3/7/08

PRESENT.:

BEST BEGINNINGS, ALASKA'S EARLY ED. INVESTMENT

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Senate HESS Committee
March 7, 2008

Presentation on Early Learning

Abbe Hensley, Executive Director
Best Beginnings
3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 104A
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907.297.3301 (direct)
ahensley@akhf.org

Melinda Myers, Senior Manager
Best Beginnings
3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 104A
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907.563.1923
mmyers@akhf.org

Mark Lackey, Executive Director
CCS Early Learning
403 S. Alaska Street
Palmer, Alaska 99645
907.745.4040 907.745.4060 (fax)
mlackey@ccsalaska.org

Sue Hull
Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board and
Best Beginnings Early Learning Council
1630 Washington Drive
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
907.479.5729 907.474.0465 (fax)
hull@gci.net

Carol Prentice, Project Manager
System for Early Education Development (SEED)
University of Alaska Southeast
1108 F Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801
907.796.6414
carol.prentice@uas.alaska.edu

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

WHAT Best Beginnings (formerly Ready to Read, Ready to Learn) is a public-private partnership bringing together people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed. It is managed by the Early Learning Council and United Way of Anchorage.

WHY Nearly half of Alaska children enter school unprepared to be successful readers or learners. Scientific research shows critical brain development occurs between birth and age 6. Investments in early childhood literacy and learning pay dividends many times over. Alaska lags behind most states in addressing early childhood literacy and learning issues.

Early Learning and Best Beginnings

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and other economists, the return on investment from early learning is "extraordinary," and any economic development proposals should include early childhood development.

This investment isn't just good for children, it's critical for the future vitality of our state. Children who have access to quality learning opportunities, at home or in away-from-home programs, are more likely to graduate from high school, get better paying jobs, avoid spending time in jail, and are more productive citizens.

Best Beginnings works with both the public and private sectors as a catalyst to bring people and resources together to maximize efforts supporting early learning. Over the past 17 months, Best Beginnings has combined some $317,000 state dollars with cash and in-kind contributions from the private sector to accomplish the following:

Completed

- Constructed a plan for a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System for early education programs, with a budget for field testing and phased-in implementation, through a grant from the Department of Health and Social Services
- Spearheaded a successful two day Governor's Summit on Early Learning with support from the National Governors Association and Alaskan partners
- Supported a public awareness campaign in Northwest Alaska that tied together the traditional *nuniaq* tradition with early brain development
- Developed an annotated bibliography of children's books that reflect Alaskan people and communities

3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 104A • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • t. 907.297.3300 • f. 907.297.3304 • BestBeginningsAlaska.org
Best Beginnings is managed by the Early Learning Council and United Way of Anchorage.

Ongoing

- Conducting a public engagement campaign (radio and TV spots, Web site) to inform all Alaskans about critical brain development between birth and age 6
- Bringing together Alaskans from across the state to work on the development of a coordinated system of early learning
- Coordinating planning and first steps for the multi-year Alaska Native Head Start Literacy Project using "Between the Lions"
- Serving on the leadership team responsible for distributing Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines and developing and coordinating statewide, regional, and community-based training for parents, early childhood educators, and others
- Creating family-friendly activity booklets based on the Early Learning Guidelines in languages other than English with a multi-year grant from the Alaska Children's Trust
- Working with North Carolina's Smart Start initiative, a national leader in successful public-private partnerships supporting young children, as the recipient of a two-year technical assistance grant
- Providing technical assistance for the Anchorage-based early literacy project "ABC Read and Talk With Me"
- Working with the Fairbanks Early Childhood Development Commission to develop a Web site with information for parents and others who care for young children (linked to the Best Beginnings Web site)
- Piloting "early learning communities" in different locations around the state, testing aspects of the Smart Start model

Major Funders and Supporters:

- BP
- ConocoPhillips
- Alaska Public Telecommunications, Inc. (in-kind)
- State of Alaska
- United Way of Anchorage (in-kind)
- Smart Start Technical Assistance Center (in-kind)

Other Contributors (cash and/or in-kind):

- Alaska Humanities Forum
- The CIRI Foundation
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Child Care Connection, Inc. Shell Oil Company
- Alaska Children's Trust
- National Governors Association
- Information Insights
- Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children
- Alaska Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- Alaska Head Start Association
- RurAL CAP
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Rural & Community Development
- University of Alaska Southeast System for Early Education Development (SEED)

Detail on Selected Activities

- **Governor's Summit on Early Learning:** The goals were to improve access to early literacy and learning opportunities for children most in need of such services, whether offered in the home or in other settings; to improve coordination of these services; and to increase the engagement of parents, grandparents, and extended family in young children's learning by providing support, resources, and incentives. Over 150 Alaskans participated in the two-day Summit, and we are working with the Governor's Office on a plan to release the recommendations.

- **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS):** A QRIS has been completed and provided to the Department of Health & Social Services. It includes the standards of the system, budget, and plan for phased-in implementation. The QRIS provides the framework for a standards-based early care and learning system for programs outside the home. It is a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Highly ranked programs would be good candidates for any state-supported pre-kindergarten effort.

- **Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs):** Best Beginnings received a grant from the Alaska Children's Trust to develop family-focused versions of the ELGs in languages other than English. The ELGs have been endorsed by the State Board of Education and state what children from birth to age 5 should know, understand, and be able to do. They are aligned with the new Kindergarten Developmental Profile and the K-2 Standards, ensuring seamless transitions for children. Alaska's ELGs help parents and adults who work with young children understand child development and their role in helping provide appropriate learning opportunities for children.

- **"Between the Lions" Alaska Native Head Start Literacy Project:** Work is ongoing with partners such as WGBH Boston, The CIRI Foundation, BP, RurAL CAP, Southcentral Foundation Head Start, Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start, and the Alaska Head Start Collaboration Office. This pilot project is in the planning stages, with outcomes for children anticipated to mirror those achieved in 11 tribal Head Start programs in New Mexico. They found the number of children at risk for reading failure decreased from 39% to 12%, and the number of children scoring above average increased from 23% to 64%.

- **Public Engagement Campaign:** PSAs are airing in Anchorage and in other parts of the state on the Alaska Public Radio Network and local stations, and spots for television have been distributed. Best Beginnings partnered recently with KTUU Channel 2 in a six-week campaign to promote early learning and literacy through specially created TV spots and selected children's books. The Best Beginnings Web site is being built out with content for parents, early educators, businesses, and others, with a wide variety of links to other information on early learning and literacy. A monthly e-newsletter has been launched to help people around the state stay connected with Best Beginnings work.

Based on a three-year implementation plan, Best Beginnings is engaged in activities and efforts on all 11 Ready to Read, Ready to Learn recommendations. To ensure all Alaska children begin school ready for success, Best Beginnings takes on the following roles:

- Convening and facilitating a variety of efforts
- Connecting and coordinating systems and programs
- Communicating the importance of early childhood, the needs of children and families, and the gaps that currently exist, in order to expand public engagement on behalf of children
- Creating additional resources and ensuring accountability in their use and impact
- Assuring continuity in the work
- Acting as a catalyst for change
- Encouraging community planning and change

CONTACTS

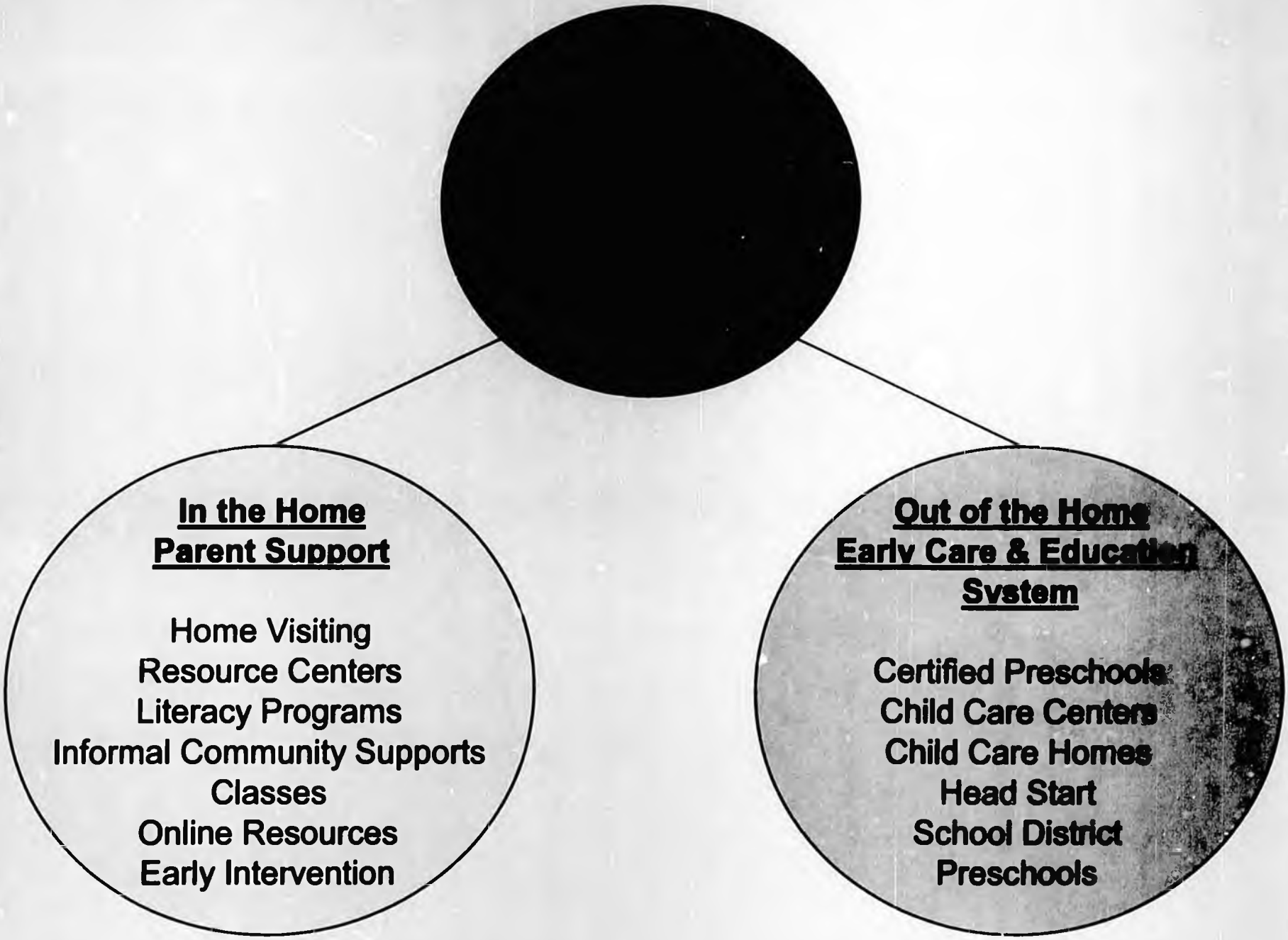
Abbe Hensley, Executive Director
907.297.3301 (direct), ahensley@akhf.org
www.bestbeginningsalaska.org

Melinda Myers, Senior Manager
907.563.1923 (direct), mmyers@akhf.org
www.bestbeginningsalaska.org

Carmin Sponseller, Administrative Coordinator
907.297.3306 (direct), csponseller@childcareconnection.org
www.bestbeginningsalaska.org

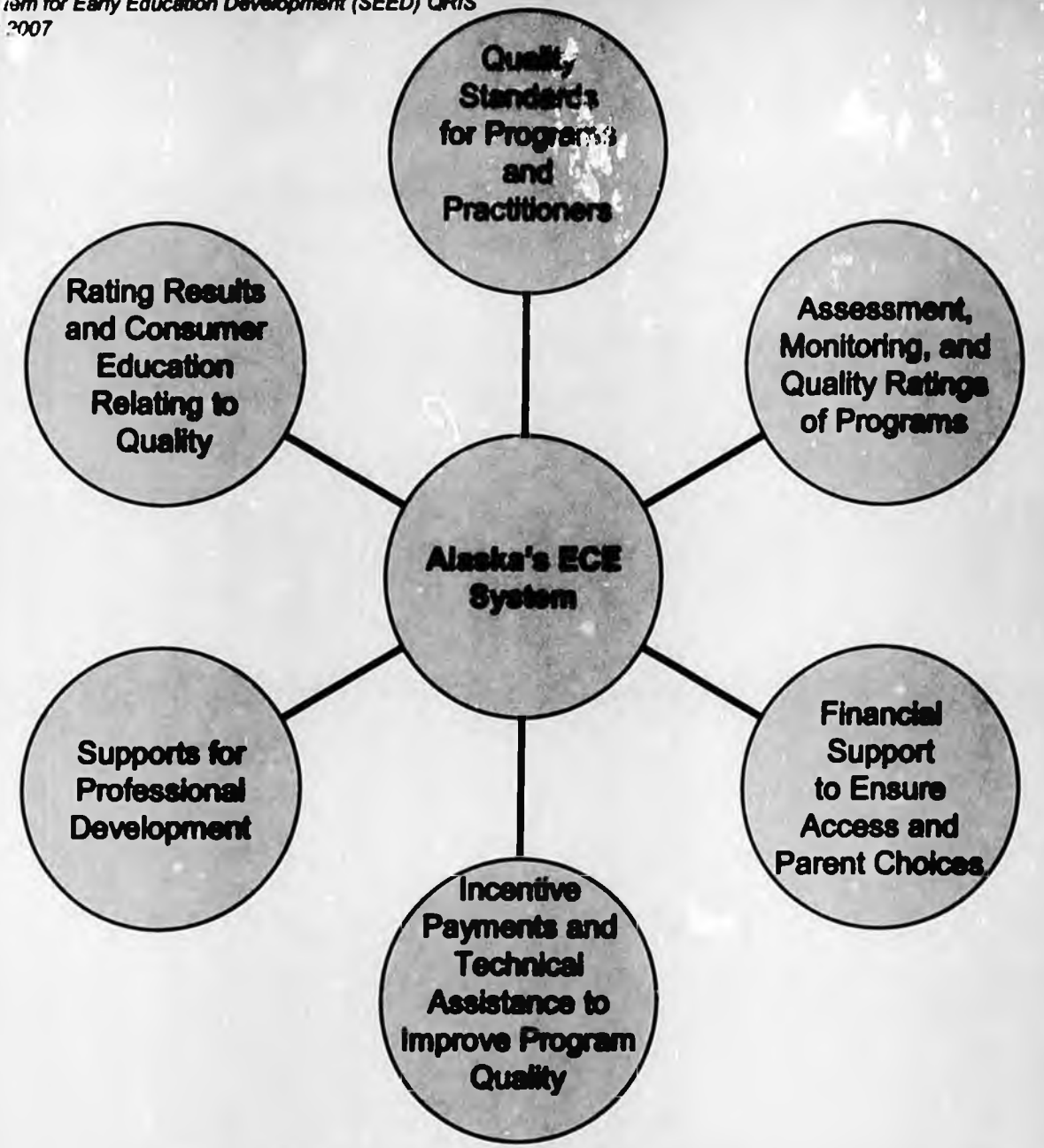
Alaska's Early Learning System

*Developed by the System for Early Education Development (SEED) QRIS Committee, December 2007



A Standards-Based Early Care and Education System

*Developed by the System for Early Education Development (SEED) QRIS Committee, December 2007



Head Start

Certified Preschool

School District Preschools

Licensed or Military Child Care Centers or Homes

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

A Standards-Based Early Care and Education System:
Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

WHAT: The Department of Health and Social Services contracted with Best Beginnings to develop a plan for a Standards-based Early Care and Education System, also known as a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), through State FY07 funding. The plan has been provided to the Department of Health and Social Services.

