



# EARLY EDUCATION MATTERS

*Lessons Learned*

---

*July 2006*

EARLY EDUCATION MATTERS is a project of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families in collaboration with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the University of Wisconsin-Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, and Milwaukee Public Schools. The project is funded through the generous support of the Joyce Foundation.

 WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON  
**CHILDREN  
& FAMILIES**  
*Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count*

# Acknowledgments



Many of the “lessons learned” in this report are based on information gleaned from various conversations with and reports from the local planning team members of the Early Education Matters planning grants. School district staff, child care teachers and directors, family child care providers, parents, preschool and Head Start staff, and other community members have been a part of these groups. WCCF greatly appreciates the significant time and effort these individuals and organizations spent communicating with the Council while forging new collaborative partnerships during the planning process.

The Early Education Matters Advisory committee made invaluable contributions throughout the project. WCCF would like to thank the members and the agencies they represented for their time and commitment:

- Carol Mauer, *4C, Community Coordinated Child Care, Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network*
- Shelley Cousin, *Wisconsin Head Start Association*
- Linda Leonhart, *Department of Workforce Development, Head Start Collaboration Project*
- Jeri Rose, *Milwaukee Community Collaboration Coach*
- Jill Haglund, *Department of Public Instruction*
- Ann Terrell, *Milwaukee Public Schools*
- Jeanette Paulson, *Wisconsin Early Childhood Association*
- Mary Babula, *Wisconsin Early Childhood Association*
- Tammy Fish, *Wisconsin Early Childhood Association*
- Diane Adams, *University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership*
- Mary Roach, *University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership*
- David Edie, *University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership*
- David Riley, *University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership*
- Jill Jacklitz, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*
- Joyce Mallory, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*
- Deborah Schmid, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*
- Charity Eleson, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*
- Barbara Zuccarello, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*
- Paula Evenson, *Wisconsin Council on Children and Families*

## ***Thank you also to the WCCF Board of Directors:***

- Marsha Engen, *President, Appleton*
- William Perloff MD, *Vice President, Baileys Harbor*
- Tonya Brito, *Secretary, Madison*
- Steve Kinkade, *Treasurer, Beloit*
- Nancy Armbrust, *Green Bay*
- Jacquelyn Boggess, *Madison*
- Colleen Ellingson, *Milwaukee*
- David U. Ewald, *South Milwaukee*
- Donna Freeman, *Green Bay*
- Gerald Huber, *La Crosse*
- Missy Jacobus MacLeod, *Milwaukee*
- Robert P. King, *Milwaukee*
- Steve I. Klaven, *Madison*
- Don Maurer, *Waukesha*
- Donald Ott, *Pewaukee*
- Anne Sheridan, *Eau Claire*
- Rose Smits, *Green Bay*
- Joy Tapper, *Milwaukee*
- Joseph R. Wall, *Milwaukee*
- Brenda Ward, *Milwaukee*
- Richard Withers, *Milwaukee*

This report is a publication of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, co-written by Paula Evenson, Early Childhood Research Analyst, and Jon Peacock, Research Director, with contributions from the Executive Director, Charity Eleson.

## ***Special thanks to:***

Diane Adams, Jill Haglund, Shelley Cousin, Jeanette Paulson and Ann Terrell for their suggestions and other contributions to this report.

## ***Suggested citation:***

Evenson, P. and Peacock, J. (2006). *Early Education Matters: Lessons Learned*. Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

Edited by Bob Jacobson  
Layout by Michael Martin Design  
Photography by Julie Landrie

# Table of Contents

*“It was a significant concern to create bridges with the local parochial and private preschools/child care centers. Dialogue and site visits helped the committee to shape a potential frame for partnerships that will go further than the four-year-old preschool programs. The integrity and commitment of this group to find what is best for kids and appropriate under law was always at the forefront of all discussions”*

- Watertown



Executive Summary .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Project Design and Overview .....	6
Collaboration .....	9
Growth of 4K and Community Approaches .....	10
Outcomes of Community Grants .....	12
Survey Data on 4K Programs by Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership .....	13
Existing Factors Impacting Community Progress toward Implementation .....	16
Advantages Strong, but Challenges Remain .....	18
Recommendations .....	20
For Policymaking and Funding .....	20
For Research .....	21
For Advocacy and Collaboration: Local and State .....	21
Next Steps .....	21
Conclusion .....	22
Appendix A: EEM Grant Communities that Have Implemented or Expanded or Will Start in Fall 2006 .....	23
Appendix B: EEM Communities Still Working Towards Implementation .....	25
Appendix C: Survey Questions for Community-Approach 4K Site Visits .....	26
Appendix D: The Financing of Wisconsin’s Public Education System— Implications for 4K Programs .....	27
Appendix E: Training Provided by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association .....	28
End Notes .....	30

# Executive Summary

In recent years, interest in preschool education has grown tremendously, as has public understanding of the importance and economic value of giving all children a strong foundation. Schools across the country are considering initiating or expanding preschool programs, particularly kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds (4K). Many districts are considering offering 4K in community-based settings, by collaborating with child care providers, Head Start or other private preschool programs.

Community approaches to 4K offer great potential as a key piece of the early childhood system puzzle. The potential advantages of collaborative, community-based 4K programs include:

- reducing the negative impact on child care providers that may result if new or expanded 4K programs take away a significant part of the market for other preschool programs;
- creating relationships between private preschool programs and the schools, which can help improve coordination across the education system;
- bringing additional funding into the early education system, as 4K programs yield additional state and local funding for early education;
- improving quality, if all the quality factors are put into place, by increasing teacher qualifications and parent involvement, and by reducing pupil-to-staff ratios; and
- addressing the needs of working families in a more coordinated way.

The Early Education Matters (EEM) project, funded by the Joyce Foundation, was initiated in 2004 to help school districts plan and implement community approaches to 4K and to focus on policy change to improve access to and quality of 4K programs. The project involved collaboration between four partners: the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, which served as the lead agency; the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association; the University of Wisconsin – Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership; and Milwaukee Public Schools.

The EEM project included funding for community planning grants, which were given to 21 communities involving 23 school districts. In addition, technical assistance and information gathered by the EEM partners was provided to those schools and many others. Almost two thirds (65 percent) of those districts subsequently implemented or voted to initiate community-approach 4K districts.

- Nine of the 23 districts receiving planning grants implemented 4K programs in fall 2005, and all of them created a community-approach program.<sup>1</sup>
- As of April 2006, six other communities had decided to implement programs in fall 2006.
- The remaining eight districts are still planning or considering the initiation of a 4K program.

*“Had we not received the grant, the school district may have resorted to just doing a 'school-district-only 4K' . . . We'd like to see more agencies become a part of the 4K program, not only to help with the potential space issue, but also because having 4K at the Chatterbox (the child care center in town) has proven to be such a success for all involved, especially the children!”*

- Kiel

The number of community-approach 4K programs in Wisconsin has increased dramatically in the last two years, as is illustrated by the following statistics, derived from data collected by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership and the Department of Public Instruction:<sup>2</sup>

- The number of schools offering community-approach 4K programs grew by 154 percent in the last two years. The number of sites increased by 180 percent, and the number of children served increased by 160 percent.
- Total 4K enrollment in Wisconsin increased by over 4,000 students in the last two years including an increase of 2,572 (64.3 percent of the total growth) in community-based 4K programs.
- In the last year alone (2005-06), community-based approaches to 4K accounted for almost 58 percent of the increase in schools offering 4K and nearly 83 percent of the growth in 4K enrollment.
- The portion of 4K students in community-approach schools went from just 9.5 percent in 2002-03 to about 20 percent in 2005-06.

Although considerable progress has been made, much work remains. One hundred eighty two elementary school districts in Wisconsin do not have any form of public 4K. In addition, state policy changes are needed to remove barriers to implementation and to ensure consistency of quality services for all four-year-olds.

Successful community-approach programs need to be part of a broad commitment to high quality early education. As Wisconsin pursues further plans to implement and fund initiatives that achieve and sustain early education excellence, it is important to ensure that all preschool and child care programs embrace the following standards:

- highly qualified teachers;
- small student-teacher ratios and small class sizes;
- parent engagement programs; and
- curricula that are based on children's development and learning patterns, helping them develop the foundation for success.

# Introduction

The national trend towards public preschool has been building in recent years. In 1980 only 10 states had public preschool, but as of 2005, at least 38 states plus the District of Columbia offered some form of public preschool.<sup>3</sup> Three of these states offer voluntary universal programs, and two states are working on a plan for implementing universal pre-kindergarten.<sup>4</sup> Of the 38 states with public preschool, at least 29 are relying in part on community-based settings, such as child care, Head Start or private preschool.

While many states need to build public support for additional budget dollars to implement preschool, Wisconsin has the advantage that 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) is built into our state constitution. That constitutional foundation has led to the development of Wisconsin's school aid funding formula, which assists any district that wants to implement a 4K program.

Wisconsin has a very strong tradition of local control, so decisions about 4K and other programs are in the hands of each school board. Perhaps due to Wisconsin's history of local autonomy, efforts to mandate 4K programs for every district in the state have faced considerable resistance, while individual districts have embraced 4K for their communities.

In 1988, Milwaukee started the first community-approach 4K, although it has not yet made this a district-wide option. A little more than a decade later, in the 2000-01 school year, La Crosse became the first district in Wisconsin to pioneer a district-wide community-approach 4K. Soon after, a few other districts followed suit. The communities going that route have a partnership with local agencies, such as Head Start, child care or preschools, to deliver the 4K program. Word began to spread that these models were preferred for a number of reasons. Advocates began to believe that this approach offered many benefits that a school-based model could not, such as reducing the negative impact on private agencies, maximizing existing resources, and building collaborative relationships.

For people interested in preschool and education issues in Wisconsin, another important consideration is that an educational achievement gap continues to be a major problem. Research has shown that about half of the achievement gap between black and white high school students is already present when children begin kindergarten.<sup>5</sup> This disparity is attributable in part to the lack of access for children of color to quality early learning settings. Black children nationally, for example, are more likely to attend lower-quality preschool programs than their peers.<sup>6</sup> Early childhood brain development research tells us that children's ability to learn is influenced significantly by their environment. Quality environments can mitigate the influences of poverty, low maternal education, and even poor health. Increasing the number of children of color with access to such programs would help narrow the achievement gap that is present when students enter school. In Wisconsin, 15 percent of 3-year-olds and 42 percent of 4-year-olds participate in kindergarten or Head Start programs.<sup>7</sup>

A number of high profile studies demonstrate that high quality early

education narrows the achievement gap for African-American children and children in poverty.<sup>8</sup> The same long-term studies show that it can also improve children's intellectual and social performance, as well as economic security later in life.

The combination of the momentum behind public preschool nationally and statewide and the success of the community-approach 4K programs in Wisconsin brought a number of people together when the Joyce funding opportunity came available. Four agencies together developed a project proposal called *Early Education Matters*. The idea was that each agency could lead a particular component of the project, and that when combined their individual areas of expertise would deliver a strong project outcome. The agencies agreed to focus the project on the expansion of the quality and quantity of early education experiences available to four-year-olds in the state of Wisconsin.

The proposal was submitted with the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families to lead the initiative and award sub-grants to the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children), the University of Wisconsin – Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, and the Milwaukee Public Schools. In addition to these funded partners, a variety of other agencies assisted with *Early Education Matters* and served on an Advisory Committee (see section on Collaboration).

