school readiness. The colored geometric shapes represent our Asset Mapping of health, child care, and other services that support families. It clearly shows that the children who are most vulnerable are living in neighborhoods where the fewest services are located.

The Process

EYI clearly played the role of the “backbone organization” a role defined by the principles of collective impact. (See more on *Collective Action* in Section 5.). By using the EDI for shared measurement, EYI facilitated groups working in mutually reinforcing ways and created ongoing communications channels. Throughout the process, EYI was supported with technical assistance from UCLA and United Way Worldwide, national partners bringing the EDI to the United States. The process was implemented in several stages:

KEYS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Continuous communications
- Backbone support organization

1. Garnering Support for EDI. It was necessary to get formal approvals from the Westbury School Board and the stated support of the community. A series of presentations were made throughout Westbury about school readiness, the EDI, and the hopes that more members of the community would become a part of the effort.

2. Administering the EDI by the District.

It was necessary to get support from the district in arranging for a full day for teachers to be trained and then supported as they completed the EDI for each child in their classes. The District assigned a March professional development day to the EDI so that all teachers could participate without the need to call in costly substitutes. EYI conducted some preliminary training a few months earlier and then one hour of training the morning of EDI completion. The real training came as teachers started completing a simple “click” questionnaire of 120 questions for each child in their class. The first child's EDI



was completed in about 20 minutes. As time went on, teachers were completing them in 10-15 minutes and able to complete the EDI for all children in one day. In addition, help from the technology office was needed for setting up child identifiers, arranging for laptops for teachers to complete the online EDI survey and being available to troubleshoot during the day of EDI completion.

3. Mapping Assets. While the data were being collected, EYI conducted an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) assessment, interviewing various community leaders about the family and children's resources in Westbury and identifying potential members for the Westbury Early Learning (Leadership Team), the group that would be making decisions about how to respond to the EDI data.

4. Creating a Community Leadership Team. Based on the asset-mapping process, a group of 15 community leaders were invited to become members of the Leadership Team. Each group/individual was met with individually and a representative was identified to participate and to review the EDI data, collect other

data from their own organizations, and working collaboratively to make changes that will help young children. After three years of quarterly meetings and several subcommittees, the Leadership Team grew to over 90 people, including parents, business leaders and elected officials, and representatives from the schools, child care programs, library, health clinics, religious institutions, and other social service programs. These groups have helped make presentations about the EDI data, hosted fairs and events with a school readiness table, and partnered with their colleagues to offer early childhood experiences to children and their families intended to improve school readiness.



5. **Publicizing Data.** EYI provided the data to the Leadership Team and helped them make presentations to their own organizations and other entities so they could begin considering actions that could be made in response to the data. Newspaper articles and flyers at community events further helped spread the word.
6. **Creating Communication Channels.** EYI created a newsletter that offered news about relevant policies, research and programs as well as the school readiness activities of Leadership Team members. *(A list of all Leadership Team members is at the end of this section.)*
7. **Building Community Capacity.** EYI hosted sessions on increasing skills and leadership potential of the Leadership Team members. There were sessions on using the media, getting out the vote, proposal writing, and on advocacy. In addition, members were trained in how to conduct a Community Café with family members and then use the tool with their own constituents to get input on improving the services families need.
8. **Transitioning Ownership.** The Leadership Team has met for four years, initiating and overseeing over 30 different initiatives across Westbury to help improve school readiness. They began as a group of 15 and grew to 90 members over that time. EYI is now stepping back to allow a Westbury organization to take the lead. That transition is occurring as this goes to press.

EDI Findings

The EDI data collected in Westbury in 2010 and 2012 revealed that large numbers of children were “not ready” in a variety of school readiness domains. There were some improvements in 2012 among the children who were “very ready” for school. However, the number of children who were vulnerable in the various domains of school readiness increased in all but one area. The 2012 data showed that: 58 percent of children in Westbury do not have the requisite skills for kindergarten in the areas of communications and general knowledge; 55 percent were “not ready” in the area of small and gross motor activities; and 48 percent of children were not ready in the area of pro-social and helping behaviors.

In addition, EYI used other population-based data to create a snapshot of the environment in which children are growing up, e.g. poverty, single parenthood, education levels of parents, immunizations, access to safe places to play, and use of child care services. These data have been extremely successful in gaining the attention of elected officials and civic groups. Leaders were astounded by the ability of population-based measures and maps to pinpoint vulnerabilities at the neighborhood level and galvanize the community to address them. EDI is one of many data tools that is effective in bringing people to the table.

EYI did not mine the data to the extent anticipated. Some of the gender and racial breakdowns in the EDI data were reviewed with school administrators, but these data were not made public. The primary reason for this is that the racial tensions in Westbury were very high, with middle-income black families who had lived in town for years upset by the number of immigrant families moving to Westbury and increasing usage of town services. This is common to other communities on Long Island that are absorbing large numbers of immigrant families. However, the majority of young children in Westbury deemed not ready for kindergarten were Hispanic, and EYI was concerned that that information might fuel more resentment about this population and chose not to take the risk.

Community Responses to EDI Data

As the Learning Leadership Team reviewed the EDI data, they considered the various ways to improve each area of school readiness vulnerability. What activities were members already doing that could be expanded to include the preschool population or their families? Who could help tackle the health vulnerabilities? What messages could all groups adopt that would help educate the community about the importance of school readiness? These are the questions asked that helped the Leadership Team mine the EDI data and identify interventions, or strategies, that could improve the domains of school readiness.

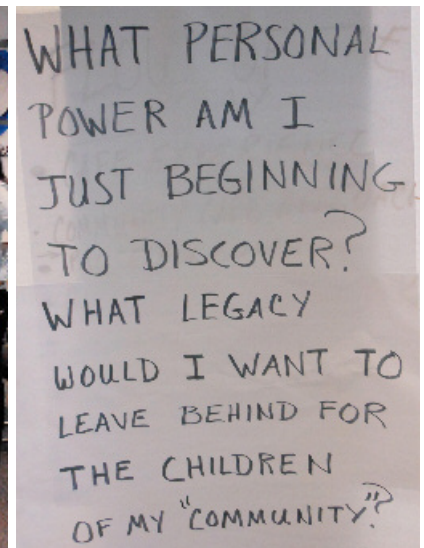
It is important to note that the staff of EYI continued to bring ideas to the Leadership Team by constantly reviewing reports and websites about school readiness strategies used in other communities across the country. Annually, EYI staff attended the Smart Start Conference in North Carolina where the state showcases successful local interventions that the state funds based on a community coalition's priorities. Furthermore, EYI was part of a national network of sites using the EDI and attended an annual convening of those communities as well and brought back many useful ideas and strategies.

Over 30 interventions have been implemented in Westbury since 2010, all aimed at increasing school readiness. They include strategies selected by the Leadership Team that EYI raised funds for or a shared focus on specific issues, e.g. family literacy. These interventions are described below based on the community player involved. Many interventions involved partnerships and collaborations, which were encouraged. EYI established the Ready, Set, Achieve! Fund with foundation funds that gave grants to nine agencies working to improve school readiness based on EDI results. Two key criteria for receiving a grant were whether the strategy met a community need and also helped strengthen community partnerships and connections.

Families

Integral to the process, family input was solicited at every turn. Parents served on the Leadership Team and were part of the committee that selected grantees for the Ready, Set, Achieve! Fund. Parents were identified through the Leadership Team members and the PTA.

- **PTA Support:** EYI coached the PTA leadership on engaging Hispanic families, resulting in regular attendance growing from 20 to more than 50 families.



- **Community Cafés:** In January 2012, Robin Higa of the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds conducted an orientation on Community Cafés. Leadership Team members brought groups of parents and about 50 people engaged in a day-long event discussing concerns about children, but most importantly, establishing a safe place in the community where diverse families can discuss their concerns. Four agencies, including the school district, then held Community Cafés with the parents they served.

Schools

School support was critical for conducting the EDI, for providing access to both technology resources and kindergarten teachers to complete the EDI for their students. The school was also a critical player in responding to the EDI. EYI was very intentional in not having school leaders chair the Leadership Team. There had been some recent complaints about the school not being responsive to community residents; they were not trustworthy to a large swath of the community. EYI did not want the school to be blamed for any poor results on the EDI. EYI emphasized that the EDI scores reflected the experiences that children had before they got to school. The ongoing participation of several school administrators at Leadership Team meetings, where dialogue was open and honest, helped improve school-community relationships considerably.



