

National League of Cities



institute
for

YOUTH, EDUCATION, and FAMILIES

[MISSION & ORGANIZATION]

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC), helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.



Responsive to municipal leaders on a wide range of issues, the Institute focuses on five core program areas:

- 1) education and afterschool
- 2) youth development
- 3) early childhood development
- 4) safety of children and youth
- 5) family economic success

get
connected
to the Institute

[STRATEGIES AND TOOLS]

Through the Institute, municipal officials have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools that can help them strengthen families and enhance the well-being of children and youth.

By registering with the Institute, municipal officials will receive **access** to networks of colleagues sharing their interests, e-mail **updates** on noteworthy developments, immediate **notices** of new publications and resources, **invitations** to participate in meetings and activities, and **opportunities** to share their successful programs and learn from the successes of others. To register with the Institute, and to obtain more detailed information on its publications and services, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or call (202) 626-3014.

- **Action kits** offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- **Technical assistance projects** in selected communities provide in-depth help to municipal leaders who are committed to taking action on behalf of children and families.
- NLC's **Summit on Your City's Families** and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-city meetings highlight best practices and promising city innovations.
- **Targeted research and periodic surveys** of local officials fill critical gaps in the nation's knowledge of the challenges facing cities and towns.
- The Institute's **web site, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs** help officials stay connected to their peers in other communities and easily share information on progress, pitfalls, and lessons learned.



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES

Register!

Register with the YEF Institute to receive our monthly e-mail newsletter, which includes notice of new Institute publications or resources and invitations to participate in special Institute meetings and activities.

NAME: _____

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Peer Networks


The YEF Institute's Peer Learning Networks enable city administrators and staff to share ideas and insights through listserv exchanges, conference calls, in-person meetings, and background materials on specific topics. To join one of our peer networks and receive additional e-mails on more specialized issue areas, please select the box(es) below.

- Afterschool Policy Advisors Network (APAN)
- Childhood Obesity Network for Municipal Leaders
- City Network on Early Care and Education
- Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) (Note: EPAN is a closed network for the 75 largest cities; officials from small and mid-sized cities should contact moore@nlc.org)
- Family Economic Success Network (FES)
- Municipal Network on Disconnected Youth (MINDY)
- Youth Participation Advisors Network (YPAN)

Please send your completed form to Michael Karpman by fax to (202) 626-3043 or mail to his attention at:

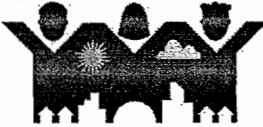
National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

For more information, call (202) 626-3072 or email karpman@nlc.org.


National League of Cities 

Launching a Mayor's Book Club

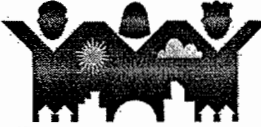
New Jersey League of Municipalities
November Conference
November 20, 2008



National League of Cities
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families





Launching a Mayor's Book Club



National League of Cities
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

National League of Cities'
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

- The National League of Cities (NLC) is the country's oldest and largest national organization representing the interests of cities.
- The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within NLC.
- The Institute focuses on several issue areas related to strengthening families. One area is Early Childhood Success.

2

Early Literacy facts

- Reading to young children regularly (20 min. per day) can lead to greater reading knowledge and skills when entering school.
- Building a love of reading early can lead to positive approaches to learning and an attachment to books.
- There is often a lack of print material in low-income child care settings - by age four, children who live in poor families will have heard 32 million fewer words than children living in higher-income families.

City Interest and Investment

The YEF Institute believes that the success of a city is directly tied to the success of its youngest residents.

- Quality early experiences for young children can help:
 - Reduce crime
 - Improve school and employment success
 - Create stronger families
- YEF Institute assists municipal leaders in areas such as:
 - School readiness
 - Parent support
 - Child health and safety
 - Access to quality child care
 - Leveraging resources

Components of a Mayor's Book Club

- The mayor reading the "Book of the Month" on the local cable station or radio;
- Child friendly resources (i.e., a backpack);
- Book drives;
- Special literacy events;
- Volunteer engagement for all ages;
- City-wide contests; and
- A year-end event at City Hall that celebrates a year of reading.

City Examples

- Jacksonville, Florida Mayor John Peyton launched a Book Club in September 2004. All four-year old pre-kindergarten students receive a free backpack filled with several reading tools and a book.
- Charleston, South Carolina has incorporated a Mayor's book club into its *Countdown to Kindergarten Initiative*. The city partnered with Barnes & Noble, Trident United Way, a local radio station, and local television.

Contact Information

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Program Director, Early Childhood and Family
Economic Success

Phone: 202/626-3069

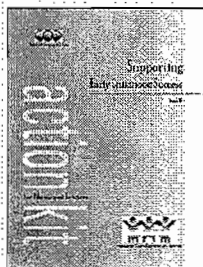
Email: goldberg@nlc.org

National League of Cities'
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1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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NLC Resources

Supporting Early Childhood Success Action Kit

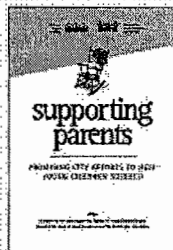
- Step-by-step guide for local officials to develop initiatives to support families with young children
 - Strengthening Families
 - Promoting child health and safety
 - Enhancing Early Learning
 - Expanding Access to Child Care



NLC Resources

Supporting Parents

- Report highlighting promising city examples and lessons learned from the YEF Institute's *Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children* technical assistance project.



National
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Institute for
Youth, Education,
and Families



supporting parents

PROMISING CITY EFFORTS TO HELP
YOUNG CHILDREN SUCCEED



A Report on the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children Project
funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Freddie Mac Foundation

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's Web site, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs.

To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or leave a message on the YEF Institute's information line at (202) 626-3014.

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Washington, D.C. 20004

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Institute for
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supporting parents

PROMISING CITY EFFORTS TO HELP
YOUNG CHILDREN SUCCEED



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Acknowledgements

The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) would like to thank the many individuals and organizations whose support and participation made this technical assistance project a success. In addition, we are grateful to those who helped prepare this report to share the lessons from this project with other cities across the nation.

The YEF Institute recognizes the contributions of the six participating cities that were willing to share their experiences. We acknowledge the leadership of local elected officials in each of the participating cities: former Mayor Ernie Wentrcek and current Mayor D. Mark Conlee in Bryan, Texas; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., in Charleston, S.C.; Mayor Patrick L. Tallarita and Councilmember Brian H. Peruta in Enfield, Conn.; Mayor Mike Moncrief and Mayor Pro Tempore Kathleen Hicks in Fort Worth, Texas; Mayor Thomas J. George in Lakewood, Ohio; and Mayor Julia Pirnack in Longmont, Colo. We applaud their leadership for the development of new paths to support parents with young children.

We also thank the senior municipal administrators in each city who convened community teams and led the planning and implementation process: Ronnie Jackson in Bryan; Bonnie Bella and Jacque Kennedy in

Charleston; Pam Brown and Karen Weseliza in Enfield; Kathy Livingston and Sandra Lamm in Fort Worth; Dottie Buckon and Toni Gelsomino in Lakewood; and Amy Ogilvie and Karen Roney in Longmont. These leaders, in partnership with local elected officials and key community stakeholders, carried out the work that yielded so many improvements in services available to parents with young children.

Julie Bosland, a YEF Institute consultant, and Tonja Rucker, the YEF Institute's senior program associate for early childhood success, served as principal authors of this report. Abby Hughes Holsclaw, program director for early childhood and family economic success, and Tonja Rucker coordinated the project on a day-to-day basis. Abby Hughes Holsclaw and Michael Karpman provided editorial assistance, and Susan Gamble was responsible for design and layout.

Clifford M. Johnson, executive director of NLC's YEF Institute, provided overall direction for this project, expertise, and editorial assistance throughout the preparation of this publication.

The YEF Institute would also like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Freddie Mac Foundation for their generous support, which allowed the YEF Institute to work with the participating cities.

Introduction

Cities and neighborhoods thrive by attracting, retaining, and supporting strong families. In turn, family success typically depends on the ability of parents to provide for their children and give them – especially during the critical first years of life – the resources and opportunities they need to grow and develop. Parents at all income levels who have access to key information and supports can do a better job promoting their child’s development and balancing their responsibilities as parents with the demands of work, school, and community life.

Unfortunately, too many parents struggle to meet their children’s basic needs and find themselves isolated or overwhelmed by the challenges they face. Economic pressures and societal changes have led more parents to work, whether in single parent or two-earner families. Approximately two-thirds of black and Latino infants and toddlers live in families with incomes below twice the federal poverty level; for white and Asian young children, more than one-quarter are in such low-income households. Moreover, extended families tend to be more geographically dispersed, leaving more parents to manage on their own. While trying to do the best that they can, parents often do not have the time to search for or know where to find the information, training, and support they need to balance work and family and get their children off to a good start in life.

Throughout the country, we see the consequences of inadequate supports for

parents of young children. Children enter school without the skills to succeed. Their growth and development is stunted by lack of access to preventive health care. In more extreme cases, children suffer from abuse and neglect. Because the early years are critical to healthy development, it is vitally important to strengthen parents’ capacity to create a nurturing and supportive home environment.

Local elected officials can become active partners in helping parents of young children succeed. In doing so, city leaders have the opportunity to make their communities more family-friendly, their workforces more productive, and upcoming generations better prepared for school and life.

While mayors and city councilmembers may see parent support and early childhood development as issues for private social service organizations, these community-based agencies are not able to do the job alone. Local government leaders have important roles to play in making family support a shared priority in the community and ensuring that public services – including those provided through libraries, schools, recreation departments, and other human service agencies – find new and more effective ways to reach out to parents of young children.

Support for Parents of Young Children

How can communities show that they value parents for the crucial roles that they play and empower them to help their young children flourish? Some key areas for action include:

- Providing information about the importance of early childhood and a parent's role as a child's first and most important teacher.
- Offering information and training on such topics as child development, positive discipline, child health, and how to prepare for a child's transition to school.
- Supporting parents as they cope with the stress of raising young children, whether through peer support groups for new parents, home visitors, or crisis care options.
- Improving access to quality child care and health care services.
- Creating settings that encourage parents to promote positive child development, from parks and community festivals to libraries and family resource centers.
- Promoting workplace flexibility to balance the demands of parenting and working.
- Connecting parents to existing benefits and services, from the federal Earned Income Tax Credit to developmental screenings for young children.
- Training parents to be advocates for their children.

Roles for Municipal Leaders

While cities and towns may not directly provide all – or even most – of the support parents need, municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to ensure that the community comes together to support families with young children. City leaders can play various influential roles:

- **Use the “bully pulpit.”** Mayors and councilmembers can utilize a wide variety of venues – from council meetings to press interviews, and business roundtables to town hall meetings – to emphasize the importance of the early years and make parent support a community priority.
- **Launch and invest in initiatives that respond to unmet needs.** City leaders can marshal the resources to support new efforts that bolster parents' access to information and support. Family resource centers, public education campaigns, book clubs, and information kiosks in well-trafficked locations are just a few of the possibilities that municipal officials can consider.
- **Publicly recognize programs and employers that support parents.** Through award programs, assistance garnering press coverage, or formal statements of appreciation from the City Council, local officials can promote and support businesses and community organizations that are making a difference in the lives of parents and their young children.
- **Engage new partners and convene stakeholders.** City leaders have the clout to reach out to a wide variety of potential partners – from corporate CEOs to school officials and faith leaders – to encourage them to join efforts to support parents. In addition, local officials can bring existing programs together to assess community needs, better coordinate and publicize existing efforts, and plan new parent support activities.
- **Promote family-friendly workplace policies.** Cities and towns can lead by example by establishing family-friendly options for municipal employees, such as flex-time, job sharing, telecommuting, or on-site child care. Municipal leaders can also encourage businesses who have not yet bought into such policies to follow suit.
- **Provide space and in-kind resources.** Cities and towns often manage a variety of buildings that could house parent support and child development programs, such as libraries, recreation centers, or community centers. Local officials can also provide critical support to community programs for parents by offering municipal staff

time and expertise, loaned equipment or city vehicles, or assistance garnering donated resources from local businesses.

- **Help programs find funding.** Cities can help ensure that parent education and child development programs have the resources they need to be successful by providing grant writing assistance, letters of support, or matching funds. In addition, cities can provide direct funding – or work with programs to apply for funding – from city general funds, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), family support and preservation grants, literacy grants, community foundations, or school districts. Some municipalities have also created dedicated local taxes to help fund programs for children and families.

