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## Quality Child Care and Compensation

February 2007

### Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children

#### Problem and why it matters to Alaskan's

According to the workforce data collected in 2006, the average Alaskan childcare professional turnover rate is 44% per year. This turnover rate signifies that many of children in care are not learning in stable environments. The median wage for child care workers is \$20,960, and teachers cite low pay as a primary reason for leaving their positions. Lack of resources and an effort to maintain affordability for parents often make it difficult for individual child care programs to offer sufficient wages to retain educated staff and to reward or encourage teacher education. Research continues to show that teacher education and turnover rates affect children's development making fair compensation and incentives for professional development of child care professionals essential.

#### Impact

Increasing compensation and professional development for the child care and education workforce will improve child care quality through salary supplements, by reducing turnover and encouraging the continued education of teachers, directors, and family child care providers.

#### Recommendation

Fund a wage supplement project that has been researched and proven to be effective in reducing turnover, increasing education and expertise in early childhood, and increasing quality for our children at the most critical time in their development. There are several models of wage supplement projects that have been implemented around the country. The Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Network, with funds from Alaska's SEED, has already developed and implemented the ROOTS Awards (Retaining Our Outstanding Teaching Staff), a program aimed at financially rewarding workers based on their educational attainment.

#### Outcome

Based on data from other states that have implemented a wage supplement project, it can be estimated that by funding a wage supplement program Alaska can reduce its turnover rate to between 12-17%. That is a 27-32% increase in retention.

#### Cost

If the wage supplement project stipends ranged from \$200/yr. to \$4,000/yr., based on educational attainment, with the average annual stipend being \$800, it is estimated that in order to serve 1,000 of the 6,500 child care workers in Alaska, it would cost \$800,000 for the stipends. It will cost an additional \$60,000 for the administration of the program. The total cost to fund a wage supplement program funded at these levels is \$860,000.

Alaska has already developed and implemented the SEED Registry, which is an integral part of the development of the tiered stipend system. The SEED Registry is funded at \$50,000 through the University of Alaska and registration fees paid by the workforce. The infrastructure for delivering this program has already been developed through the ROOTS Awards.

## Quality Child Care and Professional Development

February 2007

Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children

### Problem and why it matters to Alaskans

Research shows that the needs of early learners are unique and that the best outcomes are achieved when teachers have adequate preparation.

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing recognition of the benefits of high-quality early care and education (ECE), particularly in terms of improved academic and developmental outcomes for lower-income children (Barnet, 2002). Quality in ECE is related to how a program is structured and what type of experiences children have within those programs, but one of the most crucial variables is teacher education and training (Dwyer, Chait, & McKee, 2000). In short, teachers with a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education or a related field tend to have higher-quality classrooms (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002)." (Ackerman, 2005)

Based on this and similar research, the Federal Head Start Agency has established a mandate that 50% of lead teachers hold an associate degree or better. Funding from the Federal Department of Education (through SEED) has allowed Alaska to make significant progress toward meeting that mandate. In the academic year 2002-03, 15.9% of Head Start teachers statewide had an AA degree or better. By academic year 2005-06 this percentage had increased to 38.3%. The federal funding Alaska has received for professional development has decreased significantly. For instance, SEED (System for Early Education Development), which has funded a significant portion of professional development opportunities for Head Start staff and other providers, ends in fall of 2007.

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While progress has been significant, Alaska still has a long way to go. There is a proposed federal mandate to raise the required educational level for lead Head Start teachers to a B.A. in early childhood education or a related degree. In addition, Head Start represents only a portion of the early care and learning sector. Providers in child care centers, pre-schools, and home-based care also need assistance in raising their level of professional preparation.

### Impact

There is a direct relationship between teacher/provider preparation and quality of care and education for children. In addition, the lack of standards for early care and learning teachers and providers results in low wages. This, in turn, results in a high turnover rate in this workforce sector. Turnover rate is a key indicator of quality. Alaska needs to break this cycle of low standards, low wages, and low quality. Providing opportunity for increased professional development is part of the solution to breaking the cycle.