- **Donations to Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Classrooms:**

- School supplies were obtained from the Tools for School Drive hosted by Astoria Federal Savings and distributed by EYI Board members to all pre-k and kindergarten classrooms in Westbury. Supplies that required small motor skills were selected given vulnerabilities shown on the EDI.



- **Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration:**

- EYI and the Leadership Team Increased outreach efforts to assure that those who most needed pre-K knew about registration dates. EYI equipped the Leadership Team to engage churches, human service agencies, child care centers, and health clinics with information about pre-k and kindergarten registration in these efforts.
- After observing the pre-K registration process, EYI suggested improvements that included more Spanish-speaking staff, more activities for the children (they were watching TV at registration before), and bringing in library staff to sign up families for library cards while they waited.

- The registration process became more complicated as the district required more proof of residency, e.g. 16 different notarized signatures. EYI identified the agencies that parents were flocking to for help completing the registration packet. These five agency representatives were gathered at the school where administrators explained the forms so community groups could help parents complete them.

- EYI recommended Ready Freddy as a community process that could help children get excited about kindergarten and engage community members on the first day of school to welcome them. Unfortunately, the school was concerned about over-exciting the children and increasing chaos. That is not the experience of others that have used Ready Freddy.

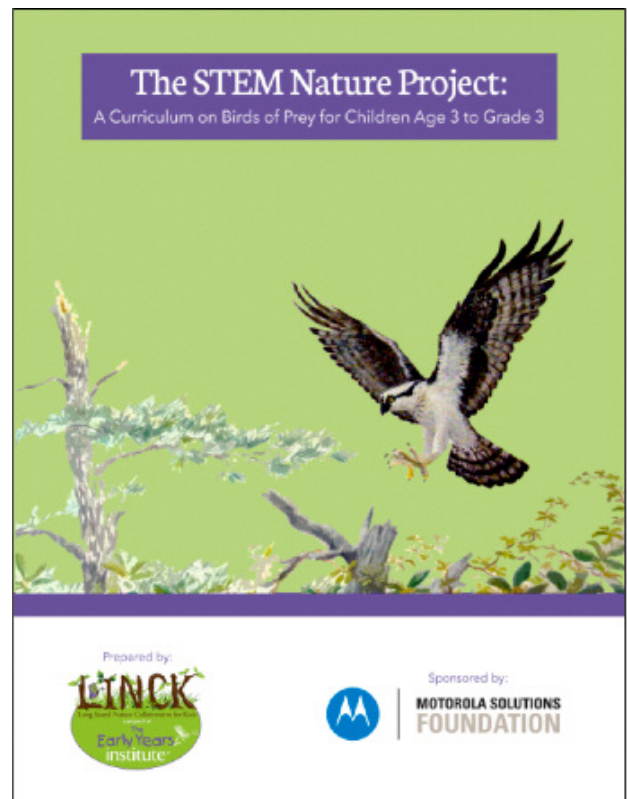
• **First Day of School:** EYI assisted the Westbury School District with helping to explain the staggered start for pre-k and kindergarten. More than 1,100 flyers were distributed and posted throughout Westbury in both English and Spanish explaining how the first few days of school would work.

• **Aligning Pre-K through Third:** With a grant from Motorola Solutions, EYI created a nature-focused STEM curriculum for children aged three to eight. With EYI as a strong proponent of reconnecting children and nature, it was decided to focus the STEM curriculum on the natural sciences, specifically the osprey. One reason this topic was chosen was because the osprey migrate as did many of the children in school. They might identify more with the experience — which proved true. The 16-week program included 30-45 minutes lessons and a homework assignment that was prepared in three languages — English, Spanish, and Créole. The curriculum was created by a team of science educators from the Westbury Schools, the LI Children's Museum, Audubon Society, and curriculum experts. It was to be piloted in the school's pre-k program, the Westbury Head Start program and a local child care center. The teachers loved this curriculum — everything was tied to the Common Core — and they reported that they got almost 100% of the homework assignments returned — in all three settings. They felt that the children's excitement about the classroom experiences and the language access helped.

• **Improving Impulse Control:** While the EDI can inform the community on what to work on to increase strengths and prevent further vulnerabilities, there are ways to look at the data to identify classroom trends that all teachers could use help with. When one teacher expressed concerns about several children with impulse control difficulties, the principal looked at the data and realized a third of the children

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

- Sharing EDI data
- Screen-Free Week
- Ready, Set, Achieve! Fund
- Community Café
- Outdoor Classroom



were having this difficulty. Several experts on impulse control and classroom management were brought in to help teachers address this problem, the scope of which was revealed by EDI data.

- Helping Kindergarten Teachers with Large Class Sizes:** After learning that kindergarten classes in Westbury would exceed 30 children, EYI contacted SUNY Old Westbury which had established a requirement for all freshmen to spend the first two years of college engaged in social justice issues in the community. The Leadership Team agreed that this enormous class size was a social justice issue and students at SUNY Old Westbury were asked to spend time in kindergarten classrooms over the course of the year. Over 50 students have been providing support to kindergarten teachers in Westbury for the past three years.



- Screen-Free Week:** EYI sponsors this campaign regionally and brought it to Westbury. It involved the distribution of information about how much time children are spending with TV and screens and the negative effects of too much screen time. The school had several assemblies to draw attention to screen time use and local legislators came in to read to the children. Parents reported that children were telling their parents they needed to turn off the TV.

Early Childhood Programs

Westbury has seven child care centers, including one Head Start program, and seven family child care homes, and 39 group family child care homes. The Head Start program in the district takes some of the district's pre-k children. There are several nursery schools as well. One goal of convening them was to provide them with current information on policy and practice. The other goal was to create a learning community that would support each other with shared ideas and resources. This did occur to some extent, however, groups of providers separated into racial/ethnic groups. They were brought together formally by the Leadership Team, the Child Care Council of Nassau, and QualitystarsNY.

- Participation in QUALITYstarsNY:** EYI helped recruit the Westbury pre-k program and several local child care programs to participate in New York State's evolving quality rating and improvement system, which offers free coaching and technical assistance to help these programs increase quality.
- Skills Chart:** Through conversations with the Westbury kindergarten teachers, a list of skills all children should have when entering kindergarten was developed. The Westbury Children's Librarian and EYI staff developed a chart with these skills along with books and activities to increase them. This was distributed to child care providers, pre-k and kindergarten classrooms, and through them, to their parents. This list was expanded upon by Nassau BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) which asked an additional 100 kindergarten teachers from 10 districts about the skills they wanted to see, and this document of 25 skills is now being circulated across Long Island.

Young People

The ABCD process led to a review of the high school clubs and local colleges that do community service as well as the youth programs around town.

- **Student Volunteers and Student Teachers:** SUNY Old Westbury placed nearly 50 student volunteers and four student teachers in the pre-k through third grade classrooms in spring 2012. The student volunteers assisted classroom teachers and allowed them to spend one-on-one time with children who needed extra attention. This program has continued in subsequent years.
- **High School Environmental Club:** They were approached to help work on the outdoor classroom, but there were limitations to working off school property. During Screen-Free Week, older children came to read to pre-k and Kindergarten children.
- **Girls Scouts Anti-Bullying:** Their connection at Leadership Team meetings led to a joint grant where Girl Scout leaders went to Head Start to discuss anti-bullying.

Health Care Professionals, Clinics, and Hospitals

Westbury has a satellite clinic of a major hospital located in town and another major hospital in the next town. Both have very ambitious community outreach efforts which they were willing to adapt to participate in the Westbury school readiness efforts.

- **Westbury Health Council:** Leaders at Winthrop Hospital and Nassau University Medical Center Health Clinic in Westbury distributed information designed to encourage medical homes, developmental screenings, and reading to babies. These two facilities see most of the immigrant families in Westbury, but efforts to raise funds to further expand this effort were not successful.
- **Health Fairs:** EYI attended the Health Fairs sponsored by the Westbury Gospel Tabernacle and enabled children to make a newspaper flower pot into which they put seeds and which was then ready for planting outside. This also enabled EYI to respond with useful information when asked, "Why is there a school readiness table at a health fair?" It created a teachable moment and EYI was prepared with a magnet with child development information that explained what school readiness is.

