

Iowa Community Empowerment Newsletter

July 2003
Volume 4, Issue 3

Questions/Comments:
Kris Bell, (515) 281-4537
Kris.bell@idom.state.ia.us



!!!Special Edition!!!

Let's Talk Quality: Early Learning Environments

Why does quality care matter?

A study by the National Academy of Sciences, summing up research on preschool programs, notes that much of the human brain develops in the first five years of life and that stimulation from the environment during this stage changes the very physiology of the brain.

It is commonly accepted that children who attend preschool are more likely to succeed in kindergarten than those who do not. High-quality early care experiences, in terms of both classroom practices and teacher-child relationship, enhance children's abilities to take advantage of the education opportunities in school.

High-quality early care leads to the development of more advanced learning skills such as language and math abilities, as well as social skills. Two influential studies on the effects of intensive, high-quality early childhood programs demonstrate that these programs benefit into adulthood disadvantaged children academically and socially.

Participating in early education can also provide academic and social benefits that last well beyond kindergarten. Research shows that investing in high-quality preschool education is a good investment, producing a more productive labor force with high-level skills who stay in jobs longer.

What is High Quality Care?

There is a consensus that quality early care includes the following:

- A safe environment
- Well-prepared teachers
- Small class size
- Interactive relationship among teachers and children
- Emphasizing both social and learning skills
- Involvement of parents

Iowa's Early Childhood Vision:

**Every child,
beginning at birth,
will be healthy and
successful.**

A more detailed analysis was given recently by the authoritative National Institute for Early Education Research, at Rutgers University, in a report issued in November of 2002. The report cited two generally accepted approaches to measuring the quality of early childhood programs. The first focuses on process quality and the second on structural quality.

Aspects of process:

This is the child-teacher interactions and the types of activities in which children are engaged. It also includes health and safety, materials and relationships with parents.

- There are positive relationships between teachers and children.
- The early care room is well equipped, with sufficient materials and toys.
- Communication occurs through the day, with mutual listening, talking/responding, and encouragement to use reasoning and problem-solving.
- Opportunities for art, music/movement, sciences, math, block play, sand, water, and dramatic play are provided daily.
- There are materials and activities to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of the program.

Aspects of structure:

Structural quality consists of such things as teacher-child ratios, class size, qualifications and compensation of teachers and staff, and square footage.

- Adult-child ratios do not exceed recommendations for the National Association for the Early Education of Children (NAEYC)
- Group sizes are small
- Teachers and staff are qualified and compensated accordingly
- All staff are supervised and evaluated, and have opportunities for professional growth.

A study prepared by the National Academy of Sciences in 2001 concluded: "If there is a single critical component to quality, it rests in the relationship between the child and the teacher/caregiver, and in the ability of the adult to be responsive to the child. But responsiveness extends in many directions: to the child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical characteristics and development."

EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

A Joint Position Statement of

The National Association for
the Education of Young
Children (NAEYC) and
The National Association of
Early Childhood Specialists
in State Departments of
Education (NAECS/SDE)*

Approved November 19, 2002
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Endorsed by the Council of
Chief State School Officers,
April 2003*

Updated May 9, 2003

¹NCRESST defines *standards* as "the broadest of a family of terms referring to expectations for student learning." This position statement uses the term *early learning standards* to describe expectations for the learning and development of young children. Narrower terms included in standards and early learning standards are *content standards* ("summary descriptions of what it is that students should know and/or be able to do within a particular discipline" [McREL]); *benchmarks* ("specific description of knowledge or skill that students should acquire by a particular point in their schooling" [McREL]-usually tied to a grade or age level); *performance standards* ("describes levels of student performance in respect to the knowledge or skill described in a single benchmark or a set of closely related benchmarks" [McREL]). Important, related standards that are not included in this position statement's definition of early learning standards are *program standards*-expectations for the characteristics or quality of schools, child care centers, and other educational settings. It should be noted that Head Start uses the term *Performance Standards* in a way that is closer to the definition of program standards, describing expectations for the functioning of a Head Start program and not the accomplishments of children in the program. A working group of representatives from NAEYC, CCSO, ERIC, and other groups is developing a more complete glossary of terms related to standards, assessment, and accountability.

Introduction

Early childhood education has become part of a standards-based environment. More than 25 states have standards¹ describing desired results, outcomes, or learning expectations for children below kindergarten age; Head Start has developed a Child Outcomes Framework; and national organizations have developed content standards in areas such as early literacy and mathematics. This movement raises significant educational, ethical, developmental, programmatic, assessment, and policy issues. Rather than writing a new set of standards, in this position statement NAEYC and NAECS/SDE address those issues, describing four features that are essential if early learning standards are to be developmentally effective. The recommendations in this position statement are most relevant to young children of preschool or prekindergarten age, with and without disabilities, in group settings including state prekindergarten programs, community child care, family child care, and Head Start. However, the recommendations can guide the development and implementation of standards for younger and older children as well.

The Position

The first years of life are critical for later outcomes. Young children have an innate desire to learn. That desire can be supported or undermined by early experiences. High-quality early childhood education can promote intellectual, language, physical, social, and emotional development, creating school readiness and building a foundation for later academic and social competence. By defining the desired content and outcomes of young children's education, early learning standards can lead to greater opportunities for positive development and learning in these early years. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) take the position that early learning standards can be a valuable part of a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children, contributing to young children's educational experiences and to their future success. But these results can be achieved only if early learning standards (1) emphasize significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes; (2) are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes; (3) use implementation and assessment strategies that are ethical and appropriate for young children; and (4) are accompanied by strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families.

Because of the educational and developmental risks for vulnerable young children if standards are not well developed and implemented, the recommendations in this position statement are embedded in and refer to the principles set forth in NAEYC's code of ethical conduct. According to this code, early childhood professionals and others affecting young children's education must promote those practices that benefit young children, and they must refuse to participate in educational practices that harm young children. Thus, a test of the value of any standards effort is whether it promotes educationally and developmentally positive outcomes and whether it avoids penalizing or excluding children from needed services and supports.

Essential Features

A developmentally effective system of early learning standards must include four essential features:

- 1. Effective Early Learning Standards Emphasize Significant, Developmentally Appropriate Content and Outcomes**
 - Effective early learning standards give emphasis to **all domains** of early development and learning.
 - The content and desired outcomes of effective early learning standards are **meaningful and important** to children's current well-being and later learning.
 - Rather than relying on simplifications of standards for older children, the content and desired outcomes of effective early learning standards are **based on research about** the processes, sequences, and long-term consequences of **early learning and development**.

Iowa's Early Childhood Vision:

Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.

EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

A Joint Position Statement of

**The National Association for
the Education of Young
Children (NAEYC) and
The National Association of
Early Childhood Specialists
in State Departments of
Education (NAECS/SDE)***

Approved November 19, 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

-Continued

2003 NAEYC Annual Conference

November 5-8, 2003

McCormick Place;

Chicago, Illinois

NAEYC's Annual Conference
and Expo - the world's largest

**IOWA AEYC 2003
CONFERENCE**
Reaching for Brighter Horizons
October 10-11, 2003
**Polk County Convention
Complex, Des Moines, Iowa**

- Effective early learning standards create **appropriate expectations** by linking content and desired outcomes to specific ages or developmental periods.
 - The content of effective early learning standards, and expectations for children's mastery of the standards, must **accommodate variations**—community, cultural, linguistic, and individual—that best support positive outcomes. To do so, early learning standards must encompass the widest possible range of children's life situations and experiences, including disabilities.
2. **Effective Early Learning Standards Are Developed and Reviewed Through Informed, Inclusive Processes**
 - The process of developing and reviewing early learning standards relies on relevant, valid **sources of expertise**.
 - The process of developing and reviewing early learning standards involves **multiple stakeholders**. Stakeholders may include community members, families, early childhood educators and special educators, and other professional groups. In all cases, those with specific expertise in early development and learning must be involved.
 - Once early learning standards have been developed, standards developers and relevant professional associations ensure that standards are shared with all stakeholders, creating multiple opportunities for **discussion and exchange**.
 - Early learning standards remain relevant and research based by using a systematic, interactive process for regular **review and revision**.
 3. **Early Learning Standards Gain Their Effectiveness Through Implementation and Assessment Practices That Support All Children's Development in Ethical, Appropriate Ways**
 - Effective early learning standards require equally effective **curriculum, classroom practices, and teaching strategies** that connect with young children's interests and abilities, and that promote positive development and learning.
 - **Tools to assess young children's progress** must be clearly connected to important learning represented in the standards; must be technically, developmentally, and culturally valid; and must yield comprehensive, useful information.
 - Information gained from **assessments** of young children's progress with respect to standards must be **used to benefit children**. Assessment and accountability systems should be used to improve practices and services and should not be used to rank, sort, or penalize young children.
 4. **Effective Early Learning Standards Require a Foundation of Support for Early Childhood Programs, Professionals, and Families**
 - Research-based standards for early childhood **program quality, and adequate resources** for high-quality programs, build environments where standards can be implemented effectively.
 - Significant expansion of **professional development** is essential if all early childhood teachers and administrators are to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to implement early learning standards.
 - Early learning standards have the most positive effects if **families**—key partners in young children's learning—are provided with respectful communication and support.