Project Overview

Founded in 2000 as an “action tank” within the National League of Cities (NLC), the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) has encouraged and supported municipal leadership to help young children get off to a strong start in life.

In response to NLC’s Early Childhood City Challenge in 2003, more than 100 cities committed to developing long-term early childhood strategic plans for their communities. In the following year, through the Freddie Mac Foundation Early Childhood Challenge, the YEF Institute provided 12 of these cities with one year of technical assistance focused on forming effective local planning teams, assessing community needs, developing outcomes-based early childhood plans, and designing implementation strategies.

Despite significant diversity in the size and geographic regions of the selected cities, a common theme emerged in nearly all of the plans – the need to support parents of young children. Community assessments, including

direct input from families, revealed that many parents of young children were not aware of the resources available to them and those who were indicated that additional supports would be helpful.

With support from the Freddie Mac Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the YEF Institute embarked on the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project in 2005. The goal of this effort was to help mayors, city councilmembers, and other municipal officials create local systems of support for parents of young children from birth through age five.

The YEF Institute hosted a two-day CSP Leadership Academy, held March 31 – April 1, 2005, to discuss opportunities for municipal action and to share best practices from cities with successful parent support initiatives. The 25 participating cities and towns were then invited to apply for 16 months of technical assistance, from June 2005 through October 2006, to put these ideas into action.

In June 2005, NLC announced that six cities had been competitively selected to participate in the technical assistance project:

- Bryan, Texas
- Charleston, South Carolina
- Enfield, Connecticut
- Fort Worth, Texas
- Lakewood, Ohio
- Longmont, Colorado

By providing concrete ideas, tools for action, and opportunities for peer exchange, the YEF Institute helped participating cities and towns take steps to develop or enhance work in one or more of the following areas:

1. **Communication campaigns**, such as media campaigns, grassroots outreach, or published materials to educate parents and other caregivers on the importance of

early childhood and highlight what they can do to support the healthy and successful development of their young children.

2. **Initiatives to connect families with early childhood resources**, such as family resource guides, help lines, community fairs, community centers, and city-school partnerships to ease the transition to elementary school.
3. **Programs to engage and empower parents**, such as parent education classes or home visiting programs, peer support groups, parent involvement in early care and education programs and elementary schools, and parent leadership and advocacy training.
4. **Efforts to establish or expand family-friendly workplace policies** within city government and/or in private-sector businesses in the community. Examples of such policies include flexible work hours

options, enhanced parental leave, subsidies for early care and education costs, or on-site child care.

It is notable that many of the participating cities and towns sought to adapt successful strategies or programs that they discovered at the initial CSP Leadership Academy or through exchanges with their peers over the course of the project.

The next section of this report presents the experiences of these six cities in the hope that other communities can learn from their efforts. Each city story concludes with the “leadership keys” that helped that community make significant progress.

The final section of this report synthesizes the lessons learned through this project. These lessons are relevant for municipal officials in cities large and small who are seeking to support parents and improve outcomes for young children.

Project Activities

The YEF Institute offered a variety of services and supports to the six cities participating in the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) technical assistance project, from site visits and tailored memos to opportunities for cross-site learning. Each of the local teams made great strides over the course of the project and the six cities developed a strong peer network.

Only NLC member cities that were selected to send a representative to the NLC Leadership Academy on Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children in the spring of 2005 were eligible to apply for this project. The selection process proved to be difficult as the YEF Institute received a strong set of proposals from cities around the country. Cities were chosen based on evidence of the following factors: a clearly defined purpose; a vision of how technical assistance from the YEF Institute could make a difference; high-level commitment; and the breadth, depth, and influence of their proposed team. The YEF Institute also sought to include cities of varying sizes and looked for geographic diversity.

Key project activities included:

● **Ongoing communication and peer exchange.** The YEF Institute hosted monthly, hour-long conference calls with senior municipal staff to present relevant news and research and to allow city teams to share best practices with one another. Topics for the calls included: a federal budget forecast for 2006; projecting costs of early childhood initiatives; maintaining momentum; identifying allies and engaging diverse partners; school readiness and back-to-school activities; understanding community rhythms; finding funding; and improving family, friend, and neighbor care.

● **Cross-site meetings.** Elected officials from the participating cities had an opportunity to meet in March 2006 at a Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children networking breakfast at NLC's Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. This gathering gave project city teams and local elected officials an opportunity to highlight successes and challenges. At the close of the project in October 2006, the YEF Institute hosted a more intensive cross-site meeting for participating municipalities. The day-long gathering in Bethesda, Md., focused on celebrating city successes, identifying next steps, and planning to take local efforts to scale. The day concluded with a tour highlighting early care and education efforts in the District of Columbia and a networking dinner.

● **Site visits.** In 2006, YEF Institute staff conducted four visits to CSP project cities to assist local leaders as they developed action plans and moved these agendas forward. On April 6, 2006, YEF Institute staff joined more than 150 Enfield citizens, including state legislators, city councilmembers, education leaders,

community stakeholders, and Mayor Patrick Tallarita to officially kick off Enfield's early childhood success public education campaign.

On April 19, 2006, YEF Institute staff joined CSP team leads in Bryan, Texas, as the city hosted its first-ever Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference to recognize businesses helping their employees balance life and work demands, and to encourage more businesses to follow suit.

On April 21, 2006, staff met with ten members of Fort Worth's early childhood planning team and helped the group plan Family Resource Rooms and literacy hubs throughout the city.

On May 18, 2006, staff met with 13 members of the mayor's early childhood advisory team in Longmont to discuss the importance of involvement from diverse segments of the community and to strategize ways in which to increase participation from members of the business community.

● **Access to national experts.** Throughout the project, participating cities had opportunities to engage with national experts and leading practitioners on key strategies to support parents. Many of the cities used ideas presented by experts from national organizations on such topics as parent leadership training; family-friendly workplace policies; outreach campaigns; serving diverse populations; and improving family, friend, and neighbor child care. Several adopted programs from other cities, such as Jacksonville, Fla., Boston, Mass., and Palo Alto, Calif., that they learned about at the initial Leadership Academy in the spring of 2005. Cities benefited not only from the

ideas and strategies they gained through YEF Institute meetings and conference calls, but also from the ongoing relationships with these leaders in the field.

- **National and local visibility.** The YEF Institute helped local officials promote the work that they were doing to improve systems of support for parents of young children. In addition to highlighting these cities in NLC's newspaper, *Nation's Cities*

Weekly, the YEF Institute also showcased local officials from two of the CSP project sites on a national audioconference that attracted listeners in cities across the country. Moreover, an October 2006 Leadership Academy showcased successful strategies emerging from the six cities, utilizing elected officials and team members as faculty.

City Stories



Bryan, Texas

Promoting Family-Friendly Workplace Policies

After Bryan, Texas, witnessed a significant increase in juvenile crime in the 1990s, municipal officials began looking for new ways to foster the healthy development of local children and youth. Based on research documenting the importance of the early years in shaping later outcomes for children, the city focused on initiatives serving young children and their parents.

Despite a very small budget, the City of Bryan experienced tremendous success in developing and implementing programs serving children and youth in partnership with existing community organizations. The city's youth services coordinator, who over time took responsibility for neighborhood services, serves on the executive management team and is an important advisor to the mayor, City Council, and city manager on all areas regarding youth development within the community.

Due to the commitment of former Mayor Pro-Tem Paul Madison and his staff, the City of Bryan was poised to take advantage of the technical assistance offered through

NLC's Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project to move into a new area of parent support: encouraging family-friendly workplace policies among local employers.

Getting Started

Former Mayor Pro-Tem Paul Madison and Ronnie Jackson, the neighborhood/youth services coordinator, participated in NLC's Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children Leadership Academy in the spring of 2005. Both returned to Bryan motivated to apply for technical assistance to develop new strategies for supporting parents of young children.

When Bryan was selected as one of the six participating municipalities, Jackson was appointed as the team lead. He quickly recruited community leaders from various sectors to help set local priorities and manage the project. Members of the planning team represented public entities, such as neighborhood/youth services, human resources, and the public library; Project



Bryan, Texas

Bryan is a city in Brazos County, Texas, and is located in the heart of the Brazos Valley in southeast central Texas, an area often referred to as “Aggieland.” Bryan and College Station, which is just south and home of Texas A&M University, together make up the College Station-Bryan metropolitan area, home to just under 200,000 residents. The city’s Youth Services Department maximizes the community’s efforts and resources devoted to children to ensure that they get off to a good start in life.

Population	56,277
% White	70.1%
% Black.....	16.4%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	32.6%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	2.7%
% American Indian.....	0.2%
% Other	8.6%
% Multiracial.....	2.0%
Median Household Income.....	\$30,012
Unemployment Rate.....	3.1%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for College Station-Bryan Area

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Some respondents placed themselves in more than one category.)



Unity, a local nonprofit health and human services organization; Blinn College; the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program; Bryan Independent School District; and Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce.

Working in partnership with YEF Institute staff, team members from Bryan reviewed their current activities to support parents of young children and discussed priorities for action. In addition to providing funding to help the local United Way update their parent resource guide, the team determined that they could best enhance existing efforts by promoting family-friendly workplace policies. YEF Institute staff discussed possible strategies with the planning team, and ultimately the team decided to pursue a conference that could help put issues of work/life balance on the radar screen for employers and provide positive recognition for employers with model practices.

Building Partnerships for Family-Friendly Workplace Practices

Project lead Ronnie Jackson spent significant time reaching out to appropriate partners to help with the planning and implementation of a conference focused on family-friendly workplace practices. Key partners included:

- Texas A & M University;
- United Way of the Brazos Valley;
- Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce;
- Brazos Valley Human Resource Group;
- Kelly Services; and
- Corporate Voices for Working Families (CVWF).

The City of Bryan served as the lead sponsor for the conference, soliciting the support of key stakeholders and covering most of the costs for printing brochures, providing conference bags, and securing the presenters.

Other key partners helped by hosting the conference, encouraging the business community to participate, identifying resource materials for conference participants, and designing a questionnaire to capture human resource policies.

Convening Employers

On April 19, 2006, the City of Bryan hosted its first-ever Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference to recognize how local businesses have helped their employees balance family and work demands and to encourage more employers to follow suit.

Approximately 60 business executives, local officials, senior city staff, and community stakeholders gathered on the campus of Texas A&M University to discuss how employers can strengthen their ability to recruit and train the best talent, decrease turnover and training costs, and increase overall employee productivity by making stronger efforts to meet the needs of parents.

Speakers representing the marketing and communications firm Guerra, DeBerry, and Coody, and the national employer association Corporate Voices for Working Families, provided participants with creative strategies to respond to the needs of families in the nation's changing workforce. In addition, the conference highlighted innovative family-


friendly workplace policies in the Lopez Super Markets of Brownsville and Neutral Posture of Bryan, a local manufacturer of ergonomic seating, which was also featured in a local news story prior to the conference.

To showcase successful local practices, three of the city's businesses were honored.

Century 21 Beal Real Estate, University Title Company, and the Texas A&M University Research Foundation described their policies to help employees balance work and family life. These policies included offering "health and wellness days," purchasing school supplies, offering a compressed work week, and providing on-site learning activities for children. The local television media featured short segments on these three businesses that received awards for their family-friendly practices.

Conference Impact

As a result of the research and discussions involved in planning the conference, the City of Bryan increasingly saw employer policies as an important way to support existing families and attract new residents to the city. The city's Human Resources Department added sick leave for employees with aging or elderly parents in need of hospitalization or professional care, and they are considering allowing employees time off (with supervisor



“There is great value in parents maintaining a work/life balance during their children’s early years of development. These are the years in which children acquire the skills to be ready for school and this leads to long-term economic development that benefits the entire city.”

– Councilmember Ben Hardeman, City of Bryan

approval) to visit their child's school as a part of their paid leave.

Conference organizers also believe that the meeting served as a catalyst for other municipal and business leaders to evaluate existing practices and adopt more family-friendly policies. The neighboring city of College Station, for instance, is working with Bryan to implement more family-friendly workplace practices and spread the word about the benefits of such policies through the local Human Resources networks. In fact, College Station was so excited about the work Bryan undertook and the support they received from the YEF Institute that they joined the National League of Cities to have access to similar technical assistance projects in the future.