The Joyce Foundation awarded \$1.3 million dollars over two years to implement the *Early Education Matters* project. The project award was made in May 2004 and concluded in April 2006.



# Project Design and Overview

The intent of the *Early Education Matters* (EEM) project is to expand the quality and quantity of early education experiences available to Wisconsin's four-year-olds. Although many improvements are needed in the early childhood system, this project is funded to focus on *community approaches to four-year-old kindergarten*. This is accomplished by means of collaborations that involve a broad range of early childhood stakeholders, including school districts, child care providers, Head Start and others committed to a common goal – quality early learning options, including a 4K component, that are readily available to parents.

Partners in the EEM project acknowledge that 4K is only one component of a broader early childhood system and understand that community approaches should be designed to help strengthen that system, not harm it, so all children may benefit. Likewise, partners working on this initiative seek to create win-win situations for child care providers, school districts and families. Progress and challenges were analyzed and will be used for future related work.

The *Early Education Matters* project has three main project goals: to expand the quality and quantity of early education experiences available to Wisconsin's four-year-olds; to inform state policy decisions; and to increase public awareness.

## ***Goal 1: Expand the Quality and Quantity of Early Education Experiences Available to Wisconsin's 4-year-olds.***

WCCF awarded \$10,000 mini-grants to 20 local communities around the state, in addition to the separate grant to Milwaukee Public Schools. Because one mini-grant was shared by 3 districts, a total of 23 school districts received financial support to plan community approaches to 4K. There were two rounds of funds, which were disbursed in 2004 and 2005. Grants were awarded in five regions across the state, and communities with a variety of demographics were chosen. The communities that were chosen were also in various phases of planning. This ranged from a few partners first coming together to write the grant to communities that had already implemented a pilot program but were not universal. Each community received a technical assistance visit, a packet of resources to get started, and ongoing technical assistance throughout the one-year planning process. In addition, communities were offered assistance with press coverage, media messaging and local advocacy and outreach activities.

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) led the training component of the project, offering three trainings in three locations the first year. The trainings were targeted to EEM grant communities, but were open to others around the state interested in exploring community approaches to 4K. Training topics the first year included leadership and empowerment of the child care workforce, use of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), and early care and education program quality. After the first year, a survey was used

to ask grantees about other topics on which they felt a need for training or technical assistance. Three additional trainings were then offered, on the topics of building allies for high quality early education, a primer on financing and decision making in the early care and education system, and a repeat of the original leadership and empowerment training. Individualized technical assistance was also provided as needed. (Additional information about the trainings can be found in Appendix E.)

Another training event was sponsored by one of the EEM Advisory Committee partners, the Wisconsin Head Start Collaboration Project, which brought in a national speaker on the topic of "Finding the Third Way." This event brought together EEM grant communities and others to spend a full day devoted to collaboration, including the chance for local planning teams to develop individualized action plans.

Another component of the EEM project was focused on Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). MPS already offered universal, full-day 4K and had a few successful community-approach partnerships with child care centers and Head Start. Thus, it had a different challenge, as existing 4K programs would need to forge new partnerships with community agencies rather than starting a whole new 4K program. As the largest school district in Wisconsin, it was known that laying the appropriate groundwork would be challenging. Goals included development of Learning Targets, consensus building with all MPS Division of Early Childhood Programs staff; development of additional collaborative partnerships between MPS and community based early childhood programs; and development of a model for transition from early childhood programs to MPS. (See Appendix A for more information about the activities of MPS.)

*"These funds were critical as we moved into implementation – probably even more necessary at this stage than when our earlier planning began five years ago as there were so many details that needed to be worked out... We exceeded our initial expectations by also developing monthly training opportunities for teachers and directors, by establishing future research plan and by developing and offering Family Service Credential training for early educators."*

- Eau Claire

## Goal 2: Inform State Policy Decisions

WCCF led this component of the project by identifying key policy goals with input from the EEM advisory committee. Activities were designed to meet those policy goals (see Goal 3 for information on these activities). The EEM project began in May 2004, and the state budget was on track to be passed in June of 2005. In spring 2004, the Governor released his KidsFirst agenda ([http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docs/kidsfirst\\_part1.pdf](http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docs/kidsfirst_part1.pdf)), which included a variety of significant quality improvement initiatives. Building off of some of these components, the EEM project identified three key policies that would help promote 4K in Wisconsin, and two other policy areas that would enhance the quality of private providers participating in community-approach models of 4K. These policy goals included:

- a. Maintain full funding for 4K through the existing membership aid provided by the school funding formula.** This funding had been targeted in the 2001-03 and 2003-05 budget cycles to be cut by the legislature,<sup>9</sup> but those proposed cuts were subsequently vetoed by the Governors McCallum and Doyle, respectively. In the 2005-07 budget the legislature did not propose any cuts to this funding.
- b. Create and offer start-up grants.** Currently, schools face a significant barrier to implementation of 4K programs due to a phase-in process that takes three years to get full funding (under existing revenue limits) for the program, and there is no state aid for pupils in the first year (see Existing Factors Impacting Community Progress Toward Implementation). A source of start-up funds for districts to help cover initial-year costs of implementing 4K may encourage its expansion around the state. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requested \$3 million in the 2005-07 budget to award grants to school districts to start up four-year-old kindergarten. The start-up grants were included in the Governor's budget, but were subsequently eliminated by the Legislature.
- c. Offer financial incentives for community-approach models.** Another policy objective was to add 10 percent to the per-pupil state reimbursement rate for communities engaging in community approaches to 4-year-old kindergarten, bringing the rate up to a maximum of 70 percent. Using a community approach capitalizes on existing resources, thus reducing the chance of a negative impact on child care businesses and creating stronger community partnerships to serve children and families. This component was in the DPI budget proposal, but was not included in the Governor's budget.
- d. Implement a quality rating system.** Among the items in the Governor's KidsFirst agenda and his budget was *Quality Counts for Quality Kids*, a rating system researched and developed by a task force of early childhood experts in Wisconsin. Such a quality assessment mechanism should be accessible, linked across systems and should have supports in

place (see "e" below) to achieve the higher ratings. Governor Doyle put \$4.3 million in the 2003-05 budget bill, but the proposed rating system was developed rapidly and child care providers had questions about implementation. The Legislature eliminated the funding that would have supported this initiative.

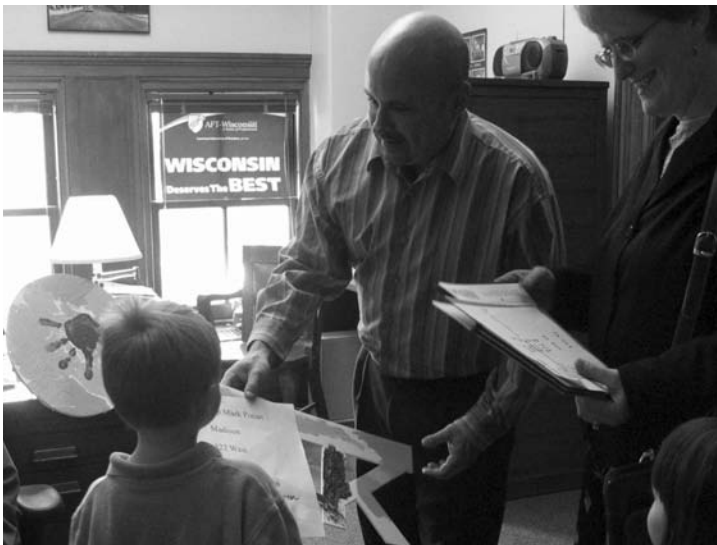
- e. Increase funding to indirect child care supports,** such as the TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship Program and the REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program, the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network, as well as other improvement and technical assistance programs. These indirect supports provide much of the training and technical assistance necessary to increase the level of quality for early childhood programs in Wisconsin. The Governor proposed \$23.77 million in his budget, the Legislature then cut the funding to \$6.76 million, and finally the Governor used his veto authority to restore the funding to \$14.76 million.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the state budget process, EEM worked to inform state policymakers of the value of early education, including the return on public investments, the value of high quality programming for children and the progress that communities throughout the state were making in developing and implementing community approaches. EEM continues to develop a better understanding amongst state policymakers of this critical investment. We will be building on that increased understanding to implement policy changes to improve both quality and access in the upcoming legislative and budget sessions.



### Goal 3: Increase Public Awareness

This goal involved coordinating several activities aimed at supporting the public policy goals identified above. Some activities included issue-based advocacy trainings, business presentations, one-on-one meetings with agency leaders to invite them to educate their members, action-alerts and newsletter articles. A special press event was organized during budget deliberations in the spring of 2005, which involved 4-year-olds from programs around the state, who decorated large keys for selected state legislators. The children and their parents presented the decorated keys to selected members of the Joint Finance Committee to let them know that they are a “key to quality early education programs.”



Another focus of the public awareness effort was working with the media. Whenever WCCF talked with the press on issues relating to poverty, education, and racial or economic disparities, the message of the importance of quality early education was always underscored. WCCF was included in over four dozen stories in print media, as well as in television stories and numerous radio interviews. Additional press contacts from reporters developed into related stories, and there continues to be significant press coverage of quality early education issues in Wisconsin.

Target groups for the public awareness efforts included parents, the child care community, school districts, the business community and other agencies working on children’s issues. WCCF staff met with the Parent Teacher’s Association, the Wisconsin School Board Association, the Wisconsin School Administrator’s Association, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator’s Association, and the Wisconsin Child Care and Education Coalition to inform them of project goals and to ask them to join us in supporting the policy goals.

WCCF also worked with business consultants to develop an issue brief on the economic benefits of 4K in a message format that would resonate with the business community. A PowerPoint presentation and sample letters for use by local communities were created. The materials were used to present to local business groups, such as Rotary clubs. Communities that received planning grants were invited to receive this presentation, and fourteen communities, including two that did not have a grant, hosted a business event.

Another public awareness effort was the dissemination of research to support quality early education. The UW-Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership (WCCRP) compiled research summaries to be utilized by grant communities. New research was also conducted to determine a baseline on the number and structure of community-approach models. This data was also used by the DPI Superintendent and other policy makers and provided valuable information to grant communities about whom to connect with and learn from.

In fall 2005, WCCRP conducted a survey to gather more extensive data on the nature of the 4K programs in the 33 community-approach districts. The survey also included randomly-selected 32 comparison communities that offer a 4K program in a school-based only setting and do not provide 4K programming at community-based sites. The survey examined five key areas: 1) family experiences and parent satisfaction with 4K in Wisconsin; 2) information on the structure, collaboration, and contractual relationships of the 13 community-approach districts (termed “baseline” communities); 3) demographic profiles on each of the 23 EEM mini-grant districts; 4) demographic information on 4K teachers; and 5) an update on the original baseline data for the current year. Reports on each of these survey topics are available at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces.flp/wccrp/matters.html>. The WCCRP data contributed significantly to this report.

# Collaboration

**E**arly Education Matters has worked with other related initiatives to avoid duplication of services, maximize existing state resources, and make progress in aligning 4K initiatives with the overall early childhood system. In addition to this project's funded partners, some key groups involved in this collaborative effort have included:

- Wisconsin Forces for Four-Year-Olds (an advisory group to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, funded by the Trust for Early Education through the Pew Charitable Trusts and in collaboration with Pre-K Now),
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners,
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant advisory committee,
- Wisconsin Child Care and Education Coalition,
- Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network\*,
- Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and DWD Head Start Collaboration Project\*,
- Wisconsin Head Start Association\*,
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI)\*,
- Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS).