READY, SET, ACHIEVE! FUND

Parenting and Family Literacy

- School District and St. Brigid's Church partner for a Parent and Toddler Club focused on literacy and school readiness
- North Shore Child & Family Guidance offers Good Beginnings for Babies to pregnant and parenting teens
- St. Brigid's Church Summer Program for young Latina mothers on breast-feeding and school readiness
- LIFE Lutheran Church for ESL and parenting for immigrant families

Improving Child Care Quality

- Playground equipment to a local center
- Program expansion for infants at a local center
- Training from Child Care Council of Nassau and QUALITYstarsNY to local family child care providers
- NAACP provides Reading Partners to Head Start's pre-k children
- Girls Scouts of Nassau County offers Head Start pre-k girls a six-week program on cultural diversity and a session for parents

Parks

- Outdoor Classroom:** With a grant from the Manhasset Community Fund, TD Bank, Jaggar Foundation, and several other local foundations, as well as the Westbury Alumni Association, EYI hired a landscape architect to create designs for an outdoor nature explore classroom at Bunky Reid Park in the New Cassel part of Westbury. Leadership Team members conducted two focus groups with parents and children to create the theme and design ideas for the space. The Town of North Hempstead promised to prepare the space by moving a fence and grading the property as well as providing ongoing maintenance. However, it has taken three years for an RFP to be developed and one funder demanded their grant back. The Leadership Team will be inviting families to help with installation and the opening celebration in the spring of 2016.

Libraries

As home of Family Place Libraries — a family and child-centered community space — Long Island libraries are leaders in supporting school readiness. Westbury is one of the Family Support Libraries and is working hard to absorb new immigrant families into their programming.

- Public Library Support:** The Westbury Public Library was a key supporter of the initiative, especially the children's librarian, who helped create library spaces for child development books for child care staff and parents. They attended pre-K and kindergarten registration to sign up parents and children for library cards. They promoted Screen-Free Week and advertised parenting information in their newsletter. They launched a *1000 Books Before Kindergarten* campaign and held play fairs to demonstrate the value of play to parents of preschoolers.
- Children's "Pocket" Libraries:** With the opening of a new community center closer to the lowest income neighborhoods in Westbury and several miles from the public library, EYI created the Children's Reading Room at the Yes We Can Center. In addition, after learning that Long Island had the third largest population of Salvadorans in the country, EYI approached the LI-based Consulate of El Salvador to see if there were opportunities to partner. Staff observed hundreds of parents coming to the Consulate with very young children and waiting hours for paperwork with nothing for the children to do. Another library was opened in the fall of 2013 at the Consulate of El Salvador's office in Brentwood, which is utilized by hundreds of families each month, many of whom are from Westbury.



EYI collected 800 books in Spanish and English from a social media campaign aimed at celebrities from El Salvador. Local artists collective from El Salvador created a mural of children from El Salvador and Consulate staff got colleagues and friends to send traditional toys from El Salvador. When parents first came in to see the new Children's Reading Room, they were emotionally moved upon seeing toys from their childhood.

Museums

The Long Island Children's Museum, a cultural gem in the region, is located in the town adjacent to Westbury. The Museum has provided both on-site programming and museum programming for the children of Westbury. A specific program was created to address the surge of Haitian immigrants to Westbury.

- **Juntos Al Kinder:** This program offered Haitian parents a summer opportunity to learn about how the school system works and how they can be helpful in reinforcing learning at home. Children attended a summer program to get oriented to kindergarten and learn some basic skills to help them acclimate.

Employers

For many of the interventions and projects that the Leadership Team embarked upon, local employers were asked to help. They were instrumental in posting important school information in storefront windows in town. They made both in-kind and financial contributions to several efforts. Their clout was best tapped when the Westbury-Carle Place Chamber of Commerce was asked to chair a new grants committee.

- **Ready, Set, Achieve! Fund:** This Fund was created with a grant from a local foundation to support community agencies working to improve child outcomes in the five areas of school readiness measured by the EDI. Since many Leadership Team members were potential grant recipients, the local Chamber of Commerce was asked to chair the grant review committee. They accepted and were joined by parents, legislators and several community groups. This was an important strategy because it created the opportunity for new community stakeholders to better understand the needs of children and the agencies trying to meet those needs. The grant awards ranged from \$1,000 to \$7,500 for a single organization and \$10,000 for organizations that applied



This free program encourages parents to read 1,000 books to their children before they enter kindergarten. Experts say this will help children read for themselves. They claim the goal is achievable: reading one book a night gets to 365 books; after two years, 730 books have been read; and by three years, the goal has been reached (1,095 books). Children receive prizes at 100-book intervals and a certificate upon completion. These campaigns are going on all over the country. See the national website:

<http://1000booksbeforekindergarten.org/wp-content/uploads/Program-Instructions.pdf>



in partnership with another group. A total of nine grants were made, totaling \$64,000 to efforts intended to reach over 500 children and families in the Westbury community. Grants were made to: four projects on family literacy, in one case the school district partnering with a church; two child care centers that improved quality and the Child Care Council that offered professional development; the NAACP that brought in reading buddies to the Westbury Head Start program; and the Girl Scouts of Nassau County supporting an anti-bullying program for preschool girls.

- **Circulated Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration Dates:** Local store owners up and down Westbury's main street agreed to post information about pre-k and kindergarten registration. Although very helpful, it was observed that Hispanic store owners said they weren't allowed to post this information in the store window but could in the back, however, non-Hispanic vendors did not have any concerns and did so. This was one of many examples of subtle discrimination and the lack of voice among the Hispanics in Westbury. The issue was brought to the Town Board's Civil Rights Commission, which claimed no ability to address such an issue.

Human Services

A special effort was made during the ABCD process to identify a diverse set of Westbury organizations offering services to families. These examples show ways to link to mental health, home visiting, and early intervention.

- **North Shore Child and Family Guidance:** This mental health agency offers many parenting programs for teens and immigrant families and those who have been through trauma. They work very hard to reduce infant mortality and violence in the community as the sponsor of National Night Out. They used many of the materials and information provided at the Leadership Team meetings to enhance their services and provided meeting space. They often played a leadership role on the Leadership Team.
- **Parent-Child Home Program:** This home visiting and literacy program was expanded to include families from Westbury and run through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). Members of the Leadership Team were instrumental in identifying families for participation.

- **Early Intervention:** The county Launch Program presented information at the Leadership Team, and members helped expand the group of people who signed up for the health and family support.
- **McCoy Center:** An active Leadership Team member until they lost their funding, they helped bring a Mother's Center (a support group) to Westbury.

Retirees

There were some groups, largely comprised of retired women, who expressed interest in school readiness. After a few leaders came to the early meetings, they brought other members of their groups to subsequent meetings of the Leadership Team.

- **Black Sorority:** Volunteers from the Alpha Kappa Alpha, a largely Black, retired women's sorority helped out at several events where the Leadership Team distributed information.

Media Leaders

The *Westbury Times* is one of 16 local newspapers managed by Anton News. EYI had met the editor while working in several other communities and made sure to visit when the work began in Westbury. She brought in her managing editor and two journalists who listened to what we were trying to accomplish. Not only did they provide coverage, but they really got the context right and reported the stories in very meaningful ways.

- EYI had several meetings with editors of the *Westbury Times*, which led to their attendance at most Leadership Team meetings and sponsored events, as well as the implementation of various initiatives. The newspaper was very helpful with announcing pre-k and kindergarten registrations.

Faith Communities

There are over 65 churches, mosques, and synagogues in Westbury. Several church leaders wield considerable political power. Most churches in Westbury serve the populations they've served for decades, but all have opened their doors to immigrant families. Some of the larger churches have four masses a day. They are considered "safe havens" for many parents and the most helpful way to connect with hard-to-reach immigrant populations.



PROJECT LAUNCH

Project LAUNCH is an initiative of the federally-funded SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services. It creates a public health approach to improving the school readiness of all children and to assure incorporation of evi-

dence-based mental health/ behavioral health screening and services into primary care practice. The project aims to facilitate the healthy development of children pre-birth through 8 years old, supporting them to reach physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive developmental milestones, thus establishing a solid foundation for success in school and beyond. Three guiding principles apply:

1. **Ecological framework**—Child development is influenced by the child's family, home environment, community, school, neighborhood, and society as a whole, in addition to individual factors.
2. **Public health approach**—Awareness promotion and prevention activities in addition to treating problems after they occur.
3. **Holistic perspective**—Health encompasses all aspects of development including physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral.