© 2002 National Association for the Education of Young Children
Contact us at pubaff@naeyc.org

The Family Storyteller

(Submitted by Donna K. Donald,
ISUE Family Life Field
Specialist, Southwest Iowa)



Iowa State University Extension is partnering with local entities to offer the *Family Storyteller* program for parents and preschool age children. The goal of this family literacy program is to enrich parent/child interaction and the home environment to enhance the language and lifelong learning skills of both parent and child.

The *Family Storyteller* can help parents:

- prepare their children to succeed in school,
- watch their children grow in independence,
- get a special time with their children,
- have fun enjoying books with their children.

Children can:

- increase their language skills,
- come to love reading and writing,
- learn about their world through carefully selected books,
- do better at school,
- feel closer with parents,
- have fun and enjoy the stories.

The six weekly sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes with groups of 10-12 families. Parents learn reading techniques and then practice reading books to their children. Fun language and craft activities complement the books and extend the learning. Each family gets a packet to take home containing the featured book and crafts activities.

Flexibility in the curriculum allows creative scheduling. Successful programs include noon time offerings at daycare centers and daytime and evening sessions with or without a meal. Planning committees use a variety of funding sources to support the program. Expenses include books, activity packets, childcare, food, and facilitator fees. Extension educators can assist with planning, implementation and evaluation of the *Family Storyteller* program. They can also provide train the trainer workshops.

Extension Specialists from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Service created the *Family Storyteller* program and evaluated its effectiveness. They worked closely with Iowa Extension educators to arrange for use of the program here. *Family Storyteller* program materials are also available in Spanish. For more information about the *Family Storyteller* program contact the local extension office.

Child Care is Education... and More

by Joan Lombardi

Upcoming Events

Iowa Empowerment Board

July 11, 2003
October 3, 2003

State Advisory Council

Meeting Schedule
July 9, 2003

Contact/Coordinator

Meeting Schedule
September 24, 2003

Early Care Health and Education Symposium

July 10, 2003

Early Care, Health and Education Congress

November 18-19, 2003
Scheman Center, Ames

Millions of children in the United States spend part of their day in child care programs while their parents work. These settings -- in centers and in homes -- are places where children can learn and grow.

In 1989 the president and the nation's governors developed a set of education goals to improve the quality of education in America. Although the first goal focuses on school readiness, child care has often been viewed as falling outside that picture. The tenth anniversary of the goals is an important opportunity to redefine education and recognize that high-quality child care is part of a system of learning that affects child development.

We know that children's language and cognitive skills thrive in high-quality child care programs with responsive caregivers who are adequately trained and supported. In poor-quality programs, opportunities to stimulate development are lost or squandered. In large groups with few trained staff, in centers or homes where children have few opportunities to be read to, listened to, or held, in programs where television or isolation replace human interaction and communication, children learn that they have little effect on their environment -- precisely the wrong message to promote readiness and school success.

Traditionally, three "places" have been seen to affect a child's education: family, school, and community. Child care is part of all three. Child care is a family support. Not only is child care often provided by relatives and other family members, but from the perspective of the child as well the family, child care is often an extension of the home. Child care provides many opportunities to help parents succeed as "first teachers."

For young children, child care is school; just listen to any group of three- and four-year olds talking about "my teacher." They have demystified the dichotomy that has fractured the early childhood field for so long. They know it is not child care and education, but rather child care is education. Research clearly tells us that early experiences matter. It's not important where it happens or what the building is called, what matters is what happens once the children arrive. More recently we have come to appreciate the importance of the community to child development -- both the climate in a community and the services provided. Child care is a fundamental part of the community. For school-age children, child care is the "new neighborhood," whether sponsored by schools or by any of a wide range of community-based organizations.

People are often reluctant to talk about child care as education. We worry that the term education is too limiting. We believe that somehow child care is more than education -- that it is child development, that it includes health, that it should be supportive of families and their working schedules. These beliefs are not part of the traditional purpose of education, although this too is changing. Also, because child care includes babies and toddlers, traditional education terms don't seem to fit.

Despite these concerns, if we are to improve child care, it must be seen as a service for children as well as parents -- it must be seen as education and more. We must step up efforts to ensure funding to improve the quality of those places where babies and young children go before they enter primary school and the places where school-age children go at the end of the school day. That means providing funds directly to child care programs to improve their educational services -- funding for accreditation, teacher training, and increased compensation.

Child Care is Education... and More – continued

Joan Lombardi will be a keynote presenter at the upcoming Early Care, Health and Education Congress on **November 18-19, 2003**.

Mark your calendars to attend the conference at the Scheman Center in Ames, Iowa.

Registration information available in July.

Book Review: *Time to Care: Redesigning Child Care to Promote Education, Support Families, and Build Communities*

By Joan Lombardi

Review comments from Shelley Levin at Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, Illinois

Improving child care also means enhancing family child care networks, providing home visits and literacy programs to kith-and-kin providers as well as parents, and ensuring that extended day is connected programmatically to what goes on during the school day. We must also keep up our efforts to bring health resources into child care, particularly health consultants who can help ensure health and safety as well as health promotion. Education for young children begins with health, and this linkage must continue into adolescence.

This is the time to take every available opportunity -- from the classroom and the living room to the hearing room and the board room -- to bring these efforts together in order to provide safe and healthy learning environments. Parents should be encouraged to join in this effort. We have to send a message to decisionmakers that while parents work, we must make sure that child care works for children.

Joan Lombardi, Ph.D., a former NAEYC Governing Board member, served in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from 1993 to 1998, as the first Associate Commissioner and Director of the Child Care Bureau and then as Deputy Assistant Secretary for External Affairs in the Administration for Children and Families.

Copyright © 1999 by Joan Lombardi, 1941 Shiver Drive, Alexandria, VA 22307. Ref: The Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, January 1999 [Volume 54, Number 1]

Source: Website of QUILT (Quality in Linking Together, Early Education Partnerships): <http://www.quilt.org>

Lombardi gives a comprehensive overview of the many people, agencies and institutions that demonstrate how child and youth care needs are being met by the engagement of older adults.

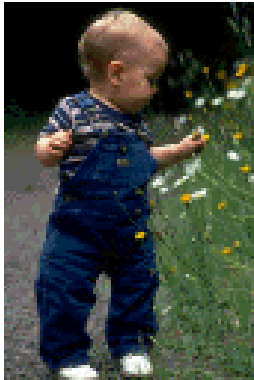
In the first chapter, Lombardi describes seven principles that “should shape our new image of child care.” Briefly stated, those principles are:

- Child care is an opportunity;
- The child care setting is not exclusively a home or a school;
- Child care for young children is not the same as child care for school-age children;
- The heart of any good child care program is the relationship between the children and the provider, and the relationship between the provider and the parents;
- Child care is not an isolated service for children; rather it should be seen as a hub of support for families;
- Child care is not a private responsibility, but must be a public service;
- Because child care supports children and families, it is everyone’s business to get involved.

Time to Care offers a practical approach to the new image of an inclusive community-based system of child and youth care and opportunity. For more information or to order a copy of *Time to Care*, visit www.temple.edu/tempres.

Early Childhood Transition in Iowa Schools

(from Iowa Dept. of Education's
"Taking the Next Steps Together:
Transition for Children Birth
Through Age Eight in Iowa"
Published June 1996



Young children must adjust to many changes. Some of the transitions experienced by children birth through age eight are major milestones for both children and families.