(\* Denotes EEM Advisory committee representation along with the four funded partner agencies: Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the UW-Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, and Milwaukee Public Schools.)

Many other groups were contacted for input and/or to provide information at some point in the project; however, the list is too exhaustive to be meaningful for this report. Every effort was made to collaborate as necessary.

*“The funding allowed us to conduct valuable research into the best practices of early childhood programming and to learn from other communities' experiences, but more importantly, for the first time in this community, almost all agencies affiliated with birth through 8-year-old services have come together at the same table to consolidate efforts, realize joint goals, and plan future initiatives.”*

- Oshkosh



# Growth of 4K and Community Approaches

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of 4K programs in Wisconsin. During the 2005-06 school year, 234 out of 416 elementary school districts in Wisconsin offered 4K programs serving 20,959 children, compared to only 166 districts serving 14,483 children in 2001-02. That amounted to a 41 percent increase in the number of districts offering 4K programs over the past four years, and a 45 percent increase in students served. In the last year alone, an additional 26 school districts began offering 4K programs, and enrollment grew by a little over 2,300 students.<sup>11</sup>

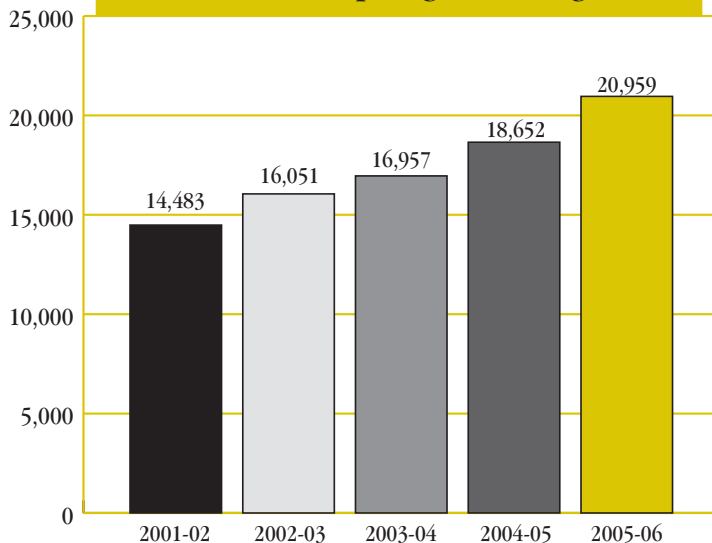
**Table 1: Growth in 4K — 2001-02 to 2005-06**

School Year	Number of Districts	Number of Students
2001-02	166	14,483
2002-03	180	16,051
2003-04	189	16,957
2004-05	208	18,652
2005-06	234	20,959

Source: DPI (press release, January 13, 2006)  
[http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpi2006\\_07.pdf](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpi2006_07.pdf)

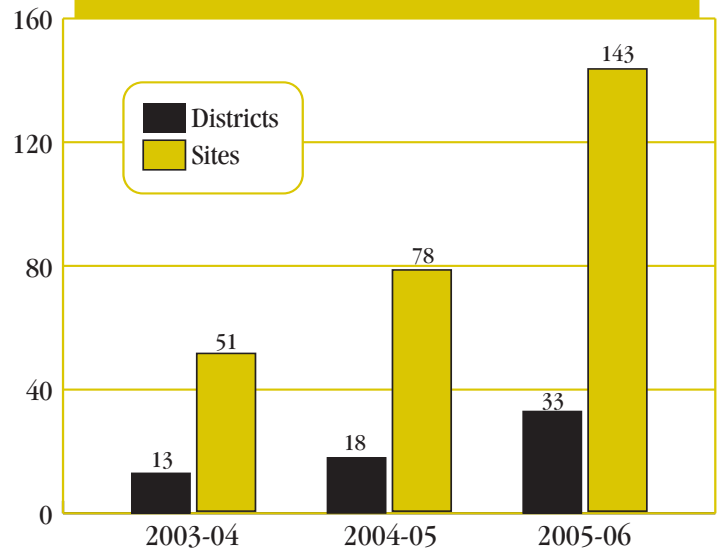
The growth in 4K enrollment in the public schools (including community-approach programs) is illustrated in Figure 1. It should be noted that there are also other institutions that offer programs to 4-year-olds, including the Milwaukee Choice schools serving 1,420 four-year-olds, child care centers, Head Start, preschools and parochial schools.

**Figure 1: Students Participating in 4K Programs**



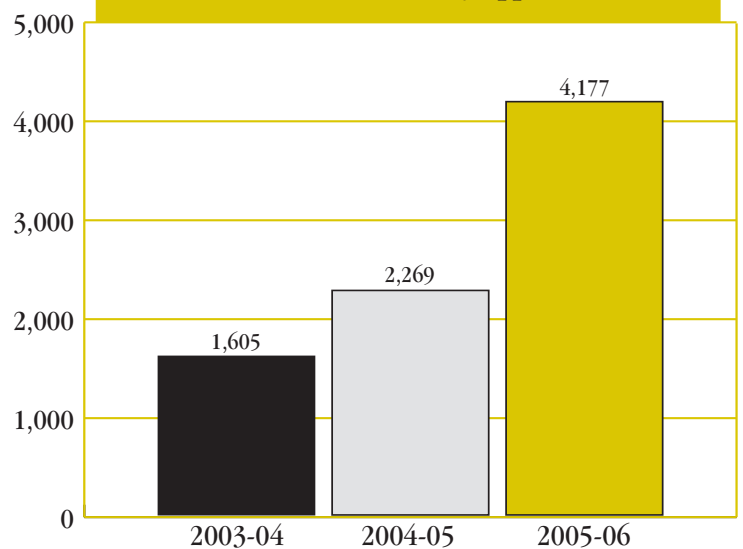
Source: Department of Public Instruction

**Figure 2: Districts Offering Community Approaches to 4K**



Source: Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership

**Figure 3: Students Served in Community-Approach Districts**



Source: Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership

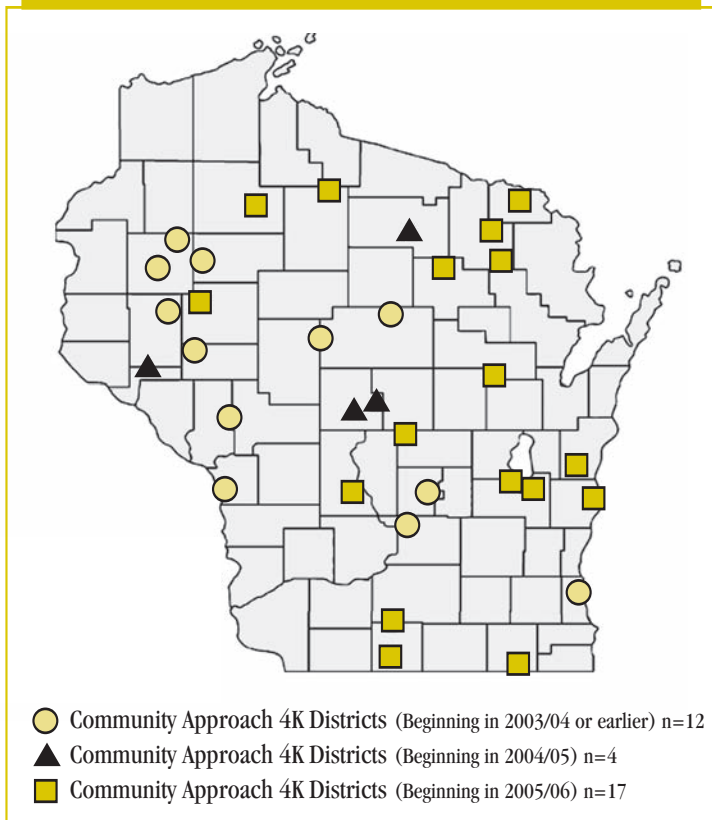
The 4K expansion has been particularly striking in community-approach programs, and that growth is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. The following are a few highlights of the trends since 2003-04:<sup>12</sup>

- The number of school districts offering community-based (community-approach) 4K programs grew by 154 percent in the last two years, the number of sites increased by 180 percent, and the number of children served increased by 160 percent.<sup>13</sup>
- Total 4K enrollment in Wisconsin increased by over 4,000 students in the last two years, and 64.3 percent of that growth was in community-approach 4K programs.

- In the last year alone, community-approach 4K programs accounted for almost 58 percent of the increase in school districts offering 4K and nearly 83 percent of the growth in 4K enrollment.
- In 2003-04, community-approach 4K school programs accounted for just 9.5 percent of 4K students, but in 2005-06 that fraction had grown to 20 percent.

It should be noted that the data collected by the Department of Public Instruction and WCCRP generally count all 4K students in a district as being community-approach students if they are in a district that is using the community-approach model (with the exception of Milwaukee), regardless of how many of the students are served outside a traditional 4K setting.<sup>14</sup> This methodology was developed based on the reasoning that there are benefits to the district as a whole from the collaborative model, regardless of the number of students being served by providers partnering with the school district. However, it might be useful in the future to separate and analyze the data based on the type of provider, rather than solely on the basis of whether the district was or was not using a community approach.

**Map 1:  
Map of Community-Approach 4K Districts (n=33)**



Source: UW-Extension Child Care Research Partnership

Of the 33 districts that reported in the fall of 2005 that they were doing community-approach 4K, 17 started in the 2005-06 school year, and almost half (8) of these are EEM grantees.<sup>15</sup> The sharp increase over the past two years probably results from a number of factors, including the financial and technical assistance offered through the

EEM project, the work of the Wisconsin Forces for Four-Year-Olds project that began in 2002, and the fact that communities now have the ability to network with many other districts that are using community approaches. The combination of technical assistance and training events, publications and other materials has provided communities with more tools to move forward to implementation.

The full report that lists all current community-approach districts is available at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/wccrp/matters.html>.

One challenge in surveying the 4K programs is that there is no official definition of “community-approach” programs at this time. DPI collects child enrollment data and identifies who is receiving membership aid for 4K as part of the September enrollment count each year, but community-approach data has not been systematically collected. Self-reporting has uncovered areas of ambiguity and confusion regarding what counts as a community approach (versus simply collaborating in some other form). For example, some districts are only partnering to offer 4K with a Head Start within the school building, which may be operated by the school district or a private agency. This would be an example of a public-public partnership rather than a public-private partnership, given that Head Start is a federal program. These models may not have the full benefits of being a community approach if they are not collaborating with the local child care centers or preschools. In several instances a school district is collaborating with a child care center that is operated by the district and is exempt from licensing (no other group child care exists in that community), raising the question of whether collaboration with oneself in the absence of any other potential partners constitutes a community approach.

If an official definition of community approaches is to be created, other factors to consider include whether or not there is shared membership aid between partners, whether or not a contractual agreement between partners exists, and whether there is sharing of other resources, such as space, transportation, and training.

*“This program has exceeded our great expectations, and all parties have reported significant satisfaction with the program. District staff, agency staff, board members, daycare providers, parents, and most importantly, the students have all indicated that the 4K program is an asset to our community. In fact, the program has been so successful that additional agencies have requested to participate in the 4K pilot program.”*

- Monroe

# Outcomes of Community Grants

**A**s noted earlier, 21 community planning grants affecting 23 districts were awarded across 5 regions to groups that were in various stages of planning. Some groups were well established and had a pilot program in place. Others had only come together a few times and had much more planning to do. Likewise, some communities were smaller with fewer potential partners, while others are larger districts with many stakeholders.

