



early childhood matters

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 1, 2008

GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The following report is a summary of the Governor's Summit on Early Childhood held March 20, 2008, at the Governor's Hotel in Portland. The Summit was made possible by a grant from The National Governor's Association (NGA) and the following Oregon sponsors: Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle, Oregon's Head Start Association, Oregon Head Start Collaboration Project, Leaders Roundtable and Northwest Remarketing.

THE SUMMIT

Oregon had the honor of being one of 10 states to be awarded a grant from the National Governor's Association to conduct a high-level policy summit on early childhood.

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Governor's Summit was to engage some of Oregon's most influential partners in dialogue and action around "Early Childhood Matters," Oregon's framework for a statewide birth-through-5 early childhood system.

THE DESIGN

Participants were invited to attend the summit, designed as a one-day conference with presentations in the morning, and strategy/action planning in the afternoon.

THE BIG PICTURE: OVERARCHING GOALS FOR THE SUMMIT

- Engage and mobilize early-childhood public and private partners.
- Galvanize partners around an Action Agenda for Early Childhood.
- Inform our preparation for the 2009 legislative agenda regarding Early Childhood policy changes and identification of new policy concepts.
- Create immediate action, where possible, at the local and state level and motivate a personal sense of the importance of early childhood.
- Center our need for policies and action that value and support children and families in all arenas -- the home, the workplace, the marketplace, within state and local government and at the local level.

THE SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE SUMMIT

- Oregon's governor is committed to an Early Childhood Agenda and continues to promote policy concepts and initiatives to improve services for all of Oregon's children. His agenda includes:

- Expanding health care access to all children;
- Increasing funding for education and the expansion of Head Start;
- Support for the Children’s Statewide Wraparound Initiative to develop an integrated statewide system of care for children with, or at risk of developing, significant emotional, behavioral or substance-abuse problems;
- Improvement for early care and education by reducing classroom sizes and increasing child care subsidy rates; and
- Family support, with an emphasis on reducing child-welfare caseloads; increasing support for relief nurseries and home visiting; and strengthening the child-care subsidy program.
- Oregon has an approved Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan that is in step with the policy items in the governor’s agenda.
- Oregon has an Early Childhood Council and an existing public/private partnership that works collaboratively toward the implementation of Oregon’s Early Childhood Comprehensive System Plan.
- Summit activities strengthened existing efforts and have allowed us to engage partners at the state and community level to reconnect around our collective vision: Children are healthy, growing and learning.

THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The following will help define policy recommendations to the governor and the next action steps for the Early Childhood Council and local communities:

- The enthusiasm for “Early Childhood Matters” as a resource for communities was tremendous. The feedback we received indicates that communities are looking to a summary handbook to inform how to move their local plans and agenda forward.
- There is a common will to advance a comprehensive early childhood agenda. Participants are committed to making certain that investment in children from birth through age 5 is linked to the essential development of Oregon’s human capital.
- Many physicians participated in the Summit, and it appears to have opened new doors of understanding regarding the importance of supports for young children and their families. We anticipate a partnership with Oregon’s Pediatric Association to reach out with parent information regarding early development and the importance of health.
- There were consistent themes across all three component areas: Health Matters, Family Matters and Early Learning Matters. These themes will inform future policy and link the Early Childhood Council’s work to the county comprehensive plans. Themes include:
 - A high level of concern regarding the need for social/emotional and mental health services and supports
 - Ensuring that all children have health care coverage
 - Ensuring that Oregon makes greater investments in birth to 3 services
 - Ensuring quality in all services for children and families
 - Consistent identified need to “market/message” the importance of early development and parent support
 - Integral to all of these themes was a persistent message to build on existing success and the critical importance of sustainable funding.

The full report is available online at www.oregon.gov/occf