



Blueprint for *Action*:

Implementing the Early Childhood Agenda in Connecticut

<i>Part I</i>	—	School Readiness
<i>Part II</i>	—	High-Quality Preschool
<i>Part III</i>	—	Family Support
<i>Part IV</i>	—	Getting Started

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Preface

It is increasingly clear that children's future school success depends on the care and education they receive before they arrive at the schoolhouse door. Too many children come to school without quality preschool experiences — experiences that provide the foundation for future learning and greatly influence school performance. In order to improve children's readiness for school, schools themselves must take on a new role in the lives of young children and their families before children reach kindergarten age. First, schools must ensure that all 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children have access to preschool programs that provide quality care and education. Second, since parents have the primary responsibility for and the greatest influence on their children's development, they need to be supported in their nurturing and parent-as-teacher roles. Finally, attention must be given to the adequacy of children's nutrition and health care, including immunizations.

Schools must assume a lead role in assuring the availability of programs that deliver critical services to children before they come to school; but schools do not do it alone. Families, communities and schools all have a part to play. Collaboration among these agents is a critical component of school readiness. The formation of school readiness councils can be the key to coordinating and implementing a plan to provide comprehensive programs and services to meet the needs of children and families in local communities. School readiness councils are comprised of parents, early care and education professionals, school administrators, business leaders, and others who have an interest in children's preparation for school.

For many years, the State Department of Education has been committed to school and community-based preschool education. Section 10-4 of the Connecticut General Statutes gives the State Board of Education supervision and control of the educational interests of the state which explicitly includes preschool education. Programs supported by the Department of Education include child nutrition programs, Family Resource Centers, Young Parents Programs, Even Start Programs, preschool special education services and funding to supplement Head Start. A significant milestone was reached in 1992 when the Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services was created within the Department of Education. This action reinforced the message that early childhood is an important part of the continuum of children's educational services as well as the Department's responsibility. The Bureau provides funding, training and technical assistance, curriculum, program development and monitoring of early childhood, family support and child nutrition programs. Subsequent to the Board establishing the Bureau, the State Board of Education adopted the Position Statement on Early Childhood Education Programs and Services in May 1994 and revised it in March 1997.

In May 1996, the State Department of Education presented *The Early Childhood Agenda in Connecticut* to the State Board of Education. This report provided an analysis of the programs and support services of the Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services, outlined the issues of concern in the field of early childhood education and provided recommendations for the Department's and field's future work. This

companion document, *Blueprint for Action: Implementing the Early Childhood Agenda in Connecticut*, responds to the actions recommended at the end of *The Agenda*. These actions were offered in response to the following key issues identified in *The Agenda*: (1) an increased number of children are starting school without the requisite skills necessary to succeed; (2) an increased number of families need financial assistance and support services in order to care for and educate their young children; (3) an increased need for high quality, developmentally appropriate, affordable, accessible, group care and educational programs for preschool children; and (4) the need to coordinate the public and private child care and school system to ensure that learning is achieved at every level and in every participating setting.

Scope of this Document

This *Blueprint for Action* is intended to assist Connecticut schools in implementing the 13 recommendations made in the *Early Childhood Agenda in Connecticut*. Each recommendation has been phrased in the form of an action statement and is followed by a rationale, background information, recommended strategies, references and resources. Recommended strategies are listed under the heading “What Can Schools Do?” and together constitute the critical component of this document. It should be noted that no school should be expected to undertake every activity. Rather, schools should take stock of their current status and identify those activities that can take them “to the next level” of service to young children and families.

Several underlying principles, or “themes,” were intentionally woven through each section of the *Blueprint for Action*. A predominant theme is that of **partnerships**. Families, communities and schools are natural partners in shaping the experiences that young children have before they enter school and during their school careers. Because schools have the major responsibility for shaping the educational lives of young children, this document places the responsibility on schools to create and maintain strong relationships with all families and their communities. The school has the authority, organization and resources to get a partnership off the ground. Once started, however, the school does not “own” the partnership but must work to empower parents and community members to be equal partners.

Another theme throughout the document is **family support**. Although the term “family” support may be new or unclear to many early childhood educators, the concept is familiar. This document uses family support with reference to the following definition:

Family support is a set of beliefs and an approach to strengthening and empowering all families and communities. Family support beliefs guide and shape all health, education and human service systems and other public and private organizations to be more proactive, preventive, community-based, culturally competent, flexible, family focused, strength-based and comprehensive (draft definition, Connecticut STATES Initiative, 1996).

Early childhood programs cannot be designed without considering families’ needs. Increasingly, parents of all income levels are employed or attending training programs

outside the home. Children in many families can no longer take advantage of part-day preschool or kindergarten programs unless the educational program is combined with full-day child care services. Many programs that seek to involve parents in children's activities are finding that fewer and fewer parents are free to participate during the day or evening. In order to serve young children within a changing family context, this document urges early childhood programs to adopt a family support philosophy. Programs and practices rooted in family support involve close collaboration between parents and staff, offer a range of activities based upon parents' needs and schedules and maintain an organized network of referrals to other community resources.

The subject of **inclusion** of *all* children in the regular education programs is also highlighted through each section of the Blueprint. The best early childhood programs use strategies that meet the needs of all young children and all learning styles. This document promotes inclusion of all children in every early childhood setting without regard to ethnicity, gender, disability or economic circumstances. When early childhood environments are inclusive, research has demonstrated improved student outcomes for special populations as well as regular education students. Similarly, the families of special populations should be included in every aspect of the early childhood program.

The most important theme around which this document is organized is **quality**. The other themes of school-family partnerships, family support and inclusion, although important components of early childhood programs, are potentially insignificant without the foundation of a high-quality educational program for young children. Research has demonstrated that high-quality services are necessary to generate the long-term benefits associated with the most successful early childhood programs. References to quality not only address classroom factors such as class size, staff-to-child ratios and curriculum, but also address the important role of supervision and training for early childhood staff and professionalism for the field as a whole. This document promotes accreditation of early childhood programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and other accrediting agencies recognized by the State Board of Education as hallmarks of high quality. Accredited programs are measured against the most comprehensive criteria available for defining quality and include examples of the best practice in early childhood education.

Overview of the Contents

The *Blueprint for Action* is divided into three main sections. Part I focuses on school readiness and includes the topics of school readiness councils and information and data collection related to school readiness. Part II introduces topics related to high-quality preschool programs. Topics in this section include program design, inclusion of children with special needs, training and professional responsibilities of the early childhood field. Part III discusses important supporting components of early childhood programs. This section focuses on three topics: supporting parents during pregnancy and the early years, parenting education in the middle and high school curriculum and family literacy. Bibliographic references as well as resources, such as organizations, clearinghouses, state agencies and local programs are presented at the end of each topic.

Shared Responsibility

The *Blueprint for Action* is built on the belief that young children's and families' needs can be met better through interagency coordination of resources not only at the local level, but also at the state level. To actualize this belief requires a dynamic model for coordinating state and local resources to support high-quality early childhood and family support programs.

Success at the local level requires schools, families and communities to join forces. Local agencies must develop the capacity to negotiate with other agencies and to integrate delivery of education and support services through strategies such as interagency agreements, co-training of staff and co-location of services.

State-level agencies, including the State Department of Education, have an important role to play in supporting young children and families. State agencies must be active partners with local agencies and provide leadership, disseminate information regarding successful practices, develop peer assistance networks, create incentives to encourage local programs to work collaboratively in delivering services and provide training and technical assistance for local program staff. In addition, coordination at the state level is necessary to make lasting change. State-level agencies must create mechanisms to promote ongoing communication across agencies for the purpose of identifying resources, program requirements, agency goals and needs.

Providing high-quality education and support for *all* children and families is a tall order for local and state partners, both. The good news is that no group must shoulder the burden alone. The State Department of Education looks forward to working and learning with a strong, dynamic and broad-based partnership devoted to the success of Connecticut's young children and families.

Position Statement on Preschool Services and Programs

(Adopted March 5, 1997)

The State Board of Education believes that quality early childhood education is essential to the future success of each student and plays a significant role in Connecticut's public school reform efforts including the focus on high expectations and demonstrated performance. The Board envisions the development and expansion of preschool programs and encourages the development of comprehensive services to young children and their families. The Board intends to foster a changed role for local and regional school boards within the context of an overall community effort, effecting quality early education for young children and providing direct assistance to communities where state support is needed to implement new programs and improve existing programs.

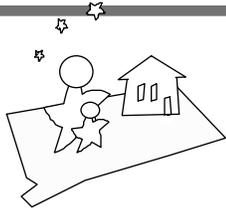
The development of successful students depends upon quality interactions among many individuals and institutions being guided by ideas, research, values and actions directed towards the best interest of the child. In the preschool through kindergarten years, families enlist child caregivers, health and social service agencies, community-based organizations, recreational specialists, libraries and schools, among others, to assist in meeting the comprehensive needs of childhood. The State Board views the local or regional school board as a leader in a community's collaborative response to early childhood needs, not necessarily as the operator of programs, but as the coordinator and facilitator of the many complementary services.

To foster the maximum development of children, the State Board of Education endeavors to sponsor programs and support activities that:

- ❖ provide opportunities to families to become full partners in the education of their children and help them reach their full potential as learners; foster the unique strengths of children and families and the development of competencies that build upon families' existing knowledge, culture, and beliefs;
- ❖ encourage coordination and collaboration at multiple levels by developing local capacity to work with other agencies in integrating the delivery of early education and family support services; developing dynamic partnerships between state and local agencies to share leadership and responsibility for developing and maintaining partnerships with families; and creating mechanisms to establish ongoing communication within the State Department of Education and collaborations among state agencies and organizations for the purpose of promoting school-family-community partnerships that support children's learning;

Continued from page ix, Position Statement

- ✧ support a program of instruction in the middle and high school grades that impact knowledge regarding parenting as an essential social function and teaches the developmental requirements of young children by integrating these issues in the appropriate curricular areas;
- ✧ provide quality child care and education programs with high quality standards in all settings, including preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, kindergartners and before- and after-school programs for preschool and kindergarten children, by ensuring the availability and equal access to such programs statewide; and ensuring qualified preschool practitioners;
- ✧ develop State Board of Education procedures for voluntary approval of preschool programs;
- ✧ promote the development and maintenance of a “school readiness council” in all communities that collaborates to assess the status of school readiness among 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children and coordinates and implements a plan to provide comprehensive programs and services to meet the needs of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children before they enter kindergarten;
- ✧ promote preschool education as a profession by training personnel in the skillful practice of early care and education which prepares children for formal school and guides families toward increasing their skills, knowledge and abilities to assist their children in reaching their potential;
- ✧ provide inclusion of all children in every setting where the individual child can benefit without regard to ethnicity, gender, disability or economic circumstance, and identify and provide services to each child with a disability from birth through 5 years old; and
- ✧ advocate and provide for basic childhood needs including health, nutrition, education, special education and social services in programs linked to schools—but not necessarily in schools — with school personnel providing professional leadership and with local education agencies participating in funding and accountability designs.



Part I: School Readiness

(1) School Readiness Councils

Action:

Assist in the establishment of school readiness councils.

Councils will encourage local coordination of early care and education to meet the educational needs of children and the schedules of working families; and make recommendations to LEAs, municipalities and other agencies regarding planning, policies, and allocation of community resources to support this objective. Readiness councils should be convened by the local school district.

School Readiness Councils

Rationale

The experiences that children have before they come to school are critical for their future school success. School readiness is the responsibility of the entire community, including the family and the school. Families and communities will be better able to meet the challenge of children's readiness for school if they join with schools to plan, design and evaluate a collective response to helping all children come to school ready to learn. School readiness councils, also called by other names such as early childhood councils, local early childhood task forces or committees, are recognized as powerful ways to organize the community around school readiness activities.

