



early childhood matters

SUMMARY REPORT

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, Portland, Ore. 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 throughout the nation 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 VISION

- To raise the visibility of early childhood in Oregon and create political will and advocacy for young children
- To inform and educate Oregon's policymakers, business leaders and community partners about the positive outcomes and economic returns from early childhood investments
- To gain perspective on the inherent values of raising healthy children as Oregon's future
- To link all stakeholders and leaders to help identify a plan for future investment in an early childhood system of services
- To increase grassroots support and create public/private partnerships at the community and state level for systems development and fiscal investment

THE BIG PICTURE: OVERARCHING GOALS

- 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

- 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, beginning in kindergarten, 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. This partnership also supports the Governor's office in developing and implementing his agenda.
- Oregon has been working in collaborative partnerships for a long time, and because we are a small state, we know one another well.
- The County Commission System requires that every county have an Early Childhood Plan and Team.
- 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 messages we received and continue to receive indicate communities are looking at the strategies in the document to determine ways they can 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 becomes linked to the essential development of Oregon’s human capital.
- Many physicians participated in the Summit. This participation appears to have opened new doors of understanding regarding the importance of supports for young children and their families as it relates to future success for young children. We anticipate continuing dialogue and working with Oregon’s Pediatric Association to define ways our partnership can do outreach 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 local 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 Oregon makes greater investments in birth to 3 services
 - Ensuring quality in all services for children and families. This theme also highlights the need for professional development and work force capacity.
 - Consistent identified need to “market/message” the importance of early development and parent support; communicating to parents that asking for help is a positive approach to parenting.
 - Integral to all of these themes was a persistent message to build on existing success and the critical importance of sustainable funding.

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 CALL TO ACTION

Gov. Kulongoski introduced Early Childhood Matters, Oregon’s framework for a statewide birth-through-5 early childhood system. Early Childhood Matters is Oregon’s call to action on behalf of all children and families in the state. The document introduces a framework for building our statewide Early Childhood system. During the afternoon interactive sessions,

participants provided multiple action ideas to forward Oregon’s agenda for an Early Childhood system of services.

THE KEYNOTE

Lisbeth Schorr, Lecturer in Social Medicine at Harvard University, and Director of the Project on Effective Interventions, presented the opening keynote address. She motivated participants with a call to our “common purpose” to act strategically, focus on results and “put together what works.” This formula makes it possible to strengthen children and families and to rebuild communities. Lisbeth also provided the closing session to conclude the summit and offer her thoughts, recommendations and suggestions for improving Oregon’s Early Childhood system.

THE FRAMEWORK

The framework begins with broad concepts and progresses to more specific strategies. It is intended to engage state and local agencies, corporations, physicians, communities and all stakeholders as they pursue their vision, priorities and goals in concert with each other. Framework strategies are purposefully general, yet they are strong platforms for the concrete action steps we, as stakeholders at every level, will specify together.

Early Childhood Matters, Oregon’s framework for a statewide birth-through-5 early childhood system, is accessible at www.oregon.gov/OCCF/

The Summit focused on the following components of the Framework:

Health Matters: Promote physical, social and emotional development, and improve access to community-based health and behavioral health services.

Family Matters: Strengthen services that support parents, and the safety and stability of families.

Early Learning Matters: Ensure that high-quality early care and education settings are affordable and accessible for all.

PARTICIPANT GOALS

- To be aware of and use Early Childhood Matters, Oregon’s framework for a statewide birth-through-5 early childhood system, in stakeholders’ comprehensive work
- To discuss what can be done at the local level and decide how to support a systems approach to early childhood services, including what policies need to be changed or developed
- To examine current community partnerships and determine how new partnerships can be developed

THE PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 300 Summit participants, representing a cross-section of Early Childhood partners and stakeholders. Participants included legislators, physicians, judges, mayors, state and local commission representatives, higher education, early intervention, program specialists, businesses and foundations, child care, health care and behavioral health care, parents, research organizations, in addition to representatives from various national early childhood advocacy groups and the National Governor's Association.