The City of Bryan has pledged to continue working on these issues and will co-sponsor another Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference in December 2007. Based on the success of the first conference, the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce, the City of College Station, Texas A&M University, Blinn College, the United Way of the Brazos Valley, and other business stakeholders are committed to participating as well.



Next Steps

Looking toward the future, senior city staff and community partners are seeking new ways to bolster early care and education issues and make parent support a community-wide priority. Leaders in the city government are interested in adopting components of Enfield's Key Initiatives to Early Education (KITE) program – particularly the hosting of a formal event to highlight early childhood resources and materials tailored to diverse segments of the community.

In addition, team members are planning a "Community Plunge" in early spring of 2008, through which the mayor, city councilmembers, state senators, and leaders of several local corporations and banks are invited to ride on a transit bus to visit local early care and education programs. Organizers hope that this first-hand experience will help leaders better understand the importance of improving services and programs for young children and their parents.

Finally, the city has entered into an agreement to help promote and underwrite television programs focused on early care and education, which will be aired on the local PBS station. These programs will feature local professionals sharing ideas and information for parents and providers related to early care and education. This agreement, modeled after the City of San Antonio's partnership with their local PBS affiliate, gives the city permission to show these programs on the local cable access channel and post them on the city's Web site with streaming video.

Through the dedicated efforts of the city and the strong partnerships they created during the CSP project, Bryan is well-positioned to continue putting the needs of children and their parents on the agenda for employers, public officials, and the community as a whole.

Leadership Keys - Bryan

- **Started with a clear, achievable goal.**

The City of Bryan and its planning partners quickly determined that they needed an organizing event to ground their efforts to promote family-friendly workplace practices. By focusing on planning a conference, they had a specific project for which they could recruit business leaders and other stakeholders as partners. It was clear how each partner contributed to the goal, reinforcing the collaborative nature of the venture and making all team members feel vested in the outcome. Finally, the implementation of the conference gave the partners a sense of accomplishment that spurred further joint action.

- **Created strong local partnerships.**

Recognizing that they could not do it alone, the city reached out to a core set of partners to help plan and implement the Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference. Most of the partners were already on board but in a few instances, to secure buy-in, the CSP team lead had to make the case with data and personal testimonials from families who had bene-

fit from family-friendly workplace policies. Each partner ended up making an important contribution, from covering conference costs to providing space, developing program content, and recruiting speakers and participants. In addition, the city chose partners that command respect in the community and have broad networks, helping to spread the word that family support should be a community-wide priority.

- **Utilized public recognition to engage and encourage employers.**

By providing awards for employers who already had successful family-friendly workplace practices, the Bryan CSP team encouraged these business leaders to continue and expand their efforts. The policies and activities of the honored businesses also provided a good example for other employers. Moreover, the recognition that these employers received among peers at the conference and the positive press coverage surrounding the conference demonstrated that supporting employees as they balance work and family can be good for their business image.



Charleston, South Carolina Giving Parents the Tools to Support Early Learning

Charleston is culturally and historically rich, but remains economically and educationally poor in many neighborhoods. Throughout his eight consecutive terms of office, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., has worked with the school district and other key stakeholders to improve early childhood resources and to engage and empower parents. In 2005, Mayor Riley spearheaded a countywide dialogue about the need for local municipalities to support a set of unified, community-based early literacy and parent support services. The ultimate goal of these efforts was to improve student performance, reduce the high school dropout rate, and improve low-performing schools.

Through NLC's Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) technical assistance project, Charleston sought to enhance and expand local initiatives that help parents of young children foster early learning in the home. The city and its partners also launched a significant public awareness campaign, which emphasized the importance of quality early care and education and provided tips and resources to parents.

A Strong Infrastructure for Early Childhood Success

With significant buy-in from the mayor and other local elected officials, residents mobilized in 2004 to create a partnership that could strengthen the local early education infrastructure under the auspices of the Trident United Way Success By 6 Initiative. This coalition is composed of a diverse group of more than 30 early childhood professionals and community leaders, including representatives from the four school districts in the Charleston area, Head Start, the public library, and numerous nonprofit organizations; educators from the local colleges and universities; medical professionals; and business leaders with an interest in the economic impact of early care and education.

The Success By 6 coalition, with active participation from city staff and the strong support of the mayor, served as the lead for the CSP project. The director of the Mayor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families has been a long-term member of – and leader within – the coalition, working to ensure that young children receive needed supports and participate in



Charleston, South Carolina

Charleston, founded in 1670 and located in the “lowcountry” of South Carolina, is the second most populous and the fastest growing city in the state. The Mayor’s Office for Children, Youth, and Families focuses on improving conditions for children and mobilizes resources in the community to work on their behalf. Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., first elected in 1975, has served eight terms.

Population	109,151
% White	59.6%
% Black.....	37.3%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	2.1%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	2.0%
% American Indian.....	0.1%
% Other	0.3%
% Multiracial.....	0.7%
Median Household Income.....	\$49,673
Unemployment Rate.....	3.8%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for Metro Area

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Some respondents placed themselves in more than one category.)

quality programs that lead to a productive future. Mayor Riley created the office in 1994 to improve the quality of life for the city’s young people and their families and build a sustainable infrastructure of services that relies on collaborative partnerships and volunteers.

Understanding Community Needs

Members of the coalition agreed that the community must ensure that young children, parents, and caregivers have access to an array of information, services, and opportunities related to healthy child devel-

opment. To identify existing gaps in service delivery, the city and members of the coalition conducted a comprehensive needs assessment. The Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University and the Riley Institute at the College of Charleston collected information that gave the city an accurate picture of the early care and education situation in Charleston.

Results of these studies found that more than 17 percent of the area’s infants were born to mothers without a high school education, a key predictor of later difficulty in school. More than 11 percent of the children in the region failed first, second, or third grades; by fourth grade, more than 25 percent of the students were below the 25th percentile in math, reading, and language. The long-term consequences of these early failures were evident: the area had a high school dropout rate of more than 40 percent, and nearly half of the 19- to 24-year-olds in the area scored below the literacy level that is typically required for most entry-level jobs.

The researchers recommended that the Success By 6 coalition, in its capacity as the region’s catalyst for change, articulate a community vision for a system of needed supports for families with young children. They defined the “system of supports” to include family environment supports, learning environment supports, and community environment supports.

Supporting Early Learning in the Home

Following Charleston’s participation in the YEF Institute’s Cities Supporting Parents Leadership Academy in the spring of 2005 and utilizing knowledge gained at the event, the coalition developed the Lowcountry Reads Project. This project serves as the foundation for a community-based system of early literacy and parent support services for families with children from birth to school entry. Three of the programs that were developed mirror programs presented at the Academy:



“The resources, technical assistance, and the opportunity to learn from other cities as a result of our participation in the NLC learning communities and the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children initiative allowed us to place a greater focus on supporting parents, child care, and early childhood education.”

— Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., City of Charleston

- **Born to Read:** The City of Charleston launched Born to Read in the spring of 2006. Through this program, prospective and new parents receive “welcome baby” kits that encourage parents to read to their new baby. A private donor gave \$20,000 to fund the program, and the city partnered with the public library and medical university’s children’s hospital to launch the program.
- **Countdown to Kindergarten:** In August 2006, the city launched Countdown to Kindergarten, which helps parents of four-year-olds support their children as they transition into kindergarten. Local businesses, government agencies, libraries, and schools host events that focus on literacy and other school readiness skills. The program provides parents with school registration and school readiness materials to be used at home to enhance learning skills. Program staff attend city events to talk with parents about school readiness and enroll their four-year-olds in the program. The program also holds an annual kindergarten registration event which allows parents to meet with school officials and kindergarten teachers, as well as receive necessary health and dental screenings. Charleston is modeling their program after Boston’s Countdown to Kindergarten initiative, which was featured at the Leadership Academy.
- **Countdown to Kindergarten Book Club:** Charleston is also incorporating a book club into Countdown to Kindergarten, an adaptation of the Mayor’s Book Club in Jacksonville, Fla., which was also highlighted at the YEF Institute Leadership Academy. The Countdown to Kindergarten Book Club engages families with four-year-olds in a year-long adventure of reading together. The goal of the project is to help build literacy as a core value in the home, and the mayor actively promotes community awareness on the importance of literacy. The program partnered with Barnes & Noble Booksellers and area television, radio, and newspapers to create a book drive to collect books for families who were most in need. Participating children receive a backpack filled with school readiness materials and an “I’m going to Kindergarten” t-shirt.

Getting the Word Out

In addition to new programs to promote early literacy, Mayor Riley and members of the early childhood coalition wanted to make



sure that parents – and the broader community – recognize the importance of early childhood success and know how to make a difference in the life of a young child.

In the spring of 2006, Mayor Riley invited all of the local media outlets—newspaper, television, and radio—to a meeting in his office to discuss the importance of early care and education to the overall success and growth of cities. At this meeting, Mayor Riley asked that they commit a certain portion of their coverage and resources to promote early childhood issues and programs.

As a result, leaders in the local media agreed to support these efforts and the amount of coverage of early education increased tremendously. A leading newspaper, for

example, featured several front page articles on the new programs, describing the project's collaborations, partnerships, and the impact of early education on the community. Weekly city newspapers have also run ads on the importance of early reading.

To keep the momentum going, the coalition launched a second major communication strategy: a “Born Learning” public education campaign. Through this campaign, they aired public service announcements and distributed high-quality written materials with information about child development and community resources for parents and child care providers. In addition to locally designed television and radio PSAs, broadcast and print media also ran Born Learning PSAs that were developed by the Ad Council and United Way of America. Local businesses sponsored these ads more than 100 times each month. Each ad included Trident United Way's 24-hour 211 information hotline where parents can call to request additional information on child development resources.

Success By 6 also created its own television show that airs continuously on the local cable access station, with new shows provided weekly. This show features local experts and organizations that provide parents with information on child development, early learning activities, and community events.

“Much is at stake for the future of our children here in Charleston. As a community, we continue to focus on supporting and empowering parents, implementing family-friendly workplace policies, and connecting parents with early childhood resources and our partnerships.”

— Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., City of Charleston

Finally, Charleston has found that community events can be effective venues for getting the word out. For instance, Countdown to Kindergarten was launched at the annual First Day of School Festival in August 2006. This celebration of education generates support for

schools and excitement about the beginning of another school year. Children and families enjoy free school supplies, educational information, and fun activities for all ages, while connecting to community resources and finding new ways to support early learning.

Leadership Keys – Charleston

● Involved the media from the beginning.

Early in the process of implementing a community-wide strategy for early childhood success, Mayor Riley personally reached out to a variety of media outlets, including television, print media, and radio. He met with them to share his passion for the subject and convey that this was a community priority. At the same time, he sought their input on the best methods to promote the project and asked them to be partners in the project. As a result, the Success By 6 PSAs received significant air time, the local newspaper featured the project on the front page, and weekly city newspapers ran ads on the importance of early reading.

● Assessed local needs and program impact.

The Charleston Success By 6 team sought to ground their efforts in research, both about community needs and programmatic strategies. They worked with Clemson University and the College of Charleston to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the needs of young children and identify gaps in service delivery. After gaining a better understanding of local needs, they recognized that they should not assume they already had or knew the best practices. With assistance from NLC, they researched

and analyzed a variety of models that had demonstrated results in other cities and sought to adapt them to the particular needs of the community. Not only did they find this research-based approach led to a better overall program, but they also found that businesses and foundations were more willing to fund a well-designed program using evidence-based interventions and measurable outcomes.

● Provided sustained leadership over time.

Municipal leaders are well-positioned to help communicate key messages about early care and education to the public, to other policymakers, and to parents and other caregivers. Mayor Riley raised awareness among the public and policymakers that it is important to invest in efforts to support early care and education. He helped sharpen the focus on the seriousness of supporting parents and investing early in the development process. He used his leadership to bring together key stakeholders to develop a continuum of services that is strengthening outcomes for children and their parents. In addition, he provided parents and other caregivers of young children with information and resources about city and community services that promotes healthy development.



Enfield, Connecticut

Fostering Parent Engagement and Leadership

Enfield, Conn., has a long history of residents working to improve the quality of life for young children and their family members. In response to a 1997 state initiative that called on communities to focus on improving school readiness through access to quality early education, the Town of Enfield formed an active and inclusive School Readiness Council (SRC). The SRC, with support from the William Caspar Graustein Foundation, then produced a school readiness action plan that guides the town's current and ongoing early childhood efforts. As a result, Enfield has received state and federal recognition for the continuity of services provided to young children and their families.

