Early Success

Delaware's Early Childhood Plan

Early Success

Delaware's Early Childhood Plan

Ready Families

\+ Ready Early Care & Education

\+ Ready Communities

\+ Ready Schools

= Ready Children

Developed by:

The Delaware Early Care and Education Council
&
Early Childhood Comprehensive System Steering Committee

With Assistance From
Delaware Early Childhood Stakeholders

2006

Early Success:

Delaware's Early Childhood Plan

Delaware recognizes that what children experience from birth to age five has a direct impact on their future success in school and life. We are committed to ensuring that all young children enter school prepared to succeed.

Early Success: Delaware's Early Childhood Plan outlines what we need to accomplish to meet this objective. It defines the components of a comprehensive early childhood system to support Delaware's youngest children and their families. When fully implemented and funded, Early Success will provide the necessary programs and resources so that all of Delaware's children can become successful adults, contributing members of our community, and participants in a global economy.

The early childhood system is a collaboration of families, programs and services that support children from birth to five year of age as they grow, develop, and learn. Early Success focuses on the whole child and his or her family.

Many factors contribute to preparing children to be ready for school and life.

- **Ready children:** children who are physically and emotionally healthy and eager to learn
- **Ready families:** families with the knowledge and resources they need to successfully support their children's learning and well-being
- **Ready early care and education programs:** high quality programs that safeguard and ensure the growth, development, health, and learning of children; staffed with teachers who are well prepared, well compensated, and well supported
- **Ready communities:** communities that embrace their role in supporting young children and their families
- **Ready schools:** school that value and build upon the early learning experiences of children

"You have about 1,000 days to build a baby's brain…to create a reader, a communicator, a learner, and a thinker."

University of Delaware
Center for Disabilities Studies

Building a System to Support Early Childhood

- A good beginning, much more to accomplish

There has been substantial improvement in the community's understanding and support for early childhood. The Governor and the Legislature have provided substantial support to both full day kindergarten and to improving subsidized child care reimbursements. Early Childhood Assistance Programs, the state's comprehensive early childhood program, has continued to be funded through difficult financial times. In 2005, the Legislature increased its focus on early learning by creating the Kids Caucus, a bi-partisan group of legislators focused solely on young children and their growth, development and learning.

Programs and agencies that function to support children's early learning are located in various state agencies, private and non-profit organizations including all of the early care and education programs. The Governor understands the need to ensure that the early learning system is coordinated and collaborative. In October 2001, the Governor established the Delaware Early Care and Education Council. The Council is responsible for providing oversight of the development of Early Success. The membership of the Council comes from the early care and education community, businesses and private citizens. That same year the interagency Office of Early Care and Education was created and continues to be jointly funded by the Departments of Education, Health and Social Services, and Services for Children, Youth and Their Families.

While substantial progress has been made, continued commitment to building an early childhood system is necessary. Building the system is summarized by a following math equation.

Ready Families + Ready Early Care & Education + Ready Communities + Ready Schools = Ready Children

This is the plan for building Early Success, Delaware's early childhood system. Each part of the equation represents a goal within the system. Each goal includes objectives to be accomplished. The objectives include completed initiatives, those under way and others requiring development. Following the goals and objectives section are the indicators that will measure the progress toward building Delaware's early childhood system. This document is a strategic plan for developing a model of excellence for early childhood. The goals of the plan are interrelated; success will not be achieved unless all goals are achieved. This plan is dynamic and will be enhanced and revised as research and progress dictates.

Guiding Principles

Early Success is the plan for achieving readiness for all children. Ensuring the readiness of all children will require:

1. Public policy development
2. Development of research-based programs and interventions
3. Expansion or redesign of existing programs
4. Collaboration and coordination between state and local agencies
5. The creation of long-term public and private partnerships
6. Measurement of effectiveness
7. A commitment to ensuring that the early learning system is developmentally appropriate, family centered, and accessible to all children and families regardless of income, ethnicity, religion, or disability.

The 5 Goals of Early Success

I. Ready Children

Physically and Emotionally Healthy Children Eager to Learn

By the year 2015, all of Delaware's young children will have available the supports they require to ensure that they are physically, socially and emotionally healthy. Early learning opportunities will be available to every child at home and in programs that are developmentally appropriate and individualized. It is important to ensure that every child's development is progressing. Child assessment for early identification of developmental challenges or disabling conditions is essential. Early intervention is critical for remediation of developmental delays and readiness for school.

Objective I.1.
Every child will have a medical home familiar with his or her unique developmental path, offering comprehensive physical and child development services including special health care needs and assessment, intervention, and referral for developmental, behavioral, social and emotional problems.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Increase the number of Delaware physicians who adopt the American Academy of Pediatrics medical home model for all children birth to age five. [To be developed]
- Implement a comprehensive and consistent screening tool for detection of developmental and mental health concerns by pediatricians and family practice physicians. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Ensure that primary care practices consistently monitor children's height and weight to identify children who are overweight or a risk of becoming overweight and provide appropriate guidance and intervention. [In planning]

Objective I.2. Every child will have access to affordable health insurance. Lack of health insurance is associated with a lack of access to high quality care. Children who lack health insurance are more likely to have poorer health outcomes at birth, have fewer well-child visits and more likely to delay seeking medical care. Children without health insurance often have poor attendance and lower school achievement.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Increase outreach efforts to ensure that every child eligible for public coverage programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP will be enrolled. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Align EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment) guidelines with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for periodic screening and surveillance. [To be developed]
- Adopt a state policy that all insurance programs include age-appropriate physical screenings as a part of their routine health package for all children under age six. [To be developed]