A QRIS is an organized method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings outside the home.

A QRIS:

- empowers parents to become informed consumers and choose high quality programs for their children;
- enables policymakers to implement policies proven to improve quality;
- promotes accountability so donors, legislators, and tax payers feel confident investing in improvements for quality;
- gives providers a roadmap to quality improvement; and
- improves the health and development of children in early care and education programs.

The system incorporates:

- quality standards for programs and practitioners;
- assessment, monitoring, and quality ratings of programs;
- financial support to ensure access and parent choices;
- incentive payments and technical assistance to improve program quality;
- supports for professional development; and
- rating results and consumer education relating to quality.

Programs are rated on a five star scale, which includes the following:

- staff qualifications and professional development;
- environment;
- curriculum and learning;
- leadership and management; and
- family engagement.

WHY: Currently there is no system in Alaska that ensures the many facets of our early care and education system are coordinated and which provides support to all types of programs such as Head Start, certified preschools, licensed or military child care centers or homes, and school district preschools. A QRIS does this. It is also a critical piece to have in place when introducing other early learning initiatives such as pre-k, and will help to ensure Alaska's long-term economic success.

WHO: The State will need to provide oversight and have ultimate responsibility for the QRIS to ensure the success of the system.

3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 104A • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • t. 907.297.3300 • f. 907.297.3304 • BestBeginningsAlaska.org
Best Beginnings is managed by the Early Learning Council and United Way of Anchorage.

OUTCOMES: Researchers in Oklahoma, Tennessee, and North Carolina have validated that the QRIS in their states measures quality accurately and with meaningful distinctions among levels. Also, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania have conducted evaluations of their systems that demonstrate overall quality improvement and better child outcomes.

Child Care Assistance Program Fact Sheet

What is the Child Care Assistance Program and why is it important?

For working families, child care is the linchpin for a family's job security. The cost of child care can be a significant portion of a family's budget. In Alaska, funds from the Child Care & Development Fund (CCDF) are used to subsidize the cost of child care for low-income families in order to allow parents to pursue work, education, or training opportunities.

- Under federal rules, the Child Care Assistance Program can provide financial assistance to help cover child care costs to families whose income is less than 85% of the state's median monthly income. Currently, the Child Care Assistance Program serves families whose income is less than 75% of the 2006 state median income. However, the majority of families served have incomes less than 60% of the state's median income because of the current co-payment structure.
- Full-day child care can cost anywhere from $4,800 to $10,800 and up per year (System for Early Education Development Economic Impact Report, 2006), depending on the age of the child and the charges of the facility.
- Child Care Assistance rates have not been raised since 2001, with the exception of rates in the Fairbanks area. These rates were only raised to match those in Anchorage and Southeast Alaska. While state assistance rates decline in relation to the current market rate, low income families must pay the difference between what the child care provider is charging and what the state will pay. This is in addition to their already required co-payment. Due to this increased financial burden, families are choosing lower priced and usually lower quality child care.
- State rates are not keeping up with the market rate. For example, in 2007 84% of infants were charged over the state rate in centers. This overage is anywhere from $91 to $338 per month more than they are receiving from Child Care Assistance (2007 Child Care Market Rate Survey).

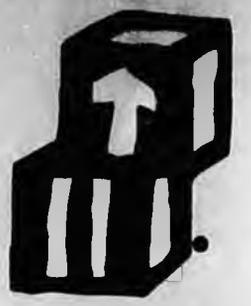
What needs to be done to improve the Child Care Assistance Program?

Increase overall funding for the Child Care Assistance Program so that:

- assistance rates will allow low income families to off-set the excessive out-of-pocket cost of child care. This will ensure equal access to quality care and education for families on Child Care Assistance.

- assistance is available to more low income families. The income ceiling should ultimately be raised to 75% of the state median income. *There are currently many families that do not qualify for assistance, yet still can't afford to send their child to child care.*

Source: Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008



What is Head Start

Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children. The program engages parents in their children's learning and helps them in making progress towards their educational, literacy and employment goals. Significant emphasis is placed on the involvement of parents in the administration of local Head Start programs. Over forty years of experience in delivering high quality early childhood services is what makes Head Start stand out as one of the most successful demonstration programs in the nation.

The Head Start program provides comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. The Early Head Start program was established to serve children from birth to three years of age in recognition of the mounting evidence that the earliest years of development are very important.

Why is Head Start Important in Alaska

- Alaska Head Start is the largest early childhood program serving over 3,500 young children ages birth to age five in 110 Alaskan communities.
- Head Start and Early Head Start grantees insure that thousands of children receive health and dental screenings each year. In many communities where medical and dental care choices are limited or non-existent, Head Start programs play a vital role in helping families' access treatment for their children.
- Research shows that well-trained teachers are a key component of high quality child development programs. In spite of funding and distance challenges, Alaska's Head Start grantees have increased the number of teachers with BA degrees in Early Childhood Education and significantly increased the number of teachers with AA degrees since 2003. This achievement not only has raised Head Start program quality but also has helped Alaska address its statewide shortage of trained early childhood educators.
- Over 10% of enrolled children have a diagnosed disabilities and are receiving coordinated services
- Children transition from Head Start to Kindergarten with increased literacy, math and social skills.
- Parents of Head Start and Early Head Start children are involved in their child's program. Parent involvement is directly related to children's cognitive growth and social outcomes.
- In 2007, Head Start programs employed over 900 people across the state. If Head Start were a private company, it would be among the top 20 of the state's largest employers. In many smaller communities, the Head Start program is an important source of employment and local economic activity.
- Demonstrated collaborative relationships with local and regional resources support and strengthen services to children and families in the State.
- According to an Economic Opportunity Institute report from 2002 entitled "The Link between Early Childhood Education and Crime and Violence Reduction", investments in early childhood education lead to large economic savings. For every $1 invested $7 is saved in special education services, correctional system services and long term societal effects of delinquency.

What Resources are needed: INCREASE STATE OF ALASKA INVESTMENT IN HEAD START

- Expansion of services to include all income eligible children ages 0 to 5
- Adequate funding to keep pace with inflation
- Workforce development funds to meet degree requirements for teachers
- Capital investment to maintain and repair aging Head Start facilities
- Accessible and available health care for children and families
- E-Rate eligibility
- Collaboration between State Departments concerning early childhood services

Alaska Head Start Association
Fact Sheet 2008

There are 17 Head Start grantees in Alaska providing services at 110 sites in 102 communities. Head Start programs enroll children who are 3-5 years old and who are not age eligible for kindergarten. The age range for Early Head Start is pre-natal to 3 years old.

Funded and Actual Enrollment

Head Start Slots, Region X	1,418	Early Head Start (EHS) Slots, Region X	161
Head Start Slots, American Indian Alaska Native Program Branch (AIAN)	1,329	Early Head Start Slots, AIAN	173
AK Total, Head Start Enrollment Slots	**2,747**	**Total Early Head Start Slots**	**334**
Total Actual HS Enrollment, Region X (includes turnover)	1,670	Total Actual EHS Enrollment, Region X	201
Total Actual HS Enrollment, AIAN (includes turnover)	1,522	Total Actual EHS Enrollment, AIAN	217
AK Total, Actual HS Enrollment	**3,192**	**AK Total, Actual EHS Enrollment**	**418**

Head Start Programs in Alaska

Program	HS	EHS	AIAN	Region X	Actual Enrollment (2007 PY)	Communities Served
Aleutian-Pribolof Islands Association	X		X		80	King Cove, St. Paul, Sand Point, Unalaska
Asso. of Village Council Presidents	X		X		264	Akiachak, Bethel, Cherfornak, Kalskag, Kotlik, Nightmute, Quinhagak, Russian Mission, Scammon Bay, Tuluksak
Cent. Council of Tlingit & Haida Tribes	X		X		272	Angoon, Craig, Douglas, Hoonah, Juneau, Klawock, Petersburg, Saxman, Sitka Wrangell, Yakutat
Coun. of Athabaskan Tribes		X	X		30	Arctic Vil., Beaver, Birch Cr., Canyon Vil., Chalkyitsik, Cir., Ft.Yukon, Rampart, Stevens Vil., Venetie
Chugachmiut	X		X		24	Nanwalek, Port Graham, Seldovia
Fairbanks Native Association	X	X	X		323	Fairbanks
Kawerak	X		X		212	Brevig Mission, Little Diomede, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Shishmaref, St. Michael, Teller, Wales, White Mtn., Shaktoolik
Kenaitze	X		X		68	Kenai, Soldotna, Kalifornisky Beach, Nikiski
Metlakatla	X		X		30	Metlakatla
Native Vill. of Tyonek	X		X		Not reported	Tyonek
Southcentral Foundation	X	X	X		299	Anchorage
Tanana Chiefs Conference	X		X		100 (funded slots)	Allakaket, Ft. Yukon, Holy Cross, Huslia, Kaltag, McGrath, Nenana, Tanana, Tetlin
Bristol Bay Native Association	X			X	110	Dillingham, Naknek, New Stuyahok, Togiak
CCS Early Learning	X			X	272	Palmer, Meadow Lakes, Chugiak, Eagle River, Wasilla
Kids' Corps, Inc.	X			X	423	Anchorage
Play 'N Learn	X			X	119	Fairbanks, North Pole, North Star Borough
RurAL CAP	X	X		X	947	Akiak, Alakanuk, Chevak, Emmonak, Haines, Homer, Hooper Bay, Kake, Ketchikan, Kluti-Kaah, Kodiak, Kwethluk, Marshall, Mt. Village, Napaskiak, Pilot Station, St. Mary's, Savoonga, Selawik, Stebbins, Sterling, Tanacross, Toksook Bay, Tok

Why Head Start Matters

Alaska's Head Start programs prepare young children for success in school and life.

1. **Head Start children are healthier than their peers from similar socio-economic backgrounds who are not enrolled in Head Start. Healthy children learn better.**

FACTS*
(The following figures refer to Head Start only. Early Head Start is not included.)

- 78% of Alaska's Head Start children received health screenings that meet EPSDT standards. This compares to a 50% EPSDT medical screening rate for eligible 2-5 year olds statewide**.
- Of the 2,152 Head Start children who received health screenings, 356 were diagnosed as needing treatment for a variety of potentially serious conditions, including hearing & vision problems, anemia and asthma.

CONCLUSION
Without Head Start, we estimate that 100 or more children would enter kindergarten by 2009 with significant undiagnosed and untreated health problems.

**Based on federal 2007 Program Information Reports (PIR) for Alaska grantees.*
***For 2003, reported in the National Health Policy Forum issue brief #819, 11/20/2006.*

FACTS*
(The following figures refer to Head Start only. Early Head Start children are not included.)

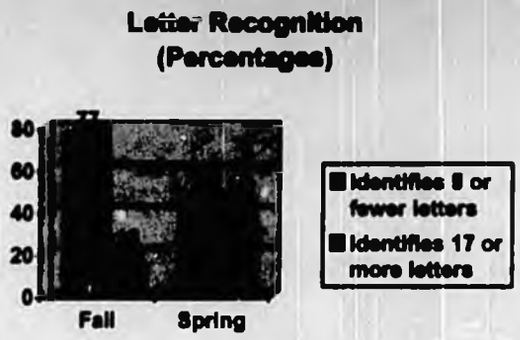
- 88% of Alaska's Head Start children received dental exams. This compares to a 25% EPSDT dental screening rate for eligible 3-5 year olds statewide**.
- Of the 2,425 Head Start children who received dental exams, 586 were diagnosed as needing dental treatment. 376 of these children (64%) received treatment.

CONCLUSION
Without Head Start, we estimate that 270 or more children every year would live with untreated oral health needs. These conditions place a child's speech development, nutritional well-being, overall health and future oral health at risk.

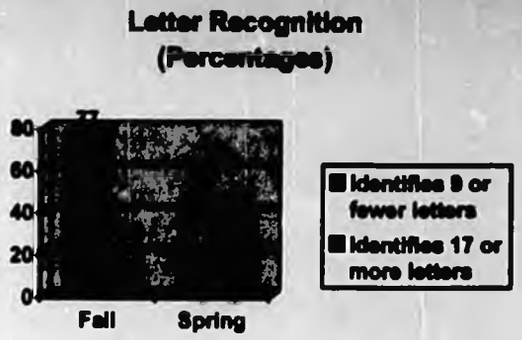
**Based on federal 2007 Program Information Reports (PIR) for Alaska grantees.*
***For 2003, reported in the National Health Policy Forum issue brief #819, 11/20/2006.*

2. **Participation in Head Start improves literacy and math skills for many children who are at risk of starting kindergarten behind their better off peers in these areas.**

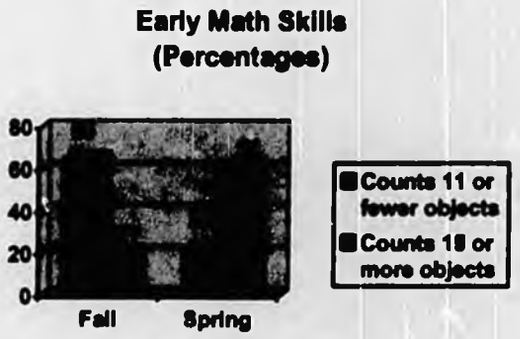
The following graphs are based on information taken from the National Head Start Reporting System (NRS) results of 11 Alaska grantees during the 2006-2007 program year. The NRS assesses only children who were going to kindergarten in 2007. The graphs include only those children assessed in both fall and spring— a total of 352 children in Region X programs, 329 children in AIAN programs.



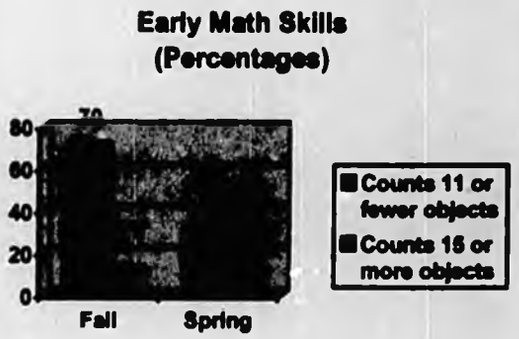
AK Region X Programs



AK AIAN Programs



AK Region X Programs



AK AIAN Programs

Alaska's Head Start programs achieved results that approach national norms even though program characteristics differ from national averages in several significant ways.

