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Early Learning Matters - February 16, 2010

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Quote of the month:

"Ensuring the quality of our early care and education system is one of the best investments we can make in Wisconsin's kids and in our state's future."

- Ken Taylor, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, quoted in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, January 23, 2010

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1. Quality Rating and Improvement System Gains Momentum

Support Growing

Support is growing for implementation of a child care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in Wisconsin. The two newspapers with the largest distribution in the state have endorsed moving ahead with Governor Doyle's YoungStar proposal.

Here is a sampling of excerpts from editorials, letters, and comments from across the state supporting QRIS:

- "Gov. Jim Doyle's plan to rate child-care centers in Wisconsin, linking their performance to state subsidy payments, is long overdue." **Editorial, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**, Feb. 4
<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/83586127.html>
- "Wisconsin is finally going to rate its child care centers and adjust subsidies to reward and encourage higher quality." **Editorial, Wisconsin**

State Journal, Feb. 8

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/opinion/editorial/article_0418723c-12a6-11df-9b23-001cc4c002e0.html

- Rating the child-care centers has the "potential to dramatically change how parents today and for generations to come will make decisions about who is best to care and educate their child." **Wanda Montgomery**, President, Black Child Development Institute-Milwaukee, quoted by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Jan. 29
<http://www.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/82468677.html>
- "By implementing a quality rating and improvement system, we can accomplish several crucial things at once: build more accountability into the Wisconsin Shares program; maximize the effectiveness of our public investment in early learning; and most important of all, give parents the tools they need to make the best decisions possible about the care their children receive." **Ken Taylor**, Executive Director, WCCF press release, Jan. 22 http://www.wccf.org/pdf/qris_statement_kt_012210.pdf
- "I think a quality rating system can add value and assure state dollars are directed to quality settings." **Jon Stellmacher**, Senior Vice President for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Appleton Post Crescent, Feb. 11
<http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2010100211005>
- By providing consistent markers and incentives for quality, this system will improve the daily experiences provided in thousands of child care centers across the state. **State Superintendent Tony Evers**, Jan. 22
http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2010_11.pdf
- "A QRIS could foster important improvements in quality that directly affect children through rating criteria that include learning environment and curriculum." **Jim Leonhart**, Executive Vice President of Celebrate Children Foundation. Jan. 9
<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/81039162.html>

Details Released

The Doyle administration has now released more details on the QRIS proposal:

- A 3-page summary:
http://www.wccf.org/pdf/QRIS_dcf_summary_Jan2010.pdf
- A detailed description of how the 5-star rating system might work:
http://www.wccf.org/pdf/QRIS_points_quality_indicators_Feb2010.pdf

The QRIS proposal has the following goals:

- To improve overall quality of child care
- To create a clear, understandable tool, via a website, for parents making child care choices

- To create incentives for providers to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- To link the quality of child care providers to Wisconsin Shares payments
- To help prevent fraud in the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy

Next Steps

We are expecting the QRIS proposal to go before the Joint Finance Committee sometime in March. Here is the likely scenario: The Department of Children and Families will make a formal request (called a "13.10 request") to shift \$10 million from the Wisconsin Shares subsidy budget line to its quality improvement budget line in the current 2009-2011 budget. The Wisconsin Shares budget for child care subsidies has a surplus due to declining caseloads and lower per child expenditures-probably caused by the recession and aggressive anti-fraud measures.

The Joint Finance Committee has rejected funding for a quality rating proposals in 2005, 2007, and 2009. However in 2009, the Legislature passed statutory language requiring the Department of Children and Families to come back with a detailed quality rating system proposal.

Keep Informed

If you would like to get advocacy alerts, go to the following website to sign up:
<http://capwiz.com/wccf/mlm/verify/>

2. Madison 4K Passes for 2011

The Madison School Board approved a four-year-old kindergarten (4K) program starting 2011-12 at a January meeting. The program will include a mix of community-based programs and school-based programs. About half of the 4K programs will be delivered in accredited early care and education programs that contract with the district. Currently 80 percent of school districts in the state provide 4K, serving over half of the 4-year-olds in the state. The addition of Madison, the state's 2nd largest school district, will move the state closer to universal 4K access for all 4-year-olds.

To see coverage by the Wisconsin State Journal, go to:

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/article_691311b0-ff28-11de-896d-001cc4c002e0.html

3. Grants Awarded to Wisconsin Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Wisconsin did well in the federal funding sweepstakes when 14 applicants received federal expansion grants for Head Start and/or Early Head Start

programs. Here is a list of organizations receiving grants from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (often called the "stimulus package").

Early Head Start Grants:

Rock-Walworth Comprehensive Family Services, Inc.
National Centers for Learning Excellence, Inc. (Waukesha.)
Renewal Unlimited, Inc. (Adams, Columbia, Dodge Juneau, and Sauk counties)
Next Door Foundation (Milwaukee- Educare)
Council for the Spanish Speaking (Milwaukee)
Wood County Head Start, Inc.
CAP Services, Inc. (Marquette, Outagamie, Portage, Waupaca, and Waushara counties).
La Casa de Esperanza, Inc. (Waukesha)
Oneida Nation
Lac Courte Oreilles tribe

Head Start Grants:

National Centers for Learning Excellence, Inc.
Dane County Parent Council, Inc.
Sheboygan Human Rights Association, Inc.
Milwaukee Public Schools
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Head Start.

