

**Early Learning is Good Business – A Business Summit on Early Childhood Education  
Community Forum Co-Hosted by Project 20/20, Calhoun Great Start Collaborative  
and Early Childhood Connections  
October 18, 2011, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

After presentations by Sterling Speirn of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Mary Barkley of Early Childhood Connections and Dave Tomko of PNC Financial Services Group, attendees (90) were asked to work in small groups to answer one of the three numbered questions below. A recorder wrote down all ideas from individuals in each small group. Attendees were then asked to answer the following question “Based upon your discussion, what needs our immediate attention going forward?” Each group then chose their top two responses (although some wrote multiple ideas) from their assigned question, wrote each on a post-it note and placed the notes on easels. Representatives from Project 20/20 and the Calhoun Great Start Collaborative then reviewed the ideas, identified themes and reported those themes to all of the attendees. The notes below contain the top themes identified, a compilation of the top responses recorded on post-it notes and ALL responses recorded by groups.

***Top themes –***

- **Get younger generations involved. Develop mentors to connect to the kids.**
- **Mobilize as a community. Make sure we understand what the community is looking for/what it needs. Start small and build on good successes**
- **Communicate community-wide about the key things involved in early childhood education (billboards).**
- **Make sure parents are engaged (parents as first teachers).**
- **Identify community aspirations. Build on the positive things happening and the opportunities we have.**
- **Provide education for business leaders about how to get involved.**
- **Identify people who can network and show other businesses how to get involved.**

***Compilation of Post-It Notes (in no particular order)***

- Getting administrators to change
- Parents are key – they are half the solution. We need to build relationships with them – leverage parents!
- How do you get parents involved in their lives – parents that participate with their child versus send their child
- “I can’t be what I can’t see.” Make sure we see opportunities everywhere that encourage early childhood education and parents as first teacher
- How do we get the community to realize that we are all responsible for the children?
- Exposure gap – children are a product of what they are exposed to:
  - Inform community of resources
  - Encourage people to spend \$
  - Encourage employers to inform employees
- Ensure families know about support by having employers encourage employees to participate
- Interaction – with communication reading (being read to). Educate the family with the richness of books, learning, the future outcome

- Build awareness through activities and messaging (billboards with facts)
- Step up community awareness and common message
- Create partnerships with communities
  - Parent workshops
  - Free early learning (pre-school)
  - Transportation
- Continue to pool resources and appeal to the critical mass for united initiatives – small business would then join to enhance
- Do a few things really well that are connected to build and maintain momentum on early childhood ambitions
- Top down, bottom up approach to create cultural shift
- What can be done next week – urgent and concrete examples!!
- Survey – what mom’s needs are, coaches to follow-up – at birth (where to give), schools? Hospitals? Day care? Churches?
- Educate community on 21<sup>st</sup> century education
  - New learning vs. factory life
  - Education beyond traditional high school
  - “lifelong learning”
  - Competitive market
- Get teens to influence the younger generation
- Business supporting volunteerism
- Educate business on the needs of early childhood education from multiple forms of media
- Create a smart marketing plan to engage businesses
- How to get business buy-in
- Recruit business leaders to advocate for early education in a very visible way throughout the community
- Commit to customizing the “business case” with returns on investment that are meaningful to your audience
- Pinpoint people who could network and show other businesses how to be involved
- Encourage people to volunteer
- Employer investment and needs of employees
  - Present → their own employees needs for quality care
  - Future → those children are work force of future
- Education for business leaders on how to get involved

## 1. HOW CAN WE CREATE A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

### ***Compilation of ALL Discussion Notes (in no particular order)***

- A great thing Early Childhood Connections and the Great Start Collaborative do is listening to parents. We can’t “cook it up” for them. It needs to be what parents want and need
- Parents that don’t just send their child but go with your child and support – opportunities for parents to do this
- Log on to the Enquirer’s Whole Child website – [topics.battlecreekenquirer.com/wholechild](http://topics.battlecreekenquirer.com/wholechild)
- Know every parent wants the best for their child – community needs collective voice and commitment including faith based, neighborhood groups, schools, businesses and so on
- Businesses give parents time away from work to get involved
- Youth involvement with a mentor/coach
- Do something, whatever that looks like, i.e. money, time, service, space, advocate