Some changes that may accompany transitions – such as an earlier meal time or elimination of a nap – have little long-term significance for a child or family. But others, such as instability in child care arrangements or marked shifts in adult expectations at home or at school, may influence a young child's sense of security and long-term attitudes toward learning.

As with many other changes, transition to a new program creates both challenges and new opportunities for growth. Conquering the challenges can give children and families additional confidence to meet future transitions. Too much change, however, can create stress, anxiety, fear or confusion, and it can hinder young children's ability to learn.

The goal in a smooth transition is to create as much continuity as possible for all children entering new programs in the community or school. Research has shown that:

- Whenever young children can experience success during significant transitions they grow in confidence and competence to manage later moves.
- Local planning by responsible teachers, families and representatives from other community agencies can minimize discontinuity and enhance children's opportunities for success..
- Developmentally appropriate curricula provide continuity and promote early success for children with a diversity of abilities and previous experiences.
- Family members often contribute significantly to young children's adjustments to a new environment. To be comfortable participants, parents need information and encouragement. Their culture and goals for their children and families must be valued.
- Families who feel welcome are likely to continue active involvement in their children's education.
- Planned activities can help children and families cope with necessary changes and negotiate transitions successfully.
- Written procedures and timelines help communities to ensure that transition activities occur on schedule.

Transition planning helps to assure that the special needs of children and families are met, necessary information about children's special learning characteristics is shared and special equipment and training are provided in a timely manner. Good beginnings help to minimize or avert later problems, such as academic failure, school dropout and antisocial actions. When teachers, families and representatives of community agencies plan together, the transition process works better than when the responsible parties do not communicate and/or cooperate. Planning can help children and their families reduce anxiety about transition and, instead, anticipate the exciting opportunities of the school years.

Community-wide planning for transition to kindergarten has been encouraged by the federal government under the National Education Goals, as a part of site-based planning the state's school restructuring, and by a myriad of position statements from professional organizations.

The Heart of Transition Planning

*(from Iowa Dept. of Education's
"Taking the Next Steps Together:
Transition for Children Birth
Through Age Eight in Iowa"
Published June 1996*



The heart of transition planning is a shared philosophy based on how young children grow and learn. All programs of care and education for children from birth to age eight should be developmentally appropriate. There are four basic elements that must be addressed and intentionally included in any early childhood program in order to meet the needs of young children:

Age Appropriateness

Developmentally appropriate programs provide a learning environment and appropriate experiences based on knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served. Research indicates in the first nine years, children develop and progress through universal stages and predictable sequences of growth and change. Children can progress within a range of plus or minus two years of chronological age and be considered “typically developing.”

Individual Appropriateness

Each child is a unique person. Children who are developing typically move through universal stages at their own individual patterns, rates, and style of growth. Children with unique needs and abilities will be offered experiences and environments that match their developmental abilities. Developmentally appropriate programs are responsive to and honor a child’s individual uniqueness and differences such as personality, learning style, ways of intelligence, family background and cultural heritage.

Child Initiated and Child Directed

Child initiated means children have control and choice in carrying out an activity but within a framework provided by a teacher. A child needs to be purposefully engaged in an activity, exploring materials with interest and curiosity, trying out ideas and involving themselves in their environment. Children are allowed to select materials or projects themselves, determine how they will interact with given materials, and decide how they will approach and solve a problem.

Teacher Supported

Teacher supported means creating an intentional and planned framework for learning and providing materials and activities consistent with what we know about child development. Teachers ask open-ended questions that encourage inquiry, thought, discussion and reflection by the child rather than expecting simple “right” answers. The teacher responds to the needs, strengths, requests and ideas of the children so they can grow and explore. Teachers become a resource and a facilitator to children to help them “learn how to learn” rather than the source and giver of information and knowledge.

Developmentally Appropriate Care: What Does it Mean?

Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care – NNCC, Sprain, J. (1990). *Developmentally Appropriate Care: What Does it Mean?* Internet: Minnesota Extension Service, www.preschooleducation.com

The term developmentally appropriate care is commonly used by child care professionals to describe care that takes into account the level of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of a child.

While there is no one right way to care for children, there are guidelines that focus on how a child develops and the care that is appropriate at various stages. These guidelines help both child care providers and parents understand ways to care for children while helping them develop positive self-esteem.

The following guidelines have been developed by early childhood and child care professionals. These guidelines focus on the idea of developmental appropriateness which is defined in two parts:

1. *age appropriateness* or the universal, predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children as they go through their early years of life; and
2. *individual appropriateness* or the unique growth sequence of each child with their own pattern and timing, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background experiences.

Appropriate Care for Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers learn by experiencing the environment - by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling, and by physically moving around. They learn a sense of trust through interaction with consistent, caring adults.

Adults not only meet physical needs but spend time holding, playing, and talking with the infant. The adult helps the infant learn by pointing out things to look at, touch, and hear.

Toilet training, feeding, and dressing are taught without criticism and provide opportunities to let the child do for themselves. Homes and centers are "child-proofed" to allow the child safe exploration.

For two-year-olds, simple books, pictures, puzzles and music are provided. Time and space for jumping, running and dancing are arranged. Language skills are encouraged by describing to the child what the child is doing, repeating new words and reading aloud. Adults know that children in this age group cannot understand the idea of sharing.

Appropriate Care for Three-, Four- and Five-year-olds

Three-year-olds are provided with learning activities that emphasize language, large motor physical activity, and movement. Activities include puzzles and blocks, wheel toys and climbers, dramatic play acting and story telling.

Four-year-olds enjoy a greater variety of experiences and more activities like cutting paper and fabric, other art activities and cooking. They can recognize shapes, colors, and use basic math and problem-solving skills.

Some four-year-olds and most five-year-olds combine ideas, have a growing memory and are developing fine motor skills. They display a growing interest in the written language. They are developing an interest in the community and enjoy special events and trips.

Adults listen, encourage creative play, join in activities, build self-esteem, and set consistent limits.

Developmentally Appropriate Care: What Does it Mean? - *continued*



Developmentally Appropriate Equipment and Space Guidelines

Infants benefit from the following equipment: crib, play yard, infant seat, high chair, waterproof mattress, and changing table. Infants need colorful pictures, objects they can grab and hit (such as crib gyms), and soft objects they can learn to pick up. Older infants need safe space for rolling, sitting, and crawling.

Toddlers use the same things as infants plus they need safe crawl space and room when taking those first steps. Most toddlers play alone. Look for easy ways for them to move from one space to another.

Toddlers love to explore. Good toys at this age are containers filled with blocks, pull toys, and stacking containers.

Preschoolers need more space. Play spaces should be varied. In addition, they need active as well as quiet spaces. They should also have a place to store personal items. A child-size toilet or potty chair and a way to wash their own hands are also helpful. They work both individually and in small groups and are beginning to like to be in larger groups too.

Preschoolers need a variety of toys for play. Art materials, puzzles, toys that produce sounds, and tricycles are typical equipment for this age.

General Features of Developmentally Appropriate Care

Child care providers that practice developmentally appropriate care have the following list of characteristics. They:

- are patient and supportive with children;
- promote creativity, discovery, and exploration;
- encourage children to take initiative in selecting activities;
- understand the individual capabilities of children;
- interact with the children by talking to them as well as listening to what they have to say;
- allow children to do things for themselves;
- offer choices of activities and materials;
- set and enforce reasonable limits; and
- are willing to use different methods of care to meet each child's abilities and needs.

Benefits of Inclusive Child Care: What are the benefits of an inclusive child care program?

(reprinted with permission from

Welcoming ALL Children

Creating Inclusive Child Care
Tamyra Freeman, Lois Hutter-Pishahi, Elizabeth Traub)

To learn more about Inclusion in Iowa, contact: Mary Schertz (515) 281-5433, Dee Gethmann (515) 281-5502 or your local Area Education Agency, Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor.

We all know what it feels like to be excluded! Child care providers who strive to offer quality, inclusive services that welcome ALL children help to end that feeling of exclusion. They help to ensure that children with and without disabilities experience the benefits of living and growing together.