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### Recommendation

Provide funding for those working in the early care and learning workforce sector to continue professional development. The average wage of a prekindergarten teacher is \$26,000 compared with an average salary of \$51,000 for a kindergarten teacher. Child

care workers received only \$20,000 per year compared to the overall average wage of Alaskans which is \$38,000 (McDowell 2006).

It is difficult for individuals working full-time and making such low wages to afford the cost of education. SEED has found that by providing tuition reimbursement to motivated individuals already working in the field, Head Start staff and others in the early care and learning field are able to progress toward completion of an AA or BA degree in early childhood education.

#### Outcome

Child care and education workers will increase their expertise and skill in early childhood education and will therefore be able to offer higher quality education to Alaskan children. In addition, when a workforce invests in their education, they are also much more likely to remain in their profession, which also adds to quality care and education.

#### Cost

107 CDA (Child Development Associate Certification)(31 credits) = \$560,252

50 Associate in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$477,000

60 Bachelor in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$572,400

5 Master in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$47,000

Administration: \$60,000

Mentors (33): \$123,750

Head Start Only Total: \$1,840,702

\*Based on 80% reimbursement of tuition and \$500 stipend to the workplace to account for time off for school.



## ALASKA STATE HEAD START

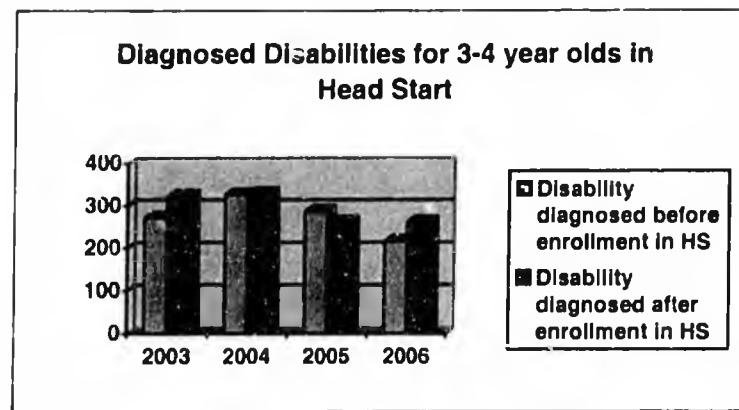
### FACT SHEET 2007

Prepared by the Alaska State Head Start Association

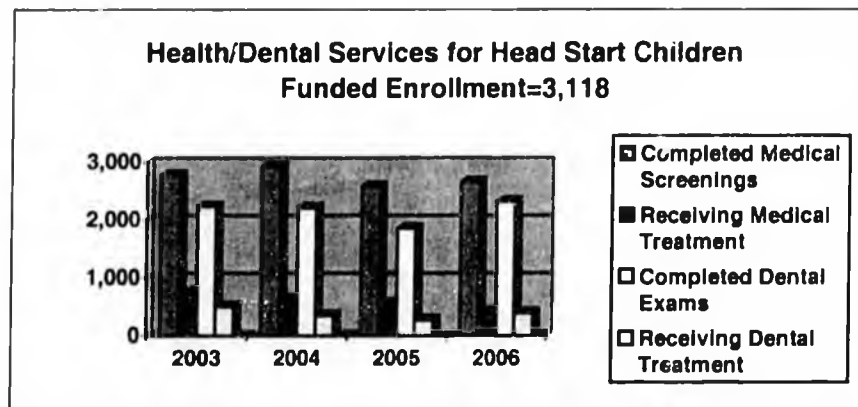
State Head Start program funding helps 17 Head Start grantees across Alaska provide comprehensive education and support services to over 3,600 young children who live in poverty. Programs use state grants to address poverty of access; support the provision of high quality direct services for children and families; support training and professional development for Head Start staff, and meet the Federal twenty percent local match requirement.