I. Ready Children

Objective I.3.
Every child will have access to oral health services. To ensure dental health children should have an initial examination by their first birthday, routine care thereafter including implementation of preventive dental health habits that meet unique needs.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Increase the number of pediatric dental providers in Kent and Sussex counties. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Increase the number of dental providers accepting Medicaid reimbursement especially in Kent and Sussex counties. [To be developed]
- Expand Delaware's SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) to include dental services. [To be developed]
- Explore the cost effectiveness of providing dental screening, cleaning and sealant programs in all early care and education settings. [To be developed]
- Educate families, especially prenatal women, about good oral hygiene and the impact of oral health on the health outcome of children. [To be developed]

Objective I.4.
Every child will have access to social, emotional, and mental health services as needed. In a 2005 study Delaware ranked 4th in the nation in the expulsion of preschoolers due to behavioral challenges. Kindergarten teachers agree that children need to be able to work well with others, be able to communicate their wants and needs, and to be enthusiastic and curious about approaching new activities. Teachers also place significant importance on skills such as the ability to follow instructions, not being disruptive in class and being sensitive to the feelings of others.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Early care and education programs will have access to professional development opportunities related to improvement of staff competence to prevent or ameliorate behavioral challenges in young children with the support and involvement of their families. [Established/ requires expansion]
  - *Partners in Excellence (PIE) is a comprehensive program that includes evidence-based training modules and ongoing technical assistance to promote young children's healthy social and emotional development and provide strategies for dealing with challenging behaviors. PIE or similar research based initiatives will be fully implemented in all early care and education programs. [Established/ requires expansion]*
  - *A comprehensive infant and toddler intervention similar to PIE is currently in development. Following piloting and evaluation, the infant and toddler intervention will be implemented by early care and education programs. [In planning]*
  - *The capacity of the mental health system to serve children birth to five years must be increased. Professional development is needed to enhance the skills and knowledge of mental health professionals to better serve young children and their families. [In planning]*
- Increase availability of out patient social and emotional service for young children and their families.
  - *Increase the number of trained mental health clinicians with expertise in the treatment of young children. [To be developed]*
  - *Streamline the process for mental health referrals. [To be developed]*
  - *Promote intervention strategies to be conducted in the child's natural environment. [To be developed]*
- Provide early care and education programs access to mental health consultation or coaching related to social and emotional wellness for young children. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Expand the use of comprehensive screening by all early care and education providers and mental health professionals. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Define roles, responsibilities and linkages for each community health component. [To be developed]
- Encourage insurers (commercial, Medicaid, and SCHIP plans) to provide better reimbursement for early mental health interventions. [To be developed]

Objective I.5.
Each child will be provided the opportunity to learn as outlined in the Delaware Early Learning Foundations. These opportunities will be developmentally appropriate and individualized for each child.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Families will have access to materials and support that will assist them to implement Early Learning Foundations with their children. [To be developed]
- Early care and education programs will ensure that the Early Learning Foundations are embedded in their curriculum for children. [In planning]
- All early care and education early childhood professionals will be trained in the Early Learning Foundations. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective I.6.
Every child will have access to monitoring of his or her development to support learning.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- The Delaware Building BLOCKS (Better Lasting Outcomes for Children – Keys to Success) is an accountability system for educational programs to monitor children's progress through their early learning experiences. The progress monitoring system is fully aligned with Delaware's Early Learning Foundations. The accountability system is required as part of Delaware's IDEA Part B and Part C programs for children with disabilities. Delaware is committed to ensuring that the final result will be a progress monitoring system for all children birth to five years. [Established/requires expansion]
- The proposed child care center regulations call for periodic assessments of children to inform curriculum and to be shared with families. [In planning]

II. Ready Families

Families with the Knowledge and Resources They Need to Successfully Support their Children's Learning and Well-Being

By the year 2015, families of young children in Delaware will have the support and education needed to support their children's healthy growth, development, learning and readiness for school. Families are significant partners in creating a culturally competent comprehensive and integrated early learning system. Families are the primary influence on their children. All other components of the early learning system must support the families of young children to be successful.

Objective II.1.
Every family will have access to a comprehensive array of parenting and child development information that will enhance their parental capacity and increase the positive relationships between children and parents. It is important that information regarding available resources for families be accessible and well-timed. This information will be available in the variety of formats and mediums to meet differing family needs.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- An age paced newsletter, such as the Cooperative Extension's Great Beginnings, will be available to all families, in both an electronic and hard copy format in both English and Spanish. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Developmental and resource materials, the Growing Together Portfolio, are made available to all families at the time of their child's birth. [Established]
- Ensure families have access to practical information about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. [In planning]
- Establish a Delaware specific comprehensive website with parenting and child development information and resources for families with young children. [To be developed]
- Parent education courses will be available in varying formats, intensities and languages. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Expand the capacity of formal and informal resources for parent education and family support services in local communities. [Established/ requires expansion and improvement]

  Including:
  - *Prenatal parent education opportunities*
  - *Informal family to family support networks*
  - *Parent education classes in a variety of formats, locations, and languages*
  - *A compendium of parenting and child learning materials made available to increase families' access to needed resources*

Objective II.2.
Every family will have access to home visiting services upon the arrival of their first child. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective II.3.
Every family will have ready access to the Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success and the Framework for Infants and Toddlers. Parents will have access to materials related to the Foundations that support their role as their child's primary teacher. [To be developed]

Objective II.4.
Every family needing more extensive family support will have access to targeted services specific to their needs. Coordinated services and resources will be available for families with identified needs or risk factors, such as teen parents, parents of children with special health care needs, families in poverty, or families at risk of abusing or neglecting their children. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective II.5.
Family support and parent education will be provided by competent staff utilizing evidence based programs that include on-going evaluation. [To be developed]

Objective II.6.
The current Family Support Coordinating Council will formalize and expand its function to include identifying and supporting programs using evidence based practice and evaluation. The Family Support Coordinating Council and the Early Care and Education Council will establish a collaborative relationship sharing and coordinating their work. Means to support the Family Support Coordinating Council will be identified. [In planning]