- Alaska has fewer full day programs
- Alaska has fewer teachers with a Bachelor's degree
- Alaska has fewer children who are enrolled in Head Start for more than one year

Program Characteristic	Alaska Program Averages	National Head Start Averages
Percentage of teachers with Bachelor's degree or higher	20%	44%
Percentage of children enrolled for more than one year	36%	51%
Percentage of children enrolled in full day programs	10%	53%

3. **Participation in Head Start increases the likelihood that children with previously undiagnosed disabilities will receive diagnosis and therapy for their disability before they enter kindergarten.**

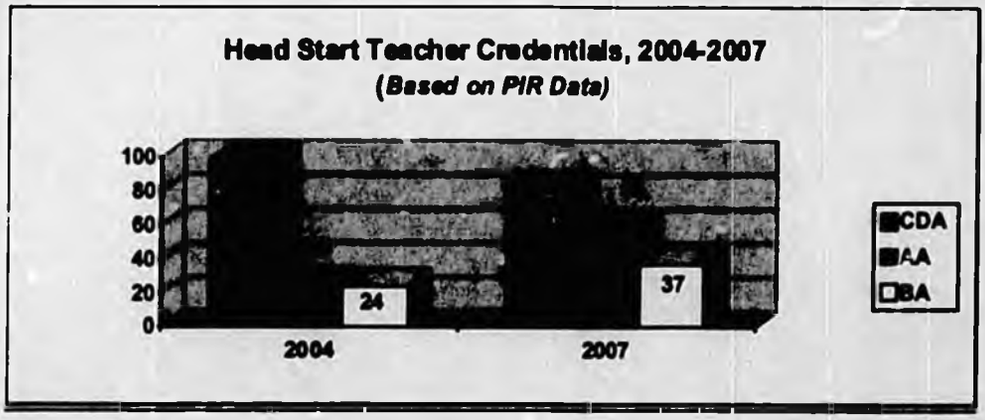
FACTS*
(The following figures refer to Head Start only. Early Head Start children are not included.)

- 95% of Alaska's Head Start children received developmental screenings exams.
- Of the 2,600 Head Start children who received developmental screenings, 276 were eventually diagnosed with a disability.

CONCLUSION
Without Head Start, hundreds of Alaska's children would enter kindergarten every year with undiagnosed disabilities.

**Based on federal 2007 Program Information Reports (PIR) for Alaska grantees.*

4. **The quality of Head Start teachers continues to improve in spite of funding and distance learning challenges.**



5. **Head Start provides economic benefits for all of Alaska.**

Federal Head Start grants injected over 27 million dollars into Alaska's economy in FY 2007. This sum does not include the many other sources of federal revenue, such as Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursements, which Head Start programs attract. This investment provides an important source of economic activity and employment in many of the rural communities listed on page one. For example, Head Start programs employed 927 people in 2006.

The Future of Head Start in Alaska

Alaska programs continue to improve in quality, and they produce positive results for children and families. Unfortunately, Head Start enrollment in Alaska is shrinking as federal and state funding allocations have stagnated at FY 2004 levels.

- Since 2003 nine programs have cut 361 slots even as the number of children eligible for services has remained steady. No program has added slots.
- Kasigluk, Hydaburg, Noorvik, Seward, and St. Mary's are among the communities that have lost Head Start services in the last six years.
- CCS Early Learning, RurAL CAP, Kids' Corps, Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)—programs serving nearly 1,500 children—have cut classroom hours at many sites.

Many studies link high quality early child development programs to large and long term economic savings. We believe that the early intervention, health, and school readiness results described above testify to the high quality of Alaska's Head Start programs. Unfortunately, Federal and state funding cuts have led to fewer children in need receiving reduced levels of service even as Alaska's Head Start program quality continues to improve.

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn

Task Force Report and Recommendations

September 2006

September 2006

Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force Report & Recommendations

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

– Emilie Buckwald, writer and publisher

Task Force Voices

"Key elements of reading and listening happen long before school age. Parents must be involved in this learning process . . . even before the child crawls."

– Patty Hamilton
Child care advocate

"Parental nurturing of a child in all aspects – physical and mental – is vital to learning. Making powerful contact with children makes them positive about life."

– Byron Mallott
Trustee, First Alaskans Institute

"This is when kids really develop their vocabularies. We know that by getting this little push . . . kids are more likely to do well . . . it sets the stage for success."

– Dr. Ann Shortt
Superintendent, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

It's very, very clear to me that the involvement of parents – talking to children, reading to them – is just paramount."

– David Wight
Former President & CEO, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company

"The cost of child care in Barrow is very expensive while the income of parents is limited. It is a very difficult situation."

– Edna MacLean
President Emeritus, Ilisagvik College

ALASKA
Ready to Read, Ready to Learn
TASK FORCE

Nancy Murkowski, Chair
Susan Anderson, President & CEO, The CIRI Foundation
Al Bolea, President, BP Pipelines Alaska, Inc.
Deborah Bonito, President, Sourdough Mercantile, Inc.
Steve Brezenski, Regional HR Manager, Carrs Safeway
George Cannelos, Federal Co-Chair, Denali Commission
Carol Comeau, Superintendent, Anchorage School District
Tom Corkran, Controller/CIO, VECO Corporation
Jerry Covey, Managing Partner, JSC Consulting, LLC
John Davis, Chair, Alaska Association of School Administrators
Sharon Gagnon, Ph.D., Board of Directors, Alaska Humanities Forum
Jack Griffin, Vice President External Affairs, ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.
Patty Hamilton, Advocate, Early Childhood Literacy
Abbe Hensley, Consultant, Child & Family Issues
Sue Hull, School Board Member, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
Karleen Jackson, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
Edna MacLean, President Emeritus, Ilisagvik College
Byron Mallott, Trustee, First Alaskans Institute
Barbara Nagengast, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
Cathryn Rasmuson, Trustee, Rasmuson Foundation
Marilyn Romano, Publisher, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
Roger Sampson, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
Dr. Ann Shortt, Superintendent, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
Paul Stankavich, President, General Manager, KAKM/KSKA/APRN
Stephanie Wheeler, Executive Director, Alaska Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
David Wight, President & CEO, Retired, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company
Candace Winkler, CEO, Child Care Connection, Inc.

"Ready to Read, Ready to Learn,"

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Dear Alaskans:

Alaska's future is bright. As our state's role in the world grows, next-generation Alaskans will have more opportunities than we – their parents and grandparents – can imagine. With these opportunities come challenges.

Many young Alaskans won't be prepared for that future because of poor reading and writing skills. An unacceptably high percentage of Alaska high school students can't read at passing levels. Many handicap their future by dropping out of school. This fact has troubled parents and educators for years. Academic improvements lag even with K-12 programs such as "No Child Left Behind."

Educators and parents have long known the path to academic success starts at home before a child enters kindergarten. Children whose parents read to them daily, who have positive interactions with their parents and who receive quality child care succeed when others don't. To ensure no child is left behind, no child should start behind.

These recommendations promote a better start and a brighter future for Alaska children. We ask you to read and learn – as we did – about how to prepare new generations of Alaskans to take advantage of opportunities and meet future challenges.

Sincerely,

Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force

Globe Staff Photo/ Essdras M. Suarez — Used with Permission

Jessica Olin reads to her 17 month old, Tyrone, at their home in Wales. Research shows positive learning experiences promote brain development, leading to increased ability to learn.

"The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

– Dr. Seuss, author of children's books

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force Report & Recommendations

Too many of our children are failing in school. The problem begins before age 6. As a result, almost half of Alaska children begin school unprepared to read or learn. They are set up for failure.

Common sense and science tell us we can do much better in preparing young children to be ready to read and ready to learn. It is a societal imperative and our obligation as Alaska's stewards to give our children the opportunity to succeed. Nothing else we do will have a more positive impact on Alaska's economic and social health.

The Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force has charted a course for success in this report. During deliberations, the 27 members learned:

- Almost half of Alaska children enter school unprepared to read or learn. This is not the child's failure. Society – parents, educators, politicians and professionals – must accept responsibility.

- Scientific research shows critical brain development occurs between birth and age 6. Children are born ready, willing and able to learn.

- Investments in early childhood literacy and learning pay dividends many times over. Children will be more successful in school, be less likely to get into trouble, grow into more productive adults, and contribute to the common good of society. The bottom line: Every dollar invested in quality early learning programs will return $7 to $17.

- Alaska lags far behind most states in addressing early childhood literacy and learning issues.

The Task Force – business, civic, nonprofit, philanthropic, education and government leaders – met from November 2005 through the summer of 2006. In developing their recommendations, Task Force members were advised by Alaska and national experts in early childhood education.

The recommendations lay the foundation for success. There is much work to do and a role for everyone.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force has recommendations in three areas: In the Home, Out of the Home in Child Care & Early Education Programs, and Looking Ahead. The first two focus on children from birth to age 6 in their environments. The third focuses on long-term sustainability of the investment in Alaska's young children.

In the Home

Three recommendations increase skills in early literacy, family literacy, early learning and parenting for all populations in Alaska:

1. Increase the engagement of parents, grandparents and extended family in their child's learning by providing resources and incentives.

2. Develop and increase access to quality, culturally engaging reading materials.

3. Increase proven, family centered literacy programs by partnering with other organizations.

Out of the Home in Child Care & Early Education Programs

Four recommendations increase access to voluntary, affordable and quality early care and education:

1. Distribute Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) in family friendly formats.

2. Implement a quality rating system (QRS) to help parents evaluate child care and early learning programs and to guide program improvement.

3. Increase the professional development opportunities and qualifications for early childhood educators and provide appropriate compensation.

4. Develop a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education.

"If you want to work on the core problem, it's early school literacy."

– James Barksdale, former CEO of Netscape

Looking Ahead

Four recommendations establish a sustainable early childhood literacy and learning system with accountability for outcomes:

1. Create a commission, council, public-private consortium or other entity to implement Task Force recommendations.
2. Develop a multi-year work plan for implementing recommendations.
3. Educate Alaskans about the social imperative of preparing children from birth to age 6 to be ready to read and learn.
4. Ensure future funding from private, nonprofit, foundation and government sources.

These recommendations chart a course for the future. It is the responsibility of all Alaskans to prepare Alaska's young children to be ready to read and ready to learn.

Enthralled by a book, Christina Arehart (center) and toddler, Rylee Rosson, are ready to learn. Alicia Arehart is the reader. The three were participants in a Ready to Read, Ready to Learn reception in March 2006 at the Governor's Mansion in Juneau.

Photo by Gene Storm

"A failure establishes only this, that our determination to succeed was not strong enough."

– Christian Nevell Bovee, 19th century author

INTRODUCTION

Goal: Every child in Alaska arrives at school ready to read and ready to learn.

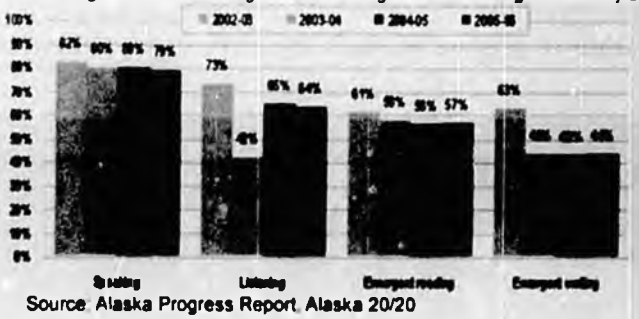
"If you look critically at the failure in our educational system, you must conclude that the child's failure and the school's failure are largely determined before the child enters the educational system at age 6."

– Irving Harris, former CEO, Procter & Gamble

The Problem

Alaska's young children have joined a disturbing national trend. They are entering school less and less prepared to succeed. This is cause for alarm and action. A battery of studies and data reinforce what parents instinctively know: An ill-prepared child is far more likely to fail in school and become a burden on society. Declining pre-kindergarten trends contribute to Alaska's low scores on standardized third-grade tests, poor performance on the High School Graduation Qualification Exams and an unacceptably high dropout rate.

Percentage of Alaska kindergartners showing desired learning and literacy skills



Source: Alaska Progress Report, Alaska 20/20

The Growing Momentum

Concerned Alaskans met in August 2004 and May 2005 to discuss early childhood literacy and learning. At the May 2005 meeting, Gov. Frank Murkowski embraced the importance of the initiative and supported formation of a grassroots task force. Twenty-seven statewide leaders were assembled to draft a blueprint identifying what Alaskans could and should do to improve school readiness in young children. This report is their response. During the past seven months, the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force has immersed itself in this foundational issue. It has sought advice from national and Alaska experts, and has digested a large amount of data and research to develop a plan that will work in every community in the state. The plan for success is contained in this report.

Most Alaskans agree there's a critical need to invest in young children. A report commissioned by the System for Early Education Development (SEED), *"Economic Impact of Early Education and Child Care Services in Alaska,"* found 87 percent of Alaskans surveyed thought early learning and child care were high priorities – higher than state funding for road construction, local government or university education. Only K-12 education rated higher.

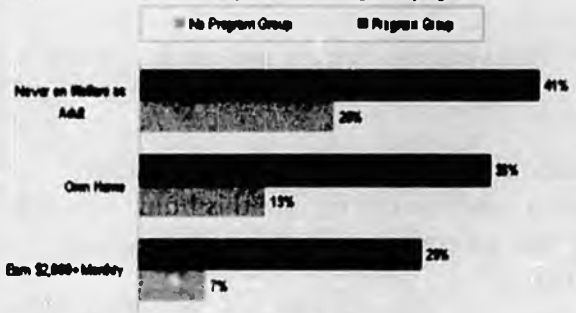
Why this age group?

Recent research demonstrates what parents and early childhood educators have known for years: A critical period for brain development occurs between birth and age 6. Parents who read, tell stories and have positive daily interactions with their young child promote the child's brain development. Quality child care and early education do the same. Children gain the skills and confidence they need to succeed from these positive early experiences.

Why is this problem growing?

Many factors contribute to this problem. Parents often don't have the tools or resources they need. Being an effective parent takes skills often passed from generation to generation. Alaskans, a highly mobile and migrant population, are frequently separated from this rich source of parenting knowledge. Those who do have access to extended family may still struggle. An increasing need for families to earn multiple incomes places a premium on time, energy and other prerequisites for effective parenting. Also, quality early care and education is not affordable for many parents. Investing time and money in young children can counter this growing problem.

Title: Economic Effects of Perry Preschool Program by Age 27

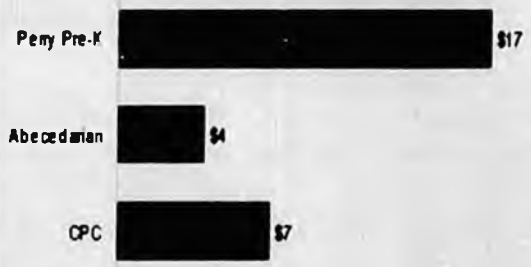


Source: National Institute for Early Education Research

Why is this my problem?

This trend impacts everyone, not just children and their families. Credible long-term studies such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, the Carolina Abecedarian Project and Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (CPC) demonstrate children who are in quality early learning programs have higher literacy skills, increased graduation rates and better attitudes toward school. These children also grow into adults who are less likely to commit crimes or require welfare assistance, and who earn higher salaries.

Title: Economic Returns of Pre-K: Government Dollars Saved per Government Dollars Invested on Pre-K Three Case Studies



Source: Pre-K Now 2005

Our children need to acquire the skills to make them successful in life. They represent Alaska's future as parents, employees, employers, citizens and leaders. It is imperative to increase the number of children arriving in kindergarten who are ready to read and learn.

"Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."
– Margaret Fuller, journalist

IN THE HOME

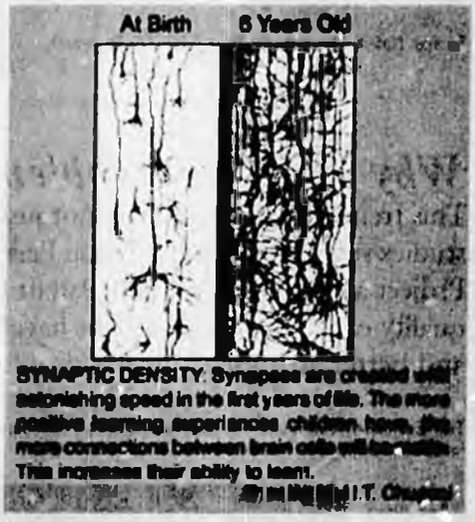
Parents are children's first and best teachers.

"What a child doesn't receive, he can seldom later give."
- P.D. James, novelist

Objective: Increase skills in early literacy, family literacy, early learning and parenting for all populations in Alaska.

We cherish the memories of stories told by our parents or of the books they read to us. Our child's delight and excitement captivate us as we pass down those stories and read some of the same books to them. These are precious moments of learning shared between a parent and a child. As parents, we are our children's first and best teachers.

We intuitively know these interactions within the family are critical in preparing children to read and learn. No technology or machine can replace this human process passed from one generation to the next. Some parents and families, however, need help in meeting the challenges of raising young children and fulfilling the role of first teacher. It is in Alaska's best interest to help.



SYNAPTIC DENSITY. Synapses are created with astonishing speed in the first years of life. The more positive learning experiences children have, the more connections between brain cells will be made. This increases their ability to learn.
© M.M. Merzenich, I.T. Chapman

Parents want their children to have a good start in life. Most parents are aware children learn from birth. What they may not know is how much the brain and lifelong learning capabilities develop in the first six years. Research shows brain connections grow dramatically from birth to age 6. Children need quality early literacy and learning environments during this period.

Task Force recommendations:

1. **Increase the engagement of parents, grandparents and extended family in their child's learning by providing resources and incentives.**
2. **Develop and increase access to quality, culturally engaging reading materials.**
3. **Increase proven, family centered literacy programs by partnering with other organizations.**

Increase the engagement of parents, grandparents and extended family in their child's learning by providing resources and incentives.

Quality information about parenting should be available to all parents. This should be provided through parent resource centers, libraries, web sites, wellness visits with health care providers and other community sources. One example is the Ready To Learn Service provided by KAKM-TV, which offers educational television, outreach to parents and free children's books. These books help families build a home library. Incentives, including vouchers for goods and services, could be used to encourage parents and family members to seek these resources.

Develop and increase access to quality, culturally engaging reading materials.

Access to reading materials is an essential ingredient for early literacy and learning development. Many Alaska communities, particularly those in remote or rural areas, don't have bookstores or libraries with adequate collections. This limits available reading materials for families.

Reading materials that are relevant to Alaska and its cultures will help engage parents and children in early learning. Publishers should be encouraged to produce more books that reflect Alaska and its diversity.

Photo illustration by Gene Storm

In both Alaska's rural and urban communities, there are few children's books that reflect the state's diverse cultures and life. Research shows young children learn best when books are relevant to their lives. It is important more reading materials be written and published that speak to the families of today's young children in Alaska.

Increase proven, family centered literacy programs by partnering with other organizations.

Family centered literacy programs build literacy skills of parents and children. There are many such programs across Alaska; more are in use nationwide. The Task Force recommends selection of programs and approaches that can be shown to work best in Alaska settings. They can be made available statewide by partnering with existing organizations.

End Results

We'll know we're successful in improving childhood literacy and learning in the home when:

- Parents and extended families are actively engaged in developing their children's literacy and learning skills.
- All homes and community and school libraries have and share abundant, quality and culturally engaging reading materials for young children.
- Research-based family literacy programs are available in all communities and are affordable for those who want to use them.
- Community leaders and community organizations join to support and promote family literacy.
- Alaskans know what literacy and learning skills are necessary for children to enter school ready to read and ready to learn.

No skill is more crucial to the future of a child, or to a democratic and prosperous society, than literacy.

– Los Angeles Times, "A Child Literacy Initiative for the Greater Los Angeles Area"

OUT OF THE HOME

Quality child care & early education programs promote successful children.

"I love to see the spark in a child's eye when they accomplish something they haven't done before."

– Staff member, Clinton Early Learning Center, Clinton, NY

Objective: Increase access to voluntary, affordable and quality early care and education.

Today's reality is that many young children will spend more waking hours in child care and early learning settings than with their families. For many children this experience begins in infancy and continues until they enter school. These critical early experiences shape who these children become and how they learn.

If we nurture and teach our children at home, we should expect the same positive learning environment outside of the home. Research surrounding the significance of quality early childhood education on children's later development is indisputable. Alaska, however, is just beginning to look comprehensively at how to improve the early learning experience for children and families. One idea is to provide guidelines for parents and early educators about what young children should know and be able to do. Another is to help parents identify quality child care programs.

Child care affects many of our children. There were approximately 63,000 children younger than age 6 in Alaska in 2004, according to the SEED report. Approximately 60 percent were in child care or early education settings. The numbers can be expected to increase with Alaska's population growth and exacerbate the current shortage of spaces in those programs.

Young families at the beginning of their earning potential wrestle financially with child care and early learning costs. Many parents already are paying what they can afford. Also, those providing the care often aren't earning a living wage. The low pay and lack of benefits lead to an unacceptable turnover rate among child care providers, who often enter the field with minimal skills and education.

The high turnover and resulting inconsistency of caregiving also have negative effects on a child's development. Research shows the younger the child, the higher the impact on long-term learning by caregiver changes.

As a public investment, early childhood development pays better returns than most, up to $17, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Research such as this led the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to substantially invest in early childhood

learning in Washington State. The foundation looked at what could be done to have the greatest impact on children who were failing and becoming dropouts. They saw it was in early care and education. As a result, the Gates Foundation pledged $9 million for early learning initiatives.

Task Force Recommendations:

1. **Distribute Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) in family friendly formats.**
2. **Implement a quality rating system (QRS) to help parents evaluate child care and early learning programs and to guide program improvement.**
3. **Increase the professional development opportunities and qualifications for early childhood educators and provide appropriate compensation.**
4. **Develop a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education.**

Distribute Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) in family friendly formats.

ELGs help parents and caregivers understand the expectations for children's development and learning. They spell out goals for what young children should know, understand and be able to do at critical stages of development. The State Board of Education and Early Development recently endorsed Alaska's ELGs. The Task Force recommends ELGs be published in multiple languages, in easy-to-read formats and be made available to families with young children through early care and education programs, pediatricians, libraries, businesses and online.

Implement a quality rating system (QRS) to help parents evaluate child care and early learning programs and to guide program improvement.

A QRS is a tool to help parents evaluate the quality of child care and early learning programs, a difficult task without some guiding criteria. It serves as a consumer guide, a benchmark for child care improvement and an accountability measure for funding. Criteria include ratio of teachers to children, family involvement and the skill and education level of the staff. A QRS also instills market-based motivation for fostering improvements by the program providers. Many states have implemented a QRS. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is in the early stages of developing a statewide QRS.

Increase the professional development opportunities and qualifications for early childhood educators and provide appropriate compensation.

Early educators need greater access to professional development offered through a variety of delivery systems. These must address the challenges faced by providers across the state, whether in rural or urban communities, such as long workdays, inflexible schedules and too few opportunities to access training.

Based on significant research, many states support increased wages for child care providers to improve recruitment and retention. Most importantly, it improves child outcomes. Alaska should do likewise.

Develop a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education.

Thirty-eight states have implemented a model of state-funded pre-kindergarten, not including Head Start. (Alaska is not one of them.) These states provide funding for pre-kindergarten in a variety of ways and utilize approaches that meet their needs within financial and political constraints.

The Task Force recommends Alaska develop a system of affordable and voluntary early childhood education. Such a system could provide handsome returns on the investment.

The Task Force further recommends community-based discussion to design a system that is effective in both urban and rural areas. To begin shaping that discussion, the Task Force has identified elements key to the design of any system. They are:

- The approach is voluntary and parents retain the choice of whether to have their children participate.
- Families can select a pre-kindergarten program from available choices, including those privately owned, faith-based, run by the community, operated by nonprofit organizations or are part of public-school systems.
- Local leaders and families actively participate in developing effective pre-kindergarten options.
- Families are provided with financial support or incentives.
- The system is phased in to allow communities and programs time to ensure appropriate planning.

End Results

We'll know we're successful in improving childhood literacy and learning outside of the home when:

- Parents are educated consumers of child care and early learning programs.
- The quality of ch d care and other early learning settings improves.
- Quality early childhood education is available and affordable for all children from birth to age 6.
- Alaskans recognize the importance and value of early childhood education.

"There is no substitute for books in the life of a child."

– Mary Ellen Chase, author and educator

LOOKING AHEAD

Turning the vision into a reality.

"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

– Japanese Proverb

Objective: Establish a sustainable early childhood literacy and learning system with accountability for outcomes.

This report completes the job of the Task Force. The work, however, has just begun. The recommendations in this report will not become reality without an ongoing effort to keep the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn issue high on Alaska's agenda.

Task Force recommendations:

1. **Create a commission, council, public-private consortium or other entity to implement Task Force recommendations.**
2. **Develop a multi-year work plan for implementing recommendations.**
3. **Educate Alaskans about the social imperative of preparing children from birth to age 6 to be ready to read and learn.**
4. **Ensure future funding from private, nonprofit, foundation and government sources.**

Create a commission, council, public-private consortium or other entity to implement Task Force recommendations.

Alaska has benefited from the work of many people involved in early childhood issues, but there hasn't been a unified voice. Interested parties include the business community, philanthropies, government agencies, the nonprofit sector and, most importantly, parents. Other states have created a body to govern or oversee early learning activities. Through the Task Force efforts, Alaska is on track to establish an entity that will ensure a comprehensive, coordinated approach to improve early literacy and learning.

Develop a multi-year work plan for implementing recommendations.

This report to the public, the governor and elected officials is the first step in a work plan that covers several years. Key elements of the work plan developed by the Task Force include:

- Launch a public education campaign.
- Obtain public feedback on early literacy and learning initiatives.
- Develop resources to assist families with early childhood learning.
- Support work on a QRS.
- Distribute and encourage the use of ELGs.
- Develop a voluntary and affordable early childhood education system statewide.

Educate Alaskans about the social imperative of preparing children from birth to age 6 to be ready to read and learn.

A critical element in this effort is educating Alaskans about the importance of early childhood literacy and learning. A long-term public education campaign is needed to help Alaskans understand this issue is a societal imperative. This campaign will involve partnering with Alaska's media outlets and collaborating with funding sources to develop a campaign specific to Alaska. It must be culturally relevant and engaging. It should raise awareness of this unparalleled opportunity to improve school readiness for Alaska's young children.

Ensure future funding from private, nonprofit, foundation and government sources.

Funding is essential in moving this effort forward. Resources currently are provided by a partnership that includes private business, nonprofits, foundations and government. This cooperative partnership will continue and can leverage support from additional funding sources.

End Results

We'll know we're successful in making the vision a reality when:

- There is an entity to guide and implement Task Force recommendations.
- Funds are obtained and maintained to support early literacy and learning.
- Early childhood learning is a societal imperative in Alaska.
- Children arrive at school ready to read and ready to learn.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Young children & families need everyone's support.

"If you do not seek out allies and helpers, then you will be isolated and weak."

– Sun Tzu, 6th Century BC Chinese philosopher

There is work for everyone to do. Just as these recommendations are the result of Alaska's many sectors coming together around an important issue, so too will the future of this effort depend upon the commitment of all Alaskans. Here are some of the ways we can support the effort to improve the school readiness of Alaska's youngest children.

Business

It is in the long-term interest of businesses to support school readiness, as it helps assure tomorrow's work force has the skills to be successful in a competitive world. Employers should consider providing supports such as flexible leave, health benefits and subsidies to help employe s with young children balance the demands of work and family. Research shows employers who provide such supports have higher retention rates, greater employee loyalty and increased productivity. A growing number of Alaska employers are making these investments. BP Alaska, Credit Union 1 and Providence Alaska Medical Center are just a few who have demonstrated their commitment to parents with young children by providing quality, on-site child care for employees. Other Alaska companies also support families with young children.

Nonprofits

The nonprofit sector can provide leadership and administrative support for this initiative. These organizations understand community dynamics and can mobilize people into action. The Alaska Humanities Forum, United Way of Anchorage's Success By 6 Initiative, Child Care Connection, Inc. and First Alaskans Institute are committed to supporting implementation of the recommendations in this report. Other nonprofits are encouraged to join.

Foundations

The support and leadership of the Rasmuson Foundation and The CIRI Foundation in this initiative demonstrate philanthropic resources can help bring about change. This sector can galvanize financial and intellectual resources, command the attention of Alaska's political leadership, foster research and pilot demonstration projects to move this effort forward.

Government

The Federal Reserve Bank study shows the economic impact of supporting early learning and how government can save money by investing in young children. The SEED report shows the public overwhelmingly supports government investment in early childhood education. The State of Alaska has committed funding to support the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn recommendations. Government at every level must recognize supporting early childhood learning is a good investment. For example, publicly funded libraries are a mainstay in early literacy and learning. Children who have the ability to learn and succeed will contribute to the long-term economic and civic vitality of their local communities and Alaska.

Faith-Based Community

Alaska's faith-based community plays an important role for young children and their families through child care, early learning programs and support for families. These efforts will ensure more children will arrive at school ready to read and learn.

Angelica Sandoval and her stepfather, Russell Fields, explore a book at the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn reception at the Governor's Mansion in Juneau. Angelica was among several children from the Hoonah & Haida Central Council Head Start program who attended the reception.

Photo by Gene Storm

END RESULTS

[illegible]

- Parents and extended families are actively engaged in developing their children's literacy and learning skills.
- All homes and community and school libraries have and share abundant, quality and culturally engaging reading materials for young children.
- Research-based family literacy programs are available in all communities and are affordable for those who want to use them.
- Community leaders and community organizations join to support and promote family literacy.
- Alaskans know what literacy and learning skills are necessary for children to enter school ready to read and ready to learn.
- Parents are educated consumers of child care and early learning programs.
- The quality of child care and other early learning settings improves.
- Quality early childhood education is available and affordable for all children from birth to age 6.
- Alaskans recognize the importance and value of early childhood education.
- There is an entity to guide and implement Task Force recommendations.
- Funds are obtained and maintained to support early literacy and learning.
- Early childhood learning is a societal imperative in Alaska.
- Children arrive at school ready to read and ready to learn.

CONCLUSION

The Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force evaluated how we as Alaskans prepare young children to read and learn and why it is important to society. The members – business, civic, nonprofit, philanthropic, education and government leaders – brought many perspectives to the job. Their childhood memories and life experiences provided the common lens through which to view early literacy and learning.