Despite this strong foundation, municipal leaders in Enfield felt in recent years that they needed to do more to coordinate existing efforts, bring in new partners, and foster parent engagement and advocacy.

The Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project helped Enfield expand and unify community support for young children and their parents. Enfield was

able to successfully weave together the efforts of the School Readiness Council, the town's social services staff, and the local United Way into a coordinated outreach and public education campaign. They generated creative new business and municipal partnerships and offered parents the necessary training and support to become actively involved in local policy and planning decisions.

Creating a Collaborative Approach

At the outset of the CSP project, the city reached out to the SRC to work together on new strategies for supporting parents of young children. In addition, they recognized the important role that the local United Way played in the lives of children and families and worked to develop a closer working relationship with this critical local organization.

As a result of this outreach, the city, the SRC, and the United Way determined that all of their efforts would be stronger if they were coordinated more effectively. Key stakeholders decided to create a collaborative campaign to raise awareness about the



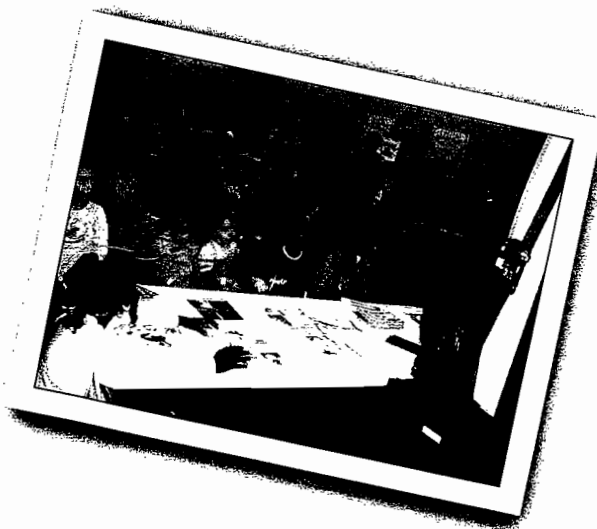
Enfield, Connecticut

The Town of Enfield is a suburb of Hartford, Conn., and only eight miles south of Springfield, Mass. Originally colonized in 1683 as part of Massachusetts, it was annexed to Connecticut in 1749. LEGO and Hallmark are the town's two largest employers. Governed by a council-manager system of government, the town seeks to enhance youth development where children and families can grow together.

Population	45,212
% White	89.7%
% Black.....	5.6%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	3.7%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	1.3%
% American Indian.....	0.2%
% Other	1.6%
% Multiracial.....	1.5%
Median Household Income.....	\$52,810
Unemployment Rate.....	4.5%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for Hartford County

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2000 U.S. Census)



importance of the early years and educate parents and other community members on what they can do to promote early childhood success.

In order to present a unified front in their outreach and public education efforts, the new partners developed a name for their collaboration: Enfield Key Initiatives to Early Education, or KITE. This new name and the related logo helped them brand their messages to the public and potential partners.

Launching a Public Education Campaign

On April 6, 2006, more than 150 Enfield citizens—including state representatives, councilmembers, early education experts, school leaders, members of civic organizations, and business leaders—joined Mayor Patrick Tallarita and Councilmember Brian H. Peruta to officially kick off Enfield's public education campaign to promote early childhood success.

At this event, the city and its partners officially launched the KITE collaboration and rolled out its public awareness campaign, called Early Learning Matters. This campaign included educational materials to support parents as their children's first teachers. Materials also offered a unified message for all community members about the importance of supporting early childhood success.

In addition to the broader outreach and education messages, the KITE partners developed customized pamphlets for different stakeholders in the community, including religious leaders, health care providers, school administrators, representatives of civic organizations, business executives, and public safety officials.

Reaching Out to Parents

Throughout the project, CSP project team members approached key stakeholders and

held community meetings to ensure that the entire community was aware of current and future early education efforts in Enfield. Several promising new business and municipal partnerships emerged from these efforts.

At the request of the town, the Westfield Shoppingtown Mall agreed to donate available kiosks near the mall's play area to display community and parenting information. They also provided informative parenting videos in the mall's family lounge, which is used primarily by parents of young children. Further, the managers of the mall were excited about the idea of displaying preschool artwork during the Week of the Young Child in April and hosting the Showcase of Schools, an event in which schools put student artwork and class projects on display for the community to see.

The Town of Enfield and the public schools also collaborated with the local TGI Friday's restaurant to engage parents in educational activities with their children. Each Tuesday, children who dined with their parents ate for free. The restaurant provided families with puzzles, games, and books that they shared

while they waited for dinner and, at the end of their meal, parents were given educational materials to take home. The response was overwhelmingly positive from the restaurant owners and the parents.

The Enfield Fire Department had already taken steps to support young children through annual firehouse tours for families with kindergarteners, including educational and safety materials and t-shirts for the children. In response to the CSP project, the firefighters expanded their engagement with families and are now willing partners and volunteers at community events hosted by members of the local education campaign.

Opening a New Parent Resource Center

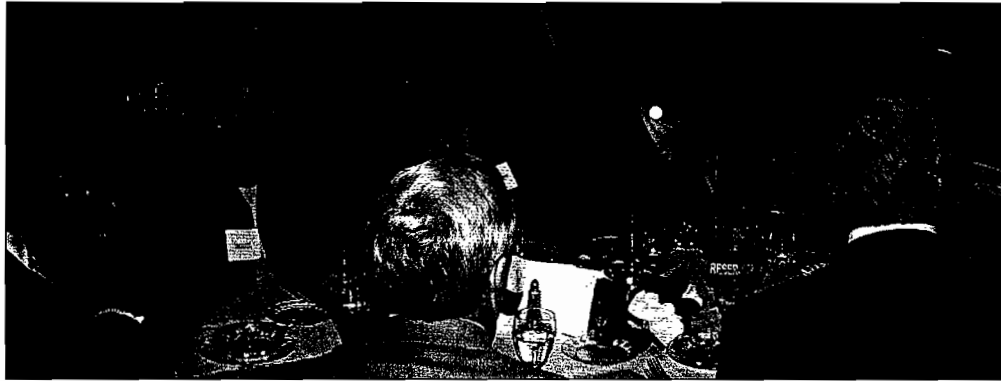
To provide more in-depth support to parents, the city and SRC worked to establish a new Parent Resource Center that opened in the fall of 2006.

The center offers family support services such as parenting education workshops and adult education programs. It also provides a meeting space for parents, with an adjoining play area for children. Parents often get together to



“Over time, high-value early childhood programs have shown that both children and taxpayers gain when communities have vision and are willing to make the appropriate investments in their future today. Policymakers need to understand that the investment in children is a powerful tool for change in their communities and, as such, they should be advocating to make it a priority.”

— Councilmember Brian H. Peruta, Town of Enfield



support one another and take advantage of the many free educational resources that are available for adults and children.

The center's staff are compiling a list of all local child care centers for parents to access on their Web site. The Web site also includes links to other parent educational resources, such as Born Learning materials.

Providing Leadership Training for Local Parents

Beyond efforts to educate and support parents, the Enfield CSP project team sought to help a smaller group of parents become active leaders in local efforts to improve outcomes for young children. After exploring the parent leadership training approach at NLC's 2005 CSP Leadership Academy, the Enfield team determined that connecting parents to more intensive training could help them bring the voices of parents into local decision-making in a more meaningful way.

The Town of Enfield secured a \$90,000 grant from the MassMutual Insurance Company to allow 15 parents to attend a Parent Leadership Academy, hosted by the Greater Hartford Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute then agreed to allow an additional five parents to attend the sessions for free, for a total of 20 Enfield participants.

The first cohort began in February 2006 and graduated from the program in June. The

curriculum introduced parents to the skills and knowledge necessary for becoming effective advocates for their children. Training components focused on leadership, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills. The training was very successful, with positive feedback from both the parents and trainers. Participating parents left the program eager to support early education issues. CSP project team leaders then placed parent graduates on planning teams or boards where they were given the opportunity to use the skills they learned in the training to advocate for quality early care programs.

The graduates formed an alumni group that takes on local projects to help improve the community. For instance, they planned and convened a service fair at a local elementary school. They also designed and planted a community garden, including a kids' garden, which grows food for the food pantry. In addition, they lobbied the local government for library and school funding.

Even with training, the Town of Enfield discovered that there are challenges to keeping parents engaged when change happens slowly in the policy arena. Enfield plans to continue offering parent leadership training programs each year and will develop a separate working group to collaborate with the KITE Committee, called KITE Parents, to ensure that parents remain at the center of local efforts to support children and families.

Leadership Keys – Enfield

- **Generated momentum with a community-wide kick-off event.**

Mayor Tallarita and Councilmember Peruta publicly demonstrated that young children are a priority in Enfield by bringing the entire community together to launch the KITE early childhood public education campaign. This event also provided a very visible forum to highlight the partnerships that had been built to better coordinate existing and future early childhood initiatives. Finally, this public gathering served as a call for new partners, encouraging individuals, organizations, and businesses to ask themselves what they could do to help more children get off to a successful start.

- **Reached out to parents where they live their lives.**

Recognizing that many parents of young children have limited time and energy to search for information on community resources, the Enfield CSP team developed innovative partnerships to meet parents where they are. They made

information available at the child area at the mall where parents shop or simply take their children play. If parents go out to dinner at the local TGI Friday's restaurant, they receive parent resources and opportunities to read and play with their children. Finally, the city made new resources available to parents of young children at an existing family center located within a local elementary school.

- **Provided concrete action steps for parents.**

The Town of Enfield recognized the importance of not only educating parents about the importance of the early years but also offering them specific opportunities to take action. For some parents, this may have meant that the message to read to their children was reinforced when they went out to dinner and received books to read to their children while waiting for their meals. For others who received parent leadership training, the skills and knowledge they gained were immediately put into practice as they took on new appointments to local boards and planning teams.





Fort Worth, Texas

Providing Innovative Programs for Diverse Populations

In the culturally diverse community of Fort Worth, Texas, city leaders want to ensure that young children of all backgrounds get off to a good start. Black and Latino residents comprise half of the population, and one-quarter of all Fort Worth households speak a language other than English. Moreover, the biggest enrollment increases within the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) are concentrated in areas where the Latino population has increased, and Census Bureau projections suggest that the number of Latino children in the county will continue to grow.

To ensure that their efforts to support parents of young children meet the needs of all families, municipal leaders initiated a collaborative effort called Early Childhood Matters (ECM) in 2004. The ECM Working Group strives to bring about meaningful changes at multiple levels: in the community, among parents and caregivers, and among early care and education programs.

Through the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project, Fort Worth tackled projects at each of these levels. They

designed and executed a coordinated, community-wide public education campaign. They supported parents and offered early learning activities through early literacy hubs. Finally, they improved parents' early care and education options by working with both formal and informal providers to boost the quality of care.

A Strong Foundation

In March 2003, former Fort Worth Mayor Pro Tem Ralph McCloud made a commitment to launch a long-term strategic planning process focused on early childhood as part of NLC's 100 City Challenge for Early Childhood Success.

Shortly thereafter, the City of Fort Worth asked Camp Fire USA – First Texas Council to convene local stakeholders who would propose an action plan to improve outcomes for young children. The Fort Worth City Council formally endorsed the proposed plan in October 2004 as the Early Childhood Matters initiative. The action plan's goals are to support families and child care providers (including family, friend, and neighbor care-



Fort Worth, Texas

According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data, Fort Worth has been one of the fastest growing large cities of more than 500,000 in the nation since April 2000. The city is the 17th-largest city in the United States, one of “America’s Most Livable Communities,” as well as the “museum capital of the southwest.” City leaders seek to ensure that young children are healthy and safe, successful in school, and connected to caring adults, allowing them the opportunity to contribute to the progress of the city.

Population	604,538
% White	60.8%
% Black.....	18.4%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	31.9%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	4.3%
% American Indian.....	0.9%
% Other	13.9%
% Multiracial.....	1.7%
Median Household Income.....	\$40,663
Unemployment Rate.....	3.8%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for Tarrant County

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Some respondents placed themselves in more than one category.)

givers), improve the quality and accessibility of early care and education programs, and improve the health of children.