All of these grantees, with the exception of Milwaukee, received the same amount of money, \$10,000, to carry out activities related to exploring community approaches to 4K. The groups carried out very similar types of activities: community feasibility studies or surveys; stipends for broad and committed group participation; site visits; training and facilitation to work on vision, mission, goals and action planning; development and printing of public awareness materials; and community events such as town suppers, an early childhood summit or business group presentations.

As this report goes to print, 15 of the 23 school districts are or will soon be implementing 4K programs, and virtually all of those are community-approach programs:

- **Nine** communities had already implemented community-approach programs in fall 2005.
- **Six** other school boards have voted to implement programs in fall 2006.
- The remaining **eight** districts are still considering initiating a 4K program.

A few of the districts were able to move to implementation very quickly,

often due to the small size of the community, or by phasing in a program over a few years. Others have taken longer to work out the details and develop a strong base of community support to take the program to scale the first year of implementation. In fact, DPI indicates that it takes 18 months to 3 years to move from the interest stage to collaboratively offering 4K programs in a community.<sup>16</sup> Some programs have been led initially by the school district with varying degrees of support from partners. Others have been community-led throughout the entire process. This variety of approaches to planning stems in large part from the fact that offering 4K is voluntary and determined district by district based on local issues, need, and who comes to the table to plan.

The funding provided by the EEM project seemed to be a key factor in supporting the planning process. According to one grantee:

“Simply stated, we would not be offering 4K for the 2006-07 school year, nor would we be offering it in the foreseeable future, without this grant. This grant gave legitimacy to an open discussion of 4K in our community. The stipends to the stakeholders were an incentive to continued participation in the conversation even when it became difficult. Other benefits to this entire process: open communication between all stakeholders, new relationships were formed and future collaborations are envisioned; new attention to our youngest learners and parents’ needs were brought to light; facilities and staffing of preschools were openly visited, discussed, and valued.” (Lake Mills)

Additional detail on each of the 21 community planning grants can be found in the appendices.



# Survey Data on 4K Programs by Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership

Table 2 summarizes some of the key statistics from the data gathered by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership. In fall 2005 WCCRP conducted an e-mail survey of all 416 elementary school districts, asking if the district offered 4K and, if so, whether it was a community approach offered in collaboration with a child care or Head Start program. That survey identified 33 districts with community-approach 4K.

WCCRP then conducted a more detailed survey of the administrators in those 33 districts, as well as administrators in 32 randomly-selected comparison districts. After considerable effort, WCCRP was able to get

responses from administrators in all of those 65 4K districts. Their survey responses provide data on 340 4K classes at 175 sites.

WCCRP also conducted surveys of 4K teachers and parents. Questionnaires were returned by 63 teachers and 9 assistant teachers (though the latter responses have not been included in the figures in Table 2). Administrators in 46 community approach sites and 14 non-collaborative sites were asked to distribute questionnaires to 4K parents; however not all of the districts did so.<sup>17</sup> A total of 300 surveys were returned by parents of 4K students.

**Table 2: Comparison of Community and Non-Community Programs**

	Overall	Community-Approach 4K Districts	Comparative Sample of 4K Districts	Significance of Difference
<b>Classes:</b>				
Average class/group size	16.0	15.9	16.7	n.s.
Average number of children per teacher	15.1	14.8	16.4	n.s.
Hours in 4K program per week	13.1	13.0	13.7	n.s.
Hours in non-4K child care per week	12.6	13.2	10.6	n.s.
Average number of 4K class days per week	4.4	4.5	4.1	n.s.
Classes offered 5 days per week	51.8%	55.2%	40.5%	*
<b>Teachers:</b>				
Teachers with at least 10 years of experience	66.7%	75.6%	47.4%	*
Teacher age - percent age 35 or older	52.7%	58.3%	42.1%	n.s.
Teachers (or "co-teachers") with at least a Bachelor's Degree	87.1%	83.3%	95.0%	n.s.
Teachers with a DPI teacher license	89.8%	85.0%	100.0%	n.s.
Salaried teachers earning at least \$30,000 (excluding assistants)	68.0%	58.1%	84.2%	n.s.
Portion of teachers who are paid by school district (vs. child care center or Head Start)	69.5%	57.1%	100.0%	**
<b>Families:</b>				
Families with incomes of at least \$50,000	57.4%	57.7%	56.3%	n.s.
Parents with at least a college degree	45.7%	40.8%	47.6%	n.s.
Child rides a bus to 4K program	48.0%	42.0%	66.7%	***

n.s. = not significant   • = significant (p=0.01 to 0.05)   \*\* = very significant (p=0.001 to 0.01)   \*\*\* = extremely significant (p<0.001)

In most cases the differences were not statistically significant because the survey responses yielded similar results for both types of district. However, comparisons of the data are also complicated by the fact that the statistics for community-approach districts come from a mixture of school-based and other 4K sites. As noted elsewhere in this report, it might be useful in the future to separate and analyze the data based on the type of provider, rather than solely on the basis of whether the district was or was not using a community approach.

### ***Class Size and Student Teacher Ratios***

Community-approach 4K classes generally appear to be a little smaller than non-community programs. There were 14.8 children per teacher in community-approach programs, compared to an average of 16.4 in non-community programs.<sup>18</sup> However, WCCRP's analysis of the data found that the difference was not statistically significant.

Care should be taken in using this data because child-to-staff ratios are difficult to measure and the data collected from the schools may not provide a completely trustworthy gauge of this important indicator of the quality of care. The task of calculating the student-teacher ratios is complicated by the fact that teachers may be either full or part-time and the 4K classes average just 13 hours per week. To adjust for those variables WCCRP computed the ratios after converting all the part-time positions into full-time equivalents,<sup>19</sup> and that appears to be the most sensible approach. However, it does not completely resolve some of the limitations of the survey data. In particular, it appears that the survey responses about class size, which came from school administrators, sometimes overlooked the presence of teachers' assistants in the classroom.<sup>20</sup>

If we simply divide the number of students by the number of classes (regardless of whether any of the classes had more than one teacher), we find that the average class in community-approach programs was 15.9 children in 2005-06, compared to 16.7 among community-approach districts.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Classroom Hours***

The data collected by WCCRP from the 300 parents who returned surveys reveal that the 4K programs provide roughly half of the weekly care for their children, although the percentage is higher for those in non-community programs (56.4 percent vs. 49.6 percent). The community-approach pupils were in their 4K programs 13.0 hours each week, and spent about 26.2 total hours per week in out-of-home care. That compares to 13.7 hours in 4K for children in the non-community programs, out of 24.3 hours total hours for those children.<sup>22</sup>

Community-approach programs typically offered shorter days. As a result, they were in operation slightly fewer (0.7) hours per week, even though those 4K programs operated for an average of 4.5 days per week, versus 4.1 days for the non-community programs. Only 40.5 percent of the non-community 4K programs offered classes 5 days per week, compared to 55.2 percent of the community-approach schools.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Teachers***

One of the WCCRP reports analyzes data from the surveys returned by 72 teachers and assistant teachers (48 in community-approach 4K programs and 24 in non-community programs). Highlights of the data from that report<sup>24</sup> include the following:

- In the community-approach programs, 83 percent of responding teachers reported having at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 100 percent in non-community districts. The teachers who did not have BA degrees all indicated that they were "co-teachers," so it appears that there was a teacher with a BA in all 4K classes.
- Among the 50 teachers who reported their salary, 58 percent of those in community programs earned more than \$30,000 annually, compared to 84 percent of responding teachers in non-community programs.
- Teachers in community programs are generally older and have more experience. Among that group of teachers, WCCRP found that 58 percent were over 35 and almost 76 percent had at least 10 years of experience, compared to 42 percent of the teachers in non-community-approach districts who were over 35, and 47 percent with at least 10 years experience.

The WCCRP surveys also shed some light on the financing of 4K programs, although this is an area that merits additional research. The data from the teacher responses show that 57 percent of respondents in community-approach programs were paid by the school district, while 5 percent were funded by a Head Start program and the remainder by a child care center. All of the responding teachers in non-community programs reported being paid by the school district.



## Family Characteristics

Among 283 responding parents who provided their income, 57.7 percent had a family income of at least \$50,000. For Wisconsin as a whole, median income for families with children was \$56,100 in 2004.<sup>25</sup> As Table 2 shows, there was little difference in income between the responding parents using community-approach 4K programs and those in non-community programs.

The average income among respondents was probably skewed higher by at least two factors in the survey implementation. First, Head Start programs were not asked to distribute the questionnaires to parents.<sup>26</sup> Second, no surveys were returned by Milwaukee parents, despite second and third reminder notices to the 4K sites. Some schools have a policy against distributing questionnaires to personnel or families, and other community-approach programs may simply not have distributed them.

Those factors almost certainly also help explain the fact that only 4 percent of the children of responding parents were racial or ethnic minorities. For the state as a whole, U.S. Census data indicate that about 19 percent of Wisconsin children under age 5 were minorities in 2000, and that figure is probably higher now.

In light of the fact that a significant policy objective factoring into the state's support for 4K programs is the desire to close the achievement gap for children from low-income and minority families, it is disappointing that the results of the parent survey seem to be skewed toward higher income families and Caucasians. Future research efforts should be designed to ensure a more representative cross-section of the parents of 4K students, in order to answer the question of whether 4K programs generally, and community-approach programs specifically, are serving all families in Wisconsin or are primarily being used by whites with middle or above-average incomes.

The responding parents of 4K pupils are more highly educated than the general adult population in Wisconsin. Almost 47 percent of respondents reported having a college degree of some sort, including about 36 percent with at least a bachelor's degree. The most comparable 2004 Census Bureau data indicate that just 28 percent of children in the state (and 26 percent nationally) live in households in which a parent has at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>27</sup> Among respondents from the community-approach programs, 40.8 percent of parents had a college degree (bachelor's or associate), compared to 47.6 percent for survey respondents using non-community programs.<sup>28</sup>

## Parent Satisfaction

The WCCRP surveys of parents included a number of questions about their satisfaction with their child's 4K program. Those questions included what the parents liked best, what one change they would recommend and how the program met the family's schedule. There were no significant differences in responses received from parents in the two types of programs.<sup>29</sup>



Parents generally reported that they were very satisfied with the 4K programming. In community approach districts, 69 percent of the parents who responded said they “strongly agree” that they are satisfied with the program, compared to 65 percent in the comparison 4k districts. Well over 90 percent of the parents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied. Nevertheless, the respondents made many thoughtful suggestions for improvements.

The top response for community approach programs (and second highest rated response from non-community approach programs) as the thing parents liked best about the program was the teacher. Interestingly, from the teacher survey we know that the teachers in the community approach programs were more experienced than the non-community approach program teachers (76 percent vs. 47 percent with 10 years or more experience).<sup>30</sup> This suggests that more experienced teachers may be developing stronger relationships with parents.

For the most part, parents in both programs felt that the program met their family's schedule. However, the top response from parents in community approach districts was that one area that could be improved was the program schedule, followed by transportation. The report by WCCRP includes several sample comments from parents in all the question areas.

# Existing Factors Impacting Community Progress Toward Implementation

## *Financial Challenges and Opportunities*

The system of financing public schools in Wisconsin offers both opportunities and challenges for districts considering the implementation of 4K programs. Appendix D elaborates on those fiscal implications.