As you read this report, we are confident you too came to the conclusions shared by those who served on the Task Force. Children are born learning. It is incumbent upon us as Alaskans to ensure their early learning experiences prepare them to succeed.

Nurturing young children – preparing them to read and to learn – is a societal imperative.

Now is the time for you to decide on your role in this critical mission.

Children from the Tlingit & Haida Central Council Head Start program take center stage at the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn reception in March 2006. Here (from left) Katie Guthrie, Brenda Velasquez, Aaliyah Johnson and Jeremiah Lott receive books from First Lady Nancy Murkowski, who hosted the event.

Photo by Gene Storm

"A house without books is like a room without windows."

– Horace Mann, education reformer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Steering Committee

Susan Anderson
President & CEO, The CIRI Foundation
Barbara Brown
Director, Leadership Anchorage,
Alaska Humanities Forum
Michele Brown
President and CEO, United Way of Anchorage
Carol Comeau
Superintendent, Anchorage School District
Memry Dahl
Finance Director, First Alaskans Institute
Katherine Farnham
Former Director, Divison of Public Assistance,
Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
Sharon Gagnon, Ph.D.
Board of Directors, Alaska Humanities Forum
Julie Ginder
Supervisor, Elementary Education,
Anchorage School District
Helen Howarth
Program Officer, Rasmuson Foundation
Diane Kaplan
President and CEO, Rasmuson Foundation
Ricardo Lopez
Program Assistant, Rasmuson Foundation
Mary Lorence
Manager, Child Care Program Office, Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Panu Lucier
Director, Rose Urban Rural Exchange,
Alaska Humanities Forum
Edna MacLean
President Emeritus, Ilisagvik College
Melinda Myers
Director, United Way of Anchorage/Success By 6
Ira Perman
Former President, Alaska Humanities Forum
Sarah Scanlon
Deputy Director, Leadership Initiative,
First Alaskans Institute
Sue Sherif
Coordinator, School Library/Youth Services,
Alaska State Library
Paul Sugar
Director, Head Start Collaboration, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
Candace Winkler
CEO, Child Care Connection, Inc.

Facilitators

Project facilitator:
Information Insights
Brian Rogers
Sherry Modrow

Meeting facilitators:
Michele Brown
Katherine Farnham
Sarah Scanlan
Joette Storm

Staff

Ira Perman
Alaska Humanities Forum
Melinda Myers
United Way of Anchorage/Success By 6
Gene Storm
Alaska Humanities Forum

The following organizations funded the work of the Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force.

ALASKA HUMANITIES FORUM

Child Care CONNECTION

ConocoPhillips

First Alaskans Institute

United Way SUCCESS BY 6™

The CIRI Foundation

United Way of Anchorage

Thank you for your support!

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES

Bibliography

Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return. Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003).

Economic Impact of Early Education and Child Care Services in Alaska. System for Early Education Development (SEED) Report. (2006).

Educational success in high-risk settings: Contributions of the Chicago Longitudinal Study. Reynolds, A.J. (1999).

Effects of early intervention on intellectual and academic achievement: A follow-up study of children from low-income families. Campbell, F. A. & Ramey, C. T. (1994).

Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40. Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. Ypsilanti. (2005).

Lives in the balance: Age-27 benefit-cost analysis of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. Barnett, W. S. Ypsilanti. (1996).

Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27. Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. Ypsilanti. (1993).

The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook. W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., Jason T. Hustedt, Ph.D., Kenneth B. Robin, Psy.D., and Karen L. Schulman, M.P.P.

Online Resources

Born Learning
bornlearning.org
Children's Defense Fund
childrensdefense.org
Every Child Matters
everychildmatters.org
Minneapolis Federal Reserve
minneapolisfed.org/research/studies/earlychild
Mind in the Making
mindinthemaking.org
National Governor's Association
nga.org
National Institute for Early Education Research
nieer.org
Pre-K Now
preknow.org
Qualistar Early Learning
corra.org
Smart Start North Carolina
smartstart-nc.org
State of Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines
educ.state.ak.us
State of Alaska, DHSS, Division of Public Assistance, Child Care Program Office
hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/ccare
System for Early Education Development
seed.alaska.edu
Talaris Research Institute
talaris.org
Thrive by Five
thrivebyfivewa.org
Voices for America's Children
voices.org
Zero to Three
zerotothree.org

"Story Time" – Special thanks!

A special thank you to Barbara Lavallee for making available the use of her artwork "Story Time" for the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn logo. This work pictures what Alaskans desire to see: parents and young children engaged in reading and learning together. Reading or storytelling is the central subject of much of her art. Other works by the artist can be seen online at: artiqueltd.com/artists/bio/artist/7


"Ready to Read, Ready to Learn,
Alaska's
Early Childhood
Investment

R.P.R

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

907.297.3306 main • 907.297.3304 fax • BestBeginningsAlaska.org
3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 230 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Best Beginnings is co-managed by the Alaska Humanities Forum and United Way of Anchorage.

Quality Rating and Improvement System

QRIS FIELD TEST:
The purpose of the QRIS field test is to ensure the system works and to address elements where issues arise. It will focus on refining the standards and assessment measures and to assure that consultation for program improvement is accessible and effective. The cost of the field test is $1.1 million dollars over a two-year period, FY09 and FY10. The budget includes costs for quality assurance monitoring, professional development, technical assistance, financial incentives, communication, evaluation, and personnel. One element of the system, a facility improvement fund, will not be included at this time in the field test. This fund is for child care programs to improve their facility in order to meet the requirements of the QRIS. It is not included in the cost estimate because it will require regulatory and possible statutory changes in order to incorporate it. The estimated cost for the facility improvement fund if the regulatory and/or statutory change is made is $500,000.

COST:
Two-Year Field Test
18 Center-based Programs (Approximately 63 classrooms)
1 8 Licensed Centers
2 3 School-based Preschools Not Licensed or Certified
3 1 Military Center
4 1 DEED Certified Preschool
5 5 Head Start/Early Head Start Sites
23 Home-based Programs
1 19 Family Child Care Homes
2 4 Family Child Care Group Homes

Elements	FY09	FY10	Total
Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM)			
•1 Initial assessor training, materials, and assessment tools	36,000	0	36,000
•2 On-site program assessment (assessors visit programs twice)	17,000	33,800	50,800
QAM Total:	**53,000**	**33,800**	**86,800**
Professional Development	20,000	40,000	60,000
Technical Assistance	75,000	150,000	225,000
Financial Incentives	134,000	268,000	402,000
Communication	2,000	2,000	4,000
Evaluation	40,000	80,000	120,000
Personnel			
•1 Project Coordinator with administrative assistance	96,100	96,100	192,200
Travel	5,000	5,000	10,000
FIELD TEST TOTAL:	**425,100**	**674,900**	**1,100,000**

A Summarized Economic Impact Report on Early Education and Child Care Services in ALASKA

step up early ed & child care

Based on the McDowell Group Report — July 2006

PREPARED FOR:
SYSTEM FOR EARLY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (SEED)
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST

step up early ed & child care

STUDY FINDINGS ARE DETAILED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:

Why should you care about the availability of quality early education and child care in Alaska? Because stepping up early education for our children is critical for all of us.

LET US STEP YOU THROUGH THE FACTS.

1. Early childhood education and child care play a critical and measurable role in Alaska's economy
2. The availability of quality, affordable child care remains a challenge for many Alaska families
3. Alaskans across the state place a high priority on state funding for early education and child care

Until recently, there was no data specific to Alaska to demonstrate how the welfare of our youngest community members impacts the entire state – both in the short term and long term. But thanks to this study commissioned by the System for Early Education Development (SEED) and completed in July 2006 by McDowell Group, there is now local information to combine with the knowledge learned from national studies to provide an accurate baseline.
What the statistics demonstrate is that Alaska lags behind much of the country in providing quality early education and child care to our residents. And while there are certainly entities working hard throughout Alaska to provide quality care for our children, Alaska remains one of only 10 states without a state-funded, statewide early childhood education system.

ALASKA IS ONE OF ONLY 10 STATES WITHOUT A STATE-FUNDED, STATEWIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYSTEM.

"I believe that high quality early childhood programs are critically important for the health and well-being of our community, and they are especially important for the health and well-being of our children. ... What can never be forgotten or taken lightly is that these programs provide a proven economic benefit to the organizations they serve. It is important that we recognize that. Research has shown that organizations who offer these services on-site for their employees retain these employees for an additional five years. The value of keeping these employees for this extended amount of time is immeasurable, and as a leader of an organization with more than 4,000 employees, I can tell you that recruiting talent is expensive, difficult and time consuming. Keeping our talent in the first place is without a doubt the best way to ensure we can sustain and live out our mission at Providence, and I'm grateful for the role our Center for Child Development plays in doing that each day."

AL PARRISH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
PROVIDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM IN ALASKA

SCOPE OF THE ALASKA STUDY

The purpose of this study is to measure the economic impacts of the early education and child care sector on Alaska's economy. This study focuses on education and care of children under six years of age. Economic impacts are measured in terms of employment, spending on child care services, and the role that child care services play in making it possible for Alaska families to earn income.

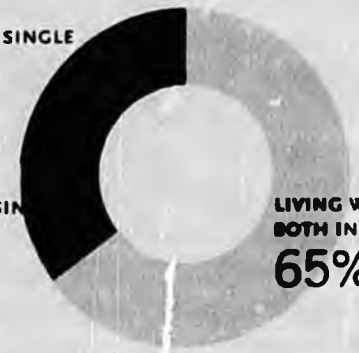
This study also examines research conducted elsewhere in the U.S. that measures the broader societal economic benefits stemming from quality child care services.

A key component of this project was a telephone survey of 725 randomly selected households. The primary purpose of the phone survey was to collect information on the types of child care services Alaska families use and how much money households spend on child care services. The survey also collected information on Alaskans' attitudes about the importance of state government funding for early education and child care services.

ALASKA WORKING PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS

To best understand the data, it is critical to first understand the scope of the population we are considering. In 2004, Alaska's population included 62,913 children under six years of age, according to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). Of these children, approximately 63 percent (39,400 children) were living in households where all available parents were in the labor force, whether families were dual-income or single-parents. These children resided in 29,400 Alaska households, all of which were potentially in need of child care services.

Detailed look at the 39,400 children under the age of six, where all available parents are in the workforce



THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ALASKA

Mounting evidence shows that investment in quality early learning and child care is critical to building and maintaining a viable state economy. The economic impact of the early education and child care sector includes jobs for thousands of Alaskans, millions of dollars in spending by households and governments, and indirect contributions of Alaska's resident labor force and family income.

JOBS
DIRECT & INDIRECT:
7,400 in child care workforce

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORKFORCE:
29,400 Alaskans can join the workforce because they have child care

WAGES
DIRECT & INDIRECT:
$124 million in child care workforce payroll

CONTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME:
$850 million in annual wages paid to working families with child care

IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Child care providers make it possible for 29,400 Alaskans to enter the labor force (one adult for each household with children under six years of age where all parents are in the labor force). The 29,400 Alaskans that are in the workforce because child care services are available to them account for 9.5 percent of the Alaska resident workforce. If these working parents also account for 9.5 percent of all Alaska resident wages, their total annual wages would be just under $850 million. This indicates an average of $28,820 per family in additional Alaska annual income, indirectly made possible by child care services, is equal to approximately 40 percent of Alaska's mean family income in 2003.

Other data suggests a similar household income impact related to adding a second wage earner. In 2004, median family income for families with one wage earner was $43,709. Median family income for families with two wage earners was $77,159, a difference of $33,450. This analysis assumes that the typical parent who is in the labor force because child care services are available to him or her earns the same wages as the average Alaska worker. This may or may not be true given the demographics of families with young children. Nevertheless, it is clear that the availability of child care has major implications on income for Alaska residents in general, and on family household income in particular.

"Investment in early childhood development programs brings a real (that is, inflation-adjusted) public return of 12%, and a real total return, public and private, of 16%. We are unaware of any other economic development effort that has such a public return ...."

ART ROLNICK
SVP AND DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF MINNEAPOLIS

LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION & CHILD CARE

A host of studies have been done to track the long-term economic impact of high quality early child care development on society. Though none of these studies focuses on Alaska, the implications for Alaska are relevant. The results of these studies have shown conclusively that although investment is required to provide quality early care to infants, toddlers and youths, the rate of return far exceeds that initial investment.

The largest benefit provided by quality early care was increased earnings capacity projected from higher educational attainment, along with higher taxes paid from better paying jobs. Other benefits are lower criminal justice system costs, reduced welfare costs, savings for crime victims, and savings on school remedial services budgets. The results of several studies are highlighted below.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

29% higher **high school graduation rates**

20% higher **college attendance**

70% lower **crime incidence**

20% lower **welfare dependence**

$143,000 **additional earned income per capita, resulting from better employment**

Studies also note that expenditures on education that are focused on K-12 may be misplaced given that brains develop rapidly in the early years (0-4), then develop at a much slower pace from age 4 through 18. The implication is that the earlier the investment on early education, the higher the return on investment will be.

step → EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE PLAY A CRITICAL AND MEASURABLE ROLE IN ALASKA'S ECONOMY.

THE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SECTOR

When understanding the economic impact of early education and child care, the actual workforce in this field is often overlooked. Yet it has been found that at least 6,500 Alaskans participate in the child care sector workforce.

The estimate of 6,500 participants is derived from a variety of sources (as described in the full McDowell Group report). It must be understood that this is a conservative estimate, however. It does not include an unknown number of at-home providers who care for four or fewer unrelated children, or any number of related children, and therefore are not required to be licensed.

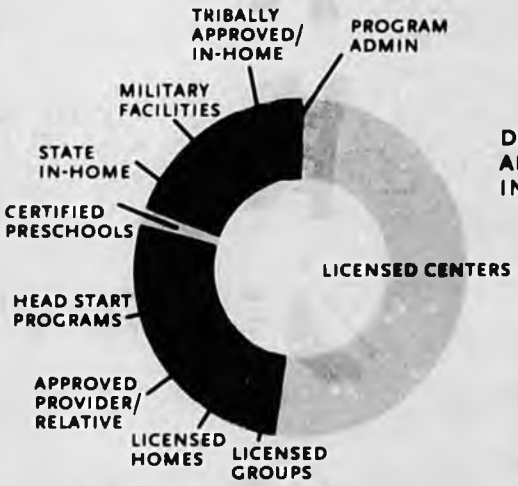
Yet, even without these added positions, the size of this workforce is comparable to other significant industries in Alaska. For example, the residential and non-residential building construction sector employed an average of 6,000 workers in Alaska in 2004, and Alaska's air transportation sector employed an average of 6,400 workers that same year.

SIZE OF COMPARABLE INDUSTRIES IN ALASKA

6,500 Workers in child care

6,400 Workers in air transportation sector

6,000 Workers in residential and nonresidential building construction



DETAILED LOOK AT THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION WORKFORCE IN ALASKA

"As Executive Dean of the College of Rural and Community Development, I understand the importance of early childhood education. We have strong partnerships with the State of Alaska, tribal entities and Head Start organizations to train students who will serve as providers, educators and role models for their communities. It is impressive to see the impact early care and education has on Alaska's economy."