Inclusive practices help to create an atmosphere in which children are better able to accept and understand differences among themselves. Children begin to realize and accept that some people need to use wheelchairs, some use hearing aids, and some use their arms and legs in different ways. Children, families, child care providers, and the community all benefit by supporting inclusion.

Benefits for Children:

- Children develop friendships and learn how to play and interact with one another
- Children develop a more positive image of themselves and a healthy attitude about the uniqueness of others
- Children are provided with models of people who achieve, despite challenges
- Children with special needs have opportunities to learn new skills by observing and imitating other children
- Children are encouraged to be resourceful, creative, and cooperative

Benefits for Families:

- All families are supported to learn more about child development
- All families have the joy of watching their children make friends with a diverse group of children
- All families have an opportunity to teach their children about individual differences and diversity
- All families have an opportunity to talk with other parents and realize they share many of the same frustrations, concerns, needs, hopes, and desires for their children
- All families have access to child care

Benefits for Child Care Professionals:

- Care givers grow professionally by developing new skills and broadening their perspective on child development
- Care givers have an opportunity to learn about and develop partnerships with other community resources and agencies
- Care givers learn to communicate more effectively and work as a team
- Care givers build strong relationships with parents
- Care givers enhance their credibility as quality, inclusive child care providers

Benefits for the Community:

- A community becomes more accepting and supportive all people
- A more diverse community leads to more creativity, possibilities, and opportunities
- Inclusion helps adults with disabilities to be better prepared for the responsibilities and privileges of community life.

School Readiness: Starting Your Child Off Right

Wynn, L. *School Readiness: Starting Your Child Off Right* Raleigh: North Carolina Partnership for Children, 2002.

Reprinted with permission

So your child is starting kindergarten soon! This is an exciting time, but it can be scary too. You may have questions about whether your child is ready to go to school, or you may be wondering how you can help him get off to a good start. This brochure gives parents ideas on how to help their child be successful in school and what to expect when school starts.

WHAT IS READINESS?

Readiness is what we call the things that help children be successful in school. However, readiness is not just about children. It has two parts: the skills and abilities children have and the readiness of the school to meet the needs of the individual child.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT READINESS AND CHILDREN?

- ❖ All children are born ready to learn. Children begin to learn as soon as they are born, and they keep learning every day.
- ❖ Readiness is not an event that happens at a certain time, like when a child enters preschool or starts kindergarten. It is a process that begins when your child is born and continues as he learns from experiences with the things and people in his world.
- ❖ Every part of your child's development is important and will help her learn. There are some things that are especially important for success in school.

Here are some aspects of your child's development that are important for success in school and some things you can do to help your child develop and grow in this area:

1. HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

All the things that contribute to good health help children have the energy and concentration to do well in school. You can help by:

- ❖ Making sure your child eats a healthy diet.
- ❖ Making sure that your child gets adequate rest and has a regular bedtime schedule.
- ❖ Taking your child for regular physical check-ups.
- ❖ Making sure your child gets needed immunizations.
- ❖ Making sure your child has many chances to use his large/gross motor skills by running, jumping, climbing steps and other activities like these.
- ❖ Making sure your child has many chances to use her small/fine muscle skills by using crayons, cutting with child size scissors, sculpting with play dough and other similar activities.

2. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Feeling good about yourself and others is important to learning. Children who are confident about their abilities and who like being with others will probably enjoy being in school and work hard there. You can help by:

- ❖ Making sure your child has many chances to be with other children, both in groups and one-on-one.
- ❖ Encouraging your child to practice skills like following directions, remembering stories and taking turns.
- ❖ Giving your child tasks to do that she can do well and learn to feel confident in her abilities. Offer praise and encouragement for tasks completed.
- ❖ Helping him learn to dress himself and manage his own personal needs.
- ❖ Having regular routines at home and being consistent so he can understand that these are important.

3. APPROACHES TO LEARNING

How your child learns is important. Children who are successful in school enjoy learning. You can help by:

- ❖ Offering your child chances to explore things he is interested in and encouraging your child to ask questions and develop a sense of curiosity.
- ❖ Giving your child jobs to do and encouraging her to finish them. Make sure to notice her work and praise her for doing a good job.
- ❖ Giving him opportunities to be creative.
- ❖ Giving her the chance to use basic problem-solving skills.
- ❖ Helping him take responsibility for his learning by asking him what he thinks or how he feels about his work or play.

4. COMMUNICATION

Communicating clearly with others is important. You can help by:

- ❖ Listening to your child.
- ❖ Encouraging your child to listen when others talk.
- ❖ Making sure your child has many chances to draw, scribble, and write using different tools such as pencils, crayons, markers and paint brushes.
- ❖ Telling your child stories and listening as she tells stories.
- ❖ Encouraging your child to tell you and others what he needs.
- ❖ Helping your child learn to accept limits and rules. Make your expectations clear and be consistent with rules.

5. THINKING AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Children learn many things about the world before they go to school. You can help your child learn by:

- ❖ Taking your child many places. Trips within your city or neighborhood can be learning experiences.
- ❖ Giving your child the opportunity to listen to you read many different kinds of books.
- ❖ Offering your child materials to use that have patterns or relationships, like puzzles.

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP CHILDREN BE SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS?

Sometimes parents think they should teach their child letters and numbers before they begin kindergarten, but the best way to help your child prepare for school is to help her know how to learn.

- ❖ Listen to your child. This shows him that communication is important.
- ❖ Talk to your child. Language development is a key to successful learning. When you talk to your child while you do things, describe what you are doing and answer their questions. This encourages language development.
- ❖ Ask your child questions that do not have a one- or two-word answer. (Instead of asking, .Did you have a good time?. ask .What did you like about the park? Why?)
- ❖ Show interest in your child's school, preschool or child care center. There are many things parents can do to help. Some parents volunteer in the classroom. Others help in the lunchroom or on the playground. Your child's teacher can help you decide how you can help.
- ❖ Read to your child. Choose many different things to read, like favorite books, poems, factual books, and magazines. Reading is one of the best ways to help your child's language development and to help her enjoy and value books. This is important to success in school. Your library is a good place to find books.
- ❖ Take your child to different places. Experiences with the world can help your child form a good base of information she can use in school. Take your child to the grocery store, the car wash, or just for a walk around your neighborhood. Talk about what you see. Describe what is happening. Point out common words on signs. Little things can be an adventure for your child, and she can learn a lot as well.
- ❖ Limit television. Too much TV takes time away from other good activities that can help your child learn. Television does not help develop language skills. Choose programs carefully and limit watching to a maximum of one or two programs a day.
- ❖ Choose good child care. Good child care helps children be successful in school. In child care, children need to be in small groups with teachers who understand and like children. They need many different activities to choose from and many materials to use. This kind of high-quality care can help your child begin to develop needed skills like getting along with others, listening, and following directions.
- ❖ Set limits for your child and stick to them. Setting limits helps children feel secure because they know what to expect and helps them learn to follow rules.
- ❖ Help your child learn to listen by using position words like .up., .down., and .beside. when you talk to him and by giving him one-, two- or three-part directions to follow. (For example, .Please brush your teeth and put on your pajamas. or .Please put away your coat, wash your hands, and sit at the table so we can have lunch.

Children who have an easier adjustment to school

- ❖ Can communicate their needs, wants and thoughts
- ❖ Can take turns and share
- ❖ Are enthusiastic and curious; and
- ❖ Can sit still and pay attention for short periods of time.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY SCHOOL IS READY?

Schools need to be ready for children, too. 'Ready schools' that help children be successful have things in common you can look for:

Ready schools make children and families feel safe and welcome. Children learn best when they are comfortable. Here are some ways schools can help your child feel at ease.

- ❖ Someone - a teacher, an aide or other school staff - is there to welcome you and your child when you come to school.
- ❖ Teachers kneel down when they talk to children so that they are on the child's eye level. They talk to your child, not just to you.
- ❖ Parents are welcome to spend time at school. The school offers places where you can feel comfortable, like a parent's lounge, resource center or in the classroom.
- ❖ The school is kept clean and attractive.
- ❖ The school reflects the make-up of the community through the artwork and books it displays so that all children can recognize something of their own home culture.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY?

Schools use birth date to decide when children will enter school. **In Iowa, if a child is five on or before September 15, he is eligible for school.** Every child develops at his own rate. Abilities and skills can develop unevenly even in the same child. For example, one child may talk early and walk later, while another child the same age may walk early and talk later. There is no magic date when children are ready. Helping your child do some of the things listed in this brochure will make adjusting to school easier.