<http://ccf.ny.gov/council-initiatives/project-launch-ny/faqs/>

- Several churches, and most actively, St. Brigid's Church, served on the Leadership Team and often provided meeting space. EYI met with St. Brigid's board and volunteers to explain the school readiness work in Westbury which resulted in many volunteers joining Leadership Team meetings. Faith community leaders used the materials EYI created for their parenting classes.
- Four churches were recipients of Ready, Set, Achieve! Grants, used primarily to provide parenting and family literacy programs.
- **The Islamic Center of Long Island**, located in Westbury but serving Muslims from all over, provided meeting space and had representatives work on several community efforts, e.g. pre-k registration, Screen-Free Week, and the outdoor classroom development. At one Leadership Team meeting, the Islamic Center representative came with a box of woolen neck scarves knitted by volunteers at the Islamic Center because they heard too many children were coming to school cold.

Government

One of the challenges of doing this work on Long Island is that there are so many units of government — 981 to be exact. There are 125 school districts and many sewer and water districts. There are two counties, two cities, hundreds of towns, and countless incorporated villages and hamlets. This is why this region is so highly taxed. It is also why it is so hard to get things done. When the EDI data were first presented to the Mayor of the Village of Westbury, he noticed that most of the vulnerable children came from a part of town known as New Cassel — a hamlet in the Village of Westbury. He said the data were of no concern to him because the children needing help came from New Cassel — despite the fact they all go to Westbury schools. This was a real problem to the work and led to social justice concerns regarding the lack of voice for certain populations.

- Members of the school board and village board joined the Leadership Team, as did the Mayor's Office and elected officials from the Town Board. Some were helpful — and then they didn't get re-elected. It is one of the ongoing challenges to building and sustaining government support at the local level. Once you've made your case and built trust with a key leader, they often move on to other jobs. As a result, where possible, relationships were made with bureaucratic staff that may have less power, but have continuity and a lot of information.
- The Town of North Hempstead, which owns and maintains the Bunky Reid Park where EYI is creating an outdoor classroom, passed a resolution providing considerable in-kind support and has agreed to provide ongoing maintenance. The process has stretched out to three years.
- There are Civic Associations that have created Block Captains for all of New Cassel. Several Block Captains joined the Leadership Team recognizing that children on their blocks were vulnerable as shown in the EDI maps.
- **Support for a Broader Regional Effort:** After hearing presentations on the EDI and the work of the Leadership Team, a group of Senators and Assembly members representing Westbury took the lead in getting 27 other legislators to support state legislation that would provide funds to Westbury and to other districts to begin a similar community-wide effort to improve school readiness using the EDI. The \$600,000 request made it through the Education Committee, but did not survive a full vote. It was clear that two things impressed the elected officials: the accountability that EDI provided, the strength of the Leadership Team and the way that interventions could be targeted to address very specific needs.

Philanthropists

Long Island is home to two large foundations and numerous small foundations offering grants of \$5,000 to \$10,000. EYI was founded by a group of five foundations, including United Way, that continued to support work in Westbury, allowing four EYI staff to spend time on these efforts.

- **Funded EYI:** Aside from the general operating money we got from local foundations, EYI pursued other grants for regional work where Westbury was named as a pilot site, e.g. Screen-Free Week, STEM curriculum.
- **Funded RSA:** The Rauch Foundation, one of EYI's founders, provided a grant of \$75,000 to establish the Ready, Set, Achieve! Fund.
- **Funded the Outdoor Classroom:** Five foundations provided funds for different elements of the outdoor classroom being built at Bunky Reid Park in New Cassel.

Intermediary Organizations

EYI was able to tap into a large group of regional or county human service organizations that have tentacles into local communities. Many of these groups participate on the EYI Advisory Group and eventually became regular attendees at Leadership Team meetings.

- **EYI Advisory Committee:** This group of 60 intermediary organizations helped select the EDI tool and heard ongoing feedback about progress in Westbury. Many Advisory Committee members became involved with the Westbury Leadership Team because they provide health and human services across the region. When groups were applying for funds, we requested that Westbury be a pilot site in their efforts. This happened with the Farmers' Markets that Sustainability LI was creating and professional development training for child care staff from the Child Care Councils.
- **Child Care Resource & Referral:** The Child Care Council of Nassau, one of the state's 35 child care resource and referral agencies, helped EYI reach local child care providers to offer professional development and help with participation in QUALITYstarsNY, the state's quality rating system, with extra funds from a local foundation.
- **Family Support LI:** This initiative at Molloy College encourages organizations in all sectors to consider the voices of families in their decision making. They offered training to district pre-k and kindergarten teachers and some training to the Leadership Team. Members of the Leadership Team have since presented to a class at Molloy College sharing their experiences using Asset-Based Community Development and participating in the Leadership Team to improve outcomes for young children.
- **Health and Welfare Council:** They have presented to the Leadership Team and used them to distribute information about Child Health Plus.
- **Make the Road:** The Leadership Team was tapped to help recruit community members to a meeting to learn about voting rights.

- **Roots of Migration:** The Hagedorn Foundation of LI funded a group of community leaders from across LI to visit Oaxaca, Mexico to learn about why Hispanic families are coming to LI and how they make the journey. An EYI Vice President went on the trip and then gave a series of presentations in Westbury and other parts of the Island to help people understand, and perhaps have empathy, for newly arrived immigrants.
- **Long Island Language Access Coalition (LILAC):** When the Town of North Hempstead wanted to host the meeting with community members to help design the outdoor classroom in Bunky Reid Park, which is their responsibility, they asked the Leadership Team meeting to make sure that Hispanic families were in attendance. All of the members worked hard and filled the room with 60 parents, mostly Hispanic. The Town then provided no translators for the meeting. LILAC reached out to the Leadership Team and worked with them to assure that future town-sponsored events include translators. This policy has since been adopted by the County Executive.
- **Docs for Tots:** This group used their interns to work on improving health access to families and encouraging more developmental screenings.
- **Family Place Libraries:** Originating on LI, there are about 250 Family Place Libraries across the country, with about 50 on LI that offer very specific programming for young children and their families. The national organization located on LI helped us work with the Family Place Library in Westbury.

Architects, Developers, Building Trades, and Associations

- **Landscape Architects:** EYI trained landscape architects across LI and one of them won the bid to design the outdoor classroom at Bunky Reid Park.

Unions

- CSEA, Civil Service Employees Association, has unionized large numbers of centers and family child care homes on LI. They have received state funds to provide professional development training to child care providers. CSEA and the LI chapter of the New York State Union of Teachers (NYSUT) had EYI make presentations about the work in Westbury and garnered their support for state funding for EDI that was being proposed.

Civic, Community, and Professional Organizations

- Block Captains helped distribute parenting information
- New Cassel Arts Council helped identify an artist to design the entry to the outdoor classroom

Law Enforcement

- Police officers serve on the Leadership Team and were instrumental in helping identify neighborhoods for mapping EDI data.
- Officers also provided input on safety of Bunky Reid Park and precautions needed to avoid theft.

The Role of EYI

With all the listening and planning, there are always incidents and observations that provide opportunities for teachable moments. For instance, we noticed that a Health Fair was distributing soda and candy as snacks. At school registration, the children were sitting on the floor watching *Sponge Bob* on the TV. There were no interpreters at public meetings. At the nationally-sponsored, National Night Out, the largest gathering of residents from all walks of life, speakers talked about how the murders and killings had to stop — not realizing they were traumatizing a group of children sitting in the audience. It's about taking notice of children, taking care to protect them — which comes first from valuing them. Hence, the tag line of EYI — Helping Communities Value Children.