In 2005, the city’s CSP project team also succeeded in engaging school district leaders in the ECM initiative. The director of the FWISD’s Early Childhood Department attended the CSP project cross-site meeting during the YEF Institute’s 2005 National Summit on Your City’s Families, and a

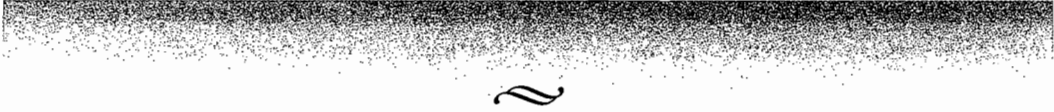
member of the FWISD Board of Trustees participated in the YEF Institute’s 2006 Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children Leadership Academy. As a result, the city and the school district are collaborating to more closely coordinate their early childhood programs. Furthermore, the school district helped disseminate information to families, provided additional technical assistance, and allowed the ECM program to locate in FWISD facilities during the summer months.

One of the first activities of the ECM initiative was to come together with other local early childhood organizations to draft a large federal grant application, which was funded in 2005. The Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) grant provided more than \$680,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with local partners and the city committing in-kind matching funds of \$125,000. Many of the activities included in the grant – such as parent education sessions, story times at the local library, special activities with fathers/grandfathers, and group reading sessions – became part of the city’s overall strategy for supporting parents of young children.

Coordinating Public Education Campaigns

At the beginning of the CSP project, several groups in the greater Fort Worth area were beginning communication campaigns to reach various target markets within a county of more than 1.5 million people. Each had a very limited budget and was interested in coordinating its awareness messages. The resulting public education effort included representatives from Fort Worth’s Early Childhood Matters initiative, United Way of Tarrant County, Arlington Child Care Council (Arlington, Texas), and Touchpoints, a community collaboration to share the T. Barry Brazelton model of interaction.

NLC provided technical assistance to the ECM team on creating clear and consistent



“We know that investments in early childhood can have lifelong benefits. I would like to see the Early Childhood Matters program extended throughout the city of Fort Worth so that more families and children will reap these benefits.”

— Councilmember Sal Espino, City of Fort Worth

messages and the role of branding in communication campaigns. Through access to national communications experts and other cities with local campaigns, Fort Worth got new ideas about how to get their message out to parents and other community members.

Based on these discussions, the four groups agreed that each would use materials from the national Born Learning campaign (a partnership among the United Way of America, the Ad Council, and Civitas), and include logos of the partnering groups on all general messages. They also designed a shared flyer format and a tag line that provided a graphic link on publications of the partner organizations. The consistent tag line, “Working together – because every child deserves a chance,” helped frame a shared mission and vision across groups. Moreover, the coordinated format, color palette, and message helped build credibility and awareness in the early stages more quickly than could have happened otherwise.

The four groups also agreed that each would share freely any research they conducted and any communication materials they developed locally without regard to proprietary ownership. Finally, to maximize the campaign’s reach, the participating organizations opted to concentrate their outreach in different parts of the city.

As a result of credibility and focus generated

through participation in the CSP project, the Early Childhood Matters initiative received a \$25,000 award from Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, the local workforce development board, to aid in startup and branding. Thus, funding was available to implement the initial coordinated communication plan rather quickly.

The joint communication campaign was officially launched at a community event coordinated by the United Way, which showcased the Born Learning resources. At the event, Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief spoke passionately about the need for children to be ready for school and the importance of partners working together to support parents and caregivers.

Developing Early Literacy Hubs

Reaching parents and other caregivers in specific, high-need communities is an important goal for the initiative. The main strategy developed to accomplish this goal was the creation of neighborhood literacy hubs called Early Childhood Resource Centers. The city piloted this model in two low-income neighborhoods – the North Side and Polytechnic – where overwhelming majorities of elementary school children are eligible for the free breakfast/lunch program. Even for families above the poverty level, household incomes in the target areas lag behind the county. In addition, language

barriers and low educational attainment among parents put children at risk for entering school with limited language and literacy skills.

The Resource Centers mobilize and support parents and other caregivers to provide early language and literacy experiences for children from birth to age five. The first literacy hub opened in February 2006 in the North Side of Fort Worth; the Polytechnic hub opened in March 2006. The hubs offer parent education programs, lending libraries of materials for parents and children to use at home, consultation with early childhood specialists, and facilitated support groups of parents. They also offer the opportunity for families to learn about other supportive community services and resources, and they host a variety of free activities that support children's healthy development. Many of the participants are grandparents who are part of an extended family or who are raising their grandchildren in their own households. One year after the program got off the ground, more than 450 parents had joined the Resource Center's network.

City Council and neighborhood support continues to be strong. Councilmembers visit the sites to give their encouragement to the parents. Leaders of neighborhood associations, nonprofit groups, school administrators, and parents have joined together to form Neighborhood Early Childhood Leadership Councils. In addition to advising the staff at the centers, the councils recruit parents and sponsor neighborhood events to raise awareness about the program and its goals.

Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers

Recognizing that child care providers also need support, the ECM team reached out to the informal family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers commonly used by Latino families in the areas served by the Resource

Centers. ECM partners benefited from participating in a special conference on supporting FFN caregivers that was arranged by NLC.

Often parents of young children themselves, FFN caregivers were encouraged to attend not only the parent education programs, but also special monthly sessions that focused on various aspects of caring for others' children. During these two-hour training sessions, FFN providers discussed topics ranging from child development to business relationships among friends and family. Upon request, child care consultants also visited FFN caregivers in their homes to offer technical assistance and advice on improving their caregiving. In the first year of the program, 130 FFN caregivers participated in 260 hours of specialized training.

The program also provided a resource kit of educational toys and equipment tailored to each FFN provider's situation. Several of these caregivers made the choice to become regulated, extending the care they provide to additional families and professionalizing their services even further.

Improving Regulated Child Care Programs

Similar to the support offered to FFN caregivers, the Early Childhood Resource Centers provide monthly training sessions, periodic on-site technical assistance, and educational resources to regulated child care centers and family child care providers in the two neighborhoods. Several individual child care professionals also received scholarships to attend a one-day conference on early brain development. In the first year, 154 child care program staff attended 616 hours of training.

Because child care programs in low-income communities typically operate on very limited budgets and there is very little publicly-funded professional development in the area, these free programs were well

received. Offering support to child care programs also helped to keep the Early Childhood Matters initiative visible throughout the community, and led to the recruitment of additional members to the Neighborhood Early Childhood Leadership Councils.

Where resources are very limited, competition among child care programs can be intense. The Early Childhood Matters collaborative approach has helped to bring the child care community together around the common vision of improving children's success in school.

Leadership Keys – Fort Worth

● **Coordinated multiple early childhood campaigns.**

Although a variety of local agencies had different agendas and approaches, Fort Worth found that collaboration strengthened all programs and helped get a clear, consistent message across to parents. Their joint marketing campaign used common materials, a strong visual logo, and the tag line “Working together – because every child deserves a chance.” These elements helped tie together divergent early childhood campaigns, building credibility among funders and boosting message resonance among citizens.

● **Built strong neighborhood leadership.**

The Fort Worth Early Childhood Matters initiative recognized that programs to improve outcomes for young children are most successful when they tap parents as leaders and allow members of different neighborhoods to define their own needs. By bringing parents together with leaders of neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and the school system through the Neighborhood Early Childhood

Leadership Councils, Fort Worth's programs are more likely to meet the needs of local families and have greater community buy-in. The ECM team also found strong partnerships with local elementary schools to be critical in meeting specialized neighborhood needs.

● **Identified and addressed cultural differences.**

Understanding the city's cultural diversity, the ECM team worked to ensure that its efforts met the needs of the city's sizable Latino population. For instance, because a greater percentage of Latino parents relied on family members, friends, and neighbors as caregivers, the city sponsored specialized training and home visits for FFN child care providers. They also found that, although recruiting and training could be time consuming, careful selection of staff people was essential to build trust, deliver culturally competent services, and provide a safe and welcoming atmosphere. Bilingual trainers and staff persons were needed to encourage non-English speakers to attend trainings and events.



Lakewood, Ohio

Responding to the Needs of Parents

Located outside of Cleveland, the city of Lakewood, Ohio, has witnessed demographic shifts similar to those of other first-tier suburbs, making the community as a whole – and particularly its population of families with young children – more racially and ethnically diverse. In addition, a rising number of parents of young children work in low-wage jobs without benefits, increasing the need for economic supports and child care assistance.

In response to these changes, local officials in Lakewood decided it was time to reassess how well they were meeting the needs of families. Through the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project, city officials and community residents determined that more parents – particularly those in underserved neighborhoods – would benefit from an additional family resource center, replicating the successful Lakewood Family Room.

The Lakewood CSP project team also determined that, to be effective, they needed to work carefully and collaboratively to determine an appropriate location, consult with

parents about their most pressing programming needs, and launch a communications campaign to engage parents.

A Foundation of Family Support

In reaction to the closing of a large, high-quality child care center in the late 1980s, parents in Lakewood worked with school and city officials to establish the Lakewood Childcare Services Advisory Board. The Advisory Board's work highlighted the need for institutional support for early care and education. The city responded by creating the Division of Early Childhood in 1992, part of the newly established Department of Human Services, which picked up the work of the Advisory Board. This division was designed to build on the strengths of families raising young children by providing services and resources to enhance parenting skills, while improving the overall quality of early care and education in Lakewood.

One of the first actions taken by the Division of Early Childhood was the opening of the Lakewood Family Room in 1994 using space donated by a local church. The Family Room



Lakewood, Ohio

Lakewood is a city in Cuyahoga County, part of the Greater Cleveland Metropolitan Area and about six miles west of downtown Cleveland. Its city leaders believe that strong families lead to successful children and a strong community. The city’s Division of Early Childhood offers a wide variety of support, education, and community-building programs and services for those residents raising or caring for young children birth through age eight.

Population	56,646
% White	93.1%
% Black.....	2.0%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	2.2%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	1.4%
% American Indian.....	0.2%
% Other	0.6%
% Multiracial.....	2.7%
Median Household Income.....	\$40,527
Unemployment Rate.....	5.6%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for Greater Cleveland Area

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2000 U.S. Census)



provides services – such as parent education, support groups, parent/child interactive activities, and time and stress management – in a comfortable setting, emphasizing family strengths, aspirations, and problem-solving capabilities. Resource and referral services are enhanced through close collaborative relationships among early childhood program providers, and the Family Room also provides parents opportunities to create relationships with other parents for peer support.

Over the years, a significant number of parents, early care and education providers, social service agencies, and other community members became involved in early childhood program efforts and advocated for replication of best practices and investment in quality care. In 2004, an informal parent advisory group evolved into the Family Room Parent Council. The council, composed of program participants, staff, and key community stakeholders such as the Lakewood Kiwanis Club, was strongly supportive of the city’s application to participate in the CSP technical assistance project.

A New Space for Families

To pursue their goal of opening a second Family Room in an underserved area of the city, the CSP project team first had to select a target area. They began by mapping the location of existing services and the residences of families with young children. Through this effort, the team chose the Birdtown neighborhood in southeastern Lakewood. The neighborhood has a large number of ethnic Slavic families and it continues to be an area that attracts new residents from diverse backgrounds because of affordable housing, transportation services, and a strong public elementary school system. City officials identified this neighborhood as “high need” because of trends in population growth and the inadequate supply of early care and education programs and other supports for parents of young children.

To help identify an appropriate space for the new family resource room, the team created a specific list of criteria, such as adequate square footage for planned programs, location near public transportation, and building accessibility for parents with young children, including those with disabilities. City staff then met with community members and surveyed potential sites in Birdtown. The specific location, however, turned out to be a greater challenge for the Lakewood team than they initially anticipated due to the poor condition of available facilities and limited funding for renovations.

In support of the project, Mayor Thomas J. George walked the neighborhood with the CSP team to engage local property owners in the search for a new location. Several discussions with property owners and faith community leaders to date have garnered support and encouragement for the project that may yield an appropriate space. In addition, the city's grant writer is currently soliciting capital improvement funds to upgrade an existing city structure, which also houses the Department of Human Services.

While a permanent location is pending, the city secured space in the newly built Harrison Elementary School for more limited parent support programming.

Assessing the Needs of Parents

Lakewood's CSP project team spent significant time and energy reaching out to parents to decide which programs and supports would be most helpful in the new center. Although programming at the existing Family Room had been successful over the past ten years, they knew that changes in local demographics meant that existing programs might not meet the needs or interests of new families.