HOW DO SCHOOLS FIND OUT ABOUT CHILDREN'S READINESS?

Parents are important. You know your child better than anyone else. You know important things about him, such as the kinds of experiences he has had before starting school, what his health is like, and what your family is like. Every child begins school with an individual mix of things they know and experiences they have had. All children learn in different ways. Sharing information about your child can help teachers and others at your school know how best to teach him.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO PREPARE FOR SCHOOL?

Here are some tips that will help your family have a good kindergarten experience:

Before school starts:

- ❖ Find out what school the children from your neighborhood attend.
- ❖ Visit the school.
- ❖ Find out what choices you may have for where your child attends school (such as magnet schools).
- ❖ Find out what the registration process is and how it works.
- ❖ Several months before school starts, find out what papers you will need and get them together (for example, your child's shot record).
- ❖ Go to any orientation meeting your school has for new parents.
- ❖ Take your child to visit the school, and meet her new teacher before the first day of school.
- ❖ Find out about transportation, and make sure your child knows how he will get to and from school.
- ❖ Your school may screen your child to help them know her better. It is important to remember that a screening is not a test. Screenings help find any problems your child may have so that she can get help with them right away.

When school starts:

- ❖ If your child is in child care or Head Start, see if the teacher who knows your child best can talk to the kindergarten teacher to tell her what your child likes and what she is learning before she comes to school.
- ❖ Talk with your child's kindergarten teacher about what they will be doing in school and what to expect.
- ❖ If you need somewhere for your child to go after school is over, check to see if the school has an after school program.

During the school year:

- ❖ Keep in touch with your child's teacher after school starts --write notes, call or visit regularly so you can talk with the teacher and let her know you want to be involved in the learning process.
- ❖ Keep a journal or folder of your child's work.

School readiness is a complex process. By following the suggestions in this brochure you can help your child get a good start in school, and build a foundation for learning that will last throughout his school years.

Iowa PITC Training Plan Program

(information submitted by Beth Beals-Walling)



...Iowa PITC Research Project...

In September 2003, Iowa State University and ISU Extension will begin a research project examining the impact of IA PITC. In order to determine if the trainings indeed improve provider practice, training participants will be randomly selected (from Training Plan providers) to be a part of the study. Individual results will not be available to participants or to the IA PITC staff. All information will be aggregated and treated confidentially.

Child care providers involved in the training plan must agree to participate in the research project and sign consent forms before taking any of the PITC series classes. Providers who are randomly chosen to be a part of the study will receive additional monies for site visits (conducted by ISU Extension staff), the first of which must occur before IA PITC classes are taken or before the second class.

The Iowa Program for Infant & Toddler Caregivers (IA PITC) is a statewide effort to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers. A new IA PITC Training Plan Program is being offered to deliver the IA PITC in a comprehensive approach. In addition, to offset provider expenses related to attending the entire four-module series, an incentive will be paid.

The plan and bonus is designed to increase attendance and retention of information in all four modules, provide technical assistance, improve provider practice, and participation in the IA PITC research project. Training plans will be comprised of 40 contact hours of IA PITC classes (ten hours per modules I - IV) within 12 months. In addition, at least two hours of technical assistance in group settings will be offered.

Applicants for the IA PITC training plan program must:

- Be employed in an early childhood child care program or related service (as determined by the State Coordinator) in the State of Iowa
- AND
- Work directly with children ages 0-3 or administer a program which serves those ages
- OR
- Be in the process of achieving an infant and toddler CDA
- AND
- Sign a training plan letter of agreement and agree to and follow all rules of the plan
 - Agree to participate in the IA PITC research project (for which additional consent forms will be required through Iowa State University) if you have not previously attended PITC trainings

Priority may be given to child care providers who:

- care for infants and toddlers
- care for an infant or toddler with special needs
- are a registered Child Development Home provider - (copy of registration must be included)
- are providing direct infant care within a licensed child care center
- all early childhood direct care and administration staff of a fully licensed child care center have applied to and agree to attend all of the trainings in one training plan
- have not taken the IA PITC series previously

Selected applicants will receive a one time stipend of \$200 following completion of all four PITC modules. Proof of attendance is required. Participants who have been paid through Empowerment dollars or other means to attend the trainings do not qualify for the stipends. Individuals earning points in programs such as "So Many Rewards," may designate your PITC hours toward those points or choose to receive the monetary stipend from IA PITC.

The Training Plan Program will be available as funds allow (200 openings). Not all applications may be funded and are awarded on a rolling basis across the state. Applications will be reviewed by the Infant Toddler Specialists within the regional Child Care Resource & Referral offices. Terms may change as determined by the State Coordinator, Department of Human Services.

Iowa PITC Training Plan Program - *continued*

...Training Plan Guidelines...

- Applicants must have a training plan signed by them and their regional Infant Toddler Specialist
- The training plan will consist of at least 40 hours of IA PITC classes, five two-hour lessons from the key topic areas of each of the four modules (lessons include statewide common key concepts).
- Each training plan will have 20 registered participants (most likely but not limited to a mix of home and center based care providers).
- Participants must attend all of the classes in the training plan (40 hours) in a twelve (12) month period in order to be eligible for the \$200 bonus.
- Center-based recipients must be involved in a technical assistance (TA) plan which includes at least two hours of TA (to be developed and arranged with the regional Infant Toddler Specialist)
- Child Development Home providers may arrange for TA via the Infant Toddler Specialist.
- Participants agree to be involved in the IA PITC program assessment study
- Incentives (\$200.00) will be paid by the regional CCR&R office after full participation has been completed
- If chosen to be involved in the IA PITC Program Assessment Study, associated activities include from two to three on-site observations conducted before 4 hours of PITC training, after approximately 14 to 18 hours of PITC training, and after approximately 28 to 32 hours of PITC training. Study participants will receive \$50 per visit following the completion of each of the three on-site assessments.
- The bonus may be taxable income. You are encouraged to seek information from a tax specialist.
- Funds may be geographically distributed, as best as possible, across the state according to the number of applicants from each region
- Applications must be fully completed to be considered.

For more information on PITC classes as well as regional offices please refer to:

<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/ACFS/pitc/pitc.asp>

<i>Region 1 (Northwest)</i>	Kari Daale	1-800-859-2025/712-786-2001
<u>Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.:</u>	418 Marion St, Po Bx 390; Remsen, IA 51050	
<i>Region 2 (Northeast)</i>	Tiffany Luck	1-800-475-0804/319-233-0804
<u>Child Care Resource/Rftral</u>	760 Ansborough Ave, PO Box 4090, Waterloo, IA 50704	
<i>Region 3 (Southwest)</i>	Toni Stork	1-800-945-9778/712-755-7381
<u>West Central Development Corp.</u>	PoBx 709; 1105 - 8 th St.; Harlan, IA 51537	
<i>Region 4 (Central)</i>	Anne Kelly	1-800-722-7619/515-286-3536
<u>Child Care Resource/Rftral of Ctrl IA;</u>	1914 Carpenter, Des Moines, IA 50314	
<i>Region 5 (Southeast)</i>	Barbara Newcomb	1-800-369-3778/319-324-1302
<u>Iowa East Central TRAIN; CCR&R</u>	2804 Eastern Ave., Davenport, IA 52803	

Tips for Successful Family Style Meals

(information provided by Sandy Fiegen, Department of Education, Bureau of Food and Nutrition)



Making a positive mealtime for the children is a priority for both families and their care providers. From the CARE Connection, here is a few questions to ask yourself to help you make the best decision.

C = Consider the children's needs:

What are the children's needs? What could I do to meet these needs?

A = Analyze your situation:

What will help me meet the children's needs? What is my situation?

What hurdles do I have to overcome? Will the decision I am about to make help me provide the best care for the children in my home/center?

R = Respond with best practices:

Do the job right. With the information I have, I will handle the situation in the best way. If I need to, I will try to get more information so that I can make a decision based on what is best for the children.

E = Evaluate the outcome:

Were the children's needs met? Did I use best practice? How could I have done a better job?

This is just a few ideas from child care centers and homes in Iowa.