Background

The President of the United States and the National Governor's Association outlined six national educational goals at a summit meeting in February 1990. Goal 1 was: *By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.* The following are the objectives of Education Goal 1.

- ✧ *All children will have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.*
- ✧ *Every parent in the United States will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping such parent's preschool child learn, and parents will have access to the training and support parents need.*
- ✧ *Children will receive the nutrition, physical activity experiences, and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and to maintain the mental alertness necessary to be prepared to learn, and the number of low-birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.*

(National Education Goals Panel, 1995)

Part I: School Readiness

(1) School Readiness Councils *Continued*

One intensive study found evidence that quality preschool program participation had positive effects on adult crime, earnings, wealth, welfare dependence and commitment to marriage.

What Is School Readiness?

The National School Readiness Task Force of the National Association of State Boards of Education (1991) issued a report to encourage and guide public policy and community efforts to achieve Education Goal 1. In this report, the task force redefined school readiness to include the following elements:

- ✧ School readiness involves not only academic knowledge and skills, but also physical health, self-confidence, and social competence.
- ✧ School readiness is not determined solely by the abilities and capacities of young children. It is shaped and developed by people and environments. Further, “getting ready for school involves helping children in the context of families and improving programs in terms of the morale and skill of their staff members.” (p. 7).
- ✧ School readiness is not determined solely by the quality of early childhood programs. Readiness also depends on the expectations and capacities of teachers and elementary schools, including factors such as developmentally and culturally appropriate practice, class size, access to technology, and staff development.
- ✧ School readiness is also the responsibility of communities, because they have a stake in and an obligation to support families in the development of healthy young children.

(NASBE, 1991)

What are the Benefits of Preschool Programs?

Assuring that National Education Goal 1 is met for every child is important for the child, the family, the school, the community and for society. Significant lasting benefits of children’s participation in high-quality preschool programs have been documented in a number of research studies. Among the benefits are an increase in intellectual performance, fewer placements in special education, and a higher high school graduation rate. One intensive study found evidence that quality preschool program participation had positive effects on adult crime, earnings, wealth, welfare dependence and commitment to marriage. The “High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27” (Schweinhart, 1994) found that the program provided taxpayers a return on investment of \$7.16 on the dollar that was spent on preschool programs (Schweinhart, 1994).

What Is A School Readiness Council?

A school readiness council is a group of parents, early care and education professionals, business leaders, and others who have an interest in young children and are concerned about their education and care experiences during the preschool years and primary grades.

State legislation* mandates a state-level school readiness council. The mission of this council is outlined below. It may offer guidance to local school readiness councils in establishing their mission. Local councils need not be limited to the parameters imposed by the state legislation as indicated below.

Families and communities will be better able to meet the challenge of children's readiness for school if they join with schools to plan, design and evaluate a collective response to helping all children come to school ready to learn.

- ✧ Coordinate the development of a range of alternative programs to meet the early care and education needs of all children.
- ✧ Foster partnerships between school districts and private organizations offering early childhood education programs.
- ✧ Provide information and assistance to parents in selecting an appropriate early childhood education program.
- ✧ Work to ensure that early childhood education programs allow open enrollment for all children and allow families receiving benefits for such a program to choose a public or accredited private program.

** Section 26 of Public Act 95-226 as amended by Section 2 of Public Act 95-213—An Act Concerning School Readiness and Intradistrict Choice (adopted, 1996).*

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Build on existing task forces, early childhood councils, or related groups, if they exist in the community, to satisfy the task of assuring children's readiness for school.
- ✧ Orchestrate the development of and provide leadership and vision for school readiness councils.
- ✧ Participate actively on the school readiness council. Assign a management level staff person to this function.
- ✧ Determine appropriate local school board participation.
- ✧ Encourage school readiness council meetings to be held at community-based sites.
- ✧ Provide child care for school readiness council meetings, and other activities, to assure family participation.

Part I: School Readiness

(1) School Readiness Councils *Continued*

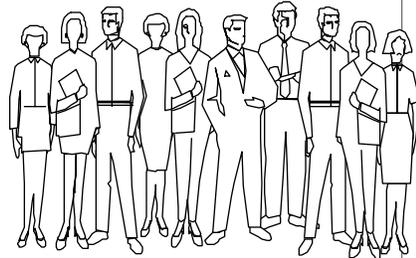
School Readiness Councils can facilitate ongoing communication among health, child care, social service, recreational and educational providers in the community regarding mutual roles and shared responsibilities around school readiness.

Continued from page 3, What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Collect and prepare relevant data for the school readiness council as needed.
- ✧ Write a report of the findings and recommendations of the school readiness council. Include these findings in the annual Strategic School Profile report for communitywide distribution.
- ✧ Communicate regularly with parents and community programs and agencies to plan and implement smooth transitions for children entering school and smooth transitions during the day.
- ✧ Share the responsibility for defining and evaluating school readiness in the community.
- ✧ Facilitate ongoing communication among health, child care, social service, recreational and educational providers in the community regarding mutual roles and shared responsibilities around school readiness.
- ✧ Develop and provide public awareness materials and conduct outreach activities regarding the expectations of children's school readiness.
- ✧ Ensure that the community has information about the Americans with Disabilities Act and the benefit of inclusive programs for young children.
- ✧ Determine correlations between school readiness indicators and future school success. This information will assist the district to evaluate and further develop school readiness strategies to better ensure children's school success.
- ✧ Seek out new funding and advocate for the redistribution of existing school and community funding streams to devote resources to the school readiness of preschool children.
- ✧ Implement effective and age appropriate curricula and practices in kindergarten classrooms to accommodate children at all developmental levels.

Who Should be on a School Readiness Council?

The composition of school readiness councils will vary from community to community. The following is a list of members who can be considered as participants in the council.



School Readiness Councils should include several parents whose children are 3 through 5 years of age, including parents of children with disabilities.

Potential Members of a School Readiness Council

- Several parents whose children are 3 through 5 years of age, including parents of children with disabilities
- School district personnel, including:
 - priority school district program coordinator/manager;
 - adult education director;
 - special education director;
 - early childhood education director; and
 - elementary school principal.
- Community Children’s Librarian
- Community Social Worker
- Head Start Director
- Representatives from the following organizations
 - ✓ community business alliance;
 - ✓ the municipality (for example, the mayor or first selectman, director of public works, administrator of public housing);
 - ✓ a Department of Social Services (DSS) state-sponsored child day-care center;
 - ✓ the Parks and Recreation Department;
 - ✓ local churches and synagogues;
 - ✓ a nonprofit community-based organization with a commitment to children and families such as the local Community Action Agency; and
 - ✓ the local and/or regional DSS office (to coordinate efforts with welfare reform).
- A community public health official
- A member of the local board of education
- A member of the local board of the United Way
- A member of a local foundation
- Members from community-based organizations such as the Lions Club
- A community relations/corporate giving staff person from business or industry
- Directors of family support programs such as Family Resource Centers and Even Start Programs
- Individuals representing special populations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCS), groups whose members speak languages other than English, and others
- Others representing efforts in the community that dovetail with the purposes of school readiness

Part I: School Readiness

(1) School Readiness Councils *Continued*

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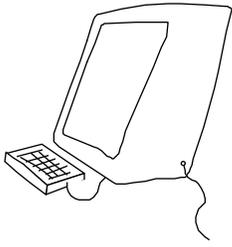
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Part I: School Readiness

(2) Information Sharing and Data Collection

Action:

Develop and support a database that collects data and promotes information sharing regarding school readiness, transition of preschool children and the needs of families relative to their role as first teachers.

Information Sharing and Data Collection

Rationale

Most preschool care and education programs are provided to children outside of the public school system. Therefore, comprehensive school readiness data are difficult to obtain or are nonexistent. The increasing expectation that schools be more accountable for school readiness requires that data systems be designed and implemented to assist in determining the current statewide status of each preschool-age cohort, as well as individual children's readiness for school. Information on children's experiences in preschool child care and education programs is particularly valuable to the school in preparation for children's entry into school.

Data and information sharing among families, preschool providers and the school can assist the child in a smooth transition to school which can positively impact on his or her future school success. Data can be used to inform the school regarding the appropriate curriculum for children entering kindergarten. Data can be used to measure growth in children's school readiness from year to year to evaluate local school readiness efforts.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Provide leadership for and actively participate in the community's school readiness council to design and implement the community's school readiness plan.
- ✧ Foster school-family partnerships before children come to school. This can include the child and family familiarizing themselves with the school building, its personnel and the values and practices of the school.
- ✧ Promote awareness among families regarding what they can do and what is expected of them to prepare children for school.
- ✧ Provide leadership regarding the design and implementation of a communitywide plan to make contact with all families, including home visits, during the years before children enter school. The purpose would be to give families support in their role as primary facilitators of their children's development.
- ✧ Meet with families at times that are convenient for them and conduct the meetings in the language that the family speaks.
- ✧ Collaborate with community child care and education

Schools can promote the development of quality useable data by developing strategies to obtain information about childrens' experiences and their work before they enter kindergarten.

...data collected can inform the school and community regarding what support is necessary to further assure that children have sufficient quality preschool experiences to maximize their school success.

- providers to determine expectations for children's readiness before they enter kindergarten. Enlist preschool providers' support to serve as a conduit for sharing kindergarten expectations with families.
- ✧ Develop strategies to obtain information about childrens' experiences and their work before they enter kindergarten. For example, collaborate with preschool teachers and child care professionals to develop a system of sharing information about children that can assist the school in preparing for the child and smoothing the transition to school. An example of information that can be useful is information derived from portfolios, checklists and reports that describe and demonstrate a child's preschool experiences.
 - ✧ Meet with families and preschool teachers and other personnel to plan an effective transition for all children enrolled in preschool programs, including children with special needs.
 - ✧ Plan and implement staff development among community and school-based preschools and kindergarten staff together. Assist in training preschool teachers to develop and assess student portfolios.
 - ✧ Encourage the use of the state's uniform kindergarten registration form (available in 1997) among local preschool programs and at kindergarten entry so that common district and statewide data can be collected. The data collected can inform the school and community regarding what support is necessary to further assure that children have sufficient quality preschool experiences to maximize their school success.
 - ✧ Determine what data at the state and local levels already exist relative to children's readiness for school and gather this information first. Develop a plan to obtain additional information needed to determine readiness. Examples of information that is needed to assess school readiness are: vaccination status of 3- and 4-year-olds; details about children's preschool experiences (e.g., type, number of hours, accredited program, public or private); books read to children at home; education level of parents; parent support activities, etc.
 - ✧ Determine correlations between school readiness indicators and future school success. This information will assist the district to evaluate and further develop school readiness strategies to better ensure children's school success.
 - ✧ Engage school and community in follow-up studies of children's progress to determine effectiveness of preschool programs.

Part I: School Readiness

(2) Information Sharing and Data Collection *Continued*

Bibliography

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Part I: School Readiness

(1) School Readiness Councils *Continued*

Resources

1. Region I Technical Assistance Center for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Edmund Muskie Institute of Public Affairs
University of Southern Maine
96 Falmouth Street
Portland, Maine 04130
phone: 207-780-4430
(also 1-800-949-4232 to be connected to the regional center serving your state)
Fax: 207-780-4417

This Center is funded to provide information, training, technical assistance related to implementation of the ADA.

2. National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-5786
1-800-424-2460

NAEYC is a professional organization that provides information and distributes publications and videos promoting quality early childhood programs and practices.

3. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801-489
1-800-583-4135

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system designed to provide users with ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature.

4. State Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)
Birth to Three System
460 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 418-6147

DMR can provide information related to the transition of children from the Birth to Three System to preschool programs and services including preschool special education and related services.