Objective II.7.
Families will be engaged in the development of the early learning system. Understanding that the relationship between a child and their parents/family members is the first and most important early learning experience, it is important to include families in all system building activities. The Family Support Coordinating Council will coordinate and provide technical assistance to support the engagement of families and leadership development opportunities for families. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective II.8.
Families that are consumers of the early care and education system will be engaged as partners in their children's early care and education program.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Early care and education programs will create multiple activities to involve families. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Families from diverse cultures will be involved. Where possible, families will be able to communicate in their preferred language. [Established/ requires expansion and improvement]
- Early care and education programs will have written plans for and activities to engage families. [In planning]
- Engage families in the governance of every early care and education programs. [To be developed]
- Create an environment where family involvement is valued and regular communication between providers and families is encouraged and supported.[Established/ requires expansion and improvement]

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Quality Programs, Professional Development and Program Licensure

By the year 2015, all of Delaware's families will have access to early care and education programs that will offer families a safe learning environment that will ensure positive outcomes for children. Early care and education programs will be staffed by professionals educated and skilled in supporting the growth, development and learning of young children. Programs will be regulated to ensure basic safeguards for children, both physical and developmental.
The original Early Success focused solely on early care and education. Therefore the programs relating to early care and are more fully developed and reflect work begun in 2000.

Quality Environments

All of Delaware's early care and education programs will employ a wide range of proven approaches for achieving quality – approaches that allow staff flexibility in using resources creatively and cost-effectively. Programs must utilize high quality curriculum that includes assessment to guide the interaction with children and inform families about their child's growth, development and learning. Programs need access to mentoring and technical assistance to support their quality improvements. The Delaware Baseline Quality Study provides specific data on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system.

Objective III.1.
A system of tiered quality for child care centers, family and large family child care homes, and school age programs will be implemented. A tiered system provides consumer information as well as incentives and support for programs to improve their quality and enhance their staff's professional development.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Delaware Stars for Early Success has been developed and is now ready for implementation. Delaware Stars includes a plan for quality rewards. The initiative is working to make tiered subsidy reimbursement a piece of the system. Strategic supports will be required to assist programs in reaching the higher levels of quality that would allow them to receive financial rewards. [Developed/ requires implementation]]

Objective III.2.
Early care and education programs will have access to technology for program management, professional development, and to support early learning curriculum improvements.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- The Division of Social Services created the Purchase of Care Portal to allow licensed providers to electronically report attendance. The portal simplifies payment process for licensed providers and provides information sharing opportunities. [Established]
- On-line registration for professional development is fully operational through the Family & Workplace Connection. [Established]
- The Child Care Director's certificate program is available on-line from Delaware Technical and Community College. [Established]
- The data collection and analysis for the Partners in Excellence programs is web-based. [Established]
- The professional development registry and credentialing will be web-based and easily accessible to early childhood professionals. [To be developed]

62% of mothers with children under 6 are in the work force.

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Objective III.3.
All early care and education programs will support and involve children's families by connecting families to services in the community including family support, health and nutrition services; being sensitive to cultural practices in child rearing; and keeping families informed of their children's progress and activities.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Nemours Health and Prevention Services is embarking on efforts to build capacity and change early care and education environments to improve health promotion, including emotional and behavioral health, nutrition and fitness. Early care and education programs will be the conduit for connecting families to this program. [Established/ requires expansion]
- The Delaware Children's Department's FACET (Families and Centers Empowered Together) program works through early care and education programs to strengthen families. [Established/requires expansion]
- The Delaware Parent As Teachers program partners with early care and education programs to offer services to families based on evidence of the existence of identified risk factors through both home and programs visits. [Established/requires expansion]
- Delaware's Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Assistance Programs offer comprehensive services to children and families that live at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). [Established]

Objective III.4.
All early care and education programs will facilitate children's transitions to new settings as children mature and family situations change. These transitions may occur daily, when a family relocates, or when a child moves to the next learning setting such as kindergarten. Programs also need to be creative to reduce the number of transitions a child makes over the course of a day. Early care and education programs must develop relationships with their local schools to support positive transitions.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Head Start and Early Childhood Assistance Programs are moving towards offering full day programs to reduce the transitions for children and meet the needs of working families. The Head Start Collaboration Project is developing technical assistance to support this effort. [In planning]

Professional Development

Delaware will have established a cross-sector system of professional development that: (1) is based on a core body of knowledge and core competencies that facilitate children learning and are linked to the Early Learning Foundations; (2) requires all adults to hold licenses; (3) provides ongoing, cumulative, and credit-bearing in-service opportunities; and (4) assures that the content of all training and preparation efforts is designed to meet the needs of diverse children and families as well as the diverse needs of the members of this growing field. Research has repeatedly confirmed that the single most important action to take in improving overall quality is to improve the education and specialized training of the workforce.

The current early care and education workforce is diverse in its levels of skill and knowledge. While a number of the professionals in the field are skilled and have education specific to early learning, a disturbing portion of the workforce has literacy challenges and little to no education specific to early learning and development. Beyond a child's family, this workforce has the greatest impact on a child during the years their brains are rapidly developing. The capacity of the existing workforce must increase and the field must attract competent professionals.

Early care and education is a low wage profession. Providing support to the workforce to improve is necessary. Scholarship programs for both college and high school level training are needed. Maintaining a stable workforce is important for employers and children. Children learn through the relationships they have with adults. It is damaging to children to lose their teacher. Low wages increase staff turnover and create challenges in developing a qualified workforce.

Early care and education needs a professional credentialing system that acknowledges steps in professional development. Credentials or individual professional licensure must recognize a level of achievement and require ongoing professional development. Professionals who develop areas of expertise need to be formally recognized. It is the responsibility of the professional credential system to ensure that all pre-service and on-going professional development reflects the current research and best practice.