1. Precede mealtime with a story time or quiet activity.
2. Wash hands in small groups.
3. Have children helpers assist with table setting. They should be supervised. Cover hair and wash hands first.
4. All foods should be on the table before children sit down.
5. Teachers may place name cards, or may assign children individually to tables to make sure children who need more supervision are not grouped together or are all seated near the teachers. Sometimes children are given colored or shaped pieces and are asked to sit at the table with the matching color or shape. No more than 7-8 children and one adult at a table.
6. Teachers should sit at the table from the beginning to the end of the meal. They should sit in the center, not at the end of the table. Teachers should be good role models and eat or taste the same foods as the children. Teachers should not bring coffee or pop or other foods to the meal tables.
7. Children should sit quietly either passing foods to others (for family style service) or with hands in laps until the teacher says they may begin eating. Every child must have some of each food his/her plate before anyone begins eating.
8. Conversation at mealtime should be relaxed and personal. Teachers should take the time to speak individually with children (by name) and should talk about the food they are eating – why foods are good for health, where they come from, how they grow, colors, shapes, flavors, etc. Mealtime is not break time for teachers, but it is a continuing part of the activity and learning curriculum.
9. All "family style" foods should be passed to each child at least twice before any child is excused from the table.

Children should be appropriately encouraged to taste and eat the food provided. However, children should never be forced to eat. Foods should not be used to discipline or reward children.

Quality and Best Practices for In-Home Visitation Programs

(submitted by Jo Hinrichs, Dept. of Public Health)

Home visiting programs have diverse goals, but they share a focus on the importance of children's early years and on the pivotal role parents play in shaping children's lives. A principle and belief of home visitation services is that one of the best ways to reach families with young children is to bring services to them, rather than expect them to reach out and seek assistance. The old saying "You don't know what you don't know" applies to the challenges of raising children. Home visitors can see the environments in which a family lives, gain a better understanding of family needs and desires and tailor services to meet family goals.

Home visitation programs targeted for pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers have emerged as a "silver bullet" to resolve a host of issues families may face, from the depth of dealing with mental illness, substance abuse and child abuse to the level of learning how to bathe or diaper a new baby. The wide variety of need families experience should dispel the expectation any one program or service is capable of "fixing" all family issues.

Program models that serve pregnant women and families with young children have a variety of goals, including preventing child maltreatment, promoting effective parenting, improving pregnancy outcomes, and advancing the social, emotional and intellectual development of children. Program models differ in many dimensions, such as the population they serve, how services are delivered and the outcomes measured, however they are all rooted in common beliefs. Primarily, all believe the parents plan a critical role in shaping the outcomes of their children and that pregnancy and early childhood is the crucial time to provide support.

Family success today demands community and public involvement and believing "it takes a village to raise a child". In order to reach the vision for Iowa's children, "Every Child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful", it will take development of "public will" and a commitment from communities to have all children reach Iowa's positive results for early childhood. A home visitation program is an essential program to have available in the realm of community support services for families. A key element is to have the home visitation aligned and integrated with all other support services available for families.

In the realm of home visitation services to support pregnant women and families with an infant or young children, communities are encouraged to support program models that "have a proven track record" through research. Evaluations assure evidence the services and support for families reach optimal outcomes. In the event modifications are made to researched home visiting models and standards, families cannot be expected to reach the same outcomes.

Communities are often challenged to choose one "home visitation model" versus another. In order to determine a model or models that best fit a community, three national resources are referenced for guidelines and best practices.

SPHERE Institute, April 23, 2001: SPHERE Institute issued a "review of the literature" on several in-home visitation programs on April 23, 2001. For information, contact: The SPHERE Institute; 1415 Rollins Road, Suite 204; Burlingame, California 94010 or email at <http://www.sphereinstitute.org/>.

Their comparison determined elements of "best practices" that evolved as characteristics and strategies of in-home visitation services most likely to induce positive outcomes:

- **Philosophy/culture:** comprehensive in focus and view program as part of a broad community support system.
- **Home services:** create a well-defined curriculum compatible with a family's needs, culture, and language
- **Target population:** targeted rather than universal
- **Client participation:** voluntary

Quality and Best Practices for In-Home Visitation Programs

--continued

Iowa's Guiding Principles and Practices for Delivery of Family Centered Services

Principle 1: The overriding purpose of providing family-centered help is family "empowerment," which in turn benefits the well-being and development of the child.

Principle 2: Mutual trust, respect, honesty, and open communication characterize the family-provider relationship.

Principle 3: Families are active participants in all aspects of services. They are the ultimate decision-makers in the amount, type of assistance and the support they seek to use.

Principle 4: The ongoing "work" between families and providers is about identifying family concerns (priorities, hopes, needs, goals or wishes), finding family strengths, and the services and supports that will provide necessary resources to meet those needs.

Principle 5: Efforts are made to build upon and use families' informal community support systems before relying solely on professional, formal services.

Principle 6: Providers across all disciplines collaborate with families to provide resources that best match what the family needs.

Principle 7: Support and resources need to be flexible, individualized and responsive to the changing needs of families.

For more information and examples for those providing services to families in this delivery mechanism, go to:

<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/ea/documents.html>

Attrition: address specific barriers to client continuation in program

- **Staff caseloads:** restricted to fixed number of clients per visitor
- **Credentials of staff:** nurses, trained paraprofessionals, and visitors with an advanced degree in a related discipline can induce positive outcomes
- **Duration and frequency:** intensity (weekly or biweekly visits) is more important than duration
- **Other:** maintain flexibility and attention to individual client needs; establish clear channels of communication among all parties involved and the community; implement continuous evaluation and modification as needed.

David and Lucile Packard Foundation: The Future of Children, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring/Summer 1999. Access at <http://www.futureofchildren.org>. "Home Visiting: Recent Program Evaluations" article makes the following recommendations:

- Existing home visiting programs and their national headquarters should launch efforts to improve the implementation and quality of services.
- Research should be crafted primarily to help programs improve quality and implementation.
- Policymakers and practitioners should maintain modest and realistic expectations for home visiting services.

Family Support America: Principles of Family Support Family Resources of America is an established national organization that has supported research and best practices for family centered practices. Web access at www.familysupportamerica.org. These principles were developed as a guide to all family focused program and service practices.

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members – adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs and to communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsible, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance and administration.

It can be a challenge to determine which home visitation model best fits your community. data from a community assessment will help guide these decisions. Communities with more than one home visitation model can link families with a program model that best aligns with family needs. Some models have criteria for the family to be eligible to participate and others can be offered to all families. A community that selects home visitation model(s) with best practices, family support principles, and research or evidence of the model's family outcomes will be offering the quality to reach desired results for children age 0-5 and their families.

**T.E.A.C.H.® Early
Childhood
Scholarship Program
Comes to Iowa**

*Submitted by Barb Merrill,
Apprenticeship/TEACH
Project Director*

The word is out! TEACH is now in Iowa! After years of planning and seeking funding, the Iowa Child Care and Early Education NetWork now holds the TEACH license for the state of Iowa. A minimum of fifty scholarships for early care and education providers and caregivers will be funded beginning with fall semester, 2003. These fifty T.E.A.C.H.® scholarships are funded with public/private partnerships, primarily through the Iowa Department of Human Services with federal funding through the Child Care and Development Block Grant Quality improvement initiative.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® began in 1990 in North Carolina, with a mere \$ 23,000 to fund 21 scholarships. Now the program has expanded to 23 states, with nearly \$ 30 million in scholarships helping over 20,000 recipients attend college while they provide child care.

Why is TEACH so successful? TEACH requires a combination of four “ingredients”, not simply funding to assist with tuition payments. The TEACH model requires education (college credit in the field of early childhood education), scholarship (to help pay for tuition, books, travel, and release time from caregiving responsibilities), compensation (a raise or bonus after a recipient completes each year of education), and a commitment (retention will be improved, as recipients are required to commit to staying with their child care program). Providers (and their supervisors if center staff) will sign contracts with TEACH IOWA to ensure all four requirements are met.

Iowa’s TEACH scholarships will support C.D.A./A.A./A.S./A.A.S degree requirements in early childhood education, covering up to 80% of tuition costs for nine to fifteen credit hours per year at a participating Iowa community college, stipends for books and travel expenses, and support release time or substitute expenses for the child care program. Recipients MUST be currently employed thirty hours per week or more in a licensed center or a registered child development home. All participants will sign a contract making a commitment to remain in their sponsoring program for a minimum of 12 months following the contract period. Sponsoring child care centers and programs also agree to support the participant. Participants will receive a raise or a bonus after fulfilling each annual contract.