Wisconsin schools, in contrast to those in many other states, do not have to compete with each other or face waiting lists for state aid for their 4K spending. The 4K funds are not earmarked by the Legislature or awarded through a grant program. Instead, schools establishing 4K programs benefit from the fact that 4K students are counted (albeit on a fractional basis) in the formula used to divide school aid. In addition, the state's effort to fund roughly two-thirds of school costs means that the creation of new programs like 4K will typically increase total state spending for school aid.<sup>31</sup>

Schools with community-approach 4K programs can also benefit from the ability to blend school funds and child care subsidy funding for low-income families, in order to help finance full day early education.

The local planning grants from the EEM project and the technical assistance also appear to have been very important for communities interested in collaborative approaches to 4K. Even though the dollar amounts are relatively modest, the grants provide important support for initial planning efforts, and they give positive reinforcement and a bit of momentum to the people working on 4K in those communities.

Although Wisconsin's schools have enjoyed some advantages as they contemplate new 4K initiatives, school districts also face a number of fiscal hurdles. Among the most significant hurdles is the state-imposed revenue cap that makes it difficult to initiate new programs. Health care and energy costs are rising at a much faster rate than the cap allows spending to increase, which means that growth in those two areas necessitates cutbacks in other significant areas of school spending. Similarly, the rising cost of the mandate to provide special education services creates fiscal challenges for some school districts.

Another significant challenge for many districts contemplating 4K programs stems from delays between when enrollment rises and when the increase is fully counted in the state aid and revenue cap formulas. It takes a full year for the increased enrollment to be reflected in state school aid calculations. In addition, the pupil count used for revenue cap purposes is a three-year average, which means that it isn't until the third year that an increase in pupils is fully factored into a district's revenue cap. Appendix D elaborates on these problems.

The state's school aid formula and the state-imposed spending restrictions make adding new programs a difficult challenge for schools, but not an insurmountable one. Although it may be counterintuitive, the initiation of a 4K program might be somewhat easier in a district



with declining K-12 enrollment, since the new 4K students help avoid the detrimental fiscal consequences of a shrinking pupil count.

## *Standards and Requirements*

Producing an approach that works for the local community is like fitting the pieces of a puzzle together. Leaders must find solutions that meet a variety of standards, such as child care licensing regulations, child care accreditation standards, DPI academic standards and Head Start standards. In addition, program philosophies and approaches to meeting these standards may be quite different.

Some communities work out solutions that require all participating partners to follow the same standard, such as the use of the same curriculum. Others allow for more individualized programming as long as it does not conflict with DPI standards. Working through the differences and coming to an agreed-upon model requires internal and external strategies. Internally, groups have employed strategies

that allow leadership and input by various partners for committees assigned to particular topics and in joint decision-making. Partners employ creative solutions that work for that specific local area.

Externally, groups put a lot of effort into networking with other districts that already have community-approach 4K. This occurs at conferences, site visits and the usual phone and email communications. Although this networking can be time-consuming and sometimes costly, many districts report that it is invaluable. One grant community developed a set of common questions used to survey at least four different programs, which allowed them to gather valuable information during site visits to assist in the development of a model that would work for them. A sample of the survey questions developed by Antigo, which can be found in Appendix C, gives a good example of the complexity of standards and requirements that must be worked out across partners.

*“The tremendous support provided by other communities who have implemented 4K programs cannot be underscored enough. There was always another community or coordinator offering to share their history, format, plans, etc to help us with our plans.*

*The availability and sincerity of these partners around the state has been outstanding.*

*They have helped us to be able to focus on our philosophy and strategies instead of being way-laid by how to get started.”*

- Watertown

### **Labor and Competition Issues**

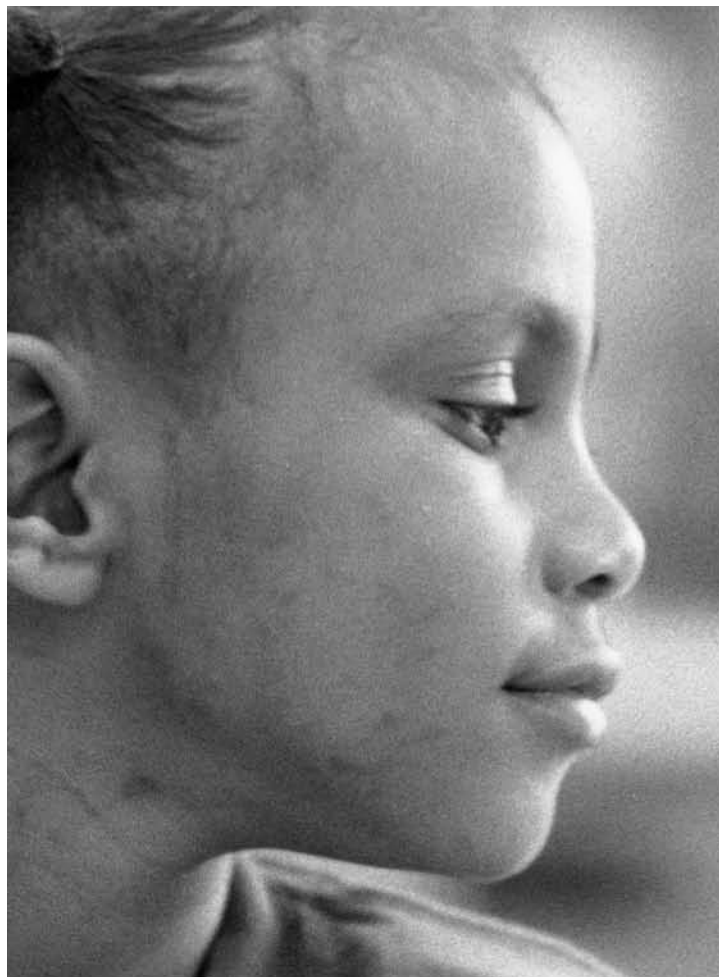
In some districts there is resistance to the idea of using non-unionized staff for school-funded early education. However, the preliminary feedback we have gotten suggests that this has been a significant barrier in only one of the districts involved in the EEM project.<sup>32</sup> Because of the range of options available for establishing collaborative programs, it should not be surprising that school districts have not generally found the union issue to be a major impediment.

A flip side of the resistance to using non-union workers is the opposition to non-community programs from existing child care providers. Those providers often raise concerns about their financial viability if school 4K programs cause them to lose 4-year-olds. Since teacher-pupil ratios are lower for 4-year-olds, those children can be less costly and more profitable to serve for providers struggling to make ends meet. Child care providers also note that if the initiation or expansion of 4K

programs causes a reduction in other pre-K programs, there will be fewer options for families during periods when school is not in session. Initial research from the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership suggests that negative impacts have been minimal on child care operations in the districts with community approaches to 4K. A study of the 14 districts found that the net capacity of licensed child care centers increased by nearly 4,000 children over a 20-month period (January 2003 - November 2004).<sup>33</sup>

The concerns of child care providers have been raised at both the local level and in the state legislature, where their complaints may have been a factor in the legislature’s attempts in the 2001 and 2003 budget bills to reduce or eliminate state financial support for 4K. The growth of community approaches to 4K helps address the concerns of private early education programs and mitigates that source of opposition to state and local support for 4K programs.

The Wisconsin Education Association Council has distributed a survey to about 75 administrators and teachers in schools with 4K programs.<sup>34</sup> That survey includes questions about sources of support for and opposition to the initiation of those programs. If they get a good rate of response for that survey, it could give us a better grasp of the types of impediments that districts have encountered and the strategies that have been used to address them.



# Advantages Strong, but Challenges Remain

The community approach to 4K programs has some distinct advantages over the school-based-only alternative; however, many challenges remain to ensure quality that is consistent for all programs. It should be noted that some of the advantages and challenges are more specific to the child care system, some to the public 4K system, and some to the nature of collaboration in the community-approach 4K districts. By the very fact that community-approach 4K creates an overlap between the child care system and the public 4K system, these factors become intertwined and may impact all systems in at least some districts. The challenges are highlighted as cautions for local service providers to consider when creating a 4K program and state policy makers to consider when changing or creating new policy.

The advantages for community-approach 4K include the following:

- Programs can maximize resources such as funding, expertise (training), school social workers, nurses, etc.
- Because DPI requires that teachers in 4K programs have bachelor's degrees, community-approach programs offered in child care or Head Start are required to do the same—a higher standard than child care state licensing regulations or Head Start standards.
- Common standards across all types of settings are required. Curriculum must be aligned with DPI standards, which are aligned with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (developmental expectations for children from age three through kindergarten supported by practice-based evidence and scientific research).<sup>35</sup> Without a community-approach program, licensed child care programs are not required to use a curriculum aligned with either of these standards.
- The school funding formula provides funding to support parent outreach activities. Without the community approach, child care programs do not receive funds specifically to support parent outreach activities.
- There is a potential for low child to teacher ratios due to child care and Head Start requirements (school-based 4K does not have child to teacher requirements; these are determined locally by each school board).
- Community programs reduce enrollment competition with private agencies by partnering to provide programs, as compared to school-based-only 4K programs.
- Teacher salaries may be increased. The survey conducted by WCCRP found that 68 percent of teachers as a group in collaborative 4K earned over \$30,000 per year<sup>36</sup> as compared to the median wage of roughly \$17,000 per year for teachers in child care centers in 2004.<sup>37</sup>



## Challenges

A recent study by Ellen Galinsky analyzed the special features of the key programs most touted for the economic benefits of quality early education programs. Her report, *The Economic Benefits of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs: What Makes the Difference?*, identifies several factors that appear to contribute to the high returns on investment in these programs. Among these were beginning early in the child's life; teachers who are well-educated, trained, and well-compensated; small class sizes and low child-teacher ratios; programs lasting more than one year; transition services to elementary school; and support for parents through home visits and encouraging parental participation in the classroom.<sup>38</sup>

Community-approach programs have the potential to incorporate many of these elements of quality; however, some challenges remain for Wisconsin to provide consistent quality programming for all four-year-olds. Community-approach programs pose some unique demands – primarily with respect to a greater degree of planning and coordination that is necessary. In addition, there are 85 school districts in Wisconsin where community approaches simply are not an option because they do not have child care or Head Start centers within their districts.<sup>39</sup>

Collaborative programs also share a number of challenges with other 4K programs and, in some cases, with other early education settings:

- Children in 4K have teachers with bachelor's degrees for the equivalent of 2.5 hours per day, but bachelor's degrees are not required for the remaining portion of the full day needed by working parents.
- No consistent low child-to-teacher ratio policy is required across all settings. DPI does not have a minimum standard (its policy bulletin recommends SAGE program standards of 1:15 or child care licensing requirements of 1:13). Ratios and group size are determined by local control and not consistent across districts. NAEYC accreditation and Head Start Standards for four-year-olds require ratios of 2:20 or lower.
- Not all child care, preschool or Head Start partners in a given community are partnering with the school district. Programs that elect not to participate or are not chosen as community-approach sites may not have the advantages listed above.

- There is currently no systematic way to track or rate quality across all programs, which makes it difficult for parents and local policymakers to make informed choices between community-approach programs and other options. We do not know much about the level of quality of the community-approach 4K and other early education programs, although we do have a little information, such as whether a program is accredited or licensed. The vast majority of programs fall between the relatively small number that are accredited<sup>40</sup> and the licensed centers that are found to have serious violations; yet there is no current system for communities and parents to assess the quality of those programs that fall somewhere in the middle on the continuum. See the discussion of Eau Claire in Appendix A for information about an initiative to examine and improve quality, and see also “*Recommendations: For Policymaking and Funding*” for other possible solutions to this challenge.