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Objective III.5.
Offer a range of scholarship opportunities to allow early care and education professionals to participate in higher education.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® must be fully funded to assist early child professionals in meeting licensing requirements and quality initiatives. T.E.A.CH. is a scholarship program specifically designed for early care and education. It supports the participant in achieving a Child Development Associate credential, Associate's degree or Bachelor's degree. It provides tuition, travel, release time and compensation to the scholar, and supports the employer by requiring the scholar to make a commitment to remain in the field. Many early care and education providers return to college part-time while working full time. Consequently, many traditional scholarship programs are not accessible to early childhood professionals. [Established/ requires expansion]

- Continue to provide the Department of Labor's Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program. Ensure that the program continues to use the mentor model and the Delaware First Competencies. Apprenticeship is a proven method for increasing the education and skill level in a profession. Apprenticeship also increases the compensation of the participant and improves stability of the workforce for employers. [Established/ requires expansion]

- Encourage high school students in the early childhood career tracks to participate in the Delaware SEED (Student Excellence Equals Degree) scholarship program. [Established]

Objective III.6.
Create a system of credentials for recognition of specialized knowledge and experience required for specific early learning roles. Credentials shall include recognition for directors, infant and toddler teachers, early literacy and school age teachers.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- A Director's Certificate has been developed by Delaware Technical and Community College. [Established]
- An Infant and Toddler Certificate and School Age Certificate are currently under development. [In planning]

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Objective III.7.
Expand the existing early care and education career training to high school students as an on-going means of developing a prepared workforce. This coursework should be incorporated into the professional development system.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- Many school districts are offering an early care and education career path through their Family and Consumer Science teachers. The opportunity exists for these students to receive Tech Prep credits in Delaware colleges. All high schools offering career paths need to establish articulation agreements with colleges. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective III.8.
Develop leadership in early care and education in Delaware through mentoring and leadership training programs.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- A leadership academy must be established to support the development of a cadre of professionals who can assume leadership roles and advocate for early care and education. [In planning]

Objective III.9.
Implement multiple delivery methods that allow the working adult to take advantage of professional development opportunities. Address the barrier to professional development stemming from low literacy level and English language learners in the field.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- Delaware First, Delaware's career development system, must develop a means to support child care staff with limited English language skills and staff with low literacy levels so they can develop the core competencies for teachers. [In planning]
- Increase the number of professional development opportunities that can be accessed through distance learning. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective III.10.
Implement and maintain a network of resources and professional development.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- Curriculum resources need to be available for teachers. Delaware First in conjunction with Family & Workplace Connection ensures availability of resources. [Established]
- Career advisement needs to be available to staff of early care and education programs through the resource centers. [Established/ requires expansion]
- Professional development and program improvement quarterly newsletters are provided to all programs. [Established]

Objective III.11.
Explore means to enhance compensation, benefits and employment conditions for staff of early care and education programs to encourage those who obtain an early childhood education degree to seek employment in Delaware.

Strategies to achieve objective:
- T.E.A.C.H. and Apprenticeship include a compensation mechanism in their programs. [Established/ requires expansion]
- A wages and benefit support program, like W.A.G.E.S.©, needs to be adopted to improve recruitment and retention of qualified professions to the field. [To be developed]
- Access to affordable health insurance is needed for early care and education workforce. [To be developed]

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Program Licensure

All early care and education programs offering services to the public will be required to be licensed and program licensing will continue to be streamlined and equitably enforced. The importance of the licensure of child care programs has been recognized in Delaware since 1915. Protecting its citizens especially those most vulnerable is one of the primary responsibilities of government. Licensure provides basic safeguards for children who are in the care of someone other than their family. Children require protection from physical and developmental harm. Child care licensure should provide those protections. The Delaware Baseline Quality Study indicates that the current program licensure requirements do not provide that basic protection from harm.

Objective III.12.
Expand state program licensing statutes to cover all early care and education programs. Create, as part of the development of public will, a campaign to inform parents, providers and the public of the prevalence of legally unlicensed programs and the possible risks they present to children, and the benefits of licensing. [To be developed]

Objective III.13.
Review and revise licensing requirements every five years to ensure that they reflect the current needs of children and families, current practice and new research. [In planning]

~ In the Delaware Baseline Quality Study of child care, 30% of licensed programs were rated good or excellent.
27% of programs were rated poor and found to be developmentally harmful to children.
All other programs were judged "mediocre".

III. Ready Early Care and Education Programs

Objective III.14.
Continue to streamline and coordinate facility licensing. The issuance of a license reflects the coordination of multiply regulatory agencies, zoning, building, fire, plumbing, transportation, Child and Adult Care Food Program and environmental health. The continuous refinement and coordination of these various agencies will improve program licensure. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective III.15.
Ensure that Delaware's program licensing system reflects state-of-the-art monitoring and enforcement approaches in early care and education. [To be developed]

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Implement Parent's Right to Know law – make it easier to review files and complaints, include on-line capability [To be developed]
- Integrate the Office of Child Care Licensing system with Delaware Stars [To be developed]
- Coordinate Delaware Stars with licensing rules as they are revised [To be developed]

Objective III.16.
Develop the capacity of licensing staff and give them the appropriate resources to enforce facility licensing. Caseload standards must reflect the recommendations of the field; 75 programs per licensing specialist. Increase the specialized training of the licensing staff and their participation in the professional certification system as it becomes available. [To be developed]

Objective III.17.
Ensure that families have easy access to the licensing records of early care and education programs to ensure they are able to make informed choices. Both on-line and in-person options need to be available. [To be developed]