BERNICE JOSEPH,
EXECUTIVE DEAN
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
COLLEGE OF RURAL AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Not only is Alaska's early education and child care sector significant in size, it features a wide variety of service providers. It includes any program providing care for children from birth to age six. Examples of these programs include center-based child care, family child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, private and public preschools, Montessori programs, and pre-kindergarten services.

Despite the prominence of individuals employed in this workforce, there is a very low correlation in compensation. DOLWD payroll data indicated that the average monthly wage of an individual employed in this sector was $1,342. This is well below the average for all sectors of the Alaska economy; the average monthly wage in Alaska for this same time period was $3,218 – nearly three times that amount.

To put this in further context, the average salary of a preschool teacher is approximately half of the average salary of a kindergarten teacher, even thought the age difference of those they teach may be less than one year. The average income of a full time/full year childcare worker in 2005 was $20,960 (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development). The average wage for preschool teachers was $26,460 and $51,960 for kindergarten teachers.

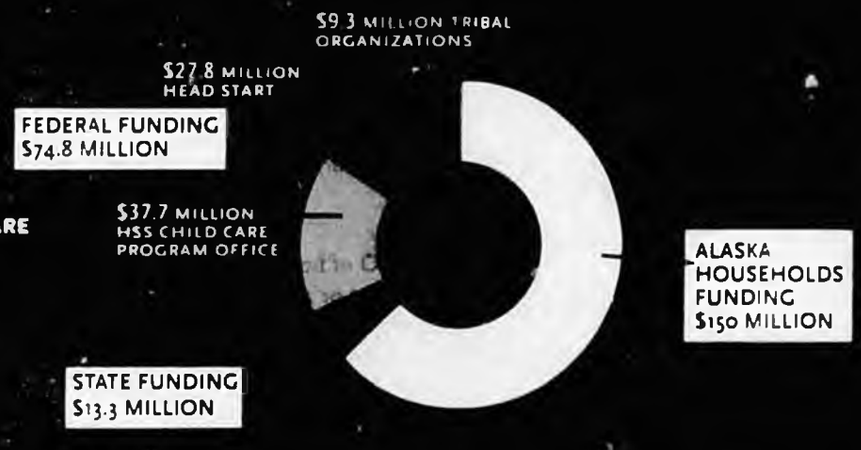
Source: ECCS pgs.26-27. The ECCS plan was published by the Office of Children's Services, DHSS, State of AK.

ALASKA WAGE COMPARISON

CHILD CARE SERVICES REVENUE AND FUNDING

There are two sources of spending on early education and child care services – government funding and spending by parents on child care services. Based on the analysis of the McDowell Group report, Alaska households may be spending $150 million annually on child care services for children under six years of age. In comparison, government spending on child care totals $88 million in Alaska, with nearly $75 million of that contribution coming from federal funding. Together, approximately $240 million is spent in Alaska on child care services for young children.

ALASKA HOUSEHOLD, STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES IN ALASKA



THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE REMAINS A CHALLENGE FOR MANY ALASKA FAMILIES

"I emphasize strongly how important it is to give the children the best start ... to have the children have a good early learning experience."

DR. WALTER SOBOLEFF
"FAMILY FEATHERS" VIDEO SERIES,
CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TLINGIT &
HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES

IMPACT ON ALASKA FAMILIES

To better understand how the early education & child care sector directly impacts families, 725 Alaska households were asked about their use of child care services as a part of this study's telephone survey. The findings of this study are understood to be the first set of data on this topic directly applicable to Alaska.

The survey sample included 323 households with children under six years of age. The sample included households from urban Alaska, defined as all communities with more than 8,000 residents. The sample also included surveys from households in communities with between 2,000 and 8,000 residents (labeled "Rural I"), as well as surveys from households in communities with fewer than 2,000 residents (labeled "Rural II"). In conducting statewide analysis of the survey results, data from these areas of the state were weighted to reflect their actual proportion of the state's population.

TYPE OF CHILD CARE SERVICES USED BY ALASKA HOUSEHOLDS*

Types of Child Care	Total (n=[illegible])	Urban (n=[illegible])	Rural I (n=[illegible])	Rural II (n=40)
Preschool or child care center	49%	43%	27%	36%
Care at someone else's home	31	42	52	22
Care in your home	27	34	26	21
Head start	8	0	8	32
Before or after school care	8	7	11	2
Other	1	0	0	3
Don't know	0	0	0	0

* Percentages do not add to 100% because households may have children in more than one child care setting. Sample sizes ("N") for Total are number of children under six years of age. Sample sizes for subgroups are number of households.

FINDING ACCEPTABLE CHILD CARE

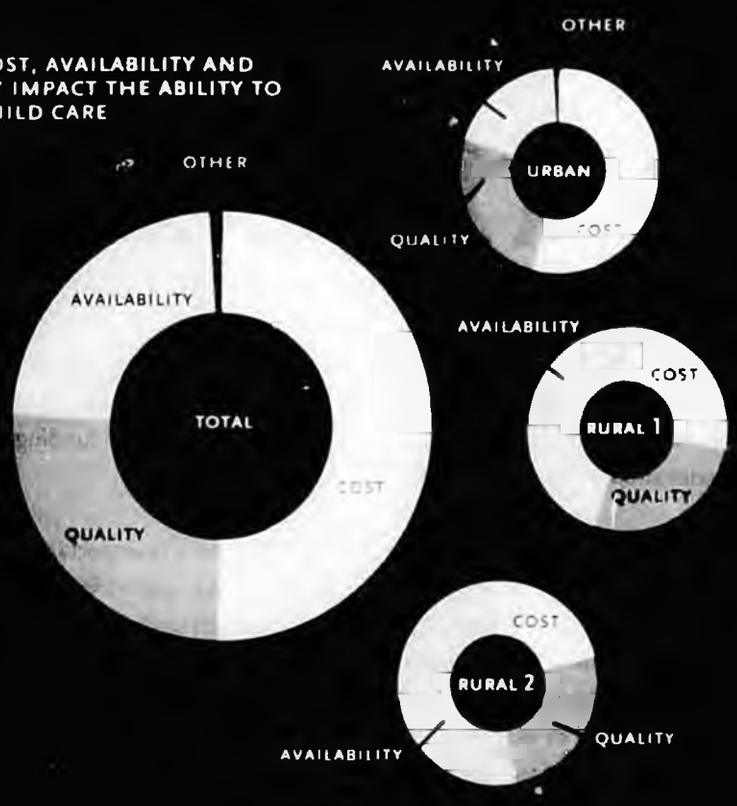
This study also found that 45 percent of Alaska households with children under six in a child care situation found it difficult or very difficult to find acceptable child care. About the same percentage (49 percent) found it either easy or very easy to find acceptable child care.

Finding quality early education and child care programs proved to be an issue both in rural and urban areas of the state.

FINDING ACCEPTABLE CHILD CARE

36% of households with children under the age of six reported that the quality, cost or availability of child care services had prevented someone in their household from seeking employment, or had in some way restricted the number of hours that they could work.

HOW COST, AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY IMPACT THE ABILITY TO FIND CHILD CARE



FACTORS AFFECTING ABILITY TO FIND ACCEPTABLE CHILD CARE

Among households in Alaska's smallest communities (the "Rural II" areas, or communities under 2,000 residents), 26 percent reported that the quality, cost or availability of child care services had prevented someone in their household from seeking employment, or had in some way restricted the number of hours that they could work. The difference between rural and urban in this regard is probably not due to better child care service in rural areas, but rather to the fact that rural areas have fewer employment opportunities available. Among those households where cost, quality or availability of child care services have been a constraint, cost was a major factor for 78 percent of households. Availability had a major impact on 56 percent of households, and quality on 48 percent.

COST MOST OFTEN CITED

When asked which factor had the greatest impact on their ability to find acceptable child care, cost was most often cited. Half (50 percent) indicated that cost had the greatest impact on their ability to find acceptable child care, while 26 percent cited quality, and 23 percent cited availability.

Cost is apparently more of an issue in urban Alaska, while availability is more of an issue in rural Alaska. Just over half of urban households indicated that cost had the greatest impact, compared to approximately one quarter of those in rural areas. Conversely, within rural areas, approximately half the households reported that availability had the greatest impact, compared to only 19 percent of urban areas.

MONTHLY COST

$400-$900
DEPENDENT ON AGE OF CHILD AND LOCATION

MONTHLY COST OF FULL-TIME CHILD CARE

COST IS A LARGE ISSUE

It is not a surprise that cost is a significant issue. The cost of full-time child care in Alaska ranges from $400 to $900 per month, depending on the age of the child and the location of the care. Given these figures, it was perhaps surprising to find that just one in seven Alaska households with children in child care services received some form of child care assistance.

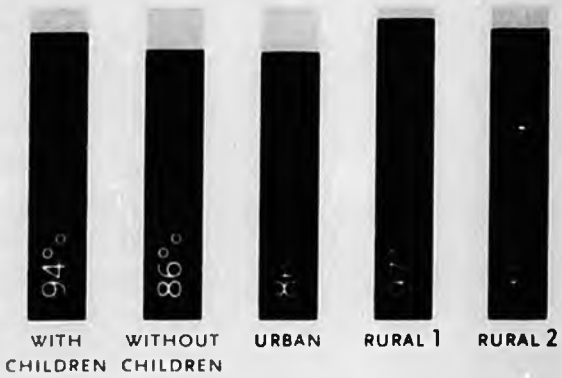
Just 1 in 7 **Alaska households with children under six in child care services received financial assistance for child care**

9 of 10 alaskans support funding

The telephone survey described earlier also asked all households a series of questions about state funding support for early learning and child care services in Alaska. Results showed overwhelming support for the funding of early education and child care.

Nearly nine out of 10 Alaska residents (87 percent) think it is important or very important for state government to provide financial support for early education and child care. Among residents with children under six years of age, 94 percent think state support is important or very important. Even among residents without young children, 86 percent think state financial support is important or very important. Further, urban and rural residents alike feel it is important to provide funding for early education and child care.

THOSE STATING IT IS "IMPORTANT" OR "VERY IMPORTANT" FOR STATE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT.



audiences who expressed above average support for early education and child care

Alaskans were also asked if the state should give early learning and child care high, medium or low funding priority. Two-thirds (66%) feel it should have high priority. A variety of population subgroups were more likely to give it a high priority. They include:

76% households with children under six

72% female residents

77% residents aged 35 to 44

76% low income residents <$25,000

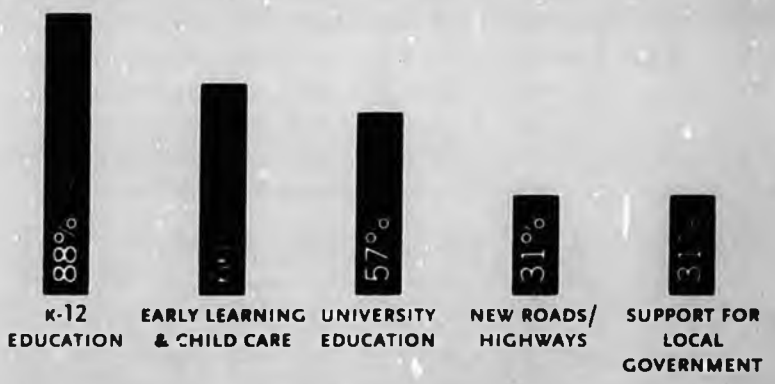
73% high income residents >$100,000

alaskans place priority on funding early education and child care

"The data shows what I have also personally experienced – that the issue of quality early education and child care is one of the most important social issues facing us in Alaska today."

JIM CALVIN, MCDOWELL GROUP

Alaskans also give early learning a high priority for state funding, when compared to other state-funded programs. Among the categories of spending presented to survey respondents, only K-12 education was rated as a high priority more often.



THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

To press this matter further, a third question regarding Alaskans' perception of the importance of funding for early learning and child care focused on relative importance. More than three-quarters of Alaska residents feel that early learning and child care are more important to fund than support for local government or construction of new roads and highways. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) feel that funding for early learning and child care is more important than funding for university education. Among the various programs, only K-12 education is viewed as more important than early learning and child care.

report conclusion - next steps

[illegible] series of questions regarding perceived importance of state funding for early education and child care [illegible] Alaskans indicate that Alaskans place a high priority on funding for education in Alaska with a high [illegible] early education and child care.

end notes

This piece serves as a condensed summary of the July 2006 McDowell report titled "Economic Impact of Early Education and Child Care Services in Alaska." This complete study was commissioned and prepared for the System for Early Education Development (SEED), based at the University of Alaska Southeast. This publication is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Education.

You may download a full copy of the report at http://seed.alaska.edu or request the full report from the SEED administrator at 907.796.6414.

We thank you for taking the time to review this report, which contains critical data regarding the future of Alaska's children and our economy.

Report revised and reprinted December 2006

The McDowell Group study team would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by the Project Steering Committee. The Committee included Mary Lorence *(Manager, Alaska Child Care Programs, Department of Health and Social Services)*, Joy Lyon *(Executive Director, Association for the Education of Young Children, Southeast Alaska)*, Mary Lou Madden *(Madden Associates)*, and Carol Prentice *(SEED Program Manager)*. In addition, SEED would like to recognize the contribution made by SEED Council members Candace Winkler and Cindy Harrington.

SEED also appreciates the collaboration with Alaska's *Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force*, 28 Alaskan leaders dedicated to improving the literacy and learning skills of Alaska's pre-kindergarteners.

Alaska SEED
System for Early Education Development

UAS
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
SOUTHEAST

stepping up early care & learning through a well-prepared workforce

Alaska SEED

what was accomplished?

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS:

- Identified core knowledge needed by professionals working with young children
- Established a professional development career ladder to articulate advancement
- Advanced career and technical education pathways in early childhood education
- Implemented a registry system to recognize and track career advancement
- Strengthened the distance delivery and support mechanisms for an AAS degree in early childhood education
- Commissioned an economic impact study on the early childhood workforce in Alaska (The McDowell Group, 2006)

DIRECT ASSISTANCE:

- In total, 2,479 Alaskans received a direct benefit from SEED – approximately 53 percent of the early care and learning workforce employed in licensed and certified care settings in the state
- 1,713 child care workers received entry level training
- The percentage of Head Start teachers with AAS degrees increased from 15% (2002/03) to almost 43% (2006-07)
- Kituusit provided support for 170 early childhood education students with over 60 AAS graduates
- Nearly 70% of all Head Start teaching staff received SEED assistance for college level study between 2003 and 2006
- 766 child care providers received initiative stipends for completion of training
- Provided educational opportunity awards for Head Start staff to complete degrees

INCREASE IN HEAD START TEACHERS WITH AAS DEGREES

Academic Year	Number of Teachers	% with AA or better
2002/2003	164	15.4%
2003/2004	196	25%
2004/2005	163	32.5%
2005/2006	201	38.3%
2006/2007	205	42.6%

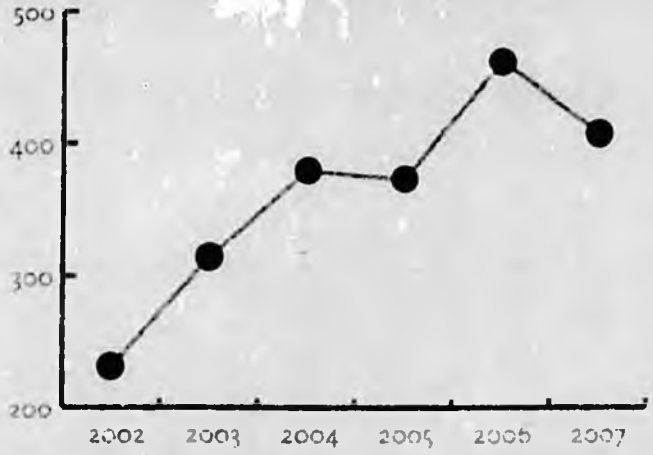
"Financially, I would have never been able to take classes on my own. This award has encouraged me to continue on in my education goals."