# Recommendations

## *For Policymaking and Funding*

The last two years have taught us that community approaches can help the state take a step toward unifying three of the major providers of early childhood education in the state: child care providers, Head Start and the public schools. However, it has also taught us that the unification of those entities through collaborative program delivery is not the only thing necessary to yield a high quality early childhood system.

Community approaches synthesize the best components of each partner in the early childhood system. However, the extreme importance that a high quality early education plays in a child's readiness for school and later success in life demands that we move toward a system that ensures that all young children, no matter what door they enter the system through, are in programs that are of high quality.

There are numerous policies, financial incentives and requirements for standards that we could mention here that could move certain components of the system toward higher quality. But no single policy will move the entire system toward the kinds of educational, economic and social outcomes that programs like the Perry Preschool, Abecedarian and the Chicago Parent Child Project have been shown to produce. We also know that community approaches, while valuable for many of the reasons highlighted in this report, do not necessarily guarantee that Wisconsin's early childhood education system is of uniformly high quality.

Our recommendations include four primary goals for the early childhood education system, whether it is early education being delivered through public schools, community programs, choice schools, licensed child care providers or charter schools. A 4-year-old participating in a 4K program has the same developmental needs as a 4-year-old who is participating in a preschool program at a licensed child care center, so our standards for quality should apply equally to both.

Ellen Galinsky's recently released study identifies key components shared by high quality programs, and we recommend that these elements be used as the general blueprint for a set of policy changes and investments that will yield early childhood programs. Those general recommendations for a comprehensive plan for a high quality early education system are:

1. highly qualified teachers;
2. small student-teacher ratios and small class sizes;
3. parent engagement programs; and
4. curricula based on research, children's development and learning patterns.

The specific policies, public investments and timeline that will produce such a system need further development and refinement by an interdisciplinary group of teachers, administrators, parents and advocates. Some of the particular elements of such a plan could include:

- A financial incentive for community-approach 4K programs, in order to offset start-up barriers and maintain collaboration.
- A clear, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a community approach.
- Applying to 4K programs the class size standards and financial assistance for the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, which assists schools in reducing class size in grades K through 3. Initially, the state should assist all SAGE schools in reducing 4K classes to not more than 15 students with each teacher.
- Moving beyond class-size reduction in SAGE schools – the child-to-teacher ratios in all programs, including those in child care centers, should progress toward smaller ratios to mirror NAEYC accreditation standards of 20 to 2.
- A quality rating system with tiered reimbursement from Wisconsin Shares implemented over a period of time, coupled with technical assistance to achieve higher rating levels.
- Incrementally raised standards for teacher qualifications in child care licensing.
- Increased compensation and benefits for the child care workforce and scholarship support to achieve the new requirements – including possibly a loan forgiveness program for those graduating with a BA in early education who commit to teaching for a specified period of time in a licensed early childhood program.
- Funding incentives for university and technical college articulation agreements.
- Incentives to use the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards to ensure that all programs use curriculums that help children get ready for school.

### ***For Research***

Continued data collection on 4K and community-approach programs is needed to assess the extent to which such programs are improving access to early education and the quality of those programs. One particularly important question to tackle is the extent to which 4K programs in general, and community-approach programs in particular, are serving low-income families. Unfortunately, the survey data collected for the EEM project did not succeed in reaching many low-income families, because few survey forms were distributed by schools in Milwaukee or in districts collaborating with Head Start. Perhaps a separate survey targeted to low-income families would help determine their participation and parent satisfaction.

It would also be useful to get more information on the financing of community-approach 4K programs. Better information about the cost of 4K programs, the revenue streams that schools use, and the arrangements between schools and private providers would help us identify barriers to and opportunities for the initiation of 4K programs and the improvement of their quality. That information would be extremely useful in more comprehensive thinking about how to design an early education system that leverages existing resources and most effectively blends the various sources of funding that are available.

### ***For Advocacy and Collaboration: Local and Statewide***

Another recommendation to achieve the policy support package mentioned above would be for stronger collaboration at the state and local levels. Building the broadest possible coalition of local support is recommended for implementation. This could come in the form of relationships with law enforcement, business leaders, libraries, public health, city and county officials, and others as determined by local need. Some communities are already doing this. As this coalition is formed for implementation, it should be engaged to support the state level policy package and communicate with local legislators. It may take some coordination at the state level to fully engage local groups.

Government leaders should support an industry-led initiative, but work together closely to find solutions that will work. Bipartisan support will be crucial for success, and relationships should be strengthened and common ground identified.

### ***Next Steps***

WCCF is committed to working with providers, parents, educators, advocates, state government staff, the Governor and legislators to address concerns and issues related to early education and care and quality improvement, and to pursue some of the recommendations outlined in this report.



## Conclusion

Community-approach 4K offers great potential as a key piece of the puzzle of developing a quality early childhood system, and is the preferred model for districts to consider when initiating 4K programming.

The process of implementing this complex approach requires broad participation, time, funding, vision, flexibility, creativity and commitment. All Early Education Matters grantees that have implemented community-approach 4K programs report similar challenges to achieving their goals, but all indicate satisfaction with the results. Likewise, parents report high levels of satisfaction with 4K programs.

The substantial growth in 4K programs has been heavily influenced by

financial supports, including the ability of school districts to receive state aid for 4K pupils. Funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Trust for Early Education (through the Pew Charitable Trusts and in collaboration with Pre-K Now) created projects such as Early Education Matters and Wisconsin Forces for Four, and contributed significantly to the expanding number of programs, and particularly to the recent rapid growth in community approaches.

Notwithstanding the substantial increase in 4K programs, 182 elementary school districts in Wisconsin do not have any form of public 4K. State policy changes are needed to remove barriers to implementation of 4K programs and to ensure consistency of quality services for all four-year-olds, regardless of the setting.



# Appendix A

## ***Early Education Matters Summary Reports from Local Planning Teams, March 2006: EEM Grant Communities that Have Implemented or Expanded***

- 1. Bloomer\*** has implemented the 4K program in three sites, including the public school, a parochial school and a child care center. The children's council continues to meet on a regular basis to work on next steps. Challenges include ongoing, regular communication among partners through meetings and collaborative events. Work is continuing in creating positive PR for the 4K program.
- 2. Elcho** is a small district that has no group child care centers in the area other than the child care center operated by the school district. Additionally, there is one Head Start center. Elcho received school board approval to implement the proposal for the community approach including the child care and Head Start Center in the fall of 2005; however, due to the tight timeframe for implementation and a few challenges with staffing and transportation issues, the decision was made to implement in partnership with the child care center in 2005 with a plan to try to work out the challenges. The goal is to implement with the Head Start partnership for the fall 2006 school year. School district child care staff attended the Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association annual conference for the first time and built new relationships within that community.
- 3. Eau Claire** already had been working with three Head Start sites upon receipt of the grant, but has expanded to offer 4K to 23 sites, including child care, parochial preschool, Head Start and school-based sites. Activities that led to this success included conducting a community-wide survey, a large public awareness campaign that involved extensive messaging tools, a public radio presentation on the collaborative model, various and extensive networking meetings and retreats with a large variety of stakeholders, an event for business leaders, and the development of a plan for data collection. Eau Claire also has implemented a quality initiative in which partners participate in an assessment using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale. The results are used to develop and implement a quality improvement plan. Eau Claire has identified that it has remaining challenges such as expansion to additional community partners, serving special needs children to large amount of community-based sites, and research and data collection. Eau Claire is already sharing "lessons learned" by assisting many other districts. Eau Claire is being featured at the annual Preserving Early Childhood Conference, presenting as part of the keynote, offering on-site and virtual tours and coordinating several workshops.
- 4. Kiel** implemented two school-based 4K sites and partnered with one child care site during the 2005-06 school year. The success

of the partnership with the child care center has encouraged an exploration of expanding the 4K program to other community agencies. The Kiel 4K program currently serves about 80% of the community's 4-year-olds. Meanwhile, other collaboration is occurring in the form of the first annual "Child Development Days" event, in which community partners are invited to participate. Parents and children are also invited to attend for information about the programs, parent education and preschool screening.

- 5. Milwaukee** already had universal and full day 4K but primarily offers the program in school-based sites. At the start of the EEM project, MPS had five community-approach sites, and in the fall of 2005 added one new community-approach site. MPS hosted a forum for principals interested in exploring the community-approach model. MPS also awarded four mini-grants to sites to explore partnerships. A committee also developed finance models for implementing community-approach partnerships. Learning Targets were completed. MPS also spearheaded a community task force working on transitions, including the development of site specific transition plans that include parents and community outreach.
- 6. Monroe** piloted the first phase of implementation in January 2005 in partnership with the local Head Start and one child care center. The program expanded in fall 2005 to include a parochial preschool program. In January 2006, the school board approved full implementation for fall 2006. There are now a total of three additional community sites interested in partnering to expand the program. Registration was occurring at the time of this report but an additional 125 4-year-olds are expected to enroll.
- 7. New Glarus** moved very quickly to implementation with school board approval in May 2005. Though a small community, the program received local newspaper and TV coverage. The program started in fall 2005 and is offered in a school-based site and with the only child care center in the district, a private accredited center. Teachers use the same curriculum designed in alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. Currently, the district has a waiting list; space and staffing for expansion are the next challenge.
- 8. Park Falls** also moved quickly with school board approval in July 2005 and began implementing the program at a school based site and a Head Start site in fall 2005. With the start of the fall 2006 school year, there will be an additional site at a parochial preschool. Park Falls lists several challenges still ahead including contract issues, food and transportation issues, inclusion of children with disabilities, and consistency across programs.

9. **Stanley-Boyd\*** reports that the only child care center in town at the time the grant was awarded elected not to partner to offer 4K, but the school partners with the Head Start located in the public school. The teachers in both these programs, including the special education teacher, work together frequently. They use the same curriculum and go on the same field trips. Only a couple of children attend both 4K and Head Start. The remaining children go home or go to a child care center. A new child care center has recently opened and is interested in collaborating. A community council is in the early stages of forming. Members have been identified and contacted.

### ***EEM Communities That Will Implement in Fall 2006***

1. **Chippewa Falls** had regular meetings with intensive action planning that led to the development of a CD (compact disk with early care and education information) that was disseminated in the community. The school board approved the new program, called Building Bridges 4 Children (BB4C) in January. The program includes criteria for partnering with private agencies and multiple models of service delivery.

2. **Lake Mills** laid the groundwork by developing a common vision with stakeholders, conducting a community survey, and collected information through site visits. In November the school board approved implementation that will include partnering with two child care centers. Implementation activities such as contract development, registration, and hiring of staff are the next big challenge.