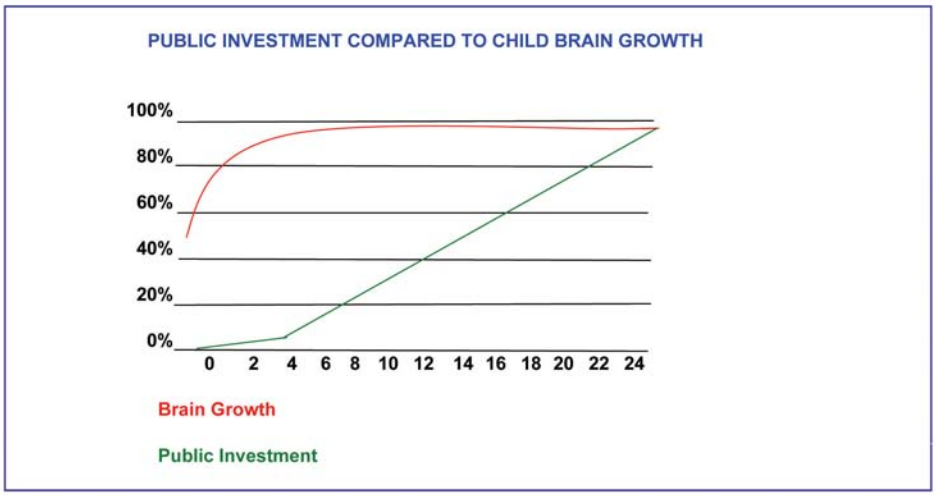
"85 percent of who you are – your intellect, your personality, your social skills – is developed by the age of five. Let's invest where it makes a difference."

Massachusetts Early Education for All

IV. Ready Communities

Public Will, Governance and Finance

By the year 2015, Delaware citizenry will understand the importance of the children's growth, development and learning during the first five years and be willing to support and invest in creating an early childhood system. The early childhood system will be a durable, normalized component of the state budget, corporate investments, and community giving. Public will, governance and finance together create a community that is willing and prepared to support the early learning system. Communities will work together to design and build localized solutions to support their young children and families.



"Investments in the earliest years of life represent more than simply another children's or human services issue. These investments represent human capital and economic development."

Child & Family Policy Center and Voices for American's Children: Early Learning Left Out

Public Will

The development of public will is critical to enhancing government's and business's capacity to invest in any social endeavor. The development of public will in early learning is defined as convincing the public that investments in the field are beneficial to society as a whole. A wealth of scientific data exists that underscores the importance of brain development in the early years, and substantial data attests to cost savings accrued from high quality early childhood services.

Objective IV.1.

Identify and develop clear, specific, concise and consistent messages to be used in advertising campaigns. Public awareness campaigns need to be targeted based on the audience. Establish a sub-committee to the Delaware Early Care and Education Council to develop guidance materials and clear, targeted messages. [To be developed]

Strategies to achieve objective:

- The Delaware Baseline Quality Study results should be incorporated into the public will effort. [Established/ requires expansion]
- The Council will partner from other organizations, such as the United Way of Delaware. [established/requires expansion]
- Clarify for the targeted messages what action is expected. The targeted populations should include the medical and business communities, state and local governments. [To be developed]

Objective IV.2.

Create a pro-active campaign to increase the family-friendliness of workplaces. More workplaces will be family friendly and support families in their important role of being a parent. [To be developed]

Governance

Developing an early childhood system is a complex, multi-year endeavor that requires on-going oversight to ensure adequate progress. The Governor gave that responsibility to the Delaware Early Care and Education Council with support from the Office for Early Care and Education. The Council reports to the Interagency Resources Management Committee (IRMC). The IRMC is composed of the Secretaries of Education, Health and Social Services and Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, the Budget Director, and the Controller General. The coordination and collaboration of these state agencies is necessary to establish an early childhood system.

Unlike public education, most early childhood services will be provided by non-governmental providers and agencies. Those non-governmental entities must be involved in the development of the system. The Council must ensure that its membership is broad enough to allow it to speak on behalf on the early childhood system. Families must be included as full participants and serve in leadership roles in the development of the early childhood system. With the increased interest in early learning, the Council and Office of Early Care and Education need to be available to advise other groups, such as the Kids Caucus, the Business Roundtable, P-20 Council, and the State Board of Education, on the progress made on building the system.

Objective IV.3.
Expand the membership of the Council to include all stakeholders with an interest in early childhood including families, criminal justice, health, mental health, family support, and public education including specific organization, such as the Wilmington Metropolitan Urban League, Family & Workplace Connection, and Nemours Health and Prevention Services. [In planning]

Objective IV.4.
Create and implement a protocol for the Council to be knowledgeable of all programs, projects and initiatives related to early childhood system building. The Office of Early Care and Education should maintain that information for the purpose of sharing information, communication, and creating linkages across the system. A web-based mechanism should be explored. [To be developed]

Objective IV.5.
Increase the communication between the Council and IRMC by establishing quartering meetings between the IRMC designees and the Council with an annual meeting with the Secretaries of Education, Health and Social Services, and Children, Youth and Their Families. [In planning]

Objective IV.6.
Increase the communication between the Council, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature by establishing regular meetings between the Chair of Council and the Governor and the Kid's Caucus.
[To be developed]

Objective IV.7.
Solidify relationships between the organizations with shared goals; specifically the Council, the Family Support Coordinating Council and the local early learning councils, such as the Wilmington Early Care and Education Council and the Sussex Early Learning Council. Kent County and New Castle County should be encouraged to form similar organizations. [Established/ requires expansion]

Objective IV.8.
Codify the Council. The Council was created by Executive Order by Governor Minner. Prior to the end of Governor Minner's term the council will be formally created by the Legislature. [In planning]

Objective IV.9.
Formalize the structure and role of the Family Support Coordinating Council. [To be developed]

Objective IV.10.
Ensure that there is coordination and collaboration among the state agencies towards the goals and objectives of Early Success. [Established/ requires expansion]

IV. Ready Communities

Financing

The early learning system must be accessible to all young children and their families and must be funded at a level so all families desiring participation will have access at a rate commensurate with their ability to pay. All families must be able to participate in high quality early learning experiences. Unlike public education, it is not the goal of the early childhood system to make all services paid for by state, local and federal funds. The development of innovative funding options is required to meet this goal.