First, the team conducted a survey to assess the needs of parents of children in pre-kindergarten through grade three, particularly those with younger siblings. The surveys were distributed at school drop-in sessions and through public school parent resource coordinators, with a second wave of surveys provided to parents in specific schools thought to have the greatest need.


From the initial needs assessment, the team formed focus groups to better understand the areas in which parents indicated they have the greatest need, such as perinatal and prenatal care for women, parent education for teen mothers, child abuse prevention, and family support to prevent domestic violence. In addition, several parents volunteered to advise the team on an ongoing basis.

The information gathered through the surveys, focus groups, and research, and suggestions drawn from discussions with commu-



“The Family Room is another example of Lakewood’s continued investment in our social infrastructure. This investment, and others like it, have paid huge dividends over the years in enhanced quality of life for all Lakewood residents.”

— Mayor Thomas J. George, City of Lakewood



“The toughest and most rewarding job anyone can have is that of being a parent. Children come without manuals or sets of directions attached. Progressive communities that assist and nurture young parents stand to benefit from this investment by way of well-adjusted children and good parents.”

— Mayor Thomas J. George, City of Lakewood

nity partners and other cities helped the Lakewood team determine which programs and curricula the new Family Room should implement to engage and empower parents. In addition, local population data from the most recent census helped staff understand the importance of focusing on bilingual and multicultural services.

Moving forward, the team felt that it was imperative to continue engaging parents in order to design programs and services that are responsive to the real needs of families.

Securing Resources for Family Services

To generate needed funding for Family Room services, Lakewood leaders met with members of the Greater Cleveland Family Support Consortium (GCFSC), officials from the Cuyahoga County Commissioner’s office, and representatives of the George Gund Foundation. As a result, the GCFSC agreed to support and expand family support services in Lakewood, which includes family literacy playrooms that support the development of pre-literacy and school-readiness skills through play. The city also obtained funding from the county to provide additional family literacy programs in the existing Family Room and throughout the summer at Madison Park, which is located in the Birdtown neighborhood.

In addition, the Children’s Trust Fund, through the Cuyahoga County Department of Jobs and Family Services, funds a social worker for young families whose primary objective is to prevent abuse and neglect by strengthening families. This grant also funds a series of parent education sessions for families with young children.

By pulling together initiatives sponsored by a variety of partners, the city is able to provide an array of supports for parents in one location.

Getting the Word Out

The CSP project team also recognized the importance of building strong community buy-in and engaging hard-to-reach families right from the start. Even without a permanent home for the new Family Room, early care and education staff conducted neighborhood walks in Birdtown in August 2006 to inform residents about the planned Family Resource Room and other programs that were available for parents and their young children.

Team members also realized that a successful strategy might be for city leaders to use their influence and visibility to focus attention on investing in early care and education. Councilmembers who live in or near targeted neighborhoods were an important

catalyst for change. They were asked to participate in several outreach events and they served as campaign sponsors to foster widespread support for local action on early care and education. The mayor and councilmembers were able to engage community stakeholders and business leaders to support local programming.

These community outreach efforts built neighborhood trust and helped parents feel connected. Moreover, as they reached out, city representatives not only encouraged neighborhood parents to utilize the existing Family Room, but also urged them to commit their time, effort, and leadership to making that programming succeed over time.

Leadership Keys – Lakewood

● **Expanded a successful local program.**

When the City of Lakewood reviewed local resources and challenges related to supporting parents of young children, one resource that stood out was the Lakewood Family Room. Because this resource center was developed and had been operating with significant parent leadership, it had successfully met the needs of families in the community for more than a decade. The Lakewood CSP project team determined that replicating the Family Room model in an underserved area of the city would allow the city to reach many more families. They also recognized, however, that a different population may have different needs. Therefore, they worked closely with parents to ensure that the new programs and resources would meet family needs.

● **Engaged elected officials to meet strategic needs.**

Despite their busy schedules and competing priorities, the Lakewood CSP team identified specific ways that the mayor and councilmembers could capitalize on their unique positions to support the effort. For instance, Mayor George walked through the Birdtown neighbor-

hood with the CSP team, enlisting the help of local property owners in their efforts to find an appropriate location for the second family resource center. In addition, the CSP team realized that city councilmembers are important liaisons with the communities they represent and tapped several of them to reach out to families and community stakeholders in targeted neighborhoods.

● **Encouraged parent input and leadership.**

Throughout the CSP project, the Lakewood team encouraged parents to be active partners in planning and implementation. The city conducted significant outreach – through surveys and focus groups – to tailor the programs offered at the new family resource center to the needs and interests of local parents. Through this process, they also recruited several parents to advise the team on an ongoing basis. Moreover, as staff conducted personal outreach in Birdtown through neighborhood walks, they emphasized that parents should think of the new Family Room as their own and find ways to make it as successful and sustainable as possible.



Longmont, Colorado

Mayoral Leadership for Quality Early Care and Education

Longmont, Colo., is a community that prides itself on its small-town feel and livability. Recognizing that cities can only remain vibrant if they are continually anticipating new challenges and helping rising generations succeed, Longmont Mayor Julia Pirnack accepted NLC's challenge in 2003 to create a long-term, community-wide strategic plan for improving early childhood outcomes.

To develop and implement this strategic plan, Mayor Pirnack established Bright EYES (Early Years Education Stewards), which unites representatives from the City of Longmont, the school district, a hospital, a community health center, and several Longmont children's service agencies. At the same time, the city reorganized its Youth Services Division to include functions related to strengthening opportunities for young children and renamed it the Division of Children and Youth Resources.

Bright EYES was charged with working with families and other stakeholders throughout the community to bring together resources around a common goal: ensuring that young children are ready to learn and ready for life.

Some key objectives include: increasing access to school readiness programs; providing enrichment activities for families of young children; and enhancing awareness of opportunities for children to develop the cognitive, language, and social/emotional skills they need to be ready for school. In addition, the team seeks to enhance community awareness of the importance of early care and education and provide opportunities for parental and community engagement.

The goals of Bright EYES were closely aligned with those of the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children (CSP) project, and Longmont used the technical assistance from NLC to focus on connecting parents to community resources at kiosks throughout the city and in two new family centers, supporting early literacy through a new Mayor's Book Club, and addressing the unique needs of the city's growing Latino population.

Connecting Parents to Community Resources

Longmont's CSP project team leads saw a tremendous opportunity to better serve



Longmont, Colorado

Longmont, founded in 1871 and located in Boulder County, Colo., sits at an elevation of 4,979 feet and is the 13th most populous city in the state. In 2006, Longmont was named one of Money Magazine’s top 100 places to live, and an “All-America City” by the National Civic League. The Children and Youth Resources Division works closely with children and families to promote their success in all areas of life.

Population	76,181
% White	86.1%
% Black.....	0.4%
% Hispanic/Latino.....	21.8%
% Asian/Pacific Islander.....	2.4%
% American Indian.....	1.2%
% Other	7.6%
% Multiracial.....	2.3%
Median Household Income.....	\$51,420
Unemployment Rate.....	2.8%*

*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2007 Estimates for Boulder County

(Unless otherwise specified, data is from the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Some respondents placed themselves in more than one category.)



families by connecting parents to existing community resources. To carry this out, the Division of Children and Youth Resources developed a database of children and youth programs and resources for parents, similar to a database that representatives of Palo Alto, Calif., presented at NLC’s 2005 CSP Leadership Academy.

To help parents access information compiled for the database, the City of Longmont allocated \$2,500 from its general fund to construct ten kiosks at which to distribute resources for parents with young children. Longmont’s database now includes more than 200 resources that parents can access online or by picking up one of the print copies available at the kiosks throughout the city.

Creating Spaces for Families

In order to house additional programs and services for Longmont’s children, youth, and families, the City of Longmont provided just under \$1 million to renovate two city facilities.

The first, the Meeker Neighborhood Center, was transformed into a Family Resource Center that opened in September 2006. The Meeker Neighborhood Center houses resources and activities for residents of the Meeker neighborhood and the adjacent Kensington neighborhood, including four additional comprehensive school readiness classrooms. The Longmont Children’s Council operates three of these classrooms with new braided funding provided by the city, county, and school district, and they are seeking operational funding for the fourth classroom.

The second facility, a former fire station, is being renovated in 2007 to create flexible space that can accommodate a variety of activities for children, youth, families, and adults living in the surrounding neighborhood.

Supporting Early Literacy

In addition to connecting parents to resources, the CSP project team engaged parents in early literacy activities through a Mayor's Book Club. Utilizing peer contacts for advice on design and implementation, the city modeled the Mayor's Book Club after a similar initiative already underway in Jacksonville, Fla.

Launched in April 2007, the book club encourages 3- and 4-year-olds and their parents to read a new book together monthly. Participating children receive a backpack, t-shirt, a special Mayor's Book Club library card, and one book each month. In the first month of the program, 315 children registered. The kick-off event was held at the Longmont Public Library, complete with Winnie the Pooh, Cat in the Hat, children's activities, and refreshments. The kick-off also featured Mayor Pirnack reading the first book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. As part of the Book Club initiative, the mayor also appeared on public access television to read to children in the community.

To continue operating this program, the City of Longmont contributed \$5,000 and has received additional support from private sources, such as the Longmont Community Foundation, New Frontier Bank, and the Clark/Lanyon Fund. The Delta Kappa Gamma sorority held a community book drive and donated the books to the Mayor's Book Club. The city also benefited from the work of two college interns who spent an entire year developing this new initiative.

Addressing Cultural Barriers

In light of the city's changing demographics, municipal and community leaders sought new opportunities to establish and sustain connections with the Latino community. To engage immigrant populations, city staff and



community representatives went door-to-door to locate families in need of services. In addition, members of the Bright EYES team connected to informal Latina networks by partnering with the community involvement committee for Longmont's multicultural strategic plan.

The city's CSP efforts were also bolstered by a countywide, federal Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) grant, which allowed the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition to offer training sessions to Latina caregivers who provide informal care to the children of their family, friends, or neighbors. Through this training, caregivers learned to use the Constructing Academic Success and Achievement (CASA) curriculum. In addition to the training sessions, participants also received weekly home visits with "Tias," or coaches. These visits included observation, support of early education strategies, and technical assistance.

From October 2006 through July 2007, the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition provided 21 training sessions in Longmont for 29 Latina caregivers, 12 of whom were from Longmont. Eight of the 12 Longmont participants went on to complete pre-licensing, and more than half are completing a Child Development Associate Degree (CDA). More trainings are scheduled for the summer of 2007.



Since the ELOA grant has ended, the partners are drafting two proposals – one for bridge funding and another for full funding – to continue this work and provide intensive training to Latino providers and parents within their own homes. In addition, the Jared Polis Foundation pledged to donate computers and printers to the caregivers.

Looking Forward

While the CSP project officially ended, the city's commitment to supporting parents of young children remains strong. Through the leadership of Mayor Pirnack, the city is continuing to find new ways to make children and families a community priority.

On March 17, 2007, the City of Longmont hosted an Education Summit, titled "Learn

Today, Change Your World Tomorrow." The goal of this summit was to build the community's capacity to address key educational challenges so that all children and adults have a chance to succeed in school and in life. More than 600 people attended the all-day event, which opened with an address by futurist Glen Heimstra and culminated in participants creating action steps to foster a community known for life-long learning.

The summit included five break-out sessions to develop goals and action steps.

Participants in the session on early childhood education felt that Longmont needed to do more to ensure that the whole community, and families in particular, are aware of the importance of early care and education and engaged in efforts to improve it. They also felt that families should have opportunities for diverse enrichment activities, including comprehensive school readiness programs.

Summit participants formed an Accountability and Action Team to follow-up on all of the proposed actions. This team will either ensure that an existing group – such as the Bright EYES coalition – is tackling these actions or will assign tasks to their own team members. Through these continued commitments, the needs of parents and young children will remain a priority in the city.

“The Longmont community recognizes how critical quality early care and education is to the future success of each individual and our community. It is just plain wonderful to watch a child's eyes light up with interest and joy as we work with them.”

— Mayor Julia Pirnack, City of Longmont

Leadership Keys – Longmont

- **Provided strong mayoral leadership.**

Mayor Pirnack's commitment to support local children and families has focused attention on, and mobilized support for, efforts that strengthen families and promote access to high-quality early care and education. The mayor exercised her power to convene key stakeholders in the community, create a local strategic plan, and work jointly to implement it. She has used her "bully pulpit" to emphasize the importance of getting children off to a good start from the earliest age. Finally, she has reorganized and refocused city functions related to young children, and she has secured funding for several of the key activities of the Bright EYES initiative.