- Get the parents involved because they have the most influence over their kids. Help parents help themselves
- Know what real people want, both the kids and the parents. Ask the kids' opinions, no matter the age!!!
- Teach young kids to talk and think for themselves
- Parents need to know about what is available to them in a way they respond to
- Realize some parents lives are chaotic and impact the child
- Service can't be one size fits all, need to reflect diversity and community
- Morals/values are important to know and have as a base to build on throughout life as things get challenging
- Educate the community – increase awareness about how important it is that learning begins at birth
- Prenatal classes
- Billboards with simple messages
- Show value of volunteerism → builds resume, promotional opportunities, builds skills
- For employers → new employees attracted to social conscious organizations
- Low to no-cost activities e.g. financial literacy workshops
- Lend a fax machine or other to a childcare organization
- Allow parents leave time to attend parent/teacher conferences
- Organize a book drive
- Get all parents to understand the value
- Funding provided through WKKF, etc. as base → employers can supplement in any way they can
- Need kids to advocate
- Need to involve ministers
- How do we connect?
- Information packets at Family Health Center, toy stores
- Mentor/dependable relationship to hold kids together in the last years
- Solicit high school students or young college students to model/mentor young children
- Encourage representatives from the Battle Creek Community Foundation, Kellogg Company, the Chamber and government to attend events like this. We need them at the table.

## 2. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO ENGAGE BUSINESSES ON THE TOPIC OF EARLY EDUCATION?

### *Compilation of ALL Discussion Notes (in no particular order)*

- Encourage volunteers
- Educate businesses as to why this is needed
- Ask the younger generation
- We let some young students “suffer” in math classes (businesses could help?)
- Help businesses to understand that early learning is benefiting everyone (including them)
- Help businesses understand that children are the future and are soon going to enter the economy
- Get teens to run presentations
- Have children that are young play with change (money) to help them with math skills
- Teens with young siblings can help educate
- Businesses could host events for younger kids
- Get businesses to donate math games or books to places where there are lobbies for children
- Businesses should be encouraged to turn off the television and read more or get more active and social

### 3. WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING TO CREATE/DEVELOP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO SUCCEED?

#### *Compilation of ALL Discussion Notes (in no particular order)*

- How well do new families receive their coaches?
- Reading is very important
- Would getting to new mothers (prenatal) help? How?
- Girls in high school – risk of pregnancy – counselors?
- Educate before pregnancy – if when the child is born – will mom be prepared with the knowledge of 20/20 program?
- How to reach as many as possible – Facebook, etc.
- Track children in the program
- Pregnant in high school, does high school know? Yes, school knows – should survey be done in high school or hospital?
- Survey – single? Income? Need assistance? How do you feel about being a new mom? Positivity about the program without making mom feel unsure or angry
- Kindergarten readiness committee - works from graduation back
- Changing the mindset of administrators to try new things. Use funding in different ways
- What does the child need to know?
- What problems are kids having, behavioral, etc.?
- Getting the kindergarten teachers all these questions from parents
- Getting parents, teachers and administrators on the same page
- Partner with Chamber of Commerce to work all groups collaboratively
- Work with the working poor, falling through the cracks
- More group meetings to engage the businesses (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.)
- Postcard = for xx\$\$ - this is what you could create
- Get parents involved with schools and home learning (parental involvement)
  - Parents understand childcare
  - Parents workshops, easier involvement – reading
  - Involvement of parents that have children lagging behind
  - Parents to encourage high learning
  - Parents need to admit the need of help
- Opportunities solely for children
  - Free early education
  - Free pre-school program
  - Help for parents of many children
- Develop resources for younger parents
- Work with hospitals and pregnant mothers
- Emphasis on government for funding early childhood
- Reading sessions for parents and children
- Involve grandparents in reading/early learning
- Involve volunteers in reading to younger ages
- Educate parents on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
  - Competitive environment
- Public/private partnerships in early learning
  - Help early so all schools have to do is teach (clothes, food, household)