The benefits of early learning are broad. Early learning should be viewed as economic development by supporting working families and creating a high quality work force. In the short term early learning supports school success for all children but most importantly for those considered at-risk for academic failure. Based on these benefits the burden of funding early learning must be shared by government, businesses and foundations, and by the families that are consumers.

Building an early childhood system is complex; the complexity is increased by the multiple funding streams. Infrastructure development must also be part of the system development. Funding must be specifically earmarked for developing and maintaining infrastructure.

Objective IV.11.
Establish the Early Care and Education Stabilization Fund. The Fund will be a blend of public and private dollars used to support the Delaware Stars Tiered Quality program, T.E.A.C.H., capital improvements at early care and education programs and to pilot system building initiatives. The Fund will be modeled on Delaware's Arts Stabilization Fund. [To be developed]

Objective IV.12.
Create a funding tracking data base to ensure that there is clear and accurate information regarding the state, county, federal, private, and foundation dollars spent to support early learning in Delaware. The data base should be maintained by the Office of Early Care and Education. [To be developed]

Objective IV.13.
Secure stable funding mechanisms. Most of Delaware's quality improvement initiatives in the areas of ready children and ready early care and education programs are funded by federal dollars that have been flat funded for more than seven years. Many states have found state funds to supplement the federal ones in the form of lottery proceeds, cigarette tax, or tobacco funds. Delaware needs to allocate funding specifically for early learning. [To be developed]

Objective IV.14
Establish funding mechanisms to support the preparation, retention of a high quality early care and education workforce. An essential issue for the early care and education workforce is access to health insurance. [To be developed]

~ 14,694 children qualify for Purchase of Care, Delaware's child care assistance program.

V. Ready Schools

Successful Transitions and Collaborations

By the Year 2015, the schools and the early learning community will forge meaningful, productive relationships that support children and their families.

The Early Learning Foundations are aligned with the K-12 kindergarten expectations. The social and emotional development program in early childhood, Partners in Excellence, has been aligned with the K-12 Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) program. Schools and early care and education programs share responsibility for ensuring that the Early Learning Foundations are used as a guide for promoting high quality early learning experiences for children. The Early Learning Foundations should not be used as a checklist to measure children's readiness for school. Children will continue to arrive at school at different developmental stages. Teachers need to work with all children and their families to support learning across the curriculum.

Children will leave the early learning system when they go to kindergarten. Just as the K-12 system works to prepare children for college and the workforce, the early learning system needs to prepare children for their school years. Connecting the systems and successfully transitioning children and their families between the two systems is very important to the success of both early learning and K-12. True partnerships need to be forged between the two education systems. Delaware's Mid-Atlantic Early Childhood Network works to connect the early care and education community with public schools.

Objective V.1.
Provide opportunities for shared professional development experiences for school and early childhood professionals beginning with those communities that already have relationships between parents, early care and education providers and schools. [To be developed]

Objective V.2.
Ensure that schools and early childhood programs support successful transitions of children and their families. [To be developed]

Objective V.3.
Provide training on developing meaningful partnerships to schools and early care and education programs.

Strategies to achieve objective:

- Provide training on the matrix/framework developed by the Delaware committee of the Mid-Atlantic Early Childhood Network. The matrix/framework offers specific guidance on building effective partnerships. [In planning]
- Invite Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) to provide training and technical support to enable Delaware to develop a Ready Schools model. [To be developed]

Objective V.4.
Utilize school resources and services to support community outreach efforts in the areas of health, mental health and family engagement opportunities. [To be developed]

Objective V.5.
Develop a means of formal recognition of those schools and early care and education programs that have created partnerships. [To be developed]

Indicators of Success

The building of a comprehensive early learning system is complex. Indicators of progress are essential to be able to measure the State's improvement. These indicators will track our progress as the system evolves. A plan for system evaluation will be further refined as the system is built. Core indicators will change as the early learning system develops.

The Delaware Early Care and Education Council will compile indicator data annually with the help of various state and community agencies. The indicator data will be reported in the Council's annual report. The report will be shared with the Governor, the Interagency Resource Management Committee, the Legislature, the Kids Caucus, and other involved organizations and individuals.

The indicators are linked to the five goals of Early Success.

~ A 6 year old living in poverty begins school with a vocabulary of just 5,000 words. Their more affluent peers begin school with a 20,000 word vocabulary.

Ready Children

Physically and Emotionally Healthy Children Eager to Learn

Young children develop physically, emotional, cognitively, and socially. Successful development in all of these areas is necessary for school readiness and lifelong success. Families need support to ensure their children grow up healthy, both physically and emotionally, and are eager to learn.

Core indicators:

- % of children under five receiving comprehensive screenings including development, vision, dental, hearing, height and weight, mental health, and lead screenings at age appropriate intervals
- % of children under the age of two who are fully immunized
- % of families reporting that they have a medical home
- % of eligible children receiving EPSDT services at age appropriate intervals
- % of insured children from birth to five
- % of medical and dental home providers serving children younger than five
- % of early care and education programs incorporating social and emotional competencies in their curriculum
- % of mental health professionals with the expertise to serve young children and their families
- Delaware's rank in the expulsion rate of preschoolers
- % of Medicaid reimbursements for early mental health and dental services
- % of pregnant women receiving prenatal care during the first trimester
- % of children born premature

Data Sources – Kids Count in Delaware, Delaware Children's Health Chartbook, Division of Public Health data,

Ready Families

Families are the prime educators of their children. It is their responsibility to assist their children to become healthy and productive citizens. In order to be successful at parenting, families need access to information, services and community resources in varying levels to support them in this important task.