#### What are the results? (Source: Federal Program Information Report)

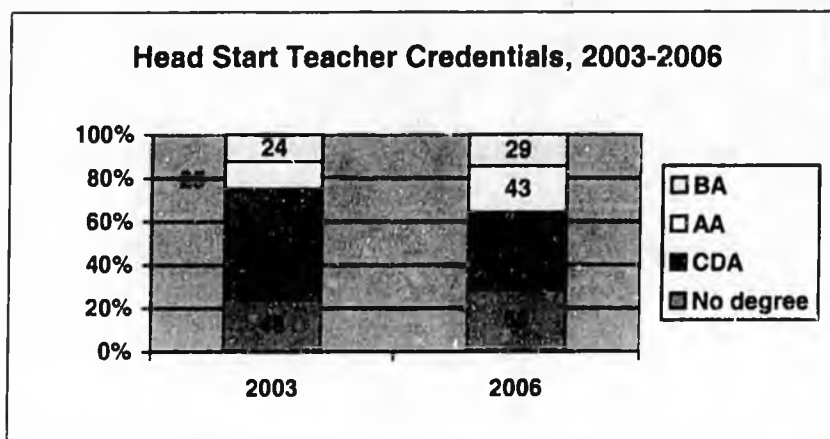
- ❖ **Early Intervention:** Alaska's Head Start programs have effective systems for identifying children with disabilities and connecting them with special education services. As the following chart illustrates, many of these children would have entered kindergarten with undiagnosed disabilities if they had not attended Head Start.



- ❖ **Medical and Dental Screening and Treatment:** 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.



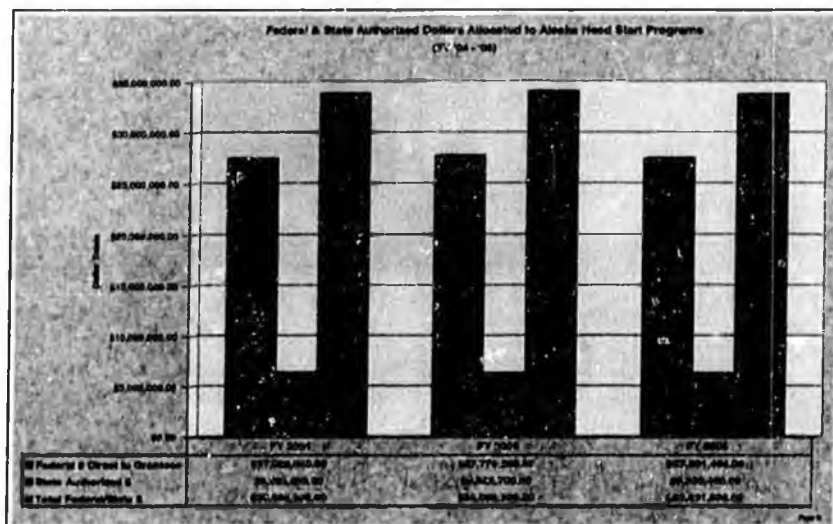
- ❖ **Quality Early Childhood Education Services:** Research shows that well-trained teachers are a key component of high quality child development programs. In spite of funding and distance challenges, Alaska's Head Start grantees have increased the number of teachers with BA degrees in Early Childhood 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.



- ❖ **Economic Impact:** In 2006, Head Start programs employed 926 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.

**What is the challenge?**

- ❖ **Federal & State Head Start Funding:** Head Start funding from the state of Alaska has remained static for many years while the cost of providing services has continued to increase. In FY 06, federal funding for the Head Start program was reduced by 1%. This resulted in the reduction of early childhood health and education services for the nation's most at-risk children and families, according to a survey by the National Head Start Association (NHSA). The 2006 cut was imposed in the context of an estimated 11 % real decline (inflation adjusted) in federal funding from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2007, which could grow to even a higher 13 % under the proposed federal budget for 2008.



## **What are the Problems?**

Years of flat funding at both the state and federal level have eroded services and capacity across the state. The following information is based on federal Program Information Reports and an Alaska Head Start Association grantee survey conducted in December 2006.

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Palmer, Kasigluk, Hydaburg, Noorvik, Seward, and St. Mary's are among the communities that have lost Head Start services in the last five 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.
- ❖ CCS Early Learning, Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Play N Learn, Kids' Corps, and Fairbanks Native Association Head Start programs have either eliminated or reduced transportation services for children.
- ❖ Many programs have been hurt by dramatic increases in utility costs. For example, BBNA reports that utility costs increased from \$52,000 to \$96,000 over the past three years.
- ❖ Virtually all programs have cut staff.