Another scholarship model will assist providers who have already completed their CDA education requirements with the CDA credentialing fee.

Each Child Care Resource and Referral region of the state has a minimum of ten scholarships available from the initial funding, to be awarded to both licensed center/preschool staff and registered child development home providers.

Applications are now available on the NetWork’s website, www.iowachildnetwork.org. Scholarship recipients will be notified beginning in late July. It is anticipated that additional recipients will be eligible to begin their studies in January 2004.

**T.E.A.C.H.® Early
Childhood
Scholarship Program
Comes to Iowa**

*Submitted by Barb Merrill,
Apprenticeship/TEACH
Project Director
--continued*

What is Apprenticeship?

Child Care Apprenticeship sites are registered through the U.S. Department of Labor. An apprentice completes 4000 hours of on-the-job training, supervised by an experienced mentor or journey person, as well as 288 hours of course work (roughly 20 credit hours of early childhood education classes). This usually can be completed in a two year period, as a person is employed at a licensed center/preschool or registered child development home. Several registered apprenticeship sites have been successfully operating in Iowa for the past three years. The NetWork, with funding from the Iowa Department of Human Services and support from U.S. Department of Labor staff, is actively recruiting additional sites to become registered. Participants in registered Child Care Apprenticeship programs are encouraged to apply for TEACH scholarship funding to assist them in completing the college credit portion of the project.

How can Empowerment help?

It is estimated that there are over 20,000 people providing child care in Iowa. More scholarships will be requested than can be provided with current funding. (By mid-June 2003, over 250 Iowa providers had requested a TEACH application packet).

We encourage local Empowerment groups to consider funding additional TEACH scholarships for providers in their own communities, through the Iowa Child Care and Early Education NetWork. The TEACH IOWA program can help to identify interested providers, counsel them into early childhood education programs at the community college of their choice, and provide the contracts to ensure follow through with the release time, compensation and commitment that is required by the project.

Empowerment could also choose to sponsor a child care program, or several programs, to become a registered Apprenticeship site. This might involve providing funding for quality improvements, assisting with tuition costs, providing stipends for the center to allow the mentor/journey person and apprentice to meet regularly for consultation, and other identified needs.

For more information, contact Barb Merrill, Apprenticeship/T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project Director, Iowa Child Care and Early Education NetWork, 218 Sixth Avenue, Suite 710, Des Moines, Iowa, 50309. Email your questions to bmerrill@iowachildnetwork.org, or call (515) 883-1206.

Building an Early Childhood Assessment Program

(Information submitted from Nancy Dunn)

The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) is a tool used to focus on three protective factors – attachment, self-control, and initiative – which are closely related to social and emotional development. The DECA also looks at the child’s use of specific challenging behaviors. The teacher and a family member complete a DECA Record Form to review the child’s use of skills and behaviors related to resilience. DECA results are summarized in individual and classroom profiles that are used to plan strategies to encourage children’s social and emotional strengths.

In Iowa, the DECA is being integrated into activities across the state. Here’s how Cedar Valley’s Promise area is working together to implement this assessment system. Through the provision of AEA 7 Success 4 Grant resources, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) were provided the opportunity to implement the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) program.

A core committee was created and representation consists of: AEA 7, CCR&R, Head Start, Cedar Valley’s Promise Empowerment and DECA Local Program Mentors. This committee provided the necessary guidance for decision-making and support of all who participated in this project. Discussion at technical assistance meetings for site directors also provided guidance to the mentors.

There were 2 primary areas of focus this year linked with the implementation of the DECA program.

- *To provide training to child care providers focused on observation and assessment of individual children and their social emotional development.*
- *To provide necessary support to child care providers as they use the DECA assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of individual child care and program – wide interventions.*

Tri-County Child and Family Development (Head Start) began implementation of the DECA program in collaboration with the Success 4 grant participants. The record of participation in this community wide effort is documented in the table below.

Provider Type	# of classrooms	# of teachers	# of children
Child Development Homes	6	5	23
Child Development Centers	13	26	194
Head Start	23	46 + 12 Family Workers	543
Grand Totals	42	89	760

Building an Early Childhood Assessment Program

(continued)

Each of the classroom teachers identified in the previous table participated in 10 – 15 hours DECA training and technical assistance. Each teacher also completed DECA assessments for the children in their classrooms. Following the DECA training each teacher was provided on-site technical assistance with the identification of strategies that would support improvement in the social emotional development of the children they serve.

In advance of these assessments, each classroom teacher was asked to complete 5 self reflective checklists in the areas of: Environments, Activities and experiences, Daily program, Supportive interactions, and Partnerships with parents. These reflective checklists were repeated at the end of the program year.

Two surveys were conducted requesting DECA program reflections. The first survey was mailed to classroom teachers and the second survey was offered to classroom teachers and core committee members at the AEA7/CCR&R DECA CELEBRATION held on May 5, 2003. These survey responses indicate changes these teachers have made in their classroom environments and changes in the way they are assessing the needs of the children in their classrooms.

Linda Likins, the National DECI Project Director made a visit to Cedar Falls in early May, attended the celebration and conducted an overview of the DECA program the next day. Following her visit, Ms. Likins says, “I was extremely fortunate to have such a visit to Cedar Falls, Iowa to witness a collaborative effort that was being implemented...” “...groups pulled together their resources to initiate a community-wide DECA Program Implementation. Not only are they providing the training to providers, they are establishing a network of mentors across disciplines. They are also looking toward a public engagement campaign that will enlighten the community and other state leaders regarding the importance of social and emotional health.”

As an end result of the training in observation, interpretation of the DECA assessment and the use of the DECA program strategy guide, the teachers were able to document improvement in the resiliency protective factors. Also, the teacher’s perceptions about behavior concerns shifted as they observed how changing areas of the total classroom environment (5 reflective checklists) helped children perform in their classroom.

Two DECA assessments were done on behalf of 183 children. The results indicate improvement in each of the assessment areas (initiative, self-control, attachment) as well as improvement in the screen for behavior concerns. There was a 34% improvement in number of children showing behavior concerns. ***Prior to implementing the DECA program there were 4 children in participating sites that were being considered for termination from enrollment due to behavior/discipline problems. Following DECA implementation there was 1 child being considered for termination from enrollment due to behavior/discipline problems.*** There was also a large improvement as children moved from “typical” to “strength” in the protective factors areas.

Building an Early Childhood Assessment Program

(continued)

The DECA program also includes tools to work with parents to help them work on the resilience protective factors within their own home environments. These tools are designed to be shared in partnerships with child care providers and parents. This area is planning on adding the parent support component for the children in next years program. Cedar Valley's Promise Empowerment has provided an opportunity to expand the base of DECA Local Program Mentors and DECA-C trained personnel (clinical mental health assessment). Continued partnerships between Success-4, CCR&R, Head Start and Cedar Valleys Promise will further enrich the opportunity to increase resiliency in all children participating in early childhood programs

Cedar Valley's Promise Empowerment resources provided our community with the opportunity to expand our ability to implement the DECA program initiated with Success 4 Grant funds last year.

In order to implement the DECA program in additional classrooms, additional DECA Local Program Mentors were needed. Devereux staff (Deborah Mahler) provided a 2-day Basic Implementation session followed by a 2-day Local

Program Mentor session. Saturday morning a half-day session was offered for those interested in learning more about the DECA-C assessment. All were very pleased with the information and excited about the opportunity to utilize these new tools in their early childhood settings.

Participants included; AEA, CCR&R, Head Start, UNI Regents Center, Community Empowerment, Substance Abuse Prevention, Child Care Center Directors, Child Development Home Providers.

If you'd like more information about Devereux's Early Childhood Initiative, go to: <http://www.devereuxearlychildhood.org/>.