Core indicators:

- % of early learning committees including family representation
- # of early care and education programs with family engagement strategies as measured by Delaware Stars for Early Success
- % of children under five abused or neglected
- % of families that ensure their children eat well and get regular physical activity
- # of families accessing the early learning website
- % of first time families receiving a home visit
- % of progress on the Family Outcome indicators in Delaware's Part C program, Head Start and Early Childhood Assistance Programs (ECAP)
- % of families with young children completing parent education programs

Data Sources – Kids Count in Delaware, Department of Education, Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Division of Public Health, NHPS Household Survey

Ready Early Care and Education

Children Enrolled in Early Care and Education Programs

Children who attend high quality, comprehensive early learning programs are better prepared for school – academically, socially and emotionally. Economically disadvantaged infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who participate in high quality programs have better school achievement, social skills and behavior than children who do not participate in a preschool experience or who are enrolled in a low quality program. The Delaware Baseline Quality Study found that the early care and education programs participated in the child care subsidy were significantly poorer quality than the programs that did not.

Core indicators:

- % of children in the child care subsidy program receiving services in a 2, 3, 4, or 5 star child care program as rated by the Delaware Star program

Early Childhood Education Teacher Credential

One of the most crucial predictors of high quality early care and education settings is the education level and specialized early childhood training of the children's teacher.

Core indicators:

- % of early care and education teachers and directors with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood
- % of early care and education teachers and directors with an associates degree in early childhood education
- % of directors and teachers who have completed specialized certificate programs

High Quality Early Care and Education Programs

The quality of the program a child attends has a direct impact on his or her later school success. Child care licensing regulations do not ensure quality programs for children (Delaware Baseline Quality Study 2005). Defining and recognizing higher quality is an important step in increasing program quality. The Delaware Stars program defines and publicly recognizes program quality. The five-star system begins with licensing and progresses through to accreditation. Increasing the number of programs with 4 or 5 stars will increase the overall quality of the early care and education system. National accreditation standards set by the early childhood professional organizations are also benchmarks of quality.

Core indicator:

- % of programs at each of the five Delaware Star levels
- % of child care centers, family child care homes, and school age care programs that are nationally accredited

Ready Early Care and Education

Access to Child Care Subsidy

Families with young children depend on child care. Families living at or near FPL need the support of child care subsidies to allow them to participate in the workforce or education programs.

Core indicator:

- % of children under 6 years receiving child care subsidy vs. those that are eligible

Family Involvement in Early Care and Education Programs

The involvement of a child's family in his or her education is a predictor of school success. Early care and education programs and families need to work together to support the learning and development of young children. Supporting families in continuing their children's learning at home is essential. Programs that incorporate family input and involvement on a regular basis are more likely to improve child and family outcomes.

Core indicator:

- % of early care and education programs with multiple strategies to involve and support families as measured by that criteria in Delaware Stars

~ "95% of public investment in education occurs after the critical years" from birth to age five, which is the time of greatest brain development.

Ready Communities

The success of every community is dependent upon the success of the next generation. Today's children are tomorrow's employees, leaders and taxpayers. The growth of the community is dependent on ensuring the successful growth, development and learning of its children. Therefore it is the responsibility of the community to be responsive to the needs of its youngest citizens.

Core indicators:

- % of state budget dedicated to the early childhood system
- # of tax incentives to support families with young children, both directly to the family and to employers that establish family support programs

Ready Schools

Children will leave the early learning system when they go to kindergarten. Research is clear that the quality of children's early learning experience directly impacts their school and life success. To ensure student success schools must partner with families and early care and education programs.

Core indicators:

- % of schools and early care and education providers that have formed partnerships
- # of school districts and early care and education programs sharing professional development experiences
- % of higher education programs incorporating the Early Learning Foundations in their teacher preparation programs

CASCADING EFFECT OF ENHANCED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT:

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

✓ *Ready for Kindergarten* =
✓ *Successful start in school* =
✓ *Fewer behavioral problems* =
✓ *More rewarding interpersonal relationships* =
✓ *More successful learning* =
✓ *Less tobacco and drug use* =
✓ *Less delinquency and truancy* =
✓ *Less juvenile justice encounters* =
✓ *Higher high school graduation rates* =
✓ *Higher rate of entrance to & completion of college* =
✓ *Higher inventory and flexibility of job skills* =
✓ *Better jobs* =
✓ *More durable family life* =
✓ *Higher income* =
✓ *More upward social mobility* =
✓ *Greater engagement in civic life* =

BETTER HEALTH & WELL-BEING

"Effective Early Childhood Programs: Turning Knowledge into Action" Susan H. Landry, PhD

Definitions

The development of an early childhood system requires diverse groups to develop a shared vision and plan. Common understanding of terms is necessary to develop a plan. Over the course of the work on this plan the following definition of terms was agreed upon.

Child care – *programs licensed to provide care and education for children birth through school age, generally a full day program, including relative care approved by the Division of Social Services*

Early care and education – *the entire array of care and education programs available to children from birth to school entry including all of the types of care and education programs*

Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) - *comprehensive care and education programs for four year old children funded by the State*

Early Head Start – *comprehensive care and education programs for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers funded by the federal government*

Early learning – *the learning experiences of a child from birth to school entry*

Family child care – *programs licensed to provide care and education to a small group of children in the licensee's home*

Family support – *an array of services provided to families to enhance and enrich their parental skills and knowledge*

Family Support Coordinating Council – *a multi-disciplinary, collaborative, public-private council that includes professionals and parents who are committed to assuring that quality family education, support and early care and education programs are available statewide. The group provides leadership in advocating for system change that assures that services are not only available but that they are "family friendly" and culturally competent.*

Head Start – *comprehensive care and education programs for three and four year old children funded by the federal government*

Home visiting – *programs providing parent support and child development information to families with young children*

Medical Home – *A pediatric or family practice clinician who works in partnership with the family/patient to assure that all of the medical and non-medical needs of the patient are met. Through this partnership, the pediatric clinician can help the family/patient access and coordinate specialty care, educational services, out-of-home care, family support, and other public and private community services that are important to the overall health of the child/youth and family.*

Purchases of Care Program – *a state program to assists families living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Limit with their child care needs*

Preschool program – *programs licensed to provide care and education for three to five year old children, generally a part day program*

Relative care – *a child care option for families who receive child care subsidy to allow children to receive child care from their relatives*

School readiness – *the process for ensuring that a child is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for the structure and expectations of the formal academic environment of the K-12 system*

Why revise the original Early Success?