- **Framed the issue for widespread community support.**

Longmont found that a clear and compelling message about the importance of investing in the early years – one that effectively reaches all segments of the community – is essential. They emphasized that the city is a "community of lifelong learners" and that lifelong learning is a key building block for the city's economic vitality. Early childhood was included as one of five break-out topics at

the city's 2007 summit on lifelong learning, providing momentum for ongoing efforts to support young children and their families.

- **Adapted successful programs from other communities.**

The Longmont CSP project team took full advantage of the cross-city sharing that NLC facilitated, researching ideas that had worked well in other communities and tailoring them to local needs. From Palo Alto, Calif., they gathered information on setting up a database of community resources for families. Longmont's database, available in print or online, now includes more than 200 local resources. From Jacksonville, Fla., they adopted the Mayor's Book Club to promote reading among households with four-year-old children, helping them prepare to enter kindergarten and fostering a lifelong love of reading. While Longmont is innovating in many ways, they are also proving that cities do not need to "reinvent the wheel." All children and families benefit when cities share their successes and borrow good ideas from colleagues in other communities.

Lessons Learned

LESSONS LEARNED



Through the Cities Supporting Parents of Young Children project, the YEF Institute worked with six municipalities committed to providing families with the information and supports necessary to help children get off to the best possible start in life. Over the course of the project, the Institute learned a great deal about the opportunities – and challenges – for local officials seeking to implement a diverse array of parent support initiatives. Based on those experiences, the Institute offers the following lessons learned for other municipal leaders:

1. Municipal leaders can mobilize community support for parents of young children.

Mayors and councilmembers are uniquely positioned to put the needs of parents with young children on the public agenda. As the cities in the CSP project demonstrated, local elected officials can launch planning efforts, engage new partners, build public will, and lend credibility by serving as the public face of parent support and early education initiatives.

Municipal leaders can launch new local initiatives – or boost existing ones – by articulating a vision for why and how the community should support families with young children. In Longmont, Mayor Pirnack identified lifelong learning as a core

community value and made clear that learning starts at birth with parents as a child's first teachers. As part of NLC's 100 City Challenge for Early Childhood Success in 2003, she established Bright EYES (Early Years Education Stewards) to create a long-term, community-wide strategic plan to improve early childhood outcomes. Bright EYES coalition members periodically review this plan to ensure that partners are successfully implementing proposed action steps and making progress toward the overall vision outlined in the plan.

Local elected officials can also use their influence to engage new partners in parent support initiatives, from business and media executives to neighborhood and faith leaders. In Charleston, Mayor Riley invited all of the local media outlets – newspaper, television, and radio – to a meeting in his office to

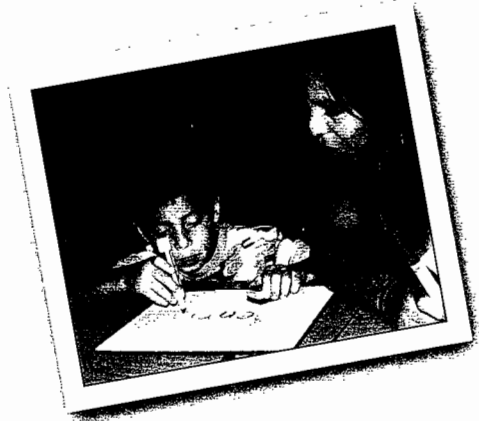
discuss the importance of early care and education to the overall success and growth of the city. As a result of his personal leadership, members of the press became partners in the city's efforts, boosting coverage of early childhood issues and programs. In Lakewood, Mayor George walked through the project team's target neighborhood to garner the support of local property owners for a new family resource room and talk with them about possible locations.

In a number of CSP project cities, the mayor or a lead city councilmember has become a visible spokesperson for local efforts to support parents and invest in young children. Many local officials utilize their "bully pulpit," speaking out on these issues during council meetings and hearings, press interviews, business roundtables, townhall meetings, and public speeches. Some officials – like Mayor Tallarita and Councilmember Peruta of Enfield or Mayor Moncrief of Fort Worth – helped generate momentum for specific initiatives by speaking at public kick-off events. Others – like Mayor Riley of Charleston or Mayor Pirnack of Longmont – launched Mayor's Book Clubs in their communities to help parents foster early literacy.

When mayors and councilmembers put support for parents of young children on the city agenda, local initiatives gain momentum among families and credibility with potential partners and funders.

2. Community assessments highlight existing resources and uncover gaps and inefficiencies.

Community assessments can help local elected officials gain a better understanding of how children and parents are faring in their city. Assessments can also paint a clearer picture – neighborhood by neighborhood – of the landscape of resources: what resources are currently available to parents, where there are gaps or



duplication in services, and why families may not be getting what they need.

In Charleston, the Success By 6 coalition partnered with two local universities to conduct a systematic needs assessment for the community. The resulting data not only helped make the case for new actions to improve outcomes for young children, but also helped them clarify how these actions needed to impact three different systems of support in order to be effective: a child's family environment, learning environments, and broader community environment.

Mapping data about the distribution of information and/or services for parents and young children can help city officials identify areas of greatest need, project trends in population growth for different parts of the city, or help make decisions about priorities for funding. Analyzing local population data from the most recent census helped staff in Lakewood understand the importance of focusing on bilingual and multicultural services in certain neighborhoods. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology can be particularly useful, allowing city leaders to visualize gaps and duplication of services for parents and young children.

Community assessments can also spur ideas about new partners to bring into the coalition, how to combine efforts for a more cohesive campaign, and how to collaborate to ensure more complete geographic and service coverage.

3. Meaningful partnerships are based on a shared vision, trust, and reliability.

Municipal leaders interested in improving outcomes for families with young children know that cities and towns cannot do it alone. In a time of tight municipal budgets, these partnerships can help communities use resources more strategically to deliver the information and services that parents need. Working together to support parents of young children allows members of the partnership to learn new ideas from each other, share expertise, and remain close to the issues and needs of parents.

Municipal leadership can help bring together diverse stakeholders around a shared vision. For instance, municipal staff in Enfield teamed up with the local United Way to create outreach materials that were customized for different stakeholders in the community, addressing the concerns of schools, businesses, public safety officials, health care providers, and civic and faith community leaders.

In some cases, the city can serve as a neutral broker among service providers and early childhood professionals, who may be competing with one another for funding or clients, by helping organizations focus on their common mission.

Mayors in a number of the CSP project cities were able to get the attention of business and media leaders, helping them understand the importance of family supports to the current and future strength of the city. After great success cultivating support among businesses for their Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference, the City of Bryan is planning a “Community Plunge” to engage more key leaders. Through this effort, local and state elected officials and executives of local corporations and banks will be invited to ride a

transit bus to visit local early care and education programs to gain first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by parents of young children and the need for increased supports.

Trust is another core component of effective collaborations. A willingness to share not only a vision, but also credit and resources, can go a long way toward building that trust. In several communities, joint logos allowed all partners to be recognized for their contributions to the local campaign. In Longmont, the city showed partners they were committed to the effort by providing, among other things, staff time to develop a database of early childhood resources, funding for kiosks to distribute parent information, and significant capital improvement funds to renovate facilities to serve families.

In addition, CSP project cities found that it took time and personal outreach to build the necessary trust for parents to become active partners. As elected officials and representatives of the CSP teams got out into local neighborhoods, sometimes walking door-to-door, they found parents much more willing to share their concerns and ideas.

Finally, partnerships are strongest when all of the partners feel the collaboration is worth the ongoing investment of time and effort. Some partners are particularly concerned about what will happen to a city initiative if there is political turnover or when budgets get tighter. Will it last? Will it continue to be an effective means of improving outcomes for families?

Some cities found that a coalition led by a respected partner reassures other partners that the coalition is sustainable over time. In Fort Worth, the city asked Campfire USA – First Texas Council to coordinate Early Childhood Matters and the City Council formally endorsed its strategic plan. Similarly, the Charleston collaboration has the strong, vocal support of the mayor, but is coordinated by the local United Way and therefore is perceived as less likely to be

derailed by changes in political leadership. Other local officials institutionalized the city's commitment to supporting children and families by creating a new office or redefining the responsibilities of a staff member or agency.

By taking the necessary steps to develop vibrant partnerships, communities can work together to turn a chaotic patchwork of messages and services for parents and young children into a comprehensive system of family support.

4. Parents need clear, consistent messages about the importance of early childhood development and the roles they can play.

With today's parents often suffering from information overload, it is important to spread a clear, consistent message that the first three years of life represent the most critical time in a child's development and that parents are their children's most important teachers.

In Fort Worth, the Early Childhood Matters partnership brought together several divergent – and sometimes competing – communication initiatives into a more effective, unified campaign. Through this campaign, all of the partner agencies agreed to utilize resources and materials from United Way of America's Born Learning public engagement campaign that educates parents about fostering early learning during everyday teachable moments with their children. With a consistent look and tag line (“Working together – because every child deserves a chance”), parents quickly began recognizing the materials and absorbing the message.

Once a clear, consistent message is agreed upon, city teams can focus on launching a successful outreach strategy. CSP project cities found that developing a cadre of trusted local spokespeople increased the



reach and influence of their messages. Mayors and other community leaders are good candidates to get the word out. In Enfield, Councilmember Brian H. Peruta served as a local spokesperson, underscoring the importance of starting early to lay the foundations for future learning. In Longmont, Mayor Pirnack recorded video spots for the local cable access station to encourage residents to talk to their children, play with them, hug them, and read to them daily. CSP teams also noted the importance of teaching staff at neighborhood centers, libraries, and schools to remind parents that children are learning every day while engaging in activities inside and outside of the home.

Outreach is most effective when parents hear or read the same message from multiple sources. Therefore, in addition to utilizing key spokespeople, CSP project cities also got the word out through public access cable programs, PSAs, and paid advertising on network television, radio, newspapers, and billboards. Mayor Riley in Charleston was particularly effective at reaching out to the local media and encouraging them to increase coverage of early childhood and specific supports for families.

Through coordinated messages and outreach strategies, cities can help more parents understand that the early years matter, that their actions make a difference, and that there are supports in the community to help them get their children off to a great start in life.

5. City officials can maximize current investments by connecting parents to existing resources.

While community assessments commonly show gaps in services and supports, they also demonstrate a rich array of resources for parents of young children. Unfortunately, many parents either do not realize that these resources are available or find them difficult to access. Cities can provide a valuable service to families – and maximize current investments – simply by finding new ways to help parents connect to existing programs and services.

One way to inform parents about existing services is by creating and distributing information packets to new parents covering child development topics and highlighting community resources. The City of Bryan has partnered with the local United Way of the Brazos Valley to produce a parent resource guide, updated every other year, with information about early care and education resources in the community.

Cities can utilize the Internet to make it easier for parents to search for needed programs or services. A Web site hosted by the city or a community-based partner may include a searchable database or links to area resources such as community-based organizations, programs and services for young children

and their families, government benefits available to parents, and information on topics such as child development, early literacy, and school-readiness. In Longmont, the city's Division of Children and Youth Resources developed a database that included more than 200 children and youth programs and resources. Parents can access information online or by picking up one of the print copies available throughout the city.

Another strategy for connecting parents to resources is to convene community-wide events targeted at or including the parents of young children. Such events are often designed to create a fun outing for the entire family, while providing an opportunity to share valuable information on community resources. Event ideas may include health and safety fairs, first day of school festivals, immunization days, child care preview fairs, or fitness events. Community events give cities an opportunity to bring a variety of local service providers together, allowing families to gather information directly from the source.

Several of the participating cities successfully utilized family resource centers (FRCs) to provide parents with access to information, training, and peer support. While services vary depending on the FRC, most offer assistance in the following core areas: child health and development, parenting education, and information and referral to other community services. One of the most valuable roles FRCs play is coordinating and centralizing access to key supports for families. Based on the utilization of existing FRCs in their communities, Longmont and Lakewood are working to open additional centers in their respective cities.

Research has shown that children under the age of five who receive quality health care and early education are more likely to succeed in the future. By directing parental attention to valuable existing resources and services, cities can pursue a low-cost method of investing in the future of the community.