5. Infoline
United Way of Connecticut
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
1-800-203-1234

Infoline provides information regarding child care for children of all ages in Connecticut.

The Department of Social Services and its regional centers have information about child-care vouchers and state-supported child-care centers.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), is the best single source for statistics regarding all aspects of education and literacy.

Infoline is a telephone information and referral resource for all human service needs. Information about and referral to the Birth to Three System and child care for all ages is available by calling Infoline.

6. Department of Social Services
25 Sigourney Street
Hartford, CT 06106
phone: (860) 424-5325

The Department of Social Services and its regional centers have information about child care vouchers and state-supported child care centers.

7. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Education Information Branch
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N. W.
Washington, DC 20208-5641
phone: 1 (800) 424-1616

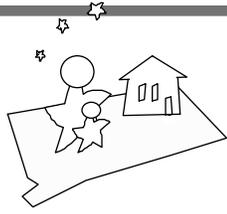
NCES, part of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), is the best single source for statistics regarding all aspects of education and literacy. NCES provides free products and services to educational researchers and state and local education agencies, including use of questionnaires developed for national surveys and information or tabulations using NCES data sets.

8. School readiness reports from Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven school districts. These reports describe demographics in each district and the planning process involved in the development of the local collaboration and the school readiness council. Contact persons are listed below.

Ms. Judy Hurle
Bridgeport Public Schools
Ben Franklin Education Center
389 Kossuth Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608
phone: (203) 576-7410
fax: (203) 576-8326

Ms. Deborah Watson
Hartford Public Schools
249 High Street
Hartford, CT 06103
phone: (860) 722-8705
fax: (860) 722-8753

Ms. Ruth Turner
New Haven Public Schools
54 Meadow Street
New Haven, CT 06519-1743
phone: (203) 946-8913
fax: (203) 946-7300



Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(1) Learning Expectations For Young Children

Action:

Disseminate to community-based and school-based child care and education programs a compilation of appropriate learning expectations (i.e., knowledge, skills and abilities) for children from preschool through Grade 3, which will also lay the foundation for mastery expectations at Grade 4. These learning expectations must take into consideration the developmental needs of both the age group and the individual child.

Learning Expectations For Young Children

Rationale

Administrators, teachers, parents and policy makers who make decisions about the education and care of young children must be knowledgeable about appropriate learning expectations for children in preschool through the primary grades. This knowledge is the basis upon which to design curriculum that provides a wide range of learning opportunities and experiences that will increase the probability of success for all children in the early childhood years.

Educators must obtain ongoing information from a variety of sources to assess children's acquisition of appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities. This will present a picture of children's achievement over time. Information gathered in this way can be coupled with information provided by tests given at specific points in time. Assessment information should be used to improve the curriculum, plan activities to meet the needs of children and provide feedback to parents.

Background

Teachers, parents and others who are responsible for the education of young children have the desire for children to be successful learners. When children are exposed to appropriate curriculum with appropriate learning expectations and experiences that build self-confidence and create a positive disposition for learning, they are capable of meeting the learning expectations and achieving success.

The body of theory and research on early childhood education supports curriculum that engages children in experiential ways of learning. Such a curriculum should be intellectually stimulating and allow children to extend their knowledge, skills and abilities to greater degrees of complexity, as they progress through various ages and stages of development.

In recent years there has been an increasing demand for a more rigorous skill-based curriculum for children in the early childhood years. Such a curriculum, when based on inappropriate higher expectations and inappropriate outcomes, causes more children to fail. The trend of escalating the

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(1) Learning Expectations For Young Children *Continued*

To encourage high quality preschool programs, schools can conduct various forums, e.g., parent meetings, workshops, early childhood councils, school readiness councils, home visits and conferences to inform parents, community child care and education providers, and the general public about appropriate expectations for children.

Continued from page 15, Background

curriculum with increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills for young children is often based on misconceptions about early learning.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Develop from existing resources of the State Department of Education, national, state and local early childhood organizations and research literature, lists of appropriate learning expectations for children of various ages and developmental levels.
- ✧ Review current research and curriculum of early childhood programs with administrators, teachers, parents, and early childhood experts, from school and community programs, to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching and classroom environments. Include in the review student learning expectations for their consistency with appropriate early childhood practices.
- ✧ Identify appropriate assessment measures that provide guidance on student expectations for the age range and developmental levels of children in preschool through the primary grades.
- ✧ Use various indicators including observational records from teachers, parent observation and children's portfolios to document children's progress in meeting expectations.
- ✧ Conduct various forums, e.g., parent meetings, workshops, early childhood councils, school readiness councils, home visits and conferences to inform parents, community child care and education providers, and the general public about appropriate expectations for children.
- ✧ Promote parental and child competencies by providing suggestions about activities for parents and children to work on together at home and engage parents in developing their own ideas for working with children. These activities may involve routine household tasks, e.g., shopping, cooking and washing.
- ✧ Hold family nights where parents can learn about appropriate activities and expectations for children. For example, family science nights.

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Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(1) Learning Expectations For Young Children *Continued*

Continued from page 17, Bibliography

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Resources

Connecticut State Department of Education Consultants
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 638-4204

See listing of consultants in Appendix A.

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(2) Programs for All Children Ages 3 to 5 and Their Families

Action:

Provide quality comprehensive and developmentally appropriate programs for all children ages 3 to 5 and their families.

Programs for All Children Ages 3 to 5 and Their Families

Rationale

There is a continuing rise in the need for early care and education programs for children ages 3 to 5 and their families. Economic and social pressures are compelling parents to enroll in training programs and to join the labor force, thereby causing more and more parents to work outside the home. These conditions have brought about a demand for early care and education programs for children who need continuous care, in full-day, year-round programs.

A quality preschool setting is nurturing, safe and encourages the curiosity of young children while stimulating their desire to learn. Quality preschool experiences provide maximum opportunities for children and families to gain essential skills, knowledge, capabilities and inclinations critical to later school success. Children in preschool programs distinguish and begin recognizing the different characteristics of objects by experimenting with them, grouping them in different ways and associating events with one another. They enjoy exposure to picture books, puppets, and stories that are read to them. The children discover things about the world. These experiences lead to the acquisition of valuable cognitive and social concepts that form the basis of later learning.

Connecticut studies support national data showing that children without quality preschool do less well in school than children with high-quality preschool experiences. Providing quality and developmentally appropriate programs requires multiple services for children. These include health and mental health services to support young children's social, physical and cognitive development. A quality comprehensive system incorporates family supports into the parent education programs.

Research has shown that quality child care and education can benefit young children, particularly, economically disadvantaged children (Nieman; R. H., and Gastright, J. F., 1981; Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., Weikart, D. P., et al. 1993; Barnett, W. S., 1995). Unfortunately, children who are most in need of preschool services are often from families who are least able to afford a quality program and are, therefore, at risk educationally. The participation rate in early childhood

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(2) Programs for All Children Ages 3 to 5 and Their Families *Continued*



A comprehensive support program expands child development to include relationships with parents, connections with community agencies, institutions, and other settings to provide early care and education for all children ages 3 to 5.

Continued from page 19, Rationale

programs is lower for children from low-income families than for other children (U. S. Department of Education, 1995). The consequences of young children not participating in a preschool experience may be more costly in later years of schooling.

The early childhood community working together in partnership and collaboration can jointly plan and advocate for ongoing, “seamless”, quality programs for young children from preschool to kindergarten, and throughout their school experience. A comprehensive support program expands child development to include relationships with parents, connections with community agencies, institutions, and other settings to provide early care and education for all children ages 3 to 5.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Join and actively participate in a local school readiness council. The principal, teachers, support service personnel and parents can serve on the council. Support the need for universal high-quality programs for all children.
- ✧ Develop strategies that stimulate and actively involve families in the early care and education of their children. For example, encourage families to use the familiar events, objects and routines of their daily lives as educational opportunities for their children. Activities such as describing objects, planning events and engaging in extended purposeful discussions contribute to the education families provide young children.
- ✧ Develop and expand comprehensive family support programs in school and community which include education, health, mental health, nutrition, social services and other services which actively involve parents while doing all that can be done to enrich the preschool readiness experiences for young children ages 3 to 5.
- ✧ Provide forums to engage parents of preschool children and staff in dialogue about the comprehensive needs of children, including, child development, health, nutrition, child care, school readiness, and specialized knowledge about disabilities. The forums provide opportunities for “parents as first teachers “ and partners in the development of their children, to express their expectations of the school and their children and

Schools can provide tools and guidance for families to monitor and record the progress and development of their own children.

Schools can insist that elementary school principals be actively involved in programs housed in their school and in community programs that send prospective kindergarten children to their school.

- the school to express its prospects of the children and families.
- ✧ Develop strategies for collaboration among parents, teachers and administrative team to provide informal networks in the community to foster a constant flow and connection of early childhood services for children. Continuity is required among home, school and community.
 - ✧ Collaborate with community services to offer families an opportunity for home visit support programs for young children before they formally enter elementary school.
 - ✧ Provide ongoing contact with preschool parents which may include sending invitations to parents for Open House observance; and inclusion in transition activities from preschool to kindergarten; meetings and other programs that will engage and acquaint them with services available within the school community.
 - ✧ Develop and make certain that environments respond to children's individual, cultural, and linguistic differences. Ensure equitable access and opportunities for young children with disabilities and their families.
 - ✧ Provide tools and guidance for families to monitor and record the progress and development of their own children.
 - ✧ Provide an environment within the school such as a family resource or parent center that assists parents in meeting needs and resolving problems related to their children's development.
 - ✧ Analyze current budgets in the school and district and coordinate efforts in using and increasing existing school and community resources to efficiently meet the needs of children ages 3 to 5.
 - ✧ Insist that elementary school principals be actively involved in programs housed in their school and in community programs that send prospective kindergarten children to their school.
 - ✧ Provide funding and technical assistance to early childhood programs within the school and community to support their efforts to obtain National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation or recognition from other state-approved programs.
 - ✧ Promote the use of kindergarten enrollment form which will be available in 1997.

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(2) Programs for All Children Ages 3 to 5 and Their Families *Continued*

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Resources

1. Connecticut State Department of Education—*Enrollment In Early Childhood Programs By Towns*. Listing of districts and towns offering pre-k, extended-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, Head Start and pre-kindergarten special education programs .
2. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education and National Parent Information Network*
(list of articles on extended-day kindergarten; benefit of pre-k and Head Start programs, and parent support information).
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801-4897
1-800-583-4135
Fax: 217-333-3767
3. School Readiness reports from Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven School Districts. (These reports describe demographics in each district and the planning process involved in the development of local collaboration and readiness councils).

Ms. Judy Hurle
Bridgeport Public Schools
Ben Franklin Education Center
389 Kossuth Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608
phone: (203) 576-7410
fax: (203) 576-8326

Ms. Deborah Watson
Hartford Public Schools
249 High Street
Hartford, CT 06103
phone: (860) 722-8705
fax: (860) 722-8753

Ms. Ruth Turner
New Haven Public Schools
54 Meadow Street
New Haven, CT 06519-1743
phone: (203) 946-8913
fax: (203) 946-7300

4. Citizens for Connecticut's Children & Youth (CCCY): KidsLink
Janice M. Gruendel, Ph.D., Co-Director
205 Whitney Avenue #308
New Haven, CT 06511
1-203-498-4240
fax: 1-203-498-4242

KidsLink:<http://statlab.stat.yale.edu/cityroom/kidslink>

(a web site for people who care about children's needs and issues. Information about children and youth is available from multiple sources to provide care and opportunities for them to build healthy bodies and minds).