The first Early Success vision limited its view to impacting children by enhancing the quality of their early care and education program. This is an important component of any early learning system because approximately 70% of Delaware's young children participate in the state's early care and education system. Since the creation of the original vision the field has come to better understand:

- The impact of children's social and emotional development
- The importance of supporting families in their parenting role
- The importance of medical homes for children
- The importance of early learning experiences on later school success
- The importance of promotion healthy eating and physical activity

This plan has reviewed and commented on by:

- Delaware Early Care and Education Council
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Steering Committee
- Building Capacity in Natural Environments Sub-Committee
- Delaware Head Start Association
- Mid-Atlantic Early Childhood Network
- Nemours Health and Prevention Services
- United Way of Delaware
- Family Support Coordinating Council
- Department of Education
- Delaware Tech Early Childhood Advisory Committee
- Kent County Child Care Centers Directors
- Health Systems Research, Inc.

2006 Delaware Early Care and Education Council

Members

Ann Wick, Chair

Dayna Moore
Owner, Lessons Learned Day Care

Barbara Sheppard
Delaware Technical Community College

Linda Walls
Director/Owner, Little Angels Center

Andrea Moselle
Astra Zeneca

Sandra Cohee, Principal
Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center

Tania Culley
Office of Child Adovate

David W. Arthurs
Parent Advocate

Beth Inter
Wilmington Head Start, Inc.

Sue McColgan
St. Johns Lutheran Early Learning Center

Advisors

Scott Felderman
United Way of Delaware

Ginny Marino
YWCA of New Castle County

Janet Cornwell, Ph.D
Director, Delaware Early Childhood Center

Doug W. Tynan, Ph.D., ABPP
AI DuPont Hospital for children

Michael Gamel-McCormick, Ph.D
University of Delaware

Evelyn Keating
Family and Workplace Connection

Rep. Melanie George-Marshall
Legislative Hall

Dorothy Onn
Nemours Health & Prevention Services

Carol Owens, M.D.
Division of Public Health

Debbie Amsden
University of Delaware

Ex-Officio Members

Representative Melanie Marshall
State Representative

Nancy Wilson, Ph.D
Department of Education

Patricia Quinn
Office of Child Care Licensing

Kathy Wilson
Delaware First Career Development System

Eulinda DiPietro
Division of Social Services

Norma Everett
Division of Public Health

Staff Support

Janet Carter
Abby L. Betts
Early Care and Education Office
Department of Education

Early Childhood Comprehensive System Steering Committee Members

Celeste Anderson
DSSSC

Melvin D'Souza
DOE

Donna Anthony
NAMI-DE

Katherine Esterly
Christiana Care HSP

Aparna Bagdi
UofD
Ind.&Family Studies

Cathie Frost
Advocate

Heidi Beck
UofD

Carl Gartner
A.I. Dupont

Christopher Botsko
Technical Assist

Rosanne Griff-Cabelli
DMSDIR

Eulinda DiPietro
DHSS-DSS

Evelyn Keating
Family & Workplace Connection

Martha Buell
UofD

Michelle Lamers
Parent Advisor

Linda Caballero, MD
A.I. Dupont Pediatric Prac.

Jim Lesko
DOE

Janet Carter
DOE

Lora Lewis
DHSS-DPH

Lynn Chaiken

Dave Michalik
DHSS-DSS

Tom Kelly, MD
DDDS

Connie Moran
DOE

Janet Cornwell
Early Childhood Prog.

Pat Nelson
U of D

Dawn Davis
Parent Advocate

Leslie Newman
Children & Families First

Carol Owens
DHSS-DPH

Julia Pillsbury
Center for Pediatrics

Dorothy Onn
Nemours Health & Prevention Services

Marc Richman
DSCYF

Marie Renzi
EMS Coordinator

Betty Richardson
Head Start Program

Dennis Rubino
DPH

Sue Samuels
CCHS

Maureen Schweitzer
Easter Seals

Anna Scovell
Coordinator

Donald Unger
UofD

Bridget Wheatley

Sussex First Time Families

Beth Mac Donald
EMSC-Special Needs Program

Dana Sawyer
Office of Prevention & Early Intervention

Joyce Pinkett
DHSS-Medicaid

Jennifer Pulcinella
Parent Advocate

Michelle Blakenship
Easter Seals of DE

Karen DeRamso
Prevent Child Abuse-DE

Steven Bachrach, MD
A.I. Dupont Hospital

Valerie Pletcher-Mullen
Parent Advocate

Alicia Comfort
Parent Advocate

Marisa Apps
Parent Advocate

Anne Morrissey
Parent Advocate

Special thanks for Lessons Learned Day Care & Preschool, Little Angles Day Care and Learning Center, St. John's Lutheran Early Learning Center, and Wilmington Head Start for allowing us to photograph their wonderful children.

Special appreciation to Ann Wick, Norma Everett and Kathy Wilson for their efforts in writing *Early Success*

For information about Early Success: Delaware's Early Childhood Plan contact"

Janet Carter
Office of Early Care and Education
Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, Delaware 19901