6. Successful parent support initiatives reach out to parents where they work, pray, shop, and play.

For many parents of young children, whose time and energy are already stretched thin, the effort required to seek out community resources or travel across town for a parenting class can seem overwhelming. As a result, participation in traditional parent support programming has often suffered from limited participation. Cities in the CSP project found that they were most successful when they took their messages and programs directly to parents, rather than waiting for parents to come to them.

To get the word out to parents about the importance of the early years and available resources, cities can complement media campaigns with personal outreach. City staff in Charleston attended church services with families in targeted neighborhoods to build trust and strengthen the connection between the city and the Latino community. In Lakewood and Fort Worth, city leaders and their CSP project partners walked through neighborhoods and apartment complexes, sharing information and listening to families' concerns. Community fairs and festivals also provided good opportunities for municipal leaders to meet with families.

Another strategy is to provide information through partnerships with public institutions and local businesses frequented by families with young children. For instance, in Charleston, the city partnered with the public library and the children's hospital to provide prospective and new parents with "welcome baby" kits that encourage parents to read to their new baby. In Enfield, the TGI Friday's restaurant began providing resources to foster parent-child interaction, and the early childhood coalition offered information for parents at the children's play area in the local mall. The City of Longmont constructed kiosks to distribute information to parents at convenient locations, such as city buildings or the local mall.

Cities are also supporting parents through their employers. In Bryan, many local business leaders participated in their Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference, encouraging employers to find better ways to meet the needs of parents as they balance the demands of work and family. In other communities, employers are encouraged to give parents time off to attend parent-teacher conferences or first day of school events for their children in preschool through high school.

Finally, cities are reaching out to parents by bringing more in-depth programming and space for peer support into convenient neighborhood locations. For instance, the City of Fort Worth created "Early Childhood Resource Centers" in two low-income neighborhoods where many of the families do not speak English to help parents and other caregivers foster early language and literacy development.

These efforts to reach out to parents where they live their lives – where they work, worship, shop, and play – have helped cities get their messages out in a more meaningful way and have boosted participation in parent support programs.

7. Initiatives that are inclusive and culturally sensitive yield higher participation and greater impact.

City officials across the country recognize that as local demographics change, city services must change as well. Children from immigrant and non-English speaking households represent the fastest growing segment of the child population in the U.S. To ensure that these children enter school ready to succeed, it is important that parent education campaigns and family support services are culturally responsive and are offered in all of the major languages of the community.

Cities are building bridges with families of different cultures and backgrounds to ensure that all parents can access available resources for themselves and their children. The City of Charleston hired an early education liaison to reach out to parents of different backgrounds and build trust with the growing Latino population. This staff person shares the same cultural background and lives in the neighborhood with parents she is trying to reach. The City of Longmont is planning to hire and train “cultural brokers” who will work with families to ensure young children receive developmental screenings. In addition, staff are designing a support class for Latino families to make it easier and more comfortable to access the school system.

Language barriers can also prevent non-English speaking parents and their children from utilizing needed services and fully participating in community activities. The City of Fort Worth was successful in using bilingual parent liaisons, instructional aides, counselors, and parent volunteers to reach out to families for parent workshops and trainings. The City of Bryan provided translation and bilingual services for parent training and communications between the home and early education programs.

Finally, cities are recognizing that they not only need to help families from different cultural backgrounds access existing services, but that they may need to reevaluate the services that are offered in light of these cultural differences. For instance, after discovering that many more Latino families prefer to place their children in the care of a trusted family member, friend, or neighbor, cities like Fort Worth and Longmont initiated programs to train and support these caregivers.

To be successful, city programs must reflect the needs and views of all members of the community.

8. Parent leadership enriches a city's efforts to support families with young children.

In many cities, parents are an untapped voice for children's issues. Parents who are given opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge and confidence can become strong partners in city initiatives for children and youth. In this role, they can be a source of ideas, expertise, and support for new projects to improve neighborhoods, local schools, and systems of family support.

In some cases, cities have cultivated parent leadership by providing active, committed parents with a formal role in program planning and implementation. For instance, in



Lakewood, an informal parent advisory group evolved into the Family Room Parent Council, providing guidance to the management of the city's family resource center. Moreover, in the process of assessing parent needs for a second family center in Lakewood, the city discovered additional parents who were willing to advise the team on the needs of parents.

In other communities, like Enfield, cities are going further by offering parent leadership training. Leadership training prepares parents to be advocates for their own children and on behalf of all children. Through specialized training – often including role playing, advocacy assignments, and networking with community leaders and neighbors – parents build the skills and confidence they need to be actively engaged in community and civic affairs.

Once parents have participated in leadership training, it is vitally important for cities to help them put into practice what they have

learned. When 20 parents from Enfield completed the 12-week training program, the city placed parent graduates on planning teams and boards where they were given the opportunity to use the skills they learned in the training. Not only did their participation enrich the committees they joined, but these parents also developed and implemented new ideas, such as a service fair at a local elementary school or a community garden.

As parents become leaders in designing and implementing community activities, they also become a trusted source of information for families in their neighborhoods and encourage other parents to utilize resources and perhaps even take on leadership roles themselves.

Working together, parents and municipal leaders – in the six CSP project cities and across the country – are shaping policy and practice to make a positive difference in the lives of children and families.

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Additional Resources

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC), helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. Responsive to municipal leaders on a wide range of issues, the YEF Institute focuses on five core program areas: education and afterschool; youth development; early care and education; safety of children and youth; and family economic success. The Institute offers local elected officials, municipal staff, and those who work with these officials the opportunity to join the Institute's Early Care and Education City Network and to take advantage of publications and resources on early childhood development. Contact (202) 626-3014. Web site: www.nlc.org/iyef.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation fosters public policies, human service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. The foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state effort of the foundation to track the status of children in the U.S. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state,

and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. Contact (410) 547-6600. Web site: www.aecf.org.

Child Welfare League of America

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is an association of nearly 800 public and private nonprofit agencies that assist more than 3.5 million abused and neglected children and their families each year with a range of services. CWLA ensures the safety and well-being of children and families, advocates for the advancement of public policy, promotes the standards for best practice, and delivers membership services. CWLA and its National Child Day Care Task Force have been prominent in advocating for better federal policies and adequate funding to ensure a comprehensive, high-quality child day care delivery system that is accessible and affordable to all parents. In addition, the Creating Parenting-Rich Communities Initiative is a multi-year project of CWLA designed to develop resources, tools, and information parents and other leaders can use to assess their communities and bring about changes to improve the lives of children by supporting parents and caregivers. Contact (703) 412-2400. Web site: www.cwla.org.

Center for Law and Social Policy

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national nonprofit organization that works to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and

family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all. To carry out this work, CLASP conducts cutting-edge research, provides insightful policy analysis, advocates at the federal and state levels, and offers information and technical assistance on a range of family policy and equal justice issues. CLASP's child care and early education work focuses on promoting policies that support both child development and the needs of low-income working parents and on expanding the availability of resources for child care and early education initiatives. Contact (202) 842-2885. Web site: www.clasp.org.

Corporate Voices for Working Families

Corporate Voices For Working Families (CVWF) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit corporate membership organization created to bring the private sector voice into the public dialogue on issues affecting working families. CVWF is a coalition of 36 leading corporations that have been engaged in listening to and addressing the challenges of their employee families for more than two decades. CVWF is focused on communicating the business case for early learning to policymakers, corporations, and other stakeholders interested in strengthening working families. CVWF's partner companies believe that the care and education of young children is critical to the attraction, recruitment, and engagement of today's parent employees as well as a key to economic growth. Contact (202) 333-8924. Web site: www.cvworkingfamilies.org.

Families and Work Institute

The Families and Work Institute (FWI) is a nonprofit center dedicated to providing research for living in today's changing workplace, family, and community. Since FWI was founded in 1989, it has tackled issues in four major areas: the workforce and workplace; education, care, and community; parenting;

and youth development. The Institute's work includes a commitment to focus on early learning and the implications for teacher and classroom quality and early childhood system design. FWI has also focused on the development of communications campaigns to share early learning research with a wide range of public and private sector audiences. Contact (212) 465-2044. Web site: www.familiesandwork.org.

Freddie Mac Foundation

For more than 15 years, the Freddie Mac Foundation has worked to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable and at-risk children, young people, and their families in the national capital region. In order to maximize impact and achieve favorable outcomes for the people served, the Foundation has worked hard to leverage resources, expertise, and relationships, and has formed important strategic partnerships to further stated objectives. The foundation continues to fund programs that strengthen families, find homes for children and families in need, support the healthy development of young people, and help families become and remain self-sufficient. Many programs support initiatives that help young children prepare for successful school experiences. Contact (703) 918-8888. Web site: www.freddiemacfoundation.org.

National Association for the Education of Young Children

Founded in 1926, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children with nearly 100,000 members, a national network of more than 300 local, state, and regional affiliates, and a growing global alliance of like-minded organizations. The organization is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with a particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all

children from birth through age eight. NAEYC conducts research that gives early childhood practitioners and policymakers essential knowledge to use in making decisions on behalf of young children and families. That information is then used by practitioners to develop and evaluate early childhood services, and to better understand young children's development and learning. Contact (202) 232-8777. Web site: www.naeyc.org.

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. Parents as Teachers is also the overarching program philosophy of providing parents with child development knowledge and parenting support. The PAT National Center drives that philosophy through four program areas – Born to Learn, Professional Development, Meld parent programs, and Advocacy – that work through a strong network of state leaders and partners. The four-part intervention model known as Born to Learn delivers its mission-based program to parents through parent educators, while professional development is delivered to family service providers. Meld is a facilitated group model that draws on peer support. Advocacy works through both public and private sectors to promote positive policies for young families. Contact (314) 432-4330. Web site: www.parentsasteachers.org.

Parent Leadership Training Institute

In 1992, the Connecticut Commission on Children worked collaboratively with the American Leadership Forum and Leadership Greater Hartford to design the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI). PLTI prepares parents to become leading advocates for children and teaches parents who wish to improve the lifelong health,

safety, and learning of children how to become change agents for the next generation. Classes focus on parent leadership and democracy skill-building, but parents are also able to shape the curriculum and participate in its evaluation and outcomes. Family supports, such as child care, are included. Each class of parents mentors the next class, creating a pyramid effect of community caring and developing a coalition of parent leaders. Contact (860) 240-0290. Web site: www.wcgmf.org/CFI/Plti.html.

United Way of America

United Way is a national network of more than 1,300 locally governed organizations that work to create lasting positive changes in communities and people's lives. Building on more than a century of service as the nation's preeminent community-based fundraiser, United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. United Way of America is the national organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement. While local United Ways tackle issues based on local needs, common focus areas include helping children and youth succeed, improving access to health care, promoting self-sufficiency, and strengthening families. United Way Success By 6® is the nation's largest network of early childhood coalitions, focused on improving school readiness through community change. In more than 350 communities or states, Success By 6® (SB6) coalitions are changing the way things work so young children can come to school ready to succeed. Contact (703) 836-7112. Web site: national.unitedway.org.

U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education was created in 1980 to promote student achieve-

ment and prepare for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. The Department's 4,500 employees and \$71.5 billion budget are dedicated to establishing policies on federal financial aid for education and distributing as well as monitoring those funds; collecting data on America's schools and disseminating research; focusing national attention on key educational issues; and prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education. The Early Reading First program supports the development of early childhood centers of excellence that focus on all areas of development, especially on early language. The Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program promotes school readiness and improved learning outcomes of young children by providing high-quality professional development. The Even Start program offers grants to support local family literacy projects that integrate early childhood education and adult literacy. Contact (800) 872-5327. Web site: www.ed.gov.

ZERO TO THREE

ZERO TO THREE supports the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families. The national, nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization informs, educates, and supports adults who influence the lives of infants and toddlers. The organization provides multidisciplinary professionals who are working with very young children and their families an extensive collection of resources aimed at supporting the work of professionals in a variety of early childhood settings. In addition, the organization offers research and practice-based training that focuses on working with infants, toddlers, and their families. The training covers a wide variety of relevant topics, from promoting healthy social and emotional development in infants and toddlers to supervising staff with greater skill and effectiveness. Contact (202) 638-1144. Web site: www.zerotothree.org.

For more information, please contact Abby Hughes Holsclaw, Program Director for Early Childhood and Family Economic Success, at holsclaw@nlc.org.



**Institute for
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