

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
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Early Learning Matters - February 7, 2010

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Quote of the month:

"Congress should support a shift away from the traditional K-through-12 approach toward a system that incorporates high-quality early learning so children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. Otherwise, our dropout crisis could well become a national security crisis."

-Retired general John M. Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a member of Mission: Readiness, a non-profit organization focused on national security issues.

In this Issue:

1. Highlights in Early Care and Education (ECE) in 2010
 2. Challenges for ECE in 2011
 3. Controversy Triggered by Sen. Grothman Proposal to Curtail 4K
 4. In the News
 - a. Retired General Puts Emphasis on Early Learning
 - b. Jim Leonhart: Early Learning Supports Jobs
 5. Reading Room
 - a. Paying Later: The High Costs of Failing to Invest in Young Children
 - b. Despite High Costs for Parents, Child Care Workers Rank Low on the Income Scale
 - c. Cost of Instability
 6. Save the Date: WCCF Lobby Day
 7. WCCF on Facebook
 8. Check Out the WCCF Blog
 9. Support WCCF!
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1. Highlights in Early Care and Education (ECE) in 2010

WCCF's [WisKids Journal](#) featured an article analyzing progress in early care and education in Wisconsin in 2010. To read the full article, go to:

<http://www.wccf.org/wkj/211/story1.html>

Below are some highlights from that article:

YoungStar : A Breakthrough for Child Care Quality

The most significant breakthrough in early care and education in 2010 was the passage of YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The unanimous vote by the Joint Committee on Finance came after many years of efforts to start a quality rating and improvement system in Wisconsin, dating back to a Governor's Task Force in 2004 and even earlier. In November ZERO TO THREE- -a national organization based in Washington, D.C -- honored Wisconsin's YoungStar as one of the top public policy achievements in the nation for infants and toddlers in 2010.

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Continues to Expand

By the end of 2010, 85 percent of Wisconsin school districts with elementary programs had 4-year-old Kindergarten (4K) programs--350 districts out of 414. A total of 41,192 children are enrolled, an estimated 58 percent of all Wisconsin 4-year-olds. In ten years the number of districts offering 4K has much more than doubled. Community approaches to 4K have also continued to expand. School district data indicate that 104 districts are now serving 4K children in collaborations with community-based settings, or 30 percent of 4K districts.

New Home Visiting Opportunities in 2010

Home visiting was elevated as an important service when federal home visiting funding was approved as part of the health care reform bill. Home visiting advocates are hoping that Wisconsin will be able to take major steps toward a statewide home visiting system.

Early Childhood Advisory Council Makes Recommendations

The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) finished 2010 with a report laying out a vision of what a statewide early childhood system could look like. The report, "Building Blocks for Wisconsin's Future: The Foundation for an Early Childhood System," is the product of the ECAC's deliberations, with an emphasis on the needs assessment by a University of Wisconsin team and recommendations related to four areas: (1) Stable, nurturing, economically secure families; (2) Safe and healthy children; and (3) Quality early learning; and (4) overarching infrastructure of an early childhood system. To access the full report, go to:

<http://dcf.wi.gov/ecac/pdf/report.pdf>

2. Challenges for ECE in 2011

Wisconsin early care and education could face some difficult challenges in 2011. A combination of likely reduced federal funding and a serious state structural deficit could result in proposals for belt-tightening.

Federal issues: In the fall of 2010 the Congress failed to continue Federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for child care and Head Start/Early Head Start programs; loss of this funding is estimated to affect services to as many as 5,000 children. In the next few weeks Congress will decide on a federal continuing budget resolution for 2011---we'll see what gets negotiated between a Republican-controlled House and Democrat-controlled Senate. Ongoing home visiting funding could also be at risk.

State issues: Governor Scott Walker is expected to deliver his budget proposal for 2011-13 on February 22. The Walker administration is certainly talking about cutting expenditures and reducing taxes, so no new early childhood initiatives are likely. The question is whether key early childhood programs will be maintained or face significant cuts. If his State of the State address on February 1 gives us any hints, he barely mentioned children and families and did not mention education in that address. To see WCCF response to the State of the State, go to:

<http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/February11/0202/0202wccf.pdf>

3. Controversy Triggered by Sen. Grothman's Proposal to Curtail 4K

Senator Glenn Grothman (R- West Bend) triggered quite a controversy when he announced that "Governor Walker should immediately announce he will not provide any more money for four-year-old kindergarten." See Grothman's position at: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/sen20/news/Press/2010/col2010-002.asp>

Madison School District superintendent Dan Nerad immediately responded, as did other early education experts. See: http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/article_14504a3a-13a9-11e0-88b0-001cc4c03286.html?print=1

The Oshkosh Northwestern responded with an editorial pointing out that not only public schools would be affected, because one-third of 4K programs are operated

in community settings:

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2011101250347>

In addition, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel did fact-checking on Grothman's take on the research about 4K. The verdict: Sen. Grothman's research claims are false.

<http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2011/jan/16/glenn-grothman/wisconsin-state-sen-glenn-grothman-says-recent-res/>

A LaCrosse Tribune editorial responded that "it's wrong to take dead aim at the state's youngest and most vulnerable as the course of least resistance for cutting the budget." http://lacrossetribune.com/news/opinion/article_fac923d2-152b-11e0-9320-001cc4c002e0.html

4. In the News

Retired General Puts Emphasis on Early Learning. John Shalikashvili is worried about young adults' lack of readiness for military service. See USA Today article: http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2011-01-25-editorial25_ST1_N.htm

Jim Leonhart: Early Learning Supports Jobs. See the op-ed from Jim Leonhart, Executive Vice President of Celebrate Children Foundation in the Wisconsin State Journal: http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/opinion/column/article_75731e5c-fdbb-5339-a54e-2ddb48fc22fe.html

5. Reading Room

Paying Later: The High Costs of Failing to Invest in Young Children: A new 6-page

policy brief from the Pew Center on the States:

http://www.partnershipforsuccess.org/uploads/20110124_02311PAESCrimeBriefweb3.pdf

Despite High Costs for Parents, Child Care Workers Rank Low on the Income Scale: In The Juggle blog at The Wall Street Journal, Sue Shellenbarger notes that few parents can afford the high costs of high-quality care, which causes child care centers to cut labor costs to survive, pushing trained, educated, skilled people out of the profession and resulting in a dearth of quality care. <http://blogs.wsj.com/juggle/2011/01/05/the-lowly-child-care-worker/>

Cost of Instability: A new Urban Institute paper examining child care instability and lack of continuity in subsidized child care.

<http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412278-child-care-instability.pdf>

6. Mark your calendars

Tuesday, March 29, Advocate & Lobby for Kids Day

Join WCCF for this interactive, advocacy training that will include state budget and legislative session briefings with question and answer time. You'll connect with peers from around the state, have lots of time for networking, learn valuable skills, and leave with tips and connections to enhance your advocacy efforts. And you will be able to put your skills right to work with a visit to YOUR state senator and representative! Go to:

http://www.wccf.org/event_advocacy_training_2011.php

7. WCCF on Facebook

"Find us on Facebook" with a link to our facebook page at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Wisconsin-Council-on-Children-and-Families/141061865927340>

You can also follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/wiskids>

8. Check Out the WCCF Blog

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

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

9. Support WCCF!

WCCF offers our e-materials and publications free of charge. We can't do it without your help. You can donate online: <http://www.wccf.org/support.php>

Thanks for your support!