THE KEY ROLES THAT EYI PLAYED:

Neutral convener	There were historical jealousies and bad feelings among some groups and EYI was trusted to bring everyone together.
Connector	Through EYI communications and at a wide variety of community meetings, EYI leaders were constantly suggesting who in the community could help further an idea.
Communicator	EYI provided the latest information and research on school readiness, information about what various groups in Westbury were doing and ideas for funding.
PR and Leadership Development for Members	EYI promoted Leadership Team members as participants on regional committees, speakers on panels and in college classrooms, and as key players in funded projects. EYI also developed local leadership by having Leadership Team members attend a national convening of EDI sites.
Fundraiser	Over four years, EYI committed over \$800,000 in funds to the efforts in Westbury and leveraged another \$250,000 in funds from the community devoted to school readiness efforts.
Spotlight for the Community	EYI recommended Westbury as a pilot site for other organizations. Access to the Leadership Team was crucial to Sustainable LI, which created a farmers' market in Westbury, in bringing programming to the Yes We Can Center, a new community center, and for selecting Westbury to receive support in participating in QualitystarsNY.
Advocate for parents	Throughout all of EYI's work with community groups and leaders in the public and private sectors, leaders included the voices of parents and encouraged them to listen to their constituents, positioning parents as essential players in designing programs aimed to help them.
Community Conscience	Probably the most important role that EYI played was to recognize and try to reverse social injustices. Though EYI focused on young children, so many of its attempts to improve positive outcomes were impeded by broader issues over which families have little control, e.g. housing, transportation, immigration policy. Core issues EYI brought to the attention of community leaders and worked with community leaders to address include:

SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

- **Racism:** Resentment had grown about their competition for services with the established population in the community. What was once a white-black struggle in many communities is now a black-brown conflict that spills over into all civic activities.
- **Lack of affordable housing:** Children are not starting kindergarten on time because of increased demands for documents substantiating residency in the district. When several families live in one dwelling, there are often sub-landlords who do not provide the paperwork needed to satisfy the school district.
- **Lack of representation:** There is no representation of Hispanic families in the decision-making bodies of the community, e.g. School Board, local government leadership, Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement District, civic associations, Library Board, PTA, and fire departments. A recent meeting on redistricting had no Hispanics represented except for two EYI staff.
- **Lack of literacy and language access:** There are relatively few places accessible to parents who want to learn English. In addition, meetings conducted by the Town of North Hempstead, School Board and other agencies do not provide translators which would allow for the full participation of non-English speaking residents.
- **Communications:** Schools use traditional backpacking and newspaper ads to let parents know about pre-k registration and miss many with limited English. EYI staff discovered this after realizing that among the 4,000 children for whom state funds were allocated but who were not served in 2007, 3,000 came from districts that didn't offer pre-k and 1,000 from districts that did. That means districts with pre-k were not reaching all children who could be served and those families — the neediest families — were not included in the pre-k lottery. One superintendent cancelled his pre-k program after reviewing the lottery list and realizing he had all the wealthy kids in the lottery. EYI now sends out reminders to school leaders about how to expand their recruitment efforts by reaching out to laundromats, churches, etc.
- **Cultural competence:** Well-meaning people often make assumptions about what families will do for their children. "We can't have a bake sale because children won't have the money to buy anything." At the book fair, they were unaware of the lack of diversity among the faces of children in the books they ordered. The unwillingness of some people to embrace the strengths of a minority group are born from their resentments of their being here. That's why the presentations on the Roots of Migration were so powerful.

WESTBURY EARLY LEARNING LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ximena Aravena

St. Brigid's Catholic Church
Outreach

Gloria Avalos

NuCare Westbury Health Center

Jan Barbieri

Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc.
Executive Director

Nancy Barreno

Nassau County Legislature
Legislative Aide

Laura A. Bauer

THE LIFE
Site Administrator

Joan Boes

Deputy Mayor Westbury
Ted Blach (clerk)

Robin Bolling

NAACP President

Robin Brenker, RN

Westbury Public Schools
Dryden Street School Nurse

April Brown Lake

Yes We Can! Community
Center Director

Dr. Christine Brown-Williamson

NuCare Westbury Health Center
Clinical Director

Grace Bryant

Westbury United Methodist Church

Eudes S. Budhai

Westbury Public Schools
Interim Assistant Superintendent:
Curriculum, Instruction, and
Personnel

Richard Burton

Town of North Hempstead
Legislative Aid

Sheila Bush

Parent Child Home Program

Siela Bynoe

Nassau County Legislature
Legislator — District 2

Michele Cacioppo

Sir Speedy / Westbury Chamber
Vice President

Tracy Caines

National Association of Mothers
Centers / Parent

Mary Cameron

Uniondale Early Childhood Center
Executive Director

Rudy Cano

Fidelis
Outreach Specialist

Dr. Celestin

NuCare Westbury Health Center
Pediatrician

Alexandra Centeno

State Farm Insurance

Yanira Chacon-Lopez

St. Brigid's Casa Mary Johanna

Miriam Cina

Westbury Public Schools
Dryden Street School

Joy Connolly

Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc.
Director of Education Program
Services

Mary Costagliola

Parent Child Home Program /
Nassau BOCES

Angeles Davila Torres

Nassau County Perinatal Services
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Yari DeLeon

Girl Scouts of Nassau County, Inc.
Community Initiatives Manager

Biena Depeña

Westbury Language Center
Long Island Language Access
Coalition

Novella Dortch-Smith

Westbury Head Start
Director

Joan Echausse

St. Brigid's Catholic Church
Outreach

Edna Eiber

Eiber Translations / JCRC

Sgt. Jeiver Espinosa

Nassau County Police Department
Community Relations

Emily Farrell

Westbury Memorial Public Library
Children's Librarian

Dr. Rosaline Felix

Westbury Public Schools
Creole Translator

Marianna Ferrantelli

Tender Loving Daycare Center
Director

Jan Figueira

Girl Scouts of Nassau County, Inc.
MVP Director

Mateo Flores

Economic Opportunity Commission
Program Director

Dr. Dana Friedman

The Early Years Institute
President

Frank Frisone

TD Bank/Westbury Chamber
Store Manager/President

Patricia Gargallo

NuCare Westbury Health Center

Carolyn Germany

North Shore Child & Family
Guidance

Patrice Gervais

Westbury Rotary

Marjory Giordani

Valley National Bank
Assistant Vice President

Dora Guerra

ABC Three Sons Daycare, Corp.
Group Family Provider

Marie Guilfu

Park Ave PTA President

Vanessa Greene

Global Arts/Media
CEO/President

Pamela Tunnell Hall

KMC Academy
Director

Martine Hackett

Hofstra
Professor

Barbara Hershman

Westbury Friends School
Interim Head of School

Elizabeth Hunt

Dryden Street PTA President

Dr. Irene Betty Hylton

Westbury/New Cassel Partnership
Co-chair of Advisory Council

Shakirah Idris

Islamic Center of LI

Michael Jackson

Westbury Recreation Center
Director

Paulina Janssen-Mesloh

The LIFE Church
ESL Program Director

Dr. Samarth Joseph

Espoir
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10. The Playing Field: Ongoing Critical Issues

It is encouraging that more and more communities across the country are demonstrating that well-planned and inclusive collaborative action can lead to dramatic increases in school readiness. Yet this progress is being made in spite of a policy landscape or playing field that hinders local work and begs for continued evolution of public policies that support school readiness increases. These interrelated issues include:

Funding

Many federal, state, and local funds used in school readiness efforts come from a wide variety of public (government) and private (foundation and individual) sources, which all have their own histories, funding requirements, eligibility, and administrative rules and processes. And none of these resources, alone or together, are sufficient to serve all eligible children and families. For example, nationally, Head Start only has funding to enroll 42% of eligible children and every state has long waiting lists for subsidized child care for parents in the workforce.

This lack of sufficient funding also affects the resources communities have to promote equity and quality across early childhood settings.

Equity

Racial equity and social justice are critical and complicated issues in school readiness. Recent studies show that early childhood services are increasingly segregated, with children of color living in communities affected by pervasive poverty receiving lower-quality programs than children living in higher-income areas. Yet the picture is more complex.

In some communities, young children from the lowest income families who are able to attend Head Start may receive high quality services because Head Start provides more resources for monitoring and improving program quality and includes more family support services such as home visiting than community-based programs can afford. At the same time, Head Start has long waiting lists and only enrolls a fraction of eligible children.

In many communities, middle class families have the biggest challenge if they earn too much to qualify for Head Start but not enough to afford tuition at the highest quality programs, or high quality before- and after-care for part-time school readiness and pre-kindergarten programs.

Program Quality, Professional Development, and Compensation

States that have invested in improving early childhood program quality by providing resources and incentives for programs to improve have seen real progress in recent years.

For example, Pennsylvania created Keystone STARS, a system that offers professional development to early childhood teachers and program administrators tied to increases in program and individual compensation. As programs increase quality they receive a quality rating that is advertised to families, giving families more information about the choices they are making for their children.

Keystone STARS is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning to improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania.

The Keystone STARS Performance Standards provide the foundation for the program. The Performance Standards are grouped into four levels. Each level builds on the previous level and utilizes research-based best practices to promote quality early learning environments and positive child outcomes. The standards address staff qualifications and professional development, the early learning program, partnerships with family and community, and leadership and management.