Part II:
High-Quality
Preschool

(2) Programs for All
Children Ages 3 to 5
and Their Families
Continued

Continued from page 23, Resources

5. ASCD video tape: Classroom Management, Curriculum Organization
ASCD
1250 N. Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1453
phone: 1-800-933-2723
fax: 1-703-549-3891

6. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (brochures and publications on early childhood development and education, and NAEYC accreditation).
NAEYC
1509 16th Street, N. W.
Washington, DC 20036-1926
phone: 1-202-328-2601, 1-800-424-2460
fax: 1-202-328-1846

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(3) Comprehensive Services

Action:

Promote the coordination of child care, health and social services for children and families with local schools or located at school sites (but not necessarily administered by school personnel).

Comprehensive Services

Rationale

High-quality comprehensive early childhood programs support the overall well-being of children and their families. For young children to learn and develop to their fullest potential, they must have good health and nutrition, adequate housing, family support services and high-quality early childhood programs. The school is envisioned as “an ombudsman for children and families, assuring that they receive the needed support” (NASBE, 1988, p.31).

What Can Schools Do?

The following strategies have been identified by the National Association for State Boards of Education (NASBE), for ensuring the provision of comprehensive services to children and families:

- ✧ Participate as active members of community coordinating bodies along with other agencies that provide support services to children and families.
- ✧ Develop coordination and referral procedures with local health and social services agencies to increase parent’s knowledge and access to services.
- ✧ Identify appropriate staff within the school (i.e., counselors, nurse, social workers) who will be responsible for planning collaboration of the child and family services in the school. Provide resources and time for these staff members to work with teachers, families, and community agencies.
- ✧ Encourage innovative family support services that build upon existing community services and linkage with public schools (e.g., transportation systems, outreach, cooperative screening, follow-up, coordinated case management).
- ✧ In collaboration with appropriate community agencies, arrange for mental health consultants to assist teachers in planning for children with special emotional needs and/or children and families under stress.
- ✧ Where appropriate, consider becoming comprehensive Birth to Three providers for children ages birth to 3 with disabilities. Advocate for early involvement with families of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(3) Comprehensive Services

Continued



Schools can collaborate with community-based personnel to assess, develop and implement comprehensive services for all preschool children within the community.

Continued from page 25, What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ In collaboration with appropriate community agencies, provide in-service training to early childhood teachers and administrators on the integration of good health and nutritional habits into the curriculum, and in the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.
- ✧ Participate in federal and state nutrition programs and in efforts to expand the availability of these services (NASBE, 1988, p. 32).
- ✧ Establish school readiness councils.
- ✧ Establish school-based child health clinics to provide access to routine medical and dental services.
- ✧ Collaborate with community-based personnel to assess, develop and implement comprehensive services for all preschool children within the community. Children and families should have equitable access to these services. There should be an integrated approach to providing services so that there will be minimum disruptions across the child's day and from year to year.

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Resources

State Department of Education Consultants
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: 860 638-4204

Connecticut Head Start Programs
(See Appendix D.)

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(4) Full-Day Kindergarten

Action:

Promote full-day kindergarten programs for all children who need them and provide the continuum of comprehensive quality child care and education from birth through the primary grades.

Full-Day Kindergarten

Rationale

Research shows that a full-day kindergarten program is beneficial for a growing number of children, especially children from low-income families (Barnett and Escobar, 1987; Randolph, 1986; Schweinhart, Weikart, and Larner, 1986). Studies have shown the participation rate in preschool programs is lower for children from low-income families than for other children (West, Germino Hausken, and Collins, 1993). Enrollment in a full-day kindergarten benefits children at-risk educationally. The full-day kindergarten responds not only to society's changing economic and social needs but as research demonstrates, the full-day kindergarten offers advantages for children, families, and schools. The data gathered from longitudinal studies concludes that participation in full-day kindergarten is positively related to subsequent school performance (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, and Bandy-Hedden, 1992; Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, and Bandy, 1991).

Research supports the value of full-day kindergarten programs indicating that such programs have benefits for young children (Rothenberg, 1995). For example, a positive correlation has been shown between social-emotional functioning and later achievement among children who have had a full-day kindergarten experience (Clemminshaw and Guidubaldi, 1979). In full-day kindergarten there are opportunities for children to interact with peers and work on projects of interest independently or within small groups. The evidence shows that children who participate in this type of kindergarten benefit socially and emotionally (Peck, McCaig and Sapp, 1988), as well as academically (Gullo, 1990; Gullo, Bersani, Clements, and Bayless, 1986).

Teachers and children in a full-day kindergarten have time to explore topics in depth. Other important characteristics researchers observed in this setting include: reduction in ratio of transition time to class time and greater continuity of day-to-day activities (Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Milburn, 1995).

The full-day kindergarten experience also benefits the family. Increasingly, families need a longer school day because of parents' work, study or job training schedules. Full-day kindergarten programs assist parents in minimizing the number of daily transitions that children must make to meet their education and child-care needs. Full-day kindergarten

“A high-quality, developmentally appropriate program in a consistent environment must be viewed as better than multiple daily care arrangements, each with its different standards and policies”

Gullo (1991)

programs coordinate better with school-based and other before- and after-school programs serving kindergarten-age children than the half-day programs. Gullo (1991) reports, “A high-quality, developmentally appropriate program in a consistent environment must be viewed as better than multiple daily care arrangements, each with its different standards and policies.”

Background

American kindergartens began as full-day programs. More children to be served and less financial support led, over time, to part-day programs.

Studies continue to address the changes in part-day and full-day programs in terms of the effects on learning. Prominent in the literature that addresses optimum learning conditions is time (Rothenberg, 1995). Young children require time to internalize learning concepts and to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their existing repertoire. Unlike older students, young children learn through engaging content in a very active way. A project of interest can be manipulated for extended periods of time independently and with peers. Greater blocks of uninterrupted time provide for learning in a relaxed atmosphere. During this time, teachers have more opportunities to observe individual children in anticipation of planning an appropriate program for each child.

Teachers report that time is significant in promoting student learning. Full-day kindergarten programs provide increased time for student engagement with curricula and teacher support and instruction. Children in a full-day kindergarten have additional time to interact with peers and adults, to talk about experiences, become caring, cooperative, independent, responsible, curious, competent, critical thinkers, problem-solvers and concerned human beings.

Children’s extended interaction with others and classroom materials reveal what they have learned and confirm to teachers each child’s readiness for additional or more complex learning content. Teachers have more occasions to work with individual children or small groups in various skill areas.

There are greater opportunities in the full-day kindergarten for teachers to work with children of limited English proficiency to increase their fluency in English. Additionally, these opportunities are extended to help and provide attention to special needs children who would benefit from extended social interactions with same-age peers.

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(4) Full-Day Kindergarten *Continued*

Full-day kindergarten affords teachers more time to develop a positive parent-teacher partnership for the benefit of the children.

In the full-day kindergarten, there is increased independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work and more enrichment activities for prolonged periods of time.

Continued from page 29, Background

Teachers also have more time in developing a positive parent-teacher partnership for the benefit of the children. In the full-day kindergarten there is increased independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work and more enrichment activities for prolonged periods of time.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Join and actively participate on the local school readiness council.
- ✧ Provide equitable access for families and children to full-day kindergarten programs.
- ✧ Provide a more supportive effort on the part of the school, at kindergarten entry, to familiarize all families and children with services and programs to enhance each child's learning potential.
- ✧ Examine transportation policies and develop a plan that facilitates easy access to full-day kindergarten programs and before- and after-school child-care services.
- ✧ Develop appropriate programming for children participating in a full-day kindergarten and include parents in planning these programs.
- ✧ Develop strong and supportive collaborations between school and homes of kindergarten children. Work with parents to develop ways they can support their child's learning at home. Inform parents of opportunities available and invite parents to actively participate in activities in the school.
- ✧ Involve families as partners in all activities related to their children, the full-day kindergarten program, and other school activities. Their expertise is a valuable contribution to the success of the full-day kindergarten program.
- ✧ Arrange scheduled informal meetings with kindergarten teachers where teachers and families can talk about their mutual expectations of school and families for kindergarten children.
- ✧ Make observations of existing kindergarten children to determine their developmental and educational needs. Smaller class size with a range of 15 - 18 children and two adults would benefit children, particularly children who come to school lacking a preschool experience. Screening and assessment may also reveal developmental needs of children which further supports smaller class size.

Each LEA can recommend and assist all public school kindergartens to become accredited with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

- ✧ Develop collaborative procedures to ensure smooth transitions across programs and from one grade to the next.
- ✧ Recommend and assist all public school kindergartens to become accredited with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- ✧ Develop collaborative relationships among community and other key service agencies to provide resources that establish comprehensive services, including transportation, for all kindergarten children.
- ✧ Schedule time for ongoing professional development for kindergarten teachers.

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Part II: High Quality Preschool

(4) Full-Day Kindergarten *Continued*

Continued from page 31, Bibliography

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Resources

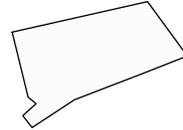
1. Connecticut State Department of Education —List of schools/districts in Connecticut with extended-day and full-day kindergartens. (See page 33.)
2. ERIC documents and journals on the benefits of full-day kindergarten.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801-4897
phone: 1-800-583-4135
fax: 217-333-3767

3. Connecticut State Department of Education (1996). National Association for the Education of Young Children National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. List of Accredited Programs. State of Connecticut.

7-12-96 ED 006 for October 1995 enrollment

***Districts With Extended-Day*/
Full-Day Kindergarten Programs***



Bethany	Norwich*
Bloomfield	Old Saybrook*
Bridgeport	Orange*
Brookfield*	Preston*
Canterbury*	Redding*
Chaplin	Sherman*
Colebrook*	Stamford
Danbury	Stratford
Darien*	Waterbury
Eastford	Waterford
Easton*	Watertown*
Fairfield*	Westbrook*
Greenwich	West Haven*
Hartford	Weston*
Killingly*	Westport*
Manchester	Wethersfield
Middletown	Wilton*
Milford*	Winchester*
Monroe*	Wolcott
New Britain	Woodbridge
New Haven	Regional District 17*
Newington	
New London*	
North Branford*	
Norwalk	

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(5) Inclusion of all Children

Action:

To ensure that children with disabilities, birth through 5 years of age, have access to high-quality early care and education programs within their community. Access to programs, services and supports should be available to all children and their families within community-based settings. Children eligible for early intervention and/or special education and related services should be provided those services in natural settings and least restrictive environments.

Inclusion of All Children

Rationale

Early childhood literature and research reflect the social and educational benefits that can be derived from providing high quality early childhood programs and services in inclusive educational environments for children with disabilities. The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion looked across a wide body of research on inclusive education in order to identify outcomes and practices associated with positive outcomes for children with disabilities. For preschool children, the Center noted Nisbeth's research summary (1994) which concluded that inclusion had positive benefits on the social competence, interactions and educational skills of young children with disabilities. An excerpt from Nisbeth's research indicates that:

“Overall, children with mild or moderate incidence disabilities, such as speech impairment or specific learning disabilities were found to do as well or better in full regular classrooms than in resource room options. Classroom options were also more cost effective. Children with moderate and severe disabilities in general settings were generally found to do as well or better than those in segregated settings, especially in social competence. There was also evidence that co-teaching, i.e., collaborative teaching by a general educator and a special educator with a heterogeneous group of special and regular education students was extremely successful in achieving student outcomes.”

The research and evaluation data on inclusive education indicates a strong trend toward improved student outcomes for special and regular education students.