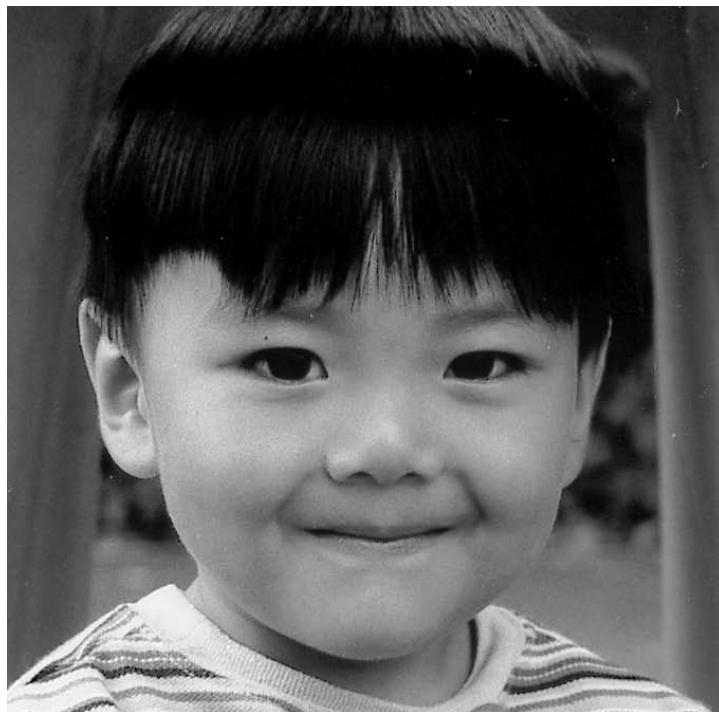
3. **Cadott\*** had a setback with a change in public school administration, but parent surveys were completed and work is ongoing to inform the community about the benefits of early childhood programming. Informing school board members building relationships with partners, and growing the planning council are also ongoing. Cadott recently committed to implementing 4K in fall 2006 with community partners such as child care and a parochial school, and contracts are currently being negotiated.

4. **Superior** will proceed with full implementation in the fall 2006. There are seven community child care centers and two Head Start centers in the collaborative planning group. There are also six potential elementary schools that could be a 4K site, but the intent is to fill partner agency sites first and use the school sites to “fill in the gaps”. Superior also intends to provide 4K program resources to family child care homes and parents who choose to care for their children at home.

5. **Oshkosh** attended trainings, had a facilitator lead the group through a retreat process to develop a vision, mission, core values and goals. Through EEM training events and community discussions, the planning group decided it needed to focus on building more partnerships by engaging essential stakeholders. It was also determined that community support would be strengthened by developing alliances with other community leadership groups. Due to district budget constraints, additional planning is also taking place to identify other sources of revenue. Remaining challenges include dispelling negative perceptions within the community, getting support from the media and business communities, and securing participation from ALL child care and preschool program providers, including those that have not yet come to the table. The school board recently approved two pilot sites for the 2006-07 school year, one with a district early childhood program and another with the UW-Oshkosh Head Start program.

6. **Watertown** responded to the request of the school board by sharing research on the advantages and disadvantages of 4K. The board decided to allow a “Design and Implementation” committee that appointed subcommittees to work on various program components for a presentation to the School Board. Stipends were used to ensure participation in meetings. Meanwhile, site visits occurred and a community forum was held. New planning group members were recruited and partnerships were strengthened. In April 2006, the school board approved the implementation of community-approach 4K starting in the fall with four to six sessions.

*\* Part of one grant awarded to collaboration of 3 districts and led by the Family Support Center/River Source Family Center.*



# Appendix B

## ***Early Education Matters Summary Reports from Local Planning Teams March 2006: EEM Communities Still Working Toward Implementation***

- 1. Antigo** developed a brochure on the benefits of 4-year-old programs, conducted site visits, attended trainings, hosted a town supper with focus groups and conducted a parent survey. The planning group decided to make a recommendation to implement a community-approach program; however, the District, with support from community members, is facing declining enrollment and budget cuts to maintain existing services. The district is also contemplating elementary school consolidation (currently eight facilities), potentially reducing the number of facilities to between one and three. One of the decisions ahead is whether or not to implement a 4K program prior to elementary consolidation.
- 2. Black River Falls** held a series of 18 meetings to determine community needs and developed a presentation that included a recommendation of community approaches. The school board approved the proposed model of community-approach 4K, however due to a budget deficit has decided to table implementation until an undetermined time. The group plans to use the information collected (models of service delivery, implementation plans, cost analysis, curriculum, assessment methods, parent surveys and sample contracts) for the next opportunity for Board approval.
- 3. Green Bay** has developed a vision, philosophy and goals. The planning group has refined delivery models, outlined community site requirements, and transportation and class size recommendations. A proposal to the school board has been developed, but the timing of the presentation is still being determined. Public awareness activities are taking a priority now, as well as additional relationship building with child care providers. The committee has established the 2007-08 school year a target implementation date, but must overcome barriers with the district budget and teachers' union.
- 4. Kenosha** conducted a countywide feasibility study and is using the results to mobilize the community including an early childhood summit and follow up meetings to the summit. The planning team was also trained in the Logic Model and explored options of 4K programming. The team also developed a WMELS training initiative that was jointly funded across school districts and agencies. A continuing challenge is the east/west divide posed by the interstate highway in the area and the differing issues and challenges of the rural and urban portions of the districts.
- 5. Luxemburg-Casco** was perhaps the only district that reported a significant negative community and school board member response. The planning committee provided a detailed proposal for a community-approach model, but the community opposition could not be overcome in the end. The school board voted not to implement 4K regardless of model. Still, advocates in Luxemburg-Casco have plans to keep the information ready for another opportunity in the future.
- 6. Maple** has been working on the mission and vision for the group and has conducted a community survey. Planning team members have attended training events and are still in the information gathering stage. A new Family/Community Resource Center will start Family nights for local preschoolers. The group has identified several challenges ahead, such as lack of district space combined with transportation issues (Maple's large, rural geographic size presents an incredible challenge). Also, there are many family child care providers in the area, and this is a model that has not yet emerged in Wisconsin. A presentation was made to the school board, and in the summer a recommendation will be made to continue investigating implementation of 4-year-old programming.
- 7. Menomonie** has attended a large number of training events and has worked with a consultant to lead the planning group in developing a vision, mission and strategic /tactic statements. Work groups have been working to develop a presentation to the school board this spring. The main challenge identified is building community support and awareness in a short timeframe. A community survey yielded overwhelmingly positive responses for a community approach to 4K. These results will be highlighted in a presentation to the school board.
- 8. Sauk Prairie** began with the planning group developing a common vision and work groups. During the planning process there was a change in school district administration, but the planning moved forward. They completed a community survey involving parents of preschool aged children, attended site visits and training, held community informational meetings, and conducted early education standards training for area childcare and preschool providers. Finally, a presentation was made to the School Board in January. Although there was no community opposition expressed at the informational meetings or to the Board, the School Board did not approve implementation primarily because of a reluctance to add a new program while cutting budget and staff in other areas. Alternative funding options to pay for start up costs are being explored. Because of support from pre-school providers and parents, the district hopes to revisit implementation of a community based 4-year-old program in the near future.

# Appendix C

## ***Survey Questions for Community-Approach 4K Site Visits*** (Created by Antigo)

- What funding was used for start-up and sustainability?
- What is the configuration of kids, centers, staff?
- What are the qualifications of staff?
- What transportation is provided between home/center and center/other programs?
- Are scholarships or sliding fee scales used?
- What percentage of four-year-olds participate?
- What is the relationship between 4K and special education (early childhood development)?
- What curriculum is used? Is it the same at each site?
- Are snacks provided? If so, how are they funded?
- What family activities are offered?  
Are they the same for all sites or site specific?
- What agreements are in place between the District and partners?  
What reimbursements or purchased services are included?
- What is the policy for students who exhibit adjustment problems once enrolled in a program?
- What are the early and open enrollment policies?
- How many weeks are 4K programs offered per year?
- What and how are training/in-services offered for 4K teachers employed by partner agencies?



## Appendix D:

### *The Financing of Wisconsin's Public Education System — Implications for 4K Programs*

The system for financing public education in Wisconsin provides both opportunities and challenges for school districts that are considering the initiation of a 4K program. On the positive side, the state's school aid formula uses a student or "membership" count that includes 4K pupils, which means that schools operating 4K programs automatically receive state aid to offset a significant portion of the costs.

State aid varies from district to district, based largely on a formula designed to target more assistance to poorer districts. However, on average the aid covers about two-thirds of school costs.

Four-year-old kindergartners, unlike students in other grades, are not counted as full-time equivalent (FTE) pupils. Instead, they are counted as a 0.5 FTE, as long as the 4K program operates for a minimum of 437 hours per year (which averages 2.5 hours per day). Alternatively, a district can count the student as 0.5 FTE if they offer 350 hours 4K classroom hours and also provide at least 87.5 hours annually of outreach activities. Districts that provide the 87.5 hours in addition to at least 437 hours of 4K class time can use an FTE count of 0.6. These counts come into play in both the school aid formula and for purposes of computing the revenue caps, discussed below.

Another positive part of the current school funding system for 4K is that for most of the past decade the state has paid two-thirds of total school costs statewide. Although the statute requiring two-thirds state financing has been repealed, the 2005-07 budget increased state aid enough to reach roughly that level of state support. If the state is able to maintain or at least approach that fiscal commitment, it means that as new or expanded 4K programs increase school spending statewide, total state aid will rise and offset about two-thirds of the increased costs.<sup>41</sup>

However, schools also face some significant fiscal challenges in initiating 4K programs. To slow the growth in local property taxes and to limit the increase in state spending for the two-thirds commitment to schools, the state has imposed a cap on the annual rate of revenue growth for each district. Referred to as revenue caps, the restrictions on increased spending are calculated using a formula that includes an adjustment for inflation and a district's pupil count, including 4K students.<sup>42</sup> Because health care and energy costs have been increasing much faster than the growth rate allowed by the revenue caps, schools have had to make significant cuts

Revenue caps are particularly problematic for districts with declining enrollment — which make up about three-fifths of districts in the state. Since many of a school's costs are fixed, spending (unlike the revenue caps) does not go up and down in direct proportion to the number of students.<sup>43</sup> As a result, declining enrollment districts often have to cut many of their core and extracurricular programs. In that fiscal environment, it can be very difficult to add new programs. On the other hand, new programs that increase or maintain the pupil count

are attractive because they loosen the revenue cap as well as increase state aid.

Another challenge for schools considering the creation or expansion of a 4K program is that there is a delay before a school receives additional aid and revenue cap relief from the state. The pupil or "membership" count used for purposes of the school aid formula is based on the number of students enrolled during the previous school year, creating a one-year delay in the receipt of additional state aid.

The membership count used for the revenue cap changes in the first year, but the change is more gradual. The membership count used in that formula is a three-year average, which is based on the September enrollment count in the current year, and the enrollment during the previous two years. If a school adds a 4K program serving 60 children, that action will increase its pupil count by 30 on an FTE basis (or 36 if it engages in sufficient outreach activities), but the use of the three-year average means that the count grows by only 10 students the first year, and by 20 in year two. It isn't until the third year that the district sees the full benefit of an increase in students.

In the 2004-05 school year, for example, the average revenue cap per pupil for all school districts was \$8,508.<sup>44</sup> Thus, an average district that had added 20 pupils (10 FTE) in 4K programs in 2002-03 would have seen its revenue cap grow by about \$85,080 in 2004-05 (or \$102,000 if the 4K program engaged in sufficient outreach activities). However, the revenue limit would have increased by only about one-third of that amount in the first year (2002-03) and two-thirds the second year.

The Wisconsin Constitution requires that public schools shall provide free access to education for all students ages 4 to 20.<sup>45</sup> This does not mean that a district has to provide a 4K program, but if it does, the program should be available to all children in the district who have turned 4 by the beginning of the school year. As a practical matter, this means that a school district cannot receive state aid for a 4K program serving just a target portion of the district. Recognizing that it is difficult for some districts to move immediately to universal access, the DPI has allowed districts the option of a three-year phase in process.