THE SESSIONS

Participants joined workshops for their pre-selected component session (i.e. Health Matters, Family Matters or Early Learning Matters). Each specific presentation focused on topic information that provided "grounding" in the Early Childhood Matters document and set the stage for the afternoon "Action Planning" work.

In the afternoon, session participants returned to their selected component area and joined in facilitated discussions that identified the actions necessary to bring life and energy to the strategies identified in the Early Childhood Matters framework. These were lively discussions that provided many new ideas for how we can actually put together what works on the ground.

THE OUTCOMES

- The Summit has been highly acclaimed as a very energizing and successful event. Participants used their time to contribute and give meaningful input that will help ensure improved systems for children and families.
- The publication "Early Childhood Matters," was received with enthusiasm and is being requested by numerous stakeholders and partners. Communities perceive this as a useful and practical tool to help forward their local Early Childhood agenda.
- All participants will receive this final Summit report as well as a working document that provides the action steps participants defined for each strategy. This document will give local communities and our list of interested partners several ideas of what they might do locally and/or with state partners.
- The Summit has provided the launching pad for Oregon's strategic action plan regarding Early Childhood. We can identify our common purpose and act strategically, focus on results, and put together what works. This enables us to reach our overarching goal: **Children are healthy, growing and learning.**

THE NEXT STEPS

Implement the **Four Guiding Principles** inherent in the actions recommended by the Summit participants. These principles are:

- Ensure parent involvement in planning, decision-making and implementation of service for families and children.
- Ensure cultural competency and responsiveness to family and individual diversity.
- Build the Early Childhood System by investing in existing successful programs, pilots and initiatives that are sustainable and statewide.
- Expand and promote public-private partnerships.

Strive to achieve the **Four Cross-Cutting Infrastructure Goals** identified in the Summit participants' recommendations. These four goals are:

- Expand access to effective programs, services and supports for Oregon's families and children.
- Enhance and maintain quality in all early childhood programs, services and supports.
- Promote work force development.
- Advance public awareness and support for early childhood.

These principles and goals will guide all specific strategies and actions taken or recommended by state, local and private partners forwarding Oregon's Early Childhood System agenda.

STATE, PRIVATE PARTNERS, LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTIONS

During the next two to three years The Early Childhood Council, in collaboration with private partners and local communities, will utilize the above Principles and Goals to implement action plans from summit participant suggested actions. The action plans will be developed by three subcommittees, each focused on one of the three strategy areas in the Framework – Health Matters, Family Matters and Early Learning Matters.

Local communities will use the Early Childhood Matters Framework to forward their community action plans for early childhood. Action ideas generated by Summit participants will help guide Framework strategy implementation at the local level.

The following strategies were selected from the Early Childhood Matters Framework for focus now:

Health Matters

- Promote universal health insurance and provide all young children and their families with a regular source of coordinated, comprehensive, quality health care.
- Promote social and emotional development in all early childhood settings.
- Identify and address health and behavioral health risks and conditions as early as possible.

- Increase behavioral health services for young children involved in the child welfare system or children experiencing homelessness, domestic violence or parental behavioral health issues.

Family Matters

- Strengthen services that support parental health, safety and well-being.
- Educate parents and community professionals and distribute information about safety, child development and parenting at the most effective times and in the most effective locations.
- Increase and enhance successful programs and services to reach more families
- Encourage and support communities to include parenting education in their early childhood system of services.

Early Learning Matters

- Increase investments to expand quality care and education services for all children (ages 0 -5) and their families. Promote and support high quality in all care and education settings.
- Support professional development and adequately compensate the early childhood work force. Ensure early education is accessible and affordable.
- Promote and support the integrations of education, health, mental health, nutrition, parent education and family support services similar to the Head Start model.
- Recognize/utilize expertise of parents as the first and most important nurturers of their children.

Oregon’s vision for a comprehensive Early Childhood System, a system that ensures **all Oregon’s children are healthy, growing and learning** will be realized through the relentless leadership of “the capacity of the human community...people living and working together...to bring forth new realities.” (Leading Beyond the Walls, The Drucker Foundation)