Background

There are two major federal pieces of legislation that provide a framework for state policies and practices. A federal education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), includes the Infant and Toddler Program (e.g., Part H for children with disabilities from birth to age 3) and Special Education and Related Services (e.g., Part B for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5). This federal law and its parts



Services and programs must provide appropriate accommodations and adaptations to ensure the full participation and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities.

provide the regulatory guidance which outlines that children with disabilities must be provided services within natural environments (under Part H) and/or services in the least restrictive environment (under Part B).

A federal civil rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides additional federal authority to ensure that children and adults with disabilities have access to the same services, supports and programs provided to children and adults without disabilities. Services and programs must provide appropriate accommodations and adaptations to ensure the full participation and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Develop, implement and evaluate written school policies, procedures and practices which ensure that all children are an integral part of the school community.
- ✧ Provide effective and creative learning environments for all children, including children with disabilities in school and community programs.
- ✧ Provide opportunities for parents to be fully involved in the assessment, planning and implementation of programs and services.
- ✧ Implement assessment, curriculum and instructional strategies that maximize learning for all children, including children with disabilities, based upon a child's individual strengths, needs and learning style.
- ✧ Provide professional development opportunities across a range of community and school personnel to address the nature and scope of typical and atypical development, with a focus on various disabilities and methods to address the individual needs of diverse learners.
- ✧ Provide inclusion within school and community programs and services such that children attend school with their siblings, friends and neighbors.
- ✧ Provide access to the general curricula within school and community programs that provide the appropriate accommodations and adaptations for the successful participation of children with disabilities. Services provided to support children with disabilities in inclusive environments should be provided with minimum disruption in the child's day.

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(5) Inclusion of all Children

Continued

Schools can enter into a written agreement with Head Start so that resources can be used effectively and children and families will have smooth transitions between Head Start programs and kindergarten in the public school.

Continued from page 35, What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Plan for and implement support and services at transition points. This includes transition times within the context of a child's day, as well as transition to before- and after-school care and transition from program to program and year-to-year.
- ✧ Use natural environments and least restrictive environments for meeting a child's individualized educational program (IEP) goals and objectives.
- ✧ Provide access to before- and after-school programs, extracurricula and other community and school related events.
- ✧ Provide access and use the same transportation services afforded children without disabilities, where appropriate.
- ✧ Employ creative use of personnel, such as team teaching between regular and special education personnel within school and/or community settings.
- ✧ Develop, implement, and evaluate professional development activities that focus on meeting the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities.
- ✧ Develop, implement and evaluate written service guidelines to meet the educational needs of all 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children with disabilities in inclusive settings as a part of community and school programs and services.
- ✧ Provide opportunities for staff participation in collaborative groups, forums and other activities that include school, parents, child-care providers, health providers and business leaders. School readiness councils and other community collaborative groups are examples of opportunities for multiple groups to work together on community early childhood issues. Other options include regularly scheduled meetings and other activities to gather with community-based programs for the purpose of assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating comprehensive services for all children, including children with disabilities. Community partners to be included can consist of individuals from health, social services, child care, as well as education and special education personnel.
- ✧ Encourage teachers to be dually certified in regular and special education.
- ✧ Enter into a written agreement with Head Start so that resources can be used effectively and children and families will have smooth transitions between Head Start programs and kindergarten in the public school.

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Turnbull, A.P. and Turbiville, V.P. (1995). Why must inclusion be such a challenge? *Journal of Early Intervention*, 19(3), 200-202.

Resources

1. Council for Administrators in Special Education of the Council for Exceptional Children
16th Street, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
(505) 243-7622
2. The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 620-3660

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(5) Inclusion of all Children

Continued

Continued from page 37, Resources

3. National Head Start Resource Access Program
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Human Development Services
P.O. Box 1182
Washington, DC 20013
(203) 245-0562
4. National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-5786
1-800-424-2460
5. National Association of State Directors of Special Education
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320
King Street Station 1
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 519-3800
6. United States Office of Special Education Programs
Early Childhood Branch
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
(203) 732-1084
7. National Information Center for Children, Youth and Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013
1-800-695-0285
8. National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitative Training Materials
*(disseminates an annotated bibliography, searches databases of
resources for information and videos)*
Oklahoma State University
816 W. 6th Street
Stillwater, OK 74078
1-800-223-5219
9. ERIC Clearinghouse *(provides a database of video and print
resources)*
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
1-800-328-0272

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(6) Early Childhood Education as a Profession

Action:

Encourage and support early childhood education as a profession.

Early Childhood Education as a Profession

Rationale

The early childhood profession is defined by a common core of knowledge that is shared by members of the profession. The common core of knowledge includes human physical growth, neurological development, emotional and psychological growth, a wide range of content and pedagogy, including special education. The early childhood professional must have the knowledge and the ability to work across various systems to meet child and family needs.

Early childhood practitioners work in a variety of programs in public schools, preschools, child-care centers (including for profit and nonprofit programs), family day care and Head Start. These practitioners serve in a variety of roles; their qualifications and experience differ from role to role, and very often from setting to setting. Many settings require persons with degrees, while in others, no formal preparation may be required. Because the qualifications and experiences of early care and education practitioners are uneven across the field, a commitment to professionalism is essential.

Early childhood professionals are required to demonstrate a commitment toward quality care and education and must constantly seek opportunities to improve competence both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.

Background

The most important determinants of the quality of children's experiences are the adults who are responsible for their care and education. Specialized preparation in early childhood education is a critical predictor of these adults' ability to provide high-quality experiences for children.

Early childhood professionals are called upon daily, to make decisions using their knowledge of child development and family life. Regardless of their role, work setting, or the age range of children served, early childhood professionals must have the requisite knowledge and abilities pertaining to the education and care of children, to be effective in their profession. In addition, research shows that high-quality early

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(6) Early Childhood Education as a Profession *Continued*

Schools can encourage public school staff to work together with staff from community care and education programs to educate the community at large about the needs of young children.

Continued from page 39, Background

childhood experiences contribute to the optimum development of children, while poor-quality programs may actually harm children.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Provide ongoing, systematic staff development opportunities in various aspects of early childhood education, including child development, curriculum design and program development for early childhood staff members and administrators based on their needs and school priorities.
- ✧ Hire teachers and administrators with early childhood experience and credentials. Hire teachers certified in both regular and special education when possible.
- ✧ Provide release time for teachers and other staff members to participate in professional development activities that are sponsored outside of schools.
- ✧ Arrange for combined staff development activities with school personnel and staff members from community preschool care and education programs.
- ✧ Use the expertise of personnel from community care and education programs for planning and leading professional development activities for school staff members.
- ✧ Develop professional relationships with staff members, other community providers and parents in early childhood to share information and provide support. This can be done through mechanisms such as early childhood school readiness councils.
- ✧ Encourage public school staff members to join and participate in early childhood and related organizations at the local, state and national levels.
- ✧ Develop or supplement professional literature and materials in school libraries that address early childhood education.
- ✧ Encourage public school staff members to work together with staff members from community care and education programs to educate the community at large about the needs of young children. This can be done through readiness councils in the community.
- ✧ Develop sound curricular and family support programs and services for young children and their families.
- ✧ Promote enhanced professional status and working conditions for early childhood educators, including improved compensation for community child-care staff members.

Schools can encourage NAEYC accreditation of preschool and kindergarten programs in schools and child care centers

- ✧ Encourage NAEYC accreditation of preschool and kindergarten programs in schools and child-care centers and provide financial support as appropriate for this initiative.
- ✧ Require that noncredentialed paraprofessionals obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and promote this effort in community child-care programs.
- ✧ Encourage early childhood practitioners and administrators to join and actively participate in local early childhood readiness councils.

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Resources

1. Connecticut State Department of Education Consultants
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457
2. Connecticut Early Childhood Education Council
c/o Teri Lawrence
Renbrook School
2865 Albany Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06117
Phone: 860 236-1661

Provides annual conferences and publications.

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(6) Early Childhood Education as a Profession *Continued*

Continued from page 41, Resources

3. Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children
1800 Silas Deane Highway, Suite #7
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
Phone: 860 257-0670

Provides membership information, annual conferences, and a network of Connecticut and New England professionals and publications from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

4. National Association for the Education of Young Children
1509 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 200036-2601
Phone: 800 424-2460

Provides membership information, publication catalogs, brochures, posters, the association's journal - *Young Children* and annual conferences.

5. National Academy of Early Childhood Programs
1509 16th Street NW.
Washington, DC 20036-2601
Phone: 203 328-2601
Provides information on accreditation for early childhood programs.

6. Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD)
1250 North Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1455
Phone: 703 549-9110

Publishes the journal *Educational Leadership*, provides information on research and classroom practice, provides an annual conference and other staff development opportunities.

7. Connecticut Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development
Diane Vecchione
Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Region #8, 21 Pendleton Drive
Hebron, CT 06248
Phone: 860228-9471

8. The Council for Early Childhood Recognition-CDA
1341 G Street, NW Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005-3105
Phone: 1- 800-424-431

This organization grants the Child Development Associate credential, which is a competency-based credential. The organization produces newsletters.

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(7) Training for Early Childhood Personnel

Actions:

Provide recommended resources to support a voluntary system for delivering and documenting quality training to early childhood staff in child care and education programs.

Develop a system of continuous training for early childhood teachers and caregivers and provide technical assistance in program development, which are necessary to promote and sustain high quality child care programs that meet the school readiness needs for preschool children.

Training For Early Childhood Personnel

Rationale

Early childhood professionals apply their expertise across many diverse settings, and function in various roles in the service of young children and their families. Although this diversity exists, there is a common core of shared knowledge and commitment to quality care for young children, that defines the early childhood profession. The Connecticut Charts A Course (CCAC) career development system for delivering and documenting quality training for early childhood professionals provides preschool programs, schools and consumers access to high quality, well-trained professionals. The CCAC system also provides professional recognition of educational accomplishments and professional development.

Background

An increasing number of children are involved in early childhood group programs outside their homes. Nationally, 11 million children attend early childhood care and education programs in centers, family child-care homes, Head Start programs and schools. The quality of the services varies, ranging from excellent to poor. Some programs are poor enough to damage the development of young children.

Research has shown that the quality of early care and education influences significantly a child's later chances for academic and social success. The most significant predictor of the quality of an early childhood program is the qualifications of the teachers and caregivers.

In Connecticut, initial steps are being taken to implement a coordinated system of training for child-care and education practitioners and to provide a career ladder within the profession. Characteristics of this system include:

- ❖ a vehicle for recognition of the learning and accomplishments of the practitioner;
- ❖ a highly visible symbol of the commitment to quality for early childhood programs in the state;
- ❖ a mechanism for a shared structure for the definition of career development which encompasses all types of programs and models serving young children and their families;

Part II: High-Quality Preschool

(7) Training for Early Childhood Personnel *Continued*

Schools can seek evidence that staff is professionally prepared through an articulated sequence of study, leading to increased competence in the knowledge, care and education of young children.

Continued from page 43, Background

- ✧ a tool for documenting the level of training and experience of the early childhood labor force of the state;
- ✧ a source of data to enable community-based training agencies and colleges to target resources to meet the full spectrum of needs of practitioners in the state; and
- ✧ a vehicle for collaborative planning and implementation of career development programs (Costley, 1993).

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Participate in meetings and workshops with the leadership of CCAC so as to develop familiarity with this system of professional development. (See resource section for contact information.)
- ✧ Assist in disseminating printed materials about the CCAC system to early childhood professionals in school and community programs.
- ✧ Disseminate standards for training to staff and encourage the registration of trainers and practitioners in CCAC.
- ✧ Review training for early childhood practitioners provided through the auspices of schools to ensure that training meets standards of CCAC.
- ✧ Provide printed information about the Child Development Associate (CDA) program for preschool teachers and paraprofessionals in schools and community programs.
- ✧ Initiate opportunities for early childhood paraprofessional school staff and community child-care staff to participate jointly in the program.
- ✧ Seek evidence that staff is professionally prepared through an articulated sequence of study, leading to increased competence in the knowledge, care and education of young children.
- ✧ Support statewide, regional and local early childhood conferences by sending staff to assist in the planning process or to serve as a presenter or participant.
- ✧ Use joint funding with community child-care and education programs to develop and acquire printed materials. For example, brochures on various aspects of early childhood education from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- ✧ Work with colleges and community groups to plan training experiences that are financially and geographically accessible to early care and education providers in a variety of settings and formats, particularly those in the local school community.