The Early Head Start grants are particularly noteworthy because they increase Wisconsin enrollment by about 50 percent. The eleven Early Head Start grants total over \$9 million and will serve over 840 children.

4. Madison Child Care Efforts Honored Nationally

The City of Madison was honored in late 2009 by the National League of Cities for its cutting-edge early childhood initiatives. Madison was cited as one of the country's four most innovative city models for promoting high quality child care and providing financial assistance to low-income families needing child care. The program has been operating for 35 years.

Congratulations to Jolene Ibeling, the city's child care coordinator, Dorothy Coniff, who held that position for many years, and the City of Madison.

To read the full report, visit www.nlc.org/iyef.

5. New Wisconsin Report on the Price of Higher Quality ECE

Public Policy Forum has released a report estimating the cost of a higher quality early childhood care and education system for Southeast Wisconsin, entitled *The Price of Quality*. This may be the first Wisconsin report to estimate the costs of a

high-quality system for child care. Report findings were highlighted at a forum in Milwaukee on February 18, featuring presentations by the key researchers Anneliese Dickman and Melissa Kovach, and an overview of the Doyle administration's proposal for a quality rating and improvement system by Department of Children and Families Secretary Reggie Bicha.

The report estimates the current annual costs for child care programs, comparing those costs with those of "better-quality" direct services (better quality is about half way to high quality), and high-quality services. The report also estimates the cost for a solid infrastructure of monitoring, technical assistance, professional development, and evaluation and assessment. The report does not make recommendations, but it offers 5 policy options. The study also explores the benefits of investing in high-quality programs.

To see the report, go to:

<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/PriceOfQualityRevised.pdf>

6. Wisconsin Race to the Top Application Includes Early Learning

Wisconsin's January 2010 application for "Race to the Top" funding from the federal Department of Education included proposals to invest in innovations for early learning.

The state application would use some of the grant funds requested to accelerate Wisconsin's work to "expand successful systems and partnerships and provide greater access to quality care to Wisconsin children." Key statewide initiatives would include:

- Expand the 4K start-up grant program to serve more districts and more children
- Implement professional development, training, and/or technical assistance for district and community early childhood partners
- Explore or implement program evaluation methods such as the Early Childhood Rating Scale or CLASS in school and community early childhood settings.
- Support local or regional early childhood collaboration councils
- Align Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with early childhood education programs.
- Further develop systems for the transition to school

To see the application, go to

http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/pdf/rttt_application1.pdf **Pages 258-262**

Note: The proposals is an excellent summary of Wisconsin's recent progress in expanding and improving early learning opportunities.

National sources indicated that very few states are expected to be funded in the first round of Race to the Top grants, with more funded later.

7. Federal Update: President Pushes for Early Childhood Investments

President Obama's budget proposal for fiscal year 2011 (which begins October 1, 2010) includes significant investments in early care and education. The President's proposal is the first step in the annual funding process for all federal programs.

In the budget proposal, the Administration is asking for:

- A **\$1.6 billion** increase for the **Child Care and Development Block Grant**
- A **\$989 million** increase for **Head Start and Early Head Start**
- About **\$9 billion over 10 years** for the **Early Learning Challenge Fund**
- **\$10 billion over 10 years** for child nutrition (including the **Child and Adult Care Food Program**, school breakfast and lunch, WIC, and other programs)
- An **expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit**, which parents can use to help offset their child care costs

In addition, on February 17, Department of Education Secretary Duncan and DHHS Secretary Sibelius indicated that the Early Learning Challenge Fund is now being pushed in the Senate again as part of a financial aid bill for higher education (the bill has already passed in the House of Representatives). We are waiting to see if home visiting is in the President new health care reform proposal.

8. Preserving Early Childhood Conference March 17-18

**Building Bridges for Our Children
Preserving Early Childhood Conference
March 17 & 18
Chula Vista Resort, WI Dells**

A Conference Promoting and Supporting Community Approaches for 4 Year-Old Kindergarten and Services to Young Children with Disabilities
For information, go to: http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/Registration_FINAL-PEC2010.pdf

9. Reading Corner

- Thanks to Therese Ahlers for the excellent article, *The Science and Psychology of Infant-Toddler Care: How an Understanding of Early*

Learning Has Transformed Child Care, by J. Ronald Lally of West Ed. I heard Lally speak in January at a national conference, and he was extraordinary. Go to:

http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/articles/images/CA.cover_.JPG

- *Education Reform Starts Early: Lessons from New Jersey's PreK-3rd Reform Efforts*, by Sara Mead. The article describes remarkable success in New Jersey- how high-quality preschool addressed the achievement gap and lessons learned. The story of New Jersey's investment in low-income school districts, forced by a court case, is fascinating.

Go to:

http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/articles/images/CA.cover_.JPG

10. Check Out the WCCF Blog

Hey !!!--- Go to WCCF's Blog for the latest in children and family news:

<http://www.wiskids.blogspot.com/>

11. Support WCCF!

WCCF offers our e-materials and publications free of charge. We can't do it without your help. You can donate online:

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

Thanks for your support