Approximately one-third (35%) of Pennsylvania's children under age five participate in publicly-funded quality early education programs such as Early Intervention, Head Start, Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and home visiting programs. General progress on school readiness initiatives impacted by STARS can be found here: <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/ELinPA/Results%20fact%20sheet%20final%204-30-15.pdf>.

All states in the country now have some form of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) as a way to tackle these interrelated issues, yet no state has yet fully funded these efforts statewide.

Turf

Sadly, because school readiness and early childhood programs and services have been underfunded for decades, a *culture of the un-empowered* has often evolved among early childhood program leaders. This often shows itself as turf-driven behavior with some leaders unable to see how sharing ideas or resources can lead to more for everyone.

The best antidote to this kind of attitude or behavior is to keep the collective focus on the well-being of children and families, rather than on serving the service providers. This is not to say that service provider perspectives are not important, but rather that unifying efforts around a shared greater purpose can often help players transcend initial fears and self-interested concerns.

Staffing Collective Impact Efforts

For the past four decades at least, funding for community-led mobilizing to solve community challenges has steadily decreased. At the same time, realization that local, inclusive collective action is often the most effective way to re-form communities and systems in ways that work in the 21st century has steadily increased.

Because these local efforts are built on webs of relationships and activity that require ongoing choreography, communication, measurement, leadership, and other elements essential to the backbone functions, they need to be staffed. And they need to be staffed with enough people who can support the diverse relationships and activities needed to achieve results.

Yet few public or private funders or institutions of higher education are investing in preparing and supporting professionals for this work. Current collective impact school readiness initiatives across the country are consistently understaffed and remain functional only because passionate professionals are willing to work too many overtime hours for too little compensation.

Infants and Toddlers

We know that the first three years are a time of critical physical, brain, and language development. While high quality center-based infant and toddler care is sometimes available, it is usually extremely expensive to provide and to use. This is because good quality infant and toddler care requires extra staff to nurture, teach, and care for each baby.

Many families prefer their babies be with family until they are 3 years old, when they want their children to go to center based programs to learn to get along with other children and get ready for school. Some lucky families are able to find and afford licensed family child care provided by a professional to a small number of children in his or her home.

This has led to many states and communities providing information and community-based supports to *family, friend and neighbor* (FFN) caregivers to help them promote positive development and school readiness. Typically, two-thirds of these caregivers are grandparents and about 10% eventually want to go on to be licensed family child care home professionals.

Experts and researchers agree that if FFN providers have the Strengthening Families protective factors, they will provide appropriate care. When planning for such efforts, it is also important to know when care is being provided, which may impact the kinds of information and support caregivers need. For example, if a grandmother is providing overnight care, she needs safety information, but may not need to learn a host of early development activities. And if she is caring for a child in a part-time program (which could be Head Start or half-day kindergarten) or before and after school, she may need other types of information and support. As always, it is important to find out from the target audience and what they need and desire. And as always, the best way to find that out is to talk with and involve them in the design and evaluation of any program for infants and toddlers or targeted to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.



11. References and Resources

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Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child. (2015). *Key Concepts: Brain Architecture*. Retrieved from: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

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Snow, C. & Van Hemel, S. (2008) *Early Childhood Assessments: Why, What, and How*. Washington DC: National Research Council of the National Academies.

Resources

100 Black Men of America, Inc. serves as a beacon of leadership by utilizing their diverse talents to create environments where children are motivated to achieve, and to empower people to become self-sufficient shareholders in the economic and social fabric of communities. <http://www.100blackmen.org/>

AAP Bright Futures supports primary care practices (medical homes) in providing well-child and adolescent care according to *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. <https://brightfutures.aap.org/>

AARP is a membership organization leading positive social change and delivering value to people age 50 and over through information, advocacy, and service. <http://www.aarp.org/>

Ad Council identifies a select number of significant public issues and stimulates action on those issues through communications programs that make a measurable difference in our society. <http://www.adcouncil.org/Our-Campaigns>

Administration for Children and Families. (2011) *Putting the Pieces Together: Community Efforts to Support our Youngest Children 0-8*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

AFL-CIO: Two research reports show that unions are playing a big role in helping child care providers bring the highest level of care to the children and families they serve. Another study calls for more effective public investment in early childhood education. <http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Community-Services/Early-Childhood-Unions-Take-Big-Role-in-Advancing-Good-Outcomes>

AFSCME is a union comprised of a diverse group of people who share a common commitment to public service. <http://www.afscme.org/>

Alliance for Early Success: The Alliance for Early Success is a catalyst for bringing state, national, and funding partners together to improve state policies for children, starting at birth and continuing through age eight. <http://earlysuccess.org/>

American Academy of Family Physicians: <http://www.aafp.org/patient-care/public-health/child-literacy.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics: Their report on the importance of play is a powerful statement about what's important during the early years. <http://www2.aap.org/pressroom/playfinal.pdf>

American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is the premier association for school superintendents and serves as the national voice for public education and district leadership on Capitol Hill. They have an advocacy campaign called "Educating the Total Child". <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=118>
<http://www.aasa.org/>

American Association of University Women (AAUW) has been empowering women as individuals and as a community since 1881. AAUW works as a national grassroots organization to improve the lives of millions of women and their families. <http://www.aauw.org/>

American Library Association provides association information, news, events, and advocacy resources for members, librarians, and library users. <http://www.ala.org/a>

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010) *Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states, and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation — grade-level reading by the end of third grade. <http://gradelevelreading.net/>

Arbor Day Foundation's Nature Explore: Working with advocates, Nature Explore transforms children's lives through research-based outdoor classroom design services, educator workshops, and natural products. <http://www.natureexplore.org/>

Association of Children’s Museums (ACM) supports children’s museums to be essential community assets by: establishing standards for professional practice; convening InterActivity conferences; collecting research and best practices; and initiating national and international partnerships with opportunities for local collaboration. <http://www.childrensmuseums.org/>

Attendance Works, Attendance Awareness Month has as its goal to mobilize schools and communities to promote the value of good attendance and to take concrete steps toward reducing chronic absenteeism. Resources for this campaign provide high-quality examples of how to promote important education-focused issues. <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/>

Born Learning at Publix is a partnership to promote early literacy in which shopping and learning can go hand in hand. Publix grocery stores teamed with Born Learning, a national campaign to give parents and caregivers information about early learning. Born Learning's mission is to help parents and caregivers turn everyday moments into learning experiences for their children. www.bornlearning.org

Born Learning Business Champion Toolkit was created by United Way to help state and local United Ways deploy business leaders already committed to early learning as public champions for early childhood education. It's part of United Way's ongoing business leader engagement work, which helps state and local United Ways identify, educate, persuade, and mobilize private sector volunteers around education, income and health. <https://www.bornlearning.org/campaign-central/mobilize/business-champion-toolkit>

Boston’s Thrive in Five: Thrive in 5 is Boston’s citywide movement to ensure children from families of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond. www.thrivein5boston.org

Boys and Girls Clubs’ programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. <http://www.bgca.org/>

Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation’s largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of active citizenship, and develops personal fitness. <http://www.scouting.org/>

Bruner, C., Stover-Wright, M., Tirmizi, S.N., and School Readiness, Language and Culture Working Group of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2007) *Village Building and School Readiness: Closing Opportunity Gaps in a Diverse Society*. Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) http://www.cfpciowa.org/documents/news/VBSR_28BD615D7FCCA.pdf.

Bruner, C. (2007) *School Readiness Resource Guide and Toolkit: Using Neighborhood Data to Spur Action*. Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network. <http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/School%20Readiness%20Toolkit.pdf>.

BUILD Initiative: The BUILD Initiative works with early childhood leaders within states and nationally to better prepare young children to thrive and succeed. <http://www.buildinitiative.org/Home.aspx>

Business Roundtable is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies working to promote sound public policy and a thriving U.S. economy. <http://businessroundtable.org/>

Center on the Developing Child. *Child Development Fact Sheet*. Retrieved June, 2014. http://developingchild.harvard.edu/download_file/-/VIEW/441/.