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Resources

1. Connecticut Charts A Course
The Registry
Child Care Training and Support Fund
Norwalk Community College
188 Richards Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06854
Phone: 1 (800) 832-7784

The Registry provides information for practitioners and leaders in the field of early childhood education on how to use this career development system and will also issue certificates of recognition.

2. The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition
1341 G Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005-3105
Phone: 1 (800) 424-4310

This organization accredits early childhood programs and will provide information on how to obtain accreditation.

Part II:
High-Quality
Preschool

(7) Training for Early
Childhood Personnel
Continued

Continued from page 45, Resources

3. Connecticut State Department of Education Consultants
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 638-4204
4. Connecticut State Department of Education Consultants
Division of Teaching and Learning
Bureau of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 566-5871
5. Connecticut State Department of Education Consultants
Division of Teaching and Learning
Bureau of Professional Development
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 566-8263
6. National Association for the Education of Young Children
1509 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1426
Phone: (202) 328-2601
Provides membership information, publications catalogs,
brochures, posters, the association's journal - *Young Children* and
annual conferences.
7. Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children
1800 Silas Deane Highway, Suite #7
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
Phone: (860) 257-0670

Provides membership information, annual conferences and a network of Connecticut and New England professionals and publications from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(8) Funding and Technical Assistance for Accreditation

Action:

Provide funding and technical assistance to encourage all early care and education programs to become accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs.

Funding and Technical Assistance for Accreditation

Rationale

The standard of excellence met by accredited programs benefits parents, children, program personnel and society.

Accredited programs have demonstrated a commitment to providing high-quality services for young children and their families. These programs have completed a rigorous process to document that they meet national standards of excellence.

All aspects of an early childhood program are addressed in the accreditation process. These include planned learning activities and materials appropriate to children's ages and development; frequent interactions among staff members and children; regular communication among staff members, administrators and parents ; staff qualifications and professional development; enough adults to respond to individual children; a multicultural focus; a healthy and safe environment for children and staff members; nutritious snacks and meals; and program evaluation. The accreditation process focuses on the needs and interests of young children from birth through age 8.

The accreditation process helps teachers and directors evaluate and improve their practice. Accreditation also helps parents make informed decisions, particularly in an investment in a high-quality program with the assurance that their children are in good hands. Accreditation helps the children, including children with special needs, in all aspects of early care and education. Developmental and educational resources are provided to adults who work with young children.

Background

The State Department of Education recommends the standards of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs as a standard of quality early childhood programming. Early childhood programs wishing to improve the quality of care and education provided to young children voluntarily seek accreditation using the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs system. The accreditation process of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs/NAEYC began in September 1985. Activities were designed by NAEYC for the

Part II: High- Quality Preschool

(8) Funding and Technical Assistance for Accreditation

Continued

Continued from page 47, Background

primary purpose of improving the professional practice of early childhood educators and to educate the American public about the importance of good-quality early childhood programs. The activities involved in the extensive self-study are based on criteria developed as a standard of high-quality programs for young children. The criteria draw on the practical experience and knowledge of thousands of early childhood educators throughout the country. The criteria were field tested after a three-year experience applying them in programs.

The accreditation process involves collaborative efforts of staff members and parents to make lasting improvements in the quality of the program serving young children. Program personnel and parents conduct a self-study to determine how well the program meets the criteria established by the Academy. Trained validators make an on-site visit to verify the accuracy of the program description. Finally, a three-member Commission considers the validated program description and makes the accreditation decision based on professional judgment. Through this process all types of early childhood programs, preschool, kindergartens, child care centers and school-age child care programs, may voluntarily seek accreditation.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Participate in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program.
- ✧ Provide leadership in developing a local mentoring system for preschool programs that wish to be accredited.
- ✧ Provide leadership to assure preschool and kindergarten programs receive the necessary technical assistance to become accredited.
- ✧ Provide accreditation fees for community programs that desire to become accredited.

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Schools can provide leadership in developing a local mentoring system for preschool programs that wish to be accredited.

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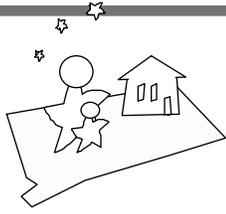
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Resources

1. Connecticut State Department of Education
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
The NAEYC Accreditation Project
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Contact: Project Manager
phone: (860) 638-4205, fax: (860) 638-4218
(for information on financial support for NAEYC accreditation or a list of NAEYC accredited programs in Connecticut)
2. National Academy of Early Childhood Programs
A Division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children
1509 16th Street, N. W.
Washington, DC 20036-1426
phone: 202-328-2601, fax: 202-328-1846
(for application and information on accreditation and self-study process)



Part III: Family Support

(1) Parenting Support During Pregnancy and the Early Years

Action:

Develop strategies to stress parenting education during pregnancy by collaborating with health and other social service agencies that provide early intervention to “at risk” families during the child’s first years of life.

Parenting Support During Pregnancy and the Early Years

Rationale

During pregnancy parents are particularly focused on the expectation of a healthy child. Motivation to meet regularly with health professionals and social service agencies to receive information and services that minimize complications associated with delivery and maximize the potential for a healthy baby is higher than at most other periods in the life of the parent. Introducing expectant parents to important information that will help them set priorities to enhance the health of the child is required. For example, mothers must know of their own nutritional needs during pregnancy and the importance of regular prenatal medical care. The parents’ commitment to seeing that the baby receives scheduled immunizations, proper nutrition, regular well-baby care, appropriate stimulation, and early attention to special needs—if required—is prerequisite to realizing their dream for their child.

The period during and immediately after pregnancy is an especially good time to encourage the parent to assess their own educational needs and learn how they help determine what their child learns and does. Health agencies and social service agencies, including schools, should identify and encourage parents without a high school diploma to enroll in an adult education program. Parents needing general parenting knowledge and support should be referred to appropriate services within the community.

Background

Expectant mothers who are regularly seen by an obstetrician develop general confidence in the instructive services provided by that medical professional. Mothers who receive regular prenatal care and provide scheduled well-baby care for infants and toddlers raise children with fewer risk factors. Poor young parents are most likely not to receive adequate prenatal care during their pregnancy. Teenage parents are most likely not to have the prerequisite experience and training required to raise healthy infants and young children. In Connecticut approximately 10,000 teenagers become pregnant each year and approximately 3,000 teen mothers elect to become active parents to their infant child(ren).

Part III: Family Support

(1) Parenting Support During Pregnancy and the Early Years

Continued

Schools can make early contact with families regarding the school's shared interest in their child's development and future success in school.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Develop school readiness councils with a broad cross-section of the community represented, especially health and social service organizations, to advise the school and other community agencies on how to improve prenatal care and parenting education.
- ✧ Meet with key medical and social service agencies serving families to develop a support strategy that identifies the need for parenting support and advocacy among their goals.
- ✧ Develop and distribute to all parents and expectant parents literature that tells of the benefits of good health and positive parenting and how these support the educational process.
- ✧ Publish information on how public schools can support parents in their personal growth and in meeting their expectations for their child(ren).
- ✧ Adopt local board level resolutions or position statements that express support for good prenatal care and for parents before their children enter school.
- ✧ Make early contact with families regarding the school's shared interest in their child's development and future success in school.
- ✧ Aggressively share and invest in other health and social service agencies to communicate and offer services that embrace the family's role in developing healthy and well-educated children. This is best done through interagency agreements.

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Part III: Family Support

(1) Parenting Support During Pregnancy and the Early Years

Continued

Resources

State and Local Agencies

Connecticut State Department of Public Health
Division of Child and Maternal Health
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-566-4800

Local Municipal Health Departments
(Located in each town. See local telephone directory.)

Regional Women Infants and Children (WIC) Office
(Consult State listings in local telephone directory.)

Local Municipal Hospitals
(See local telephone listing.)

INFOLINE
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
Phone: 1-800-203-1234

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
1509 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1426
Phone: 202-232-8777 or 1-800-424-2460

Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Family Physicians

Association of Advanced Practice Nursing

Part III: Family Support

(2) Parenting Education in the Curriculum

Action:

Provide a school-based and family-centered program of instruction that focuses on parenting issues in elementary, middle and high school grades.

Parenting Education in the Curriculum

Rationale

Students are regularly in situations that require parenting skills and knowledge about young children. Some students are themselves parents; others assist in caring for siblings or provide care for young children as part-time employment. Formal and informal school-based and family-involved programs can provide a useful orientation to the knowledge, skills and behaviors required in the parenting and “surrogate parenting” role students play during their school years and later as adults. Further, teaching parenting skills in a planned, ongoing and systematic manner with the planned involvement of families, can assist students to avoid becoming parents prematurely. Teaching the sociological, physiological, financial and emotional maturity required of parents assists students in clarifying such issues in their own families and prepares them for these responsibilities when required later in their own life.

Background

In 1993, more than 3,700 Connecticut youths, under the age of 19, became parents for the first time. Students universally report that their perception of parenting requirements was inadequate and inconsistent with the realities of the task. Research also confirms that the quality of the parent/child interaction during the initial years of the child’s life is the foundation for future emotional, social and perhaps cognitive well-being. By graduation, American schools are expected to provide young adults with the skills necessary to be minimally self-sufficient and a contributing member of society. Having limited knowledge of parenting contributes to decisions that can be detrimental to the young parent and the child. New parents generally adopt the parenting techniques of their own parents. Historically, parenting and child development curricula have not been institutionalized in schools as a vehicle for preparing young adults for parenthood. Schools can teach and model the caring and nurturing behaviors needed to parent young children.

Connecticut Education Law, Sec. 10-16c, encourages the “state board to develop family life education curriculum guides. The

Part III: Family Support

(2) Parenting Education in the Curriculum

Continued

Schools can review all curricula to ensure that a program of responsible parenting is offered in a manner that reaches all students at different periods in their school career.

Continued from page 55, Background

State Board of Education shall, on or before September 1, 1980, develop curriculum guides to aid local and regional boards of education in developing family life education programs with the public schools. The curriculum guides shall include, but not be limited to, information on developing a curriculum including family planning, human sexuality, parenting, nutrition and the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life, provided the curriculum guides shall not include information pertaining to abortion as an alternative to family planning.”

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Review all curricula to ensure that a program of responsible parenting is offered in a manner that reaches all students at different periods in their school career. Make modifications to curriculum to ensure that parenting is included where appropriate. Curriculum should include such issues as early childhood development, health needs of children, healthy pregnancies, identifying and choosing quality child care, financial obligations of parenting and the long-term responsibilities of parenting.
- ✧ Develop a collaborative partnership between teachers, students and families. Provide opportunities where parents can help in the development of strong home-school partnerships, which will ultimately lead to parents assisting their children as they succeed in school. *Innovations in Parent and Family Involvement* provides examples of exemplary programs. One program involved a three-day Parent Workshop which was offered to give parents skills as advocates, decision makers, teachers and providers of encouragement; the parents received training in leadership, decision making and problem solving. This program included a parent advisory committee which provided leadership around the type of workshops that would be offered. Parental involvement with the school demonstrates to their children that they care and value the education their child is receiving.
- ✧ Work with community agencies to provide collaborative opportunities for young adults to learn about young children and the responsibilities of parenting. Parenting education should be a whole community responsibility and value.