HEAD START TEACHER AND RECIPIENT OF SEED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AWARD

ALASKA NATIVE AND RURAL OUTREACH:

- Established a Distance Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee to the AAS and BA degree programs
- Held annual "Gatherings" to target academic goals for rural and Alaska Native students
- Increased educational opportunities for rural students through expansion of distance delivered education
- Initiated dual credit early childhood education courses in rural high schools

TOTAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ENROLLMENT



Graph depicts enrollment in 2002 at 231 students with an increase to 462 students in 2006. Decrease from 2006 to 2007 corresponds to a decrease in SEED and Kituusit support.

why does it matter?

National research indicates that quality early education and child care experiences can increase high school completion and college attendance, lower crime rates and expand lifetime earnings for children who participate. Over the long term, modest investments in early care and learning can pay big dividends both for the individual and for society.

More immediately, the state's current care and learning system allows 29,400 Alaskan parents to participate in the labor market (McDowell, 2006). But this same report by the McDowell Group states that in 36% of households with children under the age of six, someone either cannot seek employment or cannot work as many hours as they wish because they cannot find or afford quality child care.

"It has helped me achieve my goal of reaching my degree sooner so that I am in compliance with the Head Start standards."

HEAD START TEACHER AND RECIPIENT OF SEED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AWARD

what remains to be done?

- Provide tuition and training support for early care and learning providers to acquire needed knowledge and skills
- Develop statewide standards to assure quality care and learning experiences
- Assure that Alaska meets the new federal Head Start mandate requiring that all teachers have an Associate degree by 2011 and that 50% of teachers nationally have a Bachelor's in early childhood education (or equivalent) by 2013.
- Secure continued funding for the professional development registry system
- Continue to provide educational support systems for rural Alaskans

"My name is Barbara Phillip. I was born in Bethel and I live in Kwethluk. I started working as a cook at Kwethluk Head Start in 1988 when my daughter was three years old. I started working on my CDA (Child Development Associate) and in 1997 I received my CDA credential. In 2003 there was a job opening for a teacher so I applied for the job and got it. That's when I really started taking college courses to obtain my AAS degree in early childhood education.

My dream of getting my AAS degree is getting so close. All I need to take are seven more classes, and I know I can get it, if I set my mind to it."

BARBARA PHILLIP, TEACHER, KWETHLUK HEAD START

Alaska has benefited significantly from two federally funded initiatives. The Alaska System for Early Education Development (2003-2007) and the Kituusit Project (2004-2007) worked together to prepare Alaska's early care and learning workforce to reach new educational goals. Both projects were funded by the federal Department of Education and housed at the University of Alaska. SEED, based at the University of Alaska Southeast, and Kituusit, based at the University of Alaska Fairbanks/College of Rural and Community Development, share the goal of raising the quality of early care and learning through increasing the professional preparation of the teachers.

THE SEED AND KITUUSIT PROJECTS THANK OUR MANY PARTNERS

Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children
Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children, Southeast Alaska
Alaska Head Start Association
Alaska Resource and Referral Network
Best Beginnings
C.A.R.E.S. Resource and Referral
Camp Fire USA
Child Care Connection
King Career Center, Anchorage School District
Providence Alaska Medical Center
State of Alaska Departments of Health and Social Services, Education and Early Development and Labor and Workforce Development
Tribal Child Care
University of Alaska

Data provided by Madden Associates

This publication is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Education

Alaska SEED
System for Early Education Development

UAF
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS

VISION

A culturally responsive, comprehensive and accessible service delivery system for young children that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Project is to build and implement systems that support families and communities in their development of healthy children who are ready to learn when they enter school. This five-year initiative is funded through a federal Health Resources and Services Administration grant and facilitated through the Office of Children's Services in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The first two and one-half years of the project were focused on developing the statewide Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan. The next two and one-half years will be focused on implementation.

The Plan represents the past, present, and future. It incorporates the thinking from several past planning efforts as well as new ideas and solutions; recognizes the needs of today's young children and their families; promotes "best practices," those proven to

be most successful and gives us a vision for the future. The Plan does not intend to represent everything currently underway for young children, but strives to address systems gaps and identify improvements needed to assure that Alaska's young children have the greatest opportunity for positive health and developmental outcomes.

Challenges and opportunities exist for implementing this Plan. Funding is decreasing in the very areas that need to be broadened to accomplish all of our goals. The Plan requires a fundamental shift in thinking about how we utilize funding and resources. Its success is dependent on partnerships, collaboration, and extensive communication. Although partnering produces a much better product, it requires a considerable investment in time and commitment. While there may be challenges, this is also an exciting time for early childhood. There is a new awareness on the part of a broader community about the importance of early childhood. Non traditional partners are increasingly more aware of the long-range implications of the early years. The recommendations in the Plan align with current initiatives and efforts in Alaska.

The Plan will provide direction in Alaska for the development of public policy for young children. It can be used as a tool to move the agenda for young children forward. The investments that we make for young children today will pay big dividends in the future.

Importance of the early years

Experts in child development now know more than ever before about the importance of the early years in establishing the foundation for healthy growth and development. Rapidly expanding scientific knowledge in the field has revolutionized our thinking about how the brain develops, how the mind works, and how children learn. Early childhood experiences, which are shared by families and communities, influence future development and learning in powerful and long-lasting ways.

The disparities between what children know and can do are already apparent by the time they enter kindergarten. These differences are impacted by a variety of social, economic and environmental factors and are predictive of future functioning. We know the incredible importance of this early period in a child's life. It is imperative that we maximize the likelihood that children have experiences that promote their physical and emotional well-being.

How are we doing in Alaska?

Alaska has a number of extensive and significant multi system efforts currently taking place. There is no single point, however, at which these efforts for early childhood coalesce. The challenge is to bring together existing efforts under a broadened umbrella, without negating or duplicating the work already being done.

Significant systems gaps include:

- **A guidance structure to promote comprehensive and cohesive young children and their families**
- **Comprehensive early childhood policy development and funding**
- **A service delivery system that focuses on prevention and early intervention as well as meeting the needs of families with multiple issues.**

- [illegible] Children in Poverty, [illegible])
- [illegible] percent of children in Alaska have special health care needs and 20 percent of their households are living below the 200 percent federal poverty level. (SLAITS National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs, 2001)
- 13.2 percent of 0-3 year olds and 14.8 percent of 4-7 year olds were uninsured or had periods of no insurance coverage during 2003-2004. (National Survey of Child Health, 2003)
- Only 24 percent of Alaska children 1-5 who were eligible for Early Period Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) care received dental services in 2003.

Alaska has one of the highest [illegible]

How was the ECCS

The Early Childhood

Comprehensive Systems project brought together public and private partners from around the State of Alaska in a collaborative effort to review existing early childhood systems and plan for their improvement. Over 100 stakeholders participated in work groups that reviewed service delivery systems, current initiatives, funding streams, policies, best practices and information on the status of young Alaska children.

Recommendations were drafted by the work groups on how systems serving children prenatal to 8 could be improved. The drafted recommendations were approved and adopted by the Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner and the Children's Policy Team, which is comprised of Division Directors and Deputy Commissioners and endorsed by the Commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Development

The workgroups focused on four primary areas:

Medical Home – Access to an insurance support for medical homes; provision of comprehensive physical and child development services for all children (including children with special health care needs); and assessment, intervention, and referral of children with developmental, behavioral, and psycho-social problems.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health – Availability of appropriate child development and mental health services to address the needs of children at risk for developing mental health problems.

Early Care and Learning – Development and support of quality early care and learning services for children from birth through 8 that support children's early learning, health, and development of social competence.

Family Support/Parent Education – Availability of comprehensive family support and parent education services that impact the ability of families to nurture and support the healthy development of their children.

What resources guided the work?

Numerous resources **were reviewed and studied in the search for current best practices and leading edge activities in the early childhood field.**

The following resources emerged as particularly influential:

- National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy
- National Research Council Institute of Medicine: *From Neurons to Neighborhoods-The Science of Early Childhood Development*
- Family Support America
- Zero to Three
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Healthy Child Care America
- Center for the Study of Social Policy: Strengthening Families Initiative

How to use this Plan

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

groups will be [illegible]

planning and development [illegible]

the implementation of the [illegible]

blending and braiding [illegible]

establishing policies that [illegible]

their families.

Coordination of services on the final level will have the greatest impact on families. The Plan is designed to promote systems change and create more integrated and comprehensive services where families live and raise their children.

The Vision of the State of Alaska Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan is to build and implement a statewide early childhood comprehensive system that supports families and communities in their development of children who are healthy and ready to learn when entering school.

The Mission is to promote positive development and improved health outcomes for Alaska's children prenatal to 8 by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities.

Summary of Plan outcomes

System Infrastructure
page 13

1. A permanent guidance structure will exist to provide oversight of a comprehensive, integrated service system for young children prenatal to 8.
2. State-level plans and policies will include integrated best practices for early care and learning, medical homes, parent education, family support and mental health for young children.
3. Local and regional partnerships between parents, health and social services, early care and learning programs, elementary schools, local boards and organizations will work to ensure continuity of quality, comprehensive services for young children and their families.

Medical Home
page 14

4. Pediatric/family health care practices will incorporate the seven core components of medical home: care that is accessible, family centered, coordinated, continuous, comprehensive, compassionate and culturally competent.

Mental Health
page 16

5. Young children and their families will receive appropriate early mental health services through Medicaid and other sources.
6. The State of Alaska will have a qualified, well-trained workforce providing for the social and emotional well-being of young children.
7. Pediatric/family health care practices/public health settings will incorporate screening for maternal depression and caregiver mental health issues.

Early Care & Learning
page 19

8. Early care and learning programs for children birth through age 8 will be based on standards of best practice.
9. The early childhood workforce will be well-qualified and fairly compensated.
10. Children and families will be able to find and access appropriate early care and learning programs.
11. Families will be full and respected partners in their children's early care and learning programs.

Family Support & Parent Education
page 25

12. Families of young children will have access to community-based parenting and family support programs.

Early Childhood System Infrastructure

Outcome #1: *A permanent guidance structure will exist to provide oversight of a comprehensive, integrated service system for young children prenatal to 8.*

❖ There will be a strong and effective guidance structure with a shared vision to oversee state's efforts in supporting a comprehensive early childhood system.

- Determine roles and membership.
- Ensure adequate staff with the expertise and skills necessary to support the state's early childhood efforts described in this plan.
- Annually update the Plan for an early childhood comprehensive system.

Outcome #2: *State-level plans and policies will include integrated best practices for early care and learning, medical homes, parent education, family support and mental health for young children.*

❖ State departments and agencies will work collaboratively to incorporate early childhood best practices into planning efforts and policy development.

- Develop a common language and vision to be shared with agencies/departments about best practice models of integrated services.
- Promote early childhood representation at planning meetings, committees, and existing initiatives and collaborations.
- Produce annual reports on the status of Alaska's young children that can be used for planning and decision making purposes.

Outcome #3: *Local and regional partnerships between parents, health and social services, early care and learning programs, elementary schools, local boards and organizations will work to ensure continuity of quality, comprehensive services.*

❖ There will be a network of effective community and regional organizations that support comprehensive early childhood services.

- Identify existing local and regional early childhood collaborations.
- Encourage and fund collaborations among health systems, schools and mental health, early care and learning, and family support programs.
- Share information with local and regional groups on state efforts, initiatives, systems building, and best practices.

Medical Home

Outcome #4: ***Pediatric/family health care practices will incorporate the seven core components of medical home: care that is accessible, family-centered, coordinated, continuous, comprehensive, compassionate and culturally competent.***

❖ Children identified with developmental or medical needs will be referred to appropriate services and receive the services and care they need, not limited by their income or insurance status.

- Research and educate providers on appropriate billing procedures and codes for care coordination.
- Develop a menu of models for care coordination.
- Promote the use of parent consultants or relationships with parent navigation systems in primary care offices.
- Promote the use of Bright Futures and other recognized guidelines for health supervision and anticipatory guidance.
- Develop and maintain a system for managing health care information for foster children.
- Seek sustainable funding for care coordination of services.

Definition of Medical Home

- All children 0-8 will receive comprehensive well child checks including a developmental and mental health screening reflective of the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations (periodicity schedule).
  - Educate providers on benefits of developmental and mental health screening.
  - Educate providers (in addition to office managers) on billing procedures and codes.
  - Distribute a menu of screening instruments to providers.
  - Coordinate with Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT) regarding distribution of information to parents on the importance of screening.
  - Inventory and organize service information in easy to access modalities (Web site, referral lists, etc.).
- More eligible children will be enrolled in public health insurance programs (Medicaid, Denali KidCare).
  - Support removal of the frozen 2003 standard in determining eligibility for Denali KidCare and restoration of previous levels.
  - Partner with and support the work of groups such as the Covering Kids Coalition.
  - Partner with programs that have access to large numbers of young children and their families to facilitate enrollment in a public health insurance program and engagement with a medical home (WIC, early care and learning programs, and others).

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Outcome #5: *Young children and their families will receive appropriate early mental health services through Medicaid and other sources.*

- There will be reimbursement mechanisms so young children and their families have access to the services necessary to address their social/emotional development.
  - Educate providers on appropriate diagnostic procedures and billing codes.
  - Utilize appropriate crosswalk between diagnosis for young children and billing requirements.
  - Develop category for children "at-risk" for becoming seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) and/or broaden the definition for children 2 and under.
  - Expand the number of qualified providers eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.
  - Review service codes to ensure that services for young children are grounded in the environment and the family.
- Alaska Standards of Care will reflect best practices for young children.
  - Improve Alaska's standards by investigating, reviewing, and evaluating best practices in other states.
- Financial resources will be available for mental health services for young children.
  - Educate employers on the importance of choosing insurance that provides for mental health services to young children.
  - Identify funding streams and support strategies to integrate services and supports for young children with severe emotional disturbances and those at risk for SED.

Outcome #6: ***The State of Alaska will have a qualified, well-trained workforce providing for the social and emotional well-being of young children.***

- There will be a statewide early childhood mental health professional development plan which supports, connects and aligns efforts into a comprehensive system of training and education.