Center on the Developing Child: The Center on the Developing Child's diverse activities align around building an R&D (research and development) platform for science-based innovation, and transforming the policy and practice landscape that supports and even demands change. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) leads and engages its network of public and private agencies and partners to advance policies, best practices, and collaborative strategies that result in better outcomes for children, youth, and families who are vulnerable. <http://www.cwla.org/>

COFI (Chicago Parent Engagement Organization): For nearly 20 years, COFI has been building the leadership, power, and voice of low-income parents (primarily mothers and grandmothers) to improve opportunities for children and families. <http://www.cofionline.org/>

Committee for Economic Development (CED) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions to our nation's most critical issues. <https://www.ced.org/>

Communications Consortium Media Center: CCMC works to empower diverse and underrepresented communities to participate more fully in decisions about their lives. We believe collaboration among nonprofit groups sharing policy goals is an effective and efficient way to gain credibility and to influence public policy. <http://www.ccmc.org/>

Community Health Professionals' public-health campaigns can serve as models for school readiness campaigns. This guide highlights what has made public health campaigns successful. http://www.thecommunityguide.org/uses/programs_services.html

Corporation for National and Community Service's Faith-Based and Other Community Initiatives and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP) helps connect faith-based and other community organizations to CNCS, ensuring that these groups have the capacity, tools, and volunteer resources they need to help our communities maximize their full potential. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/communities/faith-based-and-other-community-initiatives-and-neighborhood>

Council for Professional Recognition (CDA) works to ensure that all professional early childhood educators and caregivers meet the developmental, emotional, and educational needs of our nation's youngest children. <http://www.cdacouncil.org/>

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship. CCSSO's promise is to lead chiefs and their organizations in this effort by focusing on those state-driven leverage points they are uniquely positioned to address and increasing their capacity to produce students ready to succeed as productive members of society. <http://www.ccsso.org/>

Council on Foundations is a nonprofit leadership association of grantmaking foundations and corporations. It provides the opportunity, leadership, and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance, and sustain their ability to advance the common good. <http://www.cof.org/>

Countdown to Kindergarten engages families, educators, and the community in a citywide effort to enhance early learning opportunities and to support the transition into kindergarten. <http://www.countdown-tokindergarten.org/>

Docs for Tots provides tools for early childhood practitioners on developmental screening. <http://docsfortots.org/>

Education Research Overview, United Way Worldwide: This Education Research Overview is designed to give state and local United Ways and their partners a more detailed picture of the research grounding our cradle-to-career education continuum. http://unway.3cdn.net/59533b0250e4d88684_y9m6iq5bs.pdf

Erikson Institute video teaches that “All It Takes is H.E.A.R.T.” (Hug, Engage, Ask, Read, Talk) to guide parents with the message that interaction between children and their parents is critically important to stimulating healthy brain development from infancy through adolescence. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpeBlz1ec18a>

Families and Work Institute is a nonprofit center dedicated to providing research for living in today’s changing workplace, changing family, and changing community. <http://www.familiesandwork.org/>

Family Place Libraries is a network of children’s librarians nationwide who believe that literacy begins at birth, and that libraries can help build healthy communities by nourishing healthy families. <http://www.family-placelibraries.org/>

Family Support Principles: Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorneys general and other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America. <http://www.fightcrime.org/>

Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grant-makers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. <http://foundationcenter.org/>

Frameworks Institute: FrameWorks Institute advances the nonprofit sector’s communications capacity by identifying, translating, and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing the public discourse about social problems. <http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>

Generations United’s mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. <http://www.gu.org/>

Girl Scouts of America focuses on building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. <http://www.girlscouts.org/>

Guide to Results-Based Planning and Facilitation: Achieving Results and Equity for Vulnerable Children and Youth: <http://resultsandequity.org/tools-and-resources/>

HRSA Community Health Workers Evidence-Based Models Toolbox offers background research and implementation options for community health workers — often referred to as the Promotora model. <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/pdf/chwtoolkit.pdf>

HRSA Maternal and Child Health: As the only governmental program responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of the entire population of women, infants, and children, the Title V program plays a critical role in coordination, capacity building, and quality oversight at the community and state levels. <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/>

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Growing Young Minds Report from the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, calls upon policymakers, practitioners, and parents to make full use of libraries and museums, and the skills and talents of those who work in them, to close knowledge and opportunity gaps and give all children a strong start in learning. <https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/growingyoungminds.pdf>

Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2013) *Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners*. Washington DC: www.ims.gov.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has a mission to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. IMLS provides leadership through research, policy development, and grant making.

KaBoom! Build a Playground Toolkit is designed to walk you through the process of how to create a community-build playspace. From fundraising to volunteer recruitment, the Toolkit can help you take your project from start to finish with over a decade's worth of KaBOOM! knowledge, advice, and best practices in building playspaces. https://kaboom.org/resources/build_playground_toolkit

League of Women Voters is a citizens' organization that has fought since 1920 to improve the government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. <http://lwv.org/>

Lions Club International empowers volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace, and promote international understanding. <http://www.lionsclubs.org/>

Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity (see Fairfax County and others working on B-8 Equity policies) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. <http://racialequityalliance.org/>

Local YWCA/YMCA: www.ymca.net www.ywca.org

Local, regional, or statewide ecumenical councils and groups.

Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education (2013) includes two community examples of how the use of indicators supported identifying and addressing school readiness needs. <http://www.fsg.org/publications/markers-matter>

Mind in the Making Essential Life Skills: The seven essential life skills every child needs in a series of videos and trainings. <http://www.mindinthemaking.org/7-essential-skills/>

Ms. Foundation for Women has a mission to build women's collective power to realize a nation of justice for all. <http://forwomen.org/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) promotes high quality learning for all children, birth to age 8, by connecting policy, practice, and research. www.naeyc.org

National Association of Attorneys General fosters interstate cooperation on legal and law enforcement issues, conducts policy research and analysis of issues, conducts trainings, and facilitates communication between the states' chief legal officers and all levels of government. <http://www.naag.org/>

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Report for Elementary Principals on Partnering to Promote School Readiness: In 2010 convened a task force of leading researchers, advocates, policymakers and practitioners to examine how to promote efforts to provide high quality learning experiences for the youngest children. This report details those efforts. <http://www.naesp.org/transforming-early-childhood-education-pre-k-grade-3>

National Association of PTAs: National PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. <http://www.pta.org/>

National Association of School Superintendents: Great school systems are the result of great leadership. NASS ensures successful school systems by advancing superintendent achievement. <http://nass.us/~schools/>

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. <https://www.socialworkers.org/>

National Association for Child Care (NAFCC) is dedicated to promoting quality child care by strengthening the profession of family child care. <http://www.nafcc.org/>

National Center for Children in Poverty: New understanding of how the quality of various early childhood settings affects child outcomes has led to increased attention regarding quality at the state and federal levels and prompted policymakers, researchers, and parents to ask more careful questions about the quality of care across settings, including FFN care. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1010.html

National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. <http://www.ncjw.org/>

National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) has a mission is to lead, develop, and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities. <http://ncnw.org/>

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA is a leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/>

National Education Goals Panel. (ND) *Reconsidering Children's Early Development and Learning: Toward Common Views and Vocabulary.* Retrieved June, 2014. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED3915769>.

National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) educates and recognizes home economics Extension professionals who improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. <http://www.neafcs.org/>

National Fund for Workforce Solutions highlights several workforce partnerships in which organized labor has played a significant role. It demonstrates why such a role should be encouraged within, and beyond, traditionally unionized industries, and suggests how policymakers and practitioners can support an expansion of that role for unions. http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/NFWS_UnionsAsPartners_111110.pdf

National Governors Association (NGA) is where governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy and develop innovative solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism. <http://www.nga.org/>

National Head Start Association (NHTA) is the voice for more than 1 million children, 200,000 staff, and 1,600 Head Start grantees in the United States and works for policy changes that ensure all at-risk children have access to the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family, and the community. <https://www.nhsa.org/>

National Human Services Assembly (NHSA) focuses on shaping public dialogue, increasing the business practices of nonprofits, and building capacity for the human services sector. NHSA's priority is to strengthen collaborative practice and policy that promote equality of opportunity and upward mobility for all. <http://www.nassembly.org/>

National Human Services Departments of various denominations: (e.g. Catholic Charities, etc.).

National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. <http://www.nlc.org/>

National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Families, and Communities: The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC), helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families>

National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. (ND) *Early Childhood Needs and Resources Community Assessment Tool*. Washington, DC: National League of Cities. www.nlc.org/iyef.