Schools can educate students on the needs of young children and the need to provide quality care for children while parents are working.

- ✧ Provide focus groups for youth to discuss among other parenting teens the responsibilities of parenting and how to avoid pressures to become parents prematurely.
- ✧ Provide opportunities/activities for students to experience effective parenting. Encourage teachers to model caring behaviors as a part of their engagement with young adults. Provide opportunities for middle and high school students to participate in activities with young children, preschool through elementary age. Educate students on the needs of young children and the need to provide quality care for children while parents are working.
- ✧ Implement volunteer programs in the middle and high schools for teens to work with younger children in settings that allow for students to develop the skills and knowledge base to prepare them for later parenting and child caring.
- ✧ Institute an HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted disease, Education Program. Provide information to students and parents on the facts, statistics and realities of HIV/AIDS in their community and nationally. Many school districts have AIDS Awareness Weeks. This is a week when special programs, focusing on HIV/AIDS, are held every day, i.e., lectures, slide shows, peer-to-peer dialogues. HIV/AIDS Poster contests may be held to promote abstinence from sex and IV drug use. Posters may be displayed in the school or in the community. Students, parents and community providers should be involved in the planning and facilitation of this program.
- ✧ Develop a curriculum or program of family/home life budgeting development, career awareness and general life skills. This program should develop in students a knowledge base that will help them in developing their own life goals and expectations. Students should be knowledgeable about welfare reform and its impact on families and children.
- ✧ Educate students on the legal and financial responsibilities of noncustodial parents.

Part III: Family Support

(2) Parenting Education in the Curriculum

Continued

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Resources

1. Connecticut Family Resource Centers
Connecticut State Department of Education
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457
Contact: Kari Sweeney (860) 638-4209

Family Resource Centers and Young Parents Programs provide parenting education opportunities for parents. Family Resource Centers also provide positive youth development activities to students in the elementary grades. These programs may be of assistance in the development of integrated parenting education.

2. Connecticut Even Start Programs
Connecticut State Department of Education
Division of Educational Programs and Services
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457
Contact: Judy Carson (860) 638-4222

Even Start Programs provide comprehensive family-centered support and education programs to improve children's academic success and increase parents' economic opportunities.

3. Connecticut State Department of Education
Division of Teaching and Learning
Bureau of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106-1630
Contacts: Nancy Letney-Pugliese (860) 566-6645
and Veronica Skerker (860) 566-2763

The Bureau of Curriculum and Instructional Programs provides technical assistance services to school districts in the development of curriculum. This bureau may be of assistance in the development of integrated parenting curriculums.

4. University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System
State Administrative Office
1376 Storrs Road, Storrs, CT 06269-4036
(203) 486-4125

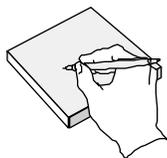
Cooperative Extension professionals and trained volunteers teach Connecticut residents to make informed choices affecting individuals and families. This program provides current information to youth and adults through workshops, projects and materials. Cooperative Extension helps Connecticut's diverse population to manage family resources and develop strong family units. Areas of focus include parenting, 4-H/youth development, nutrition and food safety, child care, money management, and lead poisoning and health.

Part III: Family Support

(3) Family Literacy

Action:

Include or coordinate family literacy programs that incorporate adult basic education and parenting education into early childhood programs.



Family Literacy

Rationale

Research has demonstrated that parents have a strong influence on the literacy development of their children. Children who live in homes where literacy activities take place regularly are more likely to experience academic success than their peers with nonreading parents. Positive effects on children's reading and writing abilities are observed when children are read to frequently at home, when they are engaged in dialog about books, when they are given access to reading and writing materials, and when they receive positive reinforcement for literacy activities. Conversely, children who live in families in which the adults have limited literacy skills themselves, or in homes where positive reading and writing experiences are not a part of everyday life, are especially at risk.

What is Family Literacy?

Family Literacy is ...

parents, children and other family members reading together and learning together.

Family Literacy Programs ...

give families access to the training and support they need to create a literate home environment and enhance the academic achievement of their children.

Background

For decades, we have acknowledged the intergenerational nature of literacy and education and recognized the family as the first and most important educational institution. It is only in recent years, however, that educators are beginning to see the potential of family literacy as a program tapping family strengths to improve the literacy and life circumstances of adults and children. Family literacy combines or integrates education for adults with the education of their children. Successful programs start with family goals to meet the individual needs of the family as opposed to individual family members. Comprehensive family literacy programs integrate adult education or literacy training, parenting education, and

The impetus for family literacy efforts comes both from the need to prevent illiteracy among children as well as the need to remediate low literacy among adults.

A key component of family literacy programs which distinguishes this model from others is the emphasis on transmitting the parent's newly developing skills and strengths to the child.

early childhood education into a unified program designed to serve the most economically disadvantaged families.

The cyclical nature of low literacy and subsequent undereducation has fueled a movement for family literacy programs. The impetus for family literacy efforts comes both from the need to prevent illiteracy among children as well as the need to remediate low literacy among adults. A key component of family literacy programs which distinguishes this model from others is the emphasis on transmitting the parent's newly developing skills and strengths to the child.

Family literacy is a rapidly expanding field. Not surprisingly, definitions and program models vary widely. The most comprehensive and effective programs not only attempt to teach both the parent and the child but also address the parent-child relationship.

How does Connecticut define family literacy?

Connecticut's definition of family literacy was developed by the State Department of Education's Advisory Committee to Family Literacy which is made up of local practitioners representing family education and support programs.

Although Connecticut's definition represents the most comprehensive type of family literacy program, the committee recognized that there is a continuum of program intensity and many programs may not incorporate all of the components identified below. Connecticut's definition of family literacy was developed to promote more intensive programs and to encourage family literacy practitioners to address all of the components of high quality, comprehensive programs.

Definition of Family Literacy in Connecticut

Family literacy provides intergenerational instruction and support to enrich the family environment and to promote lifelong learning. Family literacy is a powerful educational model which focuses on the strengths and needs of the family. It recognizes the parent as the child's first teacher and acknowledges family and culture as the foundation of learning. Family literacy programs reflect local needs and are built on many collaborations.

Part III: Family Support

(3) Family Literacy *Continued*

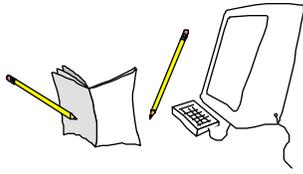
The goal of family literacy is to improve the quality of life through education and to break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and undereducation.

Family literacy models range from programs involving parents and children reading together to comprehensive family educational interventions.

Continued from page 61, Definition of Family Literacy

The goal of family literacy is to improve the quality of life through education and to break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and undereducation. Family literacy models range from programs involving parents and children reading together to comprehensive family educational interventions. A comprehensive program includes the integration of the following components:

1. **Early childhood and/or school-age education.** The early childhood component includes children from birth through 8 years of age and is based on developmentally appropriate activities and curriculum.
2. **Adult education.** The adult education component encompasses much more than basic skills, English as a second language, or preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) testing program. It is designed so that adult students of all abilities will be equipped to think critically and creatively, set goals and solve problems, and acquire interpersonal skills that are needed for participation in society.
3. **Parents and children learning together.** The parent and child interaction component provides time for parents and children to work and play together as a family unit. The reciprocal learning that takes place during this time offers parents and children a chance to become true partners in their education and to transfer the new learning into the home.
4. **Parent time together including parent education and support.** The time parents spend together blends the goals of parent support groups and parent education to meet the needs of the families in the program. This component provides time and a safe place to educate and inform parents, to provide opportunities for mutual support, to offer advocacy services to families and to study particular topics related to being a parent.
5. **Home visits to support educational programs.** The home visit component supports families in transferring learning from the other program components to their daily lives. The home visitor acts as a coach or a mentor to guide the family in developing their own literacy-based family activities.



Many communities have the program components that make up a family literacy program but few have integrated those components into a comprehensive whole that serves families as a unit.

What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Visit a family literacy program. See Resource Section for information about a listing of Connecticut's family literacy programs.
- ✧ Enlist your adult education resources. Every Connecticut community has an adult education program that can assist with providing some of the components of a family literacy program including adult basic education, parenting education, transportation and child care for the time parents are in class. Work with the district or regional adult education director in planning your family literacy program.
- ✧ Integrate the program components (i.e., early childhood education, adult education, parents and children learning together, parent education and home visits). Many communities have the program components that make up a family literacy program but few have integrated those components into a comprehensive whole that serves families as a unit. Connect program components through meaningful family activities that change intergenerational patterns associated with low literacy.
- ✧ Collaborate. Develop a strong partnership of service providers who jointly take responsibility for providing family literacy services and develop new relationships and systems to improve services for families.
- ✧ Recruit those families most in need, specifically low-income disadvantaged families with low literacy rates or limited English proficiency at program entry.
- ✧ Facilitate parent-child interactions and provide parenting education. Create a positive impact on the whole family by enhancing the relationships between parents and children.
- ✧ Visit families' homes. Individualize the program for parents and children in familiar settings by building on families' strengths. Demonstrate that the home is the child's first and most important learning environment. Home visits increase the intensity of the program experience as well as increasing access to services for some families.
- ✧ Provide adult education and adult literacy. Improve the self-sufficiency of families by enabling them to meet their goals, increasing the English language literacy levels of family members, enhancing skills and experiences related to employability and improving parents' abilities to be advocates for and teachers of their children.

Part III: Family Support

(3) Family Literacy *Continued*

Keep families participating long enough in the program to achieve learning gains and improvement in parenting.

Continued from page 63, What Can Schools Do?

- ✧ Provide early childhood education. Enhance development and ease transition to school by providing developmentally appropriate settings for children of all ages from the families enrolled in the family literacy program.
- ✧ Retain families. Keep families participating long enough in the program to achieve learning gains and improvement in parenting.
- ✧ Assist families with transitions. Family literacy programs can smooth a family's horizontal transitions (e.g., moving between Even Start and another child care provider in the same day) and vertical transitions (e.g., moving "up" from basic adult literacy to GED preparation). Create a transitional opportunity through which families chart a course for change, gain necessary skills and reach their goals.
- ✧ Provide staff development. Prepare family literacy staff and staff from collaborating agencies to work effectively with families. Extend training opportunities to all school staff including principals, pre-kindergarten and elementary teachers, related services personnel and paraprofessionals.
- ✧ Share your goal with others and enlist them in public awareness and recruitment of families with literacy needs.

(Adapted from RMC, 1996)

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Resources

1. Connecticut Even Start Family Literacy Programs

Bridgeport Even Start
52 Green Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608
(203) 366-5167

Middletown Even Start
398 Main Street
Middletown, CT 06457
(860) 343-6044

Danbury Even Start
1 School Ridge Road
Danbury, CT 06811
(203) 790-2866

Windham Even Start
P.O. Box 15
N. Windham, CT 06256
(860) 465-2345

Many other Connecticut communities are involved in family literacy. A listing of family literacy programs is provided in *Family Literacy in Connecticut: A Resource Guide* which is available from the State Department of Education, Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services, (860) 638-4222.

2. ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education The Ohio State University 1900 Kenny Road Columbus, OH 43210 (614) 292-4353 or (800) 848-4815

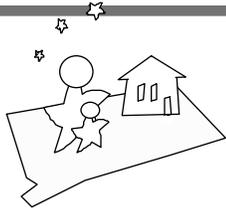
Offers family literacy related instructional materials, research reports, literature searches and newsletters.