How young children feel is as important as how they think, particularly with regard to school readiness. *(Insititute of Medicine, 2000)*

- Identify current/available workforce development opportunities.
- Conduct a survey to determine current level of expertise in the field.
- Research and articulate service provider core competencies by levels of service provision (including services reimbursed by Medicaid) across all early childhood disciplines.
- Work with the universities and training entities to incorporate early childhood mental health content into their course curriculum.
- Develop a professional development plan for training and education in early childhood mental health.

- There will be a system for mental health consultation to early childhood professionals and clinical supervision and mentorship for service providers.
  - Develop a system for early childhood mental health supervision and mentorship for paraprofessionals and professionals working with early childhood mental health issues (e.g., Infant Learning Program staff, behavioral health aides, clinicians, child development and family workers, and others).

Outcome #7: ***Pediatric/family health care practices/public health settings will incorporate screening for maternal depression and caregiver mental health issues.***

- Health care providers will recognize the importance of caregiver mental health on early childhood social and emotional well-being and regularly screen primary caregivers for adult mental health issues.
  - Educate providers on the benefits of screening primary caregivers for risk factors.
  - Educate providers (in addition to office managers) on billing procedures and codes.
  - Distribute a menu of screening instruments.
  - Coordinate with EPSDT regarding information to parents.
  - Inventory and organize service information in easy to access modalities (Web site, referral lists, etc.).

Outcome #8: *All early care and learning programs for children birth through age 8 will be based on standards of best practice.*

- All early care and learning programs will meet or exceed established health, safety and program standards.
  - Establish early care and learning program standards and regulations that reflect markers of quality (or standards of best practice).
  - Require early care and learning programs to meet or exceed established health, safety, and program standards.
  - Develop and implement a clear, coherent and equitable monitoring system for program compliance.
  - Develop and implement a quality rating system that encourages programs to meet high quality standards.
- Early care and learning programs will use Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines to better understand, support and enhance children's development and learning.
  - Develop and disseminate user friendly Early Learning Guidelines materials for providers.
- Early care and learning programs will use a variety of appropriate methods to regularly screen, assess, and monitor progress of individual children.
  - Develop and disseminate information to programs on the importance of regularly screening, assessing and monitoring children's progress and the resources available.
- Health and mental health specialists will be available to assist early care and learning programs with special issues.
  - Develop and implement a system for health and mental health specialists to provide consultation and direct services in natural settings such as early care and learning programs (expand Head Start-like models).

Outcome #9: *The early childhood workforce will be well-qualified and fairly compensated.*

- There will be a statewide system of professional development in early childhood education and statewide access to that system.
  - Provide campus-based and distance-delivered education opportunities.
  - Support the university system in meeting the requirements for accreditation in Early Childhood Education.
  - Maintain a registry system that documents the individual professional development of providers.
  - Develop and implement a registry of approved trainers.
  - Maintain and publicize a Web site that provides information on professional development opportunities.

- Early care and learning practitioners will meet the educational standards for their position.
  - Establish educational standards for early care and learning providers and embed them in requirements for programs.
  - Develop and advocate for guidelines to be adopted by the State Board of Education and Early Development moving pre-K-3 teachers toward certification in early childhood development or an early childhood endorsement.

- A professional development framework articulating career advancement will be utilized by early care and learning providers.
  - Disseminate information about the professional development framework and encourage its use by providers and employers.

- Wages and benefits of people who work in the early care and learning field will be improved to reflect compensation for education and experience.
  - Promote analysis of wage and benefit issues.
  - Develop options for improving benefits for early care and learning providers.
  - Explore the development of a system for rewarding programs which demonstrate a commitment to livable wages and benefits.
  - Conduct an annual survey of providers regarding early childhood workforce issues.

Outcome #10: *Children and families will be able to find and access appropriate early care and learning programs.*

- There will be a range of early care and

learning program models to meet the developmental needs of young children.

- Ensure a range of program models are available.
- Support collaboration between early care and learning programs and child protection services and provide adequate funding to ensure that children in the state's custody are placed in high quality early care and learning programs.
- Develop a free, voluntary, universal pre-K system for 4 and 5 year-olds using a mixed delivery system with funding that follows the child.

❖ There will be a sufficient supply of early care and learning programs to meet the needs of families with children from birth to 8.

- Research and implement strategies to increase the supply of child care where needed, especially programs serving: infant and toddlers, children with special needs, children in rural areas, school-age children, children needing non traditional hour care.
- Implement strategies to increase access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Implement strategies to increase access to Early Intervention Programs.

❖ Families will have access to consumer information and have the resources to make informed choices regarding their child's early care and learning.

- Implement a quality rating system statewide to help parents determine the quality of care.
- Provide consumer information to parents

that is user-friendly and available in multiple formats, languages and locations (such as places of employment, medical offices, WIC, Public Assistance, etc.).

- Develop public service announcements for radio and television with consumer information regarding quality care and learning programs.

❖ Families with financial needs will have access to resources to help cover the cost of child care.

- Support a child care assistance rate schedule in which parents pay no more than 10 percent of their income for child care.
- Support a child care assistance rate equivalent to the 75th percentile of the current market rate.
- Support adequate funding for child care assistance programs.
- Provide support in helping parents and providers understand the child care assistance system.
- Support child care assistance being available for families whose income is up to 85 percent of the State Median Income.

Outcome #11: *Families will be full and respected partners in their children's early care and learning programs.*

❖ Early care and learning programs will have active family support and parent involvement components.

- Research and disseminate information on best practices in outreach, engagement and family support models.
- Support the implementation of family support

models such as Strengthening Families in all early care and learning settings.
- Require the use of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment in early care and learning programs.
- Train child care licensers in the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool.

❖ Early care and learning programs will be responsive to the different cultural and language needs of the families and children that they serve. *(Support children in the continuation of their home culture and language while helping them to speak, read and write English.)*

- Encourage programs to recruit, hire, and train staff representing the cultures that they serve.
- Provide training information and strategies to providers on how to successfully engage families of diverse cultures.
- Create opportunities for community members with diverse backgrounds to participate in a network of support for early care and learning programs.

❖ Early childhood programs will facilitate the transitioning of children and their families to new classrooms/programs by implementing key elements that characterize early care and learning standards of best practice.

- Promote continuity between early care and learning programs by supporting key elements of effective early childhood programs: developmentally appropriate practice, parent involvement and support services for children and parents.
- Develop and disseminate information on the importance of transitioning children and their families and assist programs in developing transition procedures.
- Support collaboration between early care and learning programs, Infant Learning Programs and school districts.

Young children whose caregivers provide ample verbal and cognitive stimulation, who are sensitive and responsive, and who give them generous amounts of attention and support are more advanced in all realms of development compared with children who fail to receive these important inputs.

(Lamb, 1998; Smith, 1998)

Family Support America

Principles of Family Support Practice

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members – adults, youth, and children.

Family Support & Parent Education:

Outcome #12: *Families of young children will have access to community-based parenting and family support programs.*

❖ Programs serving young children and their families will be responsive to emerging family and community issues and model the principles of family support in all program activities.

- Create a statewide family support clearinghouse that serves as a repository of information regarding best practices in family services; supports interdisciplinary training; provides technical assistance; distributes information to programs, stakeholders and policy makers; and links to services.

❖ All families with young children will have access to a user-friendly, culturally competent, integrated service delivery system.

- Promote "one door opens every door" by supporting: community-based family resource centers; one-stop shopping service delivery models; family-to-family support; integrated case management.

❖ Families will be well informed regarding parenting and child development issues.

- Support programs that provide easily accessible parenting information and referrals for all Alaska families with young children ("parent lines," Web-based services, home-based delivery, etc.).

❖ Families will be supported in their role as primary caregivers.

- Encourage funding of programs that promote families as resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- Encourage employers to develop family friendly policies (e.g., family health benefits, on-site childcare facilities, flexible work schedules, changing stations in restrooms, access to parenting information, etc.).
- Support and recognize community activities which promote health and wellness in families with young children.

- Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community building process.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.

ECCS Partners

Many thanks to the partners who contributed to the development of the ECCS Plan

Medical Home:

Department of Health and Social Services
- Division of Public Health
- Division of Health Care Services
- Division of Public Assistance
- Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
- Commissioner's Office

Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Health and Human Services
Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
Alaska Primary Care Association
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Native Medical Center
Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults
Family Voices
Alaska CARES
Stone Soup
SEARHC (Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium)
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation
Upper Tanana Development Corporation Head Start
Covering Kids Coalition
Sunshine Community Health Center
Andrea Bateman, M.D.
Carol Joyce Buchholtz, M.S.

Early Care and Learning:

Department of Health and Social Services
- Division of Public Assistance
- Office of Children's Services
- Division of Public Health

Department of Education and Early Development
- Teaching and Learning Support

University of Alaska Fairbanks
- School of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education

University of Alaska Southeast,
- College of Education, Department of Teaching & Learning, Early Childhood Program
- Professional Education Center, Center for Teacher Education, (SEED) System for Early Education Development Council

University of Alaska Anchorage
- College of Education, Department of Counseling & Special Education
- Center for Human Development

Child Care Connection
Association for the Education of Young Children-Southeast Alaska
Play-n-Learn Child Development Centers
Alaska Childcare Resource and Referral Network
Southcentral Foundation Head Start Program
Chugiak Children's Services Head Start Program
North Star Borough Early Childhood Commission
Families First
Parents As Teachers

Mental Health:

Department of Health and Social Services
- Division of Behavioral Health
- Office of Children's Services
- Commissioner's Office

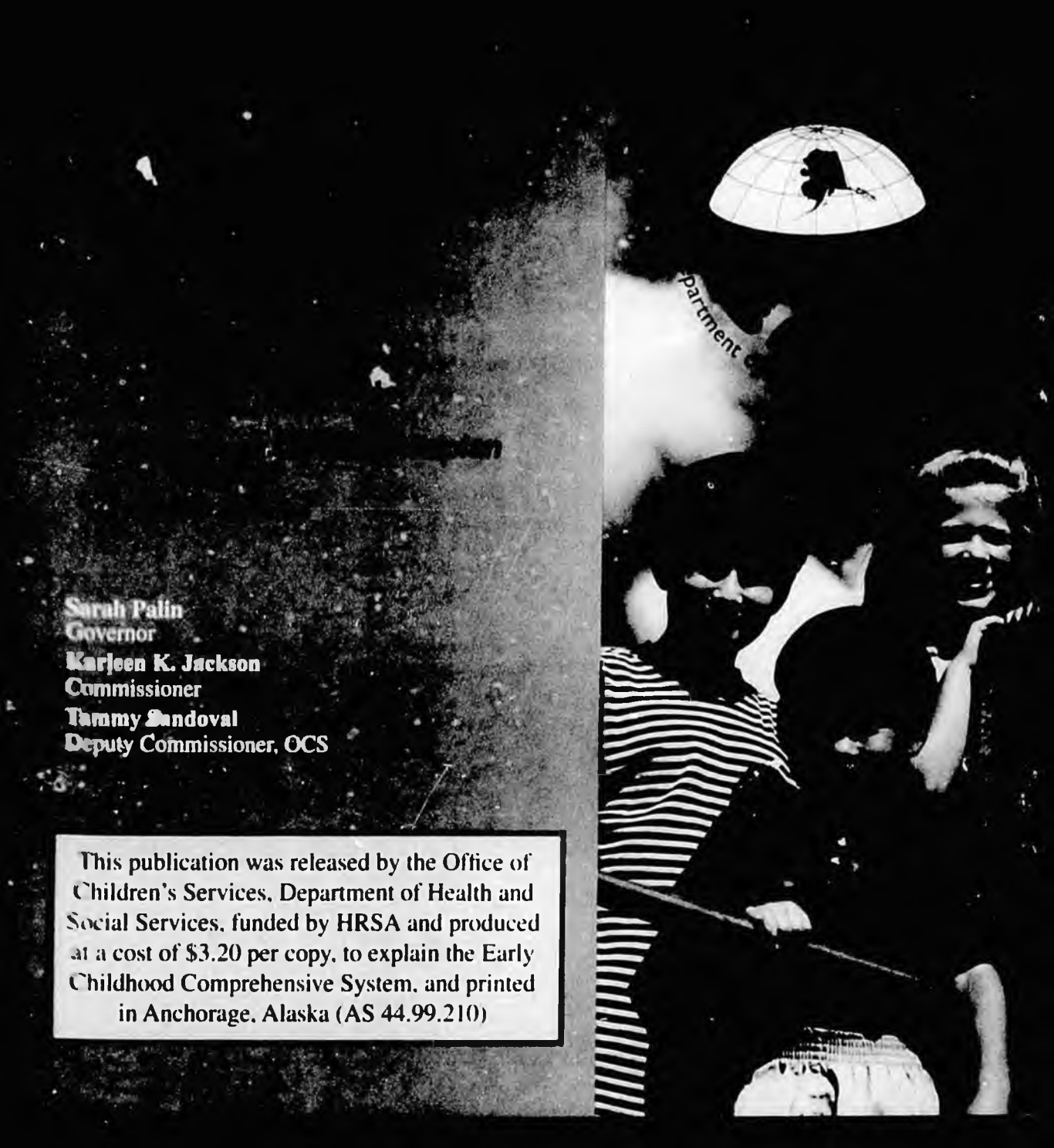
Department of Administration
- Office of Public Advocacy

Christian Health Associates
Psychology Resources
Mental Health Board-Children's Committee
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation
Southcentral Foundation
Norton Sound Health Corporation
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
Sitka Tribe of Alaska
Alaska Behavioral Health Association
Blanket of Wellness
Juneau Youth Services
Tundra Women's Coalition
North Star Hospital
Rural Alaska Community Action Program Head Start Programs
Kids' Corps Inc. Head Start Program
Play-n- Learn Child Development Centers
Anchorage Community Mental Health Center
Elmendorf Air Force Base, Family Support Program
Family Centered Services
Child Care Connection
Zero to Three: Partnering with Parents Project
Disability Law Center
Marianne VonHippel M.D.
Jeanine Jeffers-Wolfe

Family Support & Parent Education:

Department of Health and Social Services
- Office of Children's Services
- Division of Public Health
- Division of Public Assistance
- Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education

Assets for Youth Program, Association of Alaska School Boards
Association for the Education of Young Children – Southeast Alaska
Partnership for Families and Children
Anchorage Native Medical Center
Kids' Corps Inc. Head Start Program
Child Care Connection
Success By Six
United Way of Anchorage
Stone Soup
North Slope Family Services
Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Health and Human Services
Alaska Youth and Family Network
Catholic Community Services
Mat-Su Services for Children & Adults, Inc.
REACH
Denali Family Services
Hoonah City School District, Parents As Teachers Program
Anchorage School District, Child in Transition/Homeless Project
Reclaiming Futures
Alaska Injury Prevention Center
Prevent Child Abuse America-Alaska Chapter
Resource Center for Parents and Children
Volunteers of America
Family Training Associates



Sarah Palin
Governor

Karleen K. Jackson
Commissioner

Tammy Sandoval
Deputy Commissioner, OCS

This publication was released by the Office of Children's Services, Department of Health and Social Services, funded by HRSA and produced at a cost of $3.20 per copy, to explain the Early Childhood Comprehensive System, and printed in Anchorage, Alaska (AS 44.99.210)