National Organization for Women is the grassroots arm of the women's movement, the National Organization for Women is dedicated to its multi-issue and multi-strategy approach to women's rights. <http://www.now.org/>

National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. <http://www.nps.gov/kids/>

National Recreation and Park Association: The leading non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks, recreation, and conservation. <http://www.nrpa.org/>

National Results and Equity Collaborative: NREC is a newly formed organization and approach to accelerating positive and equitable results for children, youth, families, and communities through the U.S. <http://resultsandequity.org>

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007) *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do*. Harvard University. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/the-science-of-early-childhood-development-closing-the-gap-between-what-we-know-and-what-we-do/>.

North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is a national membership organization dedicated to strengthening the field of environmental education and increasing the visibility and effectiveness of the profession. <http://www.naaee.net/>

North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) works to advance the fraternal movement through advocacy, collaboration, and education. These educational offerings reach a cross-section of stakeholders in the fraternal movement. <http://www.nicindy.org/>

Perry Preschool Study: HighScope Educational Research Foundation, HighScope Press: From 1962-1967, at ages 3 and 4, the subjects of the study were randomly divided into a program group that received a high quality preschool program based on HighScope’s participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program. <http://www.highscope.org/content.asp?contentid=219>

PICO National Network is a national network of faith-based community organizations working to create innovative solutions to problems facing urban, suburban, and rural communities. <http://www.piconetwork.org/>

Preskill, H., Jones, N., Tengue, A. (2013) *Markers that Matter: Success Indicators for Early Learning and Education*. FSG. <http://www.fsg.org/publications/markers-matter>

Raising Readers provides tips and resources for healthcare providers to use during well-child visits. http://www.raisingreaders.org/healthcare_providers/

Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based nonprofit organization of medical providers who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by integrating children’s books and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud into well-child visits. <http://www.reachoutandread.org/>

ReadyNation is the preeminent business leader organization working to strengthen business through better policies for children and youth. <http://www.readynation.org/>

Rhode Island Kids Count. (2005) *Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative*. www.gettingready.org.

Rotary International consists of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, and community leaders who come together to create positive, lasting change in our communities and around the world. <https://www.rotary.org/>

San Antonio Family-Community Partnership: <https://vimeo.com/102525024> Password: sanantonio (all lowercase).

School Readiness Resource Guide and Toolkit: Using Neighborhood Data to Spur Action: <http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/School%20Readiness%20Toolkit.pdf>

Senior Corps connects today’s 55+ with the people and organizations that need them most. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>

Sierra Club: The nation’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization — with more than two million members and supporters. <http://www.sierraclub.org/>

Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>

Student United Way develops passionate student leaders who are committed to improving lives and strengthening communities. <http://www.unitedway.org/get-involved/groups/student>

Teachers Unions, such as AFT and NEA: A growing number of child care providers have become unionized. Their unions are successful in raising dollars for professional development for their members. <http://www.aft.org/> <http://nea.org>

Text4Baby is the first mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health through text messaging. <https://partners.text4baby.org/>

The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. Has local Junior Leagues that are educational and charitable women’s organizations aimed at improving their communities through volunteerism and building their members’ civic leadership skills through training. <https://www.ajli.org/>

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Results Scorecard:

<https://app.resultsscorecard.com/Scorecard/Embed/559>

The Children’s Campaign: The Children’s Campaign exists to persuade policy makers, citizens, and advocates to adopt proven strategies that lead to positive outcomes for Florida’s children.

<http://iamforkids.org/our-5-promises-to-children/promise-3-child-care-and-early-learning>

The Conference Board is a global, independent business membership and research association working in the public interest. <https://www.conference-board.org/>

The Early Childhood Funders’ Collaborative (ECFC) is an affiliation of individuals who serve as staff at foundations or corporate giving programs that have substantial grantmaking portfolios in early childhood care and education. ECFC was formed by grantmakers to provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, and strategic grant making, and it sponsors the **BUILD Initiative**. www.buildinitiative.org
www.ecfc.org

The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. UAW-represented workplaces range from multinational corporations, small manufacturers and state and local governments to colleges and universities, hospitals and private non-profit organizations. <http://uaw.org/>

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting supports pregnant women and families and helps at-risk parents of children from birth to kindergarten entry tap the resources and hone the skills they need to raise children who are physically, socially and emotionally healthy, and ready to learn.

<http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/>

The Nature Conservancy offers programs to engage youth in the wild world of nature that sustains us all.

<http://www.nature.org/about-us/youth/index.htm>

The New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) helps professionals — and the parents and primary caregivers of children whom they serve — obtain the skills, tools and support needed to raise healthy, nurtured children. <http://nyspep.org/>

The Results and Equity Collaborative is a resource that identifies core results and indicators that communities can use to align multiple initiatives. <http://resultsandequity.org>

U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world’s largest business organization representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions. <https://www.uschamber.com/>

U.S. Office of Personnel Management Guide for Establishing a Federal Nursing Mother’s Program defines both the Affordable Care Act legislation in reference to breast feeding, and provides guidance for high quality implementation of programs. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/reference-materials/nursing-mother-guide.pdf>

United Way Born Learning Trails. In partnership with local United Ways, Born Learning Trails are valuable community resources for early childhood learning and offer opportunities for visibility and volunteer engagement. These fun, physical learning activities are designed for parents or caregivers to play with young children in both outdoor and indoor settings (permanent or mobile styles). Connect with your local United Way to find out about trail installation. <http://www.unitedway.org/find-your-united-way>

United Way focuses on cradle-to-career education strategies that provide a firm foundation at an early age and continue to help develop our children into successful adults who can contribute to their communities. www.unitedway.org

United Way Outcomes Focused Strategic Planning Guide: Outcome-focused strategic planning addresses the challenges of defining, influencing, and measuring community-level results. <http://studio.unitedway.org/CILresources08/files/community%20outcomes/Outcome-focused%20planning%20for%20Community%20mob.pdf>

United Way. (2011) Education Research Overview. Accessed online June 3: http://unway.3cdn.net/59533b0250e4d88684_y9m6iq5bs.pdf

Women’s Funding Network. With more than 100 women’s funds and foundations engaged, Women’s Funding Network is the largest philanthropic network in the world devoted to women and girls. <http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/>

Zero to Three: A community planning guide for home visiting that will take you through key elements of program planning, enable you to customize your approach to your community’s unique and evolving needs, and align work at the local level with state efforts. <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/home-visiting-community-planning-tool-fillable-pdf.pdf>



About the Authors

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Dana Friedman is a nationally-recognized researcher and policy analyst for children, family and women's issues. She has worked for several national organizations and served as a consultant to major corporations, government agencies and foundations. Before founding

The Early Years Institute,

Dana was Senior Vice President at Bright Horizons Family Solutions where she led the firm's work/life consulting practice; Co-Founder and Co-President of the Families and Work Institute (FWI), a national, non-profit research firm; and a Senior Research Associate at The Conference Board, where she created the Work and Family Information Center in 1983. She began her career in Washington, D.C. where she was a lobbyist for the Day Care Council of America and the Coalition for Children and Youth. Dana is published widely and was the author of several publications including "The Juggling Act," a monthly column in Working Mother from 1990-1997. She has written articles for Harvard Business Review, Journal of Philanthropy, and Across the Board. Dana serves on the Governor's New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council and is Co-President of the Board of the Women's Fund of Long Island. She has degrees in child development from Cornell (B.S.) and University of Maryland (M.A.), and in organizational behavior from Harvard University (Ed.D.). Her strongest credentials are her three daughters.

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Nina Sazer O'Donnell has a diverse background in early childhood policy and practice, philanthropy, communications, community mobilization, early childhood system building and public engagement and outreach at the local, state and national levels and provides coaching, connections and advice to communities, organizations and leaders throughout the world.

She served as National United Way Success By 6 Director and Vice President of Education at United Way Worldwide, as VP of Child, Family and Community Programs at Families and Work Institute (FWI) and has worked with federal, state and local governments and foundations in a variety of roles.

She also served as president of the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children; founded and directed a nonprofit child care center in Vermont; directed a New Hampshire bicentennial child advocacy and community awareness campaign; wrote and managed a national public comment process for federal child care rules; and staffed The White House Conference on Families. She raised funds and played cello for the Pickle Family Circus; directed western regional community education activities for Children's Television Workshop; directed a Los Angeles United Way school-age child care project; administered a nonprofit board training center; and served as a program officer and communications director at the California Community Foundation. In addition, Ms. Sazer O'Donnell, a grandmother of 7, authored a preschool counting book; and edited a book on pain-free cello playing. She is fluent in English and Spanish.

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The School Readiness Playbook

A GUIDE FOR
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