NAEYC Accreditation Achieved

(Article submitted by Jeanette Randall of Buchanan, Delaware, Fayette Counties)



“Buchanan, Delaware, Fayette Community Empowerment has been instrumental in helping Kidsville Early Learning Center, in Independence, reach the goal of Accreditation through the National Association of Education for Young Children,” reports Kidsville Director Lois Baumert. “Kidsville has participated in many BDF Community Empowerment projects, including Preschool and Child Care Scholarship programs for qualifying families. Our staff participated in training in Music, Diversity, Science, Every Child Reads, and Welcome to Child Care.” As a result of voluntary participation in the Assessment program, participants received mini-grants for purchase of materials.

“Kidsville was one of the first preschool programs to participate in the BDF Early Childhood Assessment and Consultation Project conducted by Bev Berna, Iowa State Extension. The results of this assessment helped with the Accreditation self-study and setting of improvement goals for quality child care here at Kidsville. The NAEYC Accreditation contributes to the State result areas of Secure and Nurturing Child Care Environments and Children Ready to Succeed in School.

Washington County Empowerment LIFT-Off

By Megan Jones-Schiebel

Parents want to do what they feel is best for their children, but they can't always afford it. Sometimes, doing what's best involves purchasing items like shoes, clothing and food. At other times, however, parents want to have the option to things such as send their children to preschool. Unfortunately, a preschool education is not always possible.

Washington County Empowerment, now known as LIFT-Off (Learning Involves Families Together) began a program to help families who wanted their children to have a preschool experience, but may not be able to afford the cost. Empowerment began offering Preschool Scholarships to families who qualified financially.

Sue Kos of Kalona in northern Washington County chairs empowerment's Preschool Scholarship Committee. She said that the scholarships help families throughout the county. "Many families wanted their child to go to preschool and found the cost prohibitive. There were more kids falling in the cracks," said Kos. Kos emphasized that she was not saying every child should go to preschool if their parents didn't feel it was the right choice. "We're not trying to push parents to send their children to preschool, we're just giving them the opportunity."

This year, 40 children received scholarships to attend the licensed preschool of their parents' choice. Every month, the preschool scholarship committee pays \$50 of the preschool tuition for the scholarship recipient. The money goes directly to the preschool. Families pay the remainder of the monthly balance. The recipient of the scholarship must reside in Washington County, and must attend a licensed preschool program of their own choosing.

Families complete an application to see if their child or children qualify for preschool scholarships. All preschools in the area receive applications to give to parents, as well as anyone who has contact with preschool-age children. The Preschool Scholarship Committee reviews all of the applications for scholarships. Kos is always looking get more people involved with the committee.

To qualify for a preschool scholarship, families must meet four basic criteria. The committee verifies the family's income and eligibility first. They take into account the age of the child. Scholarships are available for children ages 3 to 5. The committee also looks at the number of children in the family who are attending preschool at the same time. Finally, committee members take into account any extenuating circumstances.

The Preschool Scholarship Committee uses guidelines that school districts use for students to qualify for free and reduced school lunches. She stressed that the names of children and their families who receive the preschool scholarships remain confidential between the preschools and the members of the Empowerment Preschool Committee Scholarship Committee.

THE PRESCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM began three years ago. Initially, Kos said that the committee wanted to be able to provide 40 scholarships, but had to cut back due to decreases in funding. The first year, 15 preschool scholarships were offered. In the second year, the committee was able to offer 28 scholarships. Due to a large response, Kos said the group was able to add 10 more scholarships in fall 2001, bringing the total of scholarships to 38. During this past school year, 40 scholarships were filled by children attending preschool.

Washington County Empowerment LIFT-Off

--continued



The committee keeps a waiting list of children and their families that qualify for scholarships. If a child moves, or doesn't need a scholarship any longer, the next child on the waiting list becomes eligible to receive a scholarship at any time during the school year.

Kos urges families to contact their state legislators, and tell them to support empowerment funding which makes the Preschool Scholarships possible. She said the families should let their legislators know how these programs are benefiting kids. The more the word gets out on the scholarships and benefits they provide, the more legislators will see the need involved.

"Kids will enter kindergarten ready to learn," said Kos. "Again, we're not trying to push parents to send their children to preschool. We just want to give those who want to send their children the opportunity."

Jan Lawless is the director of the Washington Preschool Center. She said that the scholarships have provided an opportunity that was not otherwise available to children. Lawless has been a preschool teacher for 30 years. "It's opening up preschool to children who may not otherwise have been able to afford preschool. Everyone knows how important it is. It's more important now than ever to start going to preschool to get a taste of what it's like when you go to kindergarten all day long," said Lawless.

Lawless also supports the scholarship program because the preschool for which she works cannot afford to give scholarships. Washington Preschool Center is a non-profit center, and with the preschool's limited budget, there are not funds left over for scholarships. "I knew there were children who needed to come to preschool, and parents who wanted to send their children, but couldn't quite swing it," said Lawless. "It's one of the best things that's happened to the preschool program. I'm truly excited and appreciative. I know that the parents are, too."

Scott County's Training with Equipment



Here are just a few links to websites where companies sell quality children's equipment.

- Lakeshore Learning Materials:
<http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/>
- Environments, Inc. --
www.environments@eichild.com
- Kaplan Early Learning Company. --
<http://www.kaplanco.com/>

The Scott County Empowerment Board recognizes that quality of child care is a vital element in improving the school readiness of our children. One very successful venture that is included in our plan for the past three years is to provide "Training with Equipment."

This board identified specific curriculum areas that would have the greatest impact on the children's learning in developmentally appropriate ways. Early Childhood Specialists in the community were contracted to teach the classes. High quality equipment was purchased for centers to implement the strategies and techniques presented in the trainings.

The requirements to participate in the training are that the Director and 50% of the staff MUST attend all of the training sessions in order for the center to receive the equipment.

Over the past three years Scott County Empowerment Area (CEA) has funded Training with Equipment in the following areas: Blocks, Music, Infant and Toddler Care, Science, Dramatic Play and Books and Babies. The Scott CEA Board feels that the Training with Equipment project has been extremely successful as demonstrated by the training's performance measures. Parents have provided positive feedback, such as, "My child is happier now that he's busier." Center licensing consultants report that the quality in centers is noticeably higher because 'staff understand what needs to be done, how to do it and they have the equipment to do it.' Center Directors share that staff is actually eager to attend because the trainings are interesting and they can immediately implement the strategies in the classroom with the new equipment.

Cedar Valley's Promise United for the Love of Our Children

Submitted by Jaynie Mason

Cedar Valley's Promise (CVP) Community Empowerment collaborative efforts provide support to early childhood programs and the families they serve. These collaborative efforts include technical assistance and training and support services.

Child Care Resource & Referral along with Tri-County Head Start, Area Education Agency 7, and many community agencies share a common mission and desire to support the children in the Cedar Valley in an effective, efficient manner. Through the CVP Early Childhood Task Team, we have been successful in developing supportive relationships within our early childhood community, that address identified community needs. This partnership, funded through a variety of sources has allowed us to create and/or expand the following projects designed to improve services to children and families in the Cedar Valley:

- Administration Training (Develop management and Administration skills)
- Apprenticeship/Degree Program Coordination (Formal education opportunities)
- Bosnian and Spanish Interpreters (contracted through Head Start)
- Child Care Health Consultant (contracted through Black Hawk Co. Health Dept.)
- Child Development Home Consultants (Supports child development home providers)
- Child Care Registered Dietitian (Contracted Through Tri-County Children & Family)
- Community Summit (meeting of community agencies involved in early childhood issues)
- Crisis Child Care (Technical assistance/financial support for families needing short-term care)
- DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment mentor training and site support)
- Excellence in Early Education Awards (Recognition of 5 Early Education Professionals)
- Hand-in-Hand program (Early Head Start)
- Inclusive Child Care Coordination (Supports inclusion for all children)
- ITERS/ECERS/FDCRS training (Assessing program quality)
- Quality enhancement grants (Provider mini-grants, accreditation grants, CDA grants)
- Resource Development Coordination (Oversees quality enhancement efforts)
- National Smart Start conference (Opportunity for Early Childhood Task Team)
- Training support services (Administrative Training, ChildNet, Creative Curriculum, DECA, Every Child Reads, Health & Safety Training, Welcome to Child Care)
- Playground Safety Research Project (Collaboration project with National Playground Safety)

The cooperative spirit of the CVP Early Childhood Task Team has been the catalyst for all these projects. Plans for the future will build on the needs identified by this group, and the desire to improve the quality of care for young children in our community.