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Early Learning Matters – December 17, 2008

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Quote of the month:

“Early learning is the foundation of a strong economy. It prepares tomorrow’s workforce for global competition while ensuring that the children of today’s workers enter school ready to learn.”

- New North, a non-profit corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders in 18 counties in Northeast Wisconsin.

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1. Governor Doyle Appoints State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care

Governor Jim Doyle announced the members of the first Wisconsin Governor’s State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care on December 16. The Council will be co-chaired by Department of Children and Families Secretary Reggie Bicha and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Libby Burmaster.

To see the Governor’s press release and a list of the 31 appointees to the Council, go to: <http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/Dec08/dec16/1216govearlychild.pdf>

2. New WCCF Publications

a. Quality System for Early Care and Education

WCCF has released a policy brief. “Great Plan for Wisconsin: A System for Early Care and Education.” The brief focuses on the components of an effective system to improve the early learning options for children and families in Wisconsin. The model described

begins with quality standards for programs and practitioners, and includes:

- Professional and program development to meet and maintain standards)
- Monitoring and accountability to ensure compliance with standards)
- On-going financial assistance linked to meeting standards)
- Engagement and outreach to sell the vision across the state)

These elements were set forth by Anne Mitchell and Louise Stoney in a 2006 paper. The policy brief describes a large and diverse set of early care and education services in Wisconsin, constituting over a \$1 billion per year enterprise and over 10,000 early childhood programs. According to the policy brief, early care and education in Wisconsin has a “limited infrastructure for this essential service that is shaping our children in their most important years.”

To see this publication and other WCCF policy papers on early education, go to:

http://www.wccf.org/education_pub.php

b. Closing the Achievement Gap

WCCF’s new report outlines the importance of quality early childhood experiences in closing the achievement gap. “Let’s Start at the Very Beginning: A Very Good Place to Start,” this WisKids Count issue brief focuses on early learning components that research shows narrow the gaps in school readiness.

The report points to the recommendations of the Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition’s Great Start Initiative, which “ includes quality standards for strong early learning programs, helping programs meet those standards, and fiscal incentives for programs that meet the higher standards.” The Coalition also supports expanding home visiting programs, increasing collaborative 4-year-old kindergarten, and tax credits to help families pay for high quality child care.

Go to: http://www.wccf.org/pdf/lets_start_beginning_WisKids_brief_fall2008.pdf

3. State Profile: Arizona’s First Things First

Arizona is launching its First Things First citizen’s initiative that funds quality early childhood development and health at the state and local level. In late 2006 Arizona voters passed proposition 203, which raised cigarette taxes to raise revenue (estimate: \$150 million per year) to increase the quality of, and access to, early childhood programs that will ensure a child entering school arrives healthy and ready to succeed.

The bulk of the funds go out to regional partnership councils to accomplish one or more of six goals, related to early childhood development and health. First Things First requires broad-based membership on the regional councils. The design of the initiative is based on North Carolina’s Smart Start program, which may be the most developed state system for improving early learning and preventive health services.

For more information, go to: <http://www.azecdh.gov/>

4. Steve Barnett: Taking a Hard Look at Quality

Steve Barnett, the Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), provides an assessment of early care and education in the U.S. A wake-up call for Barnett came with the results of a RAND Corporation's recent study of the quality of early education for preschool-age children in California. Using different rating approaches, the conclusion was the same: few children have access to a quality education.

Based on Barnett's research, he comes to the following conclusion: "Regardless of the children's age or ethnicity or the rating system used to measure quality, eight or nine out of every 10 children in the nation who attend center-based programs do not attend those considered good or better. And, in a depressingly familiar pattern, young children from Hispanic and African-American families are least likely to attend a quality program at ages 3 or 4."

The analysis is in the July/August 2008 NIEER newsletter, Preschool Matter, found at: <http://nieer.org/psm/index.php?psm=62>

5. In the News

a. WCCF's Charity Eleson's Column on the State Budget Featured

WCCF Executive Director Charity Eleson's column, "Fixing this broken budget needs balanced approach," was featured in the November 30 Sunday Forum section of the Wisconsin State Journal.

Here's an excerpt: "It is the worst deficit in the state's history. With a deficit of this size, it is imperative that we take a balanced approach to bringing it back into line. We cannot simply slash our way out of this predicament. We must thoughtfully explore ways to increase state revenue as well."

To read the full article, go to:

<http://www.madison.com/archives/read.php?ref=/wsj/2008/11/30/0811280379.php>

b. Invest in Kids, Reduce Crime, Says Milwaukee Police Chief

If you want to reduce crime, invest in young people, said Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn Monday at a symposium on violence prevention in Washington, D.C. To see the article in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Online:

<http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/news/35331739.html>

c. Eau Claire's Community Approach to Pre-K Gets National Attention

Eau Claire School District's breakthrough work was highlighted on a Pre-K Now National Program Broadcast heard across the country via satellite hookup on Dec. 10. For more info, go to:

[file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/dedie/Local%20Settings/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/OLK74/printstory%20\(2\).htm](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/dedie/Local%20Settings/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/OLK74/printstory%20(2).htm)

6. Reading Room

From NIEER online newsletter, December 2008:

a. Forbes Columnist: Spend Stimulus Dollars on Early Education

Thomas F. Cooley, professor of economics at the New York University Stern School of Business, writes that investing in human capital and education, with an emphasis on early education, is a wise investment for a national stimulus package. Read the full article:

http://www.forbes.com/opinions/2008/11/26/stimulus-spending-education-oped-cx_tc_1126cooley.html

b. Big Improvement in Illinois Early Childhood Workforce

The last seven years have seen a dramatic increase in the quality of the Illinois early childhood workforce, according to a new study. Not only has the percentage of lead teachers with bachelor's degrees risen but a coherent career development system is emerging in the state. The report highlights key achievements in the state, including establishment of the Illinois Early Learning Council and the launch of Preschool for All. Go to: http://cecl.nl.edu/research/reports/whos_caring_report_2008.pdf

c. Meta-Analysis of 123 Studies: Positive Effects for Children Attending Pre-K

Rutgers University researchers who analyzed 123 comparative studies found that overall there were significant positive effects in social and cognitive development and school progress for children who attended preschool prior to entering kindergarten. The largest gains were in cognitive development. The study found that positive effects persisted long after preschool.

Go to: <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=15440>

7. Workplace Giving Time- Support WCCF

Many employers, such as the State of WI, are now holding or will soon begin their annual workplace giving campaigns. Many of those campaigns in southern WI include WCCF - under the umbrella of Community Shares of WI (CSW).

If you value this newsletter or WCCF's other work, we need your help. Please support us and let WCCF know if this newsletter is something we should continue. Remember: that your contributions are TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

If your employer does not offer a workplace giving campaign that includes Community Shares organizations, you can donate online to WCCF from the Community Shares website:

<https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/CommunitySharesofWisconsin/OnlineGiving.html>

Or you can contribute directly on the following portion of our website:

<https://payments.auctionpay.com/ver3/?id=w043832>