In summary, the state's school funding system means that Wisconsin schools, in contrast to those in many other states, do not need to be on waiting lists or competing with each other for state aid for their 4K spending. Nevertheless, the net effect of the school aid formulas and state-imposed spending restrictions is that adding new programs is currently a difficult challenge for schools, but not an insurmountable one (as evidenced by the substantial increase in 4K programs in recent years). Although it may be counterintuitive, the initiation of a 4K program may be somewhat easier in a district with declining K-12 enrollment, since the new 4K students help avoid the detrimental consequences of a shrinking pupil count.

# Appendix E:

## ***Training Provided by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association***

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) developed the curriculum for five training topics over the two years of the Early Education Matters (EEM) Project. These training topics, as well as the dates and locations, were designed to provide useful information to members of the planning committees for the school districts receiving planning grants through the EEM project. A significant focus of the trainings was to support child care providers – both group center and family child care providers – to participate fully in the community collaboration efforts in their communities.

Another objective was to provide trainings that brought the broader community of early childhood partners together to better understand quality child care and its role within a community. Communities that received EEM planning grants were able to send five team members to these trainings free of charge. In addition, these trainings and/or components of these trainings were offered to communities as a technical assistance tool in developing their community partnerships.

The following trainings were offered: Leaders for Change; Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards; Quality Care for Quality Kids; A Primer on Financing and Decision Making; and Meeting High Quality Standards in Early Education and Building Allies to Meet Those Standards. Descriptions of each of the trainings are provided below. Following the descriptions is information on numbers of participants, what sector of work they came from, and where these trainings were held.

- ***Leaders for Change.*** The goal of this session was to develop leaders prepared to embrace change and to envision a system of early care and education inclusive of 4-year old kindergarten that is good for children, families and teachers, and one that does no harm to existing community-based child care programs. To help a community move forward, it is important to fully engage the voices of all stakeholders, particularly the voices of the child care workforce. Participants discussed values, explored issues of power, and considered leadership from a developmental perspective in this session.
- ***Quality Care for Quality Kids.*** As proposed by Governor Doyle in the KidsFirst Initiative, Quality Care for Quality Kids is a quality rating system combined with a tiered reimbursement system for child care programs. Day One of this intensive training provided a broad overview of this five-star, research-based rating system, and was open to all sectors of early education, including public schools who may be engaged in collaborative efforts to provide 4K in their community. Day Two helped programs explore in more depth the three main categories of quality indicators.

**1. Educational Qualifications** – With a focus on professional development planning, addressing what resources exist and how one accesses them, the barriers

to professional development and how to begin to address them.

**2. Learning environment and curriculum** – An exploration of the variety of tools that exist to address children’s learning environment, including rating scales, accreditation, performance standards, and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.

**3. Business Practices** – Focus on business practices that attract and retain a stable workforce, because teachers and providers are the key to quality. Addressing the creation of positive work environments and issues around recruitment and retention.

• ***The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)*** provide a shared framework for understanding and communicating expectations for young children’s development from age 3 through kindergarten. They are a guide for parents, professionals, communities and policymakers, all of whom share responsibility for the well being of young children in Wisconsin. They guide the work of early education advocates and professionals in creating, evaluating and improving the conditions necessary for children’s optimal development. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards are applicable across ALL early learning environments, including child care, Head Start, public and private preschool programs, and four/five year old kindergarten. They are intended to align with Wisconsin’s K-12 Model Academic Standards and to provide early learning opportunities that support children’s success in school. While their implementation is voluntary, the WMELS were expected to factor into the Governor’s quality indicators initiative, which called for quality-rated licenses for child care programs. Goals of the WMELS training included:

- keeping the focus on the child,
- exploring the different lenses with which we view each individual child,
- illuminating the teaching cycle, and
- encouraging intentionality in what we do with young children.

• ***A Primer on Financing and Decision Making: Looking at each sector of early education (community-based child care, Head Start, and public schools).*** This workshop explored how child care, Head Start and public schools are financed, who makes what decisions, what accountability requirements and regulations apply to each system, and options for blending funding to provide community-based collaborative programs for early childhood care and education.

• **Meeting High Quality Standards in Early Education and Building Allies to Meet Those Standards.**

As Wisconsin considers a quality rating system for regulated child care providers, programs will need to prepare to meet high quality standards. This training is designed to help programs explore in more depth the three main categories of quality indicators:

- 1) educational qualifications;
- 2) learning environment and curriculum; and
- 3) business practices.

This session also focused on crafting a message to take out to the broader community – including parents, business and community leaders, and elected officials, as well as those engaged in social change efforts (the women’s movement, anti-racist and social justice organizations, the labor movement, etc.). This training also provided information on working with the media to promote understanding of and support for a greater public investment in high quality early childhood education.

• **Participation by Early Childhood Sector**

Trainings were held in Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville, Madison, Milwaukee, and Oshkosh. Participants included members of the community teams in the districts that were EEM grantees, as well as individuals from all sectors of the early childhood field and from communities considering community collaborations.

Child Care Providers (both group center and family child care providers) . . . . .	214
Head Start Providers . . . . .	11
Public School Personnel (teachers and administrators) . . . . .	48
Agencies/Higher Education (e.g., CCR&Rs, CESAs, colleges) . . . . .	12
School Districts Represented . . . . .	23



# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The nine grantees that began community-approach programs include Stanley-Boyd, based on additional information received in February 2006. However, because that information was not available earlier, Stanley Boyd was not included in the survey of community-approach districts and was not counted as such a district in the WCCRP data that is used elsewhere in this report.
- <sup>2</sup> The first set of percentage increases is derived from WCCRP data. The other percentages were calculated by WCCF, using WCCRP survey data on the number of community-approach schools and students and DPI data on total 4K students.
- <sup>3</sup> Schumacher, R. D Ewen, K. Hart, and J. Lombardi. (2005) *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care*, Policy Brief No. 5, Center for Law and Social Policy.
- <sup>4</sup> Pre-K Now, (March 2006), <http://www.preknow.org/advocate/factsheets/snapshot.cfm>
- <sup>5</sup> Jencks, Christopher & Phillips, Meredith. *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Brookings Institution Press, 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> J. Brooks-Gunn, S. McLanahan, & S. Rouse. "Introducing the Issue." *The Future of Children*, Spring 2005.
- <sup>7</sup> Center for America Progress (Aug. 2005) Education: *The State We're In. An Education Report Card for the State of Wisconsin*.
- <sup>8</sup> Schweinhart, Lawrence J. et al., *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project Through Age 40*; High/Scope Press; Ypsilanti Michigan, 2005.
- <sup>9</sup> As explained in Appendix D, the state funding for 4K programs is not a separate allocation. It is simply the part of state school aids that is allocated among districts on the basis of the inclusion of a fraction of 4K students in the pupil count used in the school aids formula.
- <sup>10</sup> Peacock, J. and P. Evenson. (2005) *Investing in Early Education in Wisconsin: the 2005-2007 Budget and Recent Spending Trends*, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.
- <sup>11</sup> Department of Public Instruction, January 13, 2006, press release. [http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpi2006\\_07.pdf](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpi2006_07.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> See endnote #2.
- <sup>13</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Assessing the Value of 4K in Wisconsin: A Study of 4K Community Approach Districts: 2005-06*, Executive Summary, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>14</sup> An exception was made for the Milwaukee Public School district, where community approaches are used in just 6 of the 123 schools, and it was concluded that the other 117 schools should not be part of the survey of community-approach programs.
- <sup>15</sup> These figures are based on the information received by WCCRP from school districts in the fall of 2005. Additional information obtained several months later indicated that one other district initiated a community approach 4K program in 2005-06.
- <sup>16</sup> Rodgers Rhyme, A, (2005) *A Case Study on the Expansion of Four Year Old Kindergarten and The Wisconsin Forces for Four Year Olds Community Initiative*.
- <sup>17</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Update on Community Approach Districts: 2005-06*, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership. p. 4.
- <sup>18</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *4K Teachers in Community Approach and Comparison Districts: 2005-06*. UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Anecdotal evidence from a very informal e-mail survey of 4K teachers suggests that assistant teachers are present at a higher frequency than indicated in the school administrators' responses to the WCCRP survey.
- <sup>21</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *4K Teachers in Community Approach and Comparison Districts: 2005-06*. UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>22</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Assessing the Value of 4K in Wisconsin: A Study of 4K Community Approach Districts: 2005-06*, Executive Summary, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>23</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Update on Community Approach Districts: 2005-06*, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>24</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *4K Teachers in Community Approach and Comparison Districts: 2005-06*. UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>25</sup> The median income figure for 2004 comes from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT website, and it is derived from data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.
- <sup>26</sup> Head Start programs were not asked to distribute the questionnaires to parents because of a concern that it could lead to a possible bias toward low-income families. (Ninety percent of Head Start families must be at or below the federal poverty level.)
- <sup>27</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT website.
- <sup>28</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Assessing the Value of 4K in Wisconsin: A Study of 4K Community Approach Districts: 2005-06*, Executive Summary, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.

- <sup>29</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *Family Experiences and Parent Satisfaction with 4-year-old Kindergarten in Wisconsin*, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>30</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *4K Teachers in Community Approach and Comparison Districts: 2005-06*, UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership. Figure 2.
- <sup>31</sup> As noted in Appendix D, the statutory commitment to fund two-thirds of school costs has been repealed, but the 2005-07 budget provides roughly that level of support, and future efforts to meet or approach that informal commitment can be expected to increase state support as school districts increase total spending.
- <sup>32</sup> Green Bay's teacher union has not embraced the community site model. It wants all teachers to be employees of the school system, hence union members. They are continuing to work on a compromise.
- <sup>33</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *A Report on Closed Licensed Child Care (January 2003 - November 4, 2004) in Counties with Collaborative 4K Programs*. UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>34</sup> The WEAC survey was distributed to schools that have initiated 4K programs in the last two years, and it was sent to the superintendent (or designee), the local teachers association president, and the participating child care providers who are members of the Early Childhood Association.
- <sup>35</sup> Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, (2003), <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/EarlyLS.htm>
- <sup>36</sup> Adams, D., et al. (2006) *4K Teachers in Community Approach and Comparison Districts: 2005-06*. UW-Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership.
- <sup>37</sup> Roach, M.A., et. al. (2005) *Issue Brief #16: What do we know about the workforce in child care centers?* Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, University of Wisconsin-Extension. This brief reports that the median hourly wage for teachers in full-day child care centers was \$8.66 per hour in 2004.
- <sup>38</sup> Galinsky, E. (2006) *The Economic Benefits of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs: What Makes the Difference?* The Committee for Economic Development.
- <sup>39</sup> Internal memo to Department of Public Instruction from the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, October 2005.
- <sup>40</sup> Only 10 out of 86 community-approach non-school-based sites are accredited, and an additional 57 sites are school-based and not accredited.

- <sup>41</sup> The percentage of costs covered by state aid will vary from district to district, depending primarily on the amount of tax base behind each pupil.
- <sup>42</sup> The revenue caps apply to two funding sources – general school aid and property taxes – that comprise the vast majority of school financing, but they don't apply to earmarked or “categorical” state aid, such as special education aid.
- <sup>43</sup> Districts with declining enrollment get some temporary relief from declining revenue caps, but over the long haul the revenue caps change in direct proportion to enrollment, whereas costs do not.
- <sup>44</sup> Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Information Paper #12, *Local Government Expenditure and Revenue Limits*, p. 6.
- <sup>45</sup> Wisconsin Constitution, Article X, Section 3.





16 North Carroll Street • Suite 600 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 284-0580 • fax: (608) 284-0583 • [www.wccf.org](http://www.wccf.org)