Part III: Family Support

(3) Family Literacy *Continued*

Continued from page 65, Resources

3. National Center for Family Literacy
Waterfront Plaza Suite 200
325 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
(502) 584-1133 or (502) 584-0172
(Offers training, technical assistance, written materials and an annual conference dedicated to family literacy.)
4. National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy (NCLE)
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 429-9292, ext. 200
(Offers instructional materials, research reports, literature searches and newsletters related to working with non-English speaking families.)
5. National Institute for Literacy
800 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20202-7560
(202) 632-1500, (202) 632-1512
(Offers information retrieval systems linked to national resources and research, grant funding; Coordinates literacy activities at national and state levels.)
6. U.S. Department of Education
Division of Adult Education and Literacy Clearinghouse
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-7240
(202) 205-9996
(Offers family literacy-related instructional materials, research reports, literature searches and newsletters.)
7. Literacy Volunteers of Connecticut
30 Arbor Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 236-5466
(Offers instructional and training materials, local volunteer tutor programs and statewide conferences.)
8. The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy
1002 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 338-2006
(A funding source for development of family literacy programs and support for training and professional development of teachers.)
9. A collection of family literacy resources (books, video tapes and curriculum materials) is housed at:
Adult Training and Development Network
Capitol Region Education Council
111 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 247-2732



The Challenge of School-Based Leadership in Organizing Early Care and Education Systems in Local Communities

Part IV: Getting Started

(1) How to Coordinate Programs

In May 1994, with the adoption of its Position Statement on Early Childhood Education, the State Board of Education expressed its desire to have local boards of education be more active in engaging the community in activities that improve and expand services for preschool children.

This section is presented to help local boards of education move forward immediately in advancing quality early childhood education services in each community. The commitment of the State Board of Education and the efforts of the State Department of Education are included to reiterate the importance of early childhood education within the department. It also serves as a model for getting started that can be replicated at the local level.

Further, this section alerts school districts to how this interest in early childhood education is the foundation to their own goal of high levels of performance for each student. Lastly, outcomes for a local early care and education system are offered to assist school districts in getting a local community involved with them around this initiative. These outcomes, among others, also may be used as benchmarks to help the community or school readiness council monitor its progress.

State Board Commitment

In May 1994, with the adoption of its *Position Statement on Early Childhood Education*, the State Board of Education expressed its desire to have local boards of education be more active in engaging the community in activities that improve and expand services for preschool children. The Board strengthened that expectation in its *Position Statement on Preschool Education* adopted in March 1997.

State Department of Education Collaborative Initiatives

The State Department of Education realizes that coordination among state agencies which serve children is necessary to prepare schools to participate in local discussion on behalf of children and families. To help local boards of education assume their new role in the early childhood arena, the State Department of Education is collaborating with the State

Part IV: Getting Started

(1) How to Coordinate Programs *continued*

At a time when many school systems are struggling to shore up the confidence of their communities in the mandated K-12 school programs, the burden of extending that obligation downward to younger children is indeed challenging.

Continued from page 67, SDE Collaborative Initiatives

Departments of Social Services and Public Health to establish mutual agreements to develop a system of comprehensive services that can be accessed by all children and families.

Since 1995, State Department of Education grant applications going to local school boards and community groups have encouraged or required collaboration with other groups. These grant programs include Head Start, Family Resource Centers, Young Parents, School Readiness and Even Start. In 1996, the department funded local school readiness councils in the state's most needy communities. In brief, the obligation of the local school readiness council is to advance community planning between the school and other agencies on behalf of children and families. These councils receive technical assistance through the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) to serve the school and community in the planning and implementation of locally determined strategies that meet criteria established by the State Department of Education. Participation of school personnel on local school readiness councils is required.

Finally, in 1996, the State Department of Education coordinated the resources of the Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services and the Office of Urban and Priority School Districts to facilitate local initiatives that benefit children in school and community child care and education settings. Ongoing technical assistance is available to Priority School Districts to promote collaborative community child care and education designs.

School-Community Collaboration

At a time when many school systems are struggling to shore up the confidence of their communities in the mandated K-12 school programs, extending that obligation downward to younger children is indeed a challenge. The State Department of Education believes that families with young children are best served by high-quality options which allow parents to choose among public and private schools and other early care and education providers.

Schools are reminded each day that if significantly enhanced student performance is the most important criterion for establishing community confidence in what schools do, they no longer can ignore the importance of what children experience

Schools are reminded each day that if significantly enhanced student performance is the most important criterion for establishing community confidence in what schools do, they no longer can ignore the importance of what children experience and learn before they enter kindergarten.

and learn before they enter kindergarten. If schools are not expected to provide services directly, but, collaborate with other agencies to ensure that comprehensive services including preschool education, child care, health, nutrition, special needs and social services, are provided for those children and families who need them, this is a radical departure from the way schools traditionally operate.

The State Board of Education expects that support for the continuum of learning, beginning at birth, will be equally shared by schools and community early care and education providers. All appropriate resources, including funding, facilities, training and planning will be coordinated at the community level to ensure that all children receive high-quality programs that meet their learning needs and the child care needs of families. School personnel will need to work with parents, other agency heads, politicians and other public and private funders of programs and services to realize these expectations. School professionals will be an assertive voice in identifying the relationship between children's success in school and the quality of experiences children receive at home and in early care and education settings.

Every community in Connecticut invests heavily in schools. The school is the repository of much diverse knowledge and many valuable community resources. The cadre of highly trained education professionals and the knowledge they possess must be shared with those individuals and institutions that provide the earliest care and education to children. Specialists, including curriculum writers, content area teachers, therapists, counselors and administrators must reach out to those who struggle to prepare young children before they enter school. Participation on local child care center boards affords opportunities to share the expectations of the local school and learn the successful practices used by the community-based program so that care for the child can be seamless and that learning objectives and methodologies evolve in a natural and planned way between systems.

Part IV: Getting Started

(1) How to Coordinate Programs *continued*

Outcomes for a Local Early Care and Education System

At the community level, a well coordinated early care and education system with meaningful public school involvement should reflect many of the following outcomes:

- ✧ ***single point of entry*** — A single point of entry that identifies all providers of care and education services for 3- and 4-year-old children is known to the public. This service provides assistance to families in assessing and meeting child care and education needs. Licensing capacity, enrollment data, costs, accreditation status and other information needed by families for placement consideration is available.
- ✧ ***quality standards*** — Each child care center program meets quality standards established by the state and community. Quality includes appropriately trained staff; safe environments; schedules, equipment and materials appropriate for the age(s) of children served; meaningful parent involvement and support activities; and evidence of meeting the requirements of a SDE-approved endorsing agency.
- ✧ ***educational objectives*** — Educational objectives for all children, ages 3 through 8, are clearly articulated. The early childhood education continuum of teachers in centers and schools support and build upon the professional knowledge, parental involvement and student progress at each level.
- ✧ ***accountability*** — Curricula in all cognitive areas that support high expectations are developed jointly by professionals in the pre-kindergarten through Grade 3 continuum. These curricula are distributed to all school and community-based programs for adoption. Student progress and monitoring protocols are developed and distributed to all programs. Resources for training in curriculum implementation and assessing student progress are provided and all staff members are scheduled on an ongoing basis to access such training.

***The Ultimate Outcome—
the whole child,
ready for school***

☆ ***comprehensive services*** — In addition to care and education services, each program provides directly or through referral: general child care information; special needs assessment/evaluation and treatment if necessary in the areas of child health and nutrition, social services and parent/family support, including adult education and family literacy.

☆ ***collaboration*** — Each community has a mechanism, such as a school readiness council, for engaging in regular and ongoing assessment of childhood and family support needs, especially as these needs affect the education of young children. Such a mechanism also empowers an entity to review community resources and make recommendations to policy-making authorities, including the local board of education, regarding the use and coordination of funds in the community that maximize access, availability and affordability of services to children and families.

***The Ultimate Outcome —
the whole child, ready for school***

Children enter kindergarten at age 5 with two years of quality preschool experience, fully immunized, in excellent general health and receive regularly scheduled well-child care by a family pediatrician and dentist, and have parents who are involved in their children's education and pursuing their own educational, professional and personal growth.

Part IV: Getting Started

(2) Cost Considerations

Every community will need to consider how to fund the development and maintenance of high-quality preschool programs.

Cost Considerations

Every community will need to consider how to fund the development and maintenance of high-quality preschool programs. A recommended way to get started in this activity is to inventory the known resources of the community and determine which of these can contribute to the many cost centers associated with comprehensive child-care and education services. Determine which costs can be shared with other local programs and which will have to be borne entirely by the program.

In addition to expenses, planners must anticipate revenue sources. Familiarizing oneself with the subsidy programs of state and local agencies may assist in finding funding for construction and renovation of space and general program development and maintenance. Consider that some families can afford to share the cost of care and preschool education. The development of a fair sliding fee scale can contribute significantly to off-setting the ongoing costs of programs. Some communities enter into agreements with local businesses and corporations to share the cost of communitywide care. These agreements include businesses purchasing or subsidizing slots for their employees and making annual cash grants to programs to keep the overall cost affordable to all in the community. Also, many large businesses have employee giving programs that the company will match. Encouraging families to represent their child-care center's needs to fellow employees strengthens the sense of community and mutual benefit.

In Connecticut, most communities have established organizations that raise funds on behalf of social service agencies. Local United Ways are among the most recognized. Each child-care program or consortia should consult with the local United Way to evaluate the requirements and benefits of membership.

On the following page is a worksheet to assist in determining the cost of child-care programs. This worksheet reflects choices that communities may consider when determining the cost centers to be budgeted and potential revenue sources by category. Figures associated with this model are not recommendations; they are guidelines to assist in getting started on the planning process.

Child Care and Education Program

Cost Worksheet

Classroom Staffing		
Teaching Staff		
Certified	% FTE	
Noncertified	% FTE	
Child Development Associate (CDA)	% FTE	
Paraprofessional Staff		
Child Development Associate (CDA)	% FTE	
Non-CDA	% FTE	
Fringe benefits	%	
Instructional Costs		
Child Transportation	\$ /child	
Classroom Equipment	\$ /child	
Field Trips	\$ /child	
Instructional Supplies	\$ /child	
Other	\$ /child	
Parenting Activities	\$ /child	
Playground Equipment	\$ /child	
Professional Development	\$ /emp.	
Staff Travel	\$ /emp.	
Center Staffing*		
Accountant	% FTE	
Bookkeeper	% FTE	
Case Manager	% FTE	
Clerical	% FTE	
Custodian	% FTE	
Director	% FTE	
Health Coordinator	% FTE	
Home Visitor	% FTE	
Nurse	% FTE	
Parent Involvement Coordinator	% FTE	
Secretary	% FTE	
Social Worker	% FTE	
Other	% FTE	
Fringe benefits	%	
Occupancy Costs		
Insurance		
Maintenance (supplies)		
Mortgage/Rent/Lease		
Repairs		
Utilities		
Administrative Costs		
Administrative Supplies & Postage		
Administrative Travel		
Audit and Other Services		
Office Equipment		
Other		
Printing, Copying, Promotion		
Total:		

Revenue Sources	
Federal Funds	\$
State Funds	\$
Local Funds	\$
Local in-kind	\$
Parent Fees	\$
Other Sources	\$
Total:	

Cost per Child			
<i>Funding/# of children=Cost per child</i>			
Funding	/ by	# Children	Cost per child
<i>Example</i>			
<i>\$100,000</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>=\$4000</i>

* Staffing of a child care and education center will vary from community to community. The positions referenced in this worksheet are offered to planners to assist in identifying the functions that require funding in a high-quality, comprehensive program. A single individual may be responsible for multiple functions. Individuals other than center staff may perform a function on behalf of the child care center, therefore, eliminating the need to budget that function.

FTE means Full-Time Equivalent