## **Conclusion**

*A recent report prepared by the University of Alaska Southeast concerning the economic impact of child care and early education programs states that 66% of Alaskans believe that early learning should be a high priority for state funding. However, Federal and state funding cuts have led to fewer children in need receiving reduced levels of service even though Head Start program quality has improved. Without increased assistance hundreds more young Alaskans who are at risk of school failure will lose the proven benefits they gain through participation in quality Head Start programs.*

## **Child Care Assistance Program Fact Sheet**

### **What is it 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 (SEED 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. A very high percentage of families are being charged a great deal above the state reimbursement rate.

### **What needs to be done to improve it:**

- 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 be raised to 85% of the state median income. *There are currently many families that do not qualify for assistance but still can't afford to send their children to child care.*

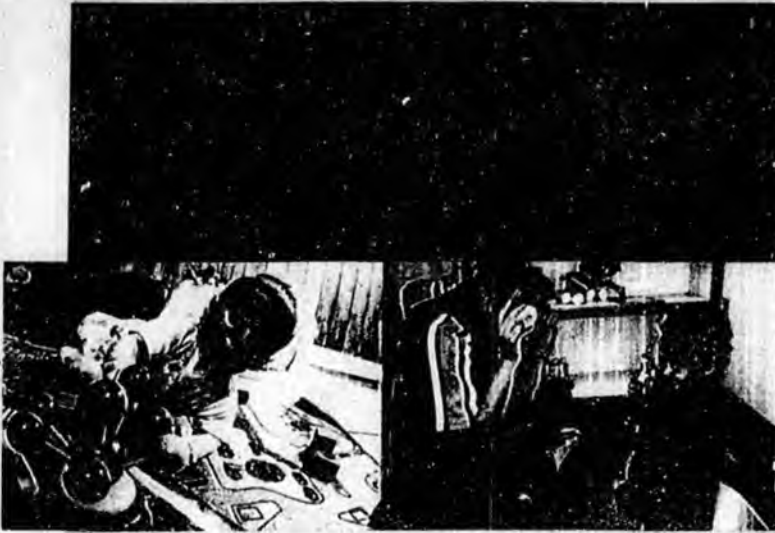
A SUMMARIZED ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT ON  
EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE SERVICES IN  
ALASKA

step<sup>up</sup> 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<sup>up</sup> early ed & child care

STUDY FINDINGS ARE DETAILED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:

<i>Demographics</i>	Pg. 2
<i>The Economic Impact on Alaska</i>	Pg. 3
<i>The Early Learning and Child Care Sector</i>	Pg. 5
<i>Impact on Alaska Families</i>	Pg. 7
<i>Alaskans Support Funding</i>	Pg. 9

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

LIVING WITH SINGLE  
MOTHER, IN  
LABOR FORCE

23%

LIVING WITH SINGLE  
FATHER, IN  
LABOR FORCE

12%

LIVING WITH TWO PARENTS,  
BOTH IN LABOR FORCE

65%





#### 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.



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

#### LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

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.

SIZE OF COMPARABLE INDUSTRIES IN ALASKA

6,500 Workers in child care

6,400 Workers in air transportation sector

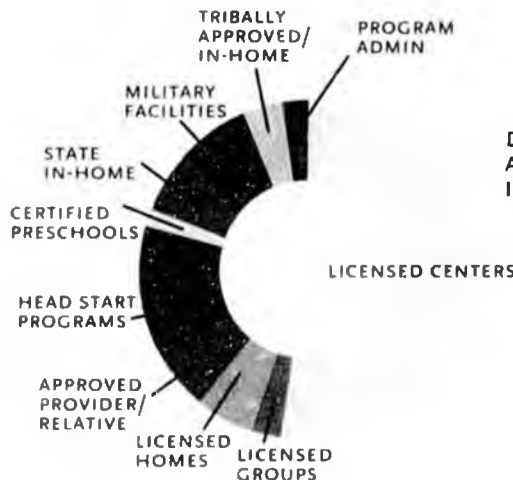
6,000 Workers in residential and nonresidential building construction

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.



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 though 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.





*"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= 268)	Urban (n=117)	Rural I (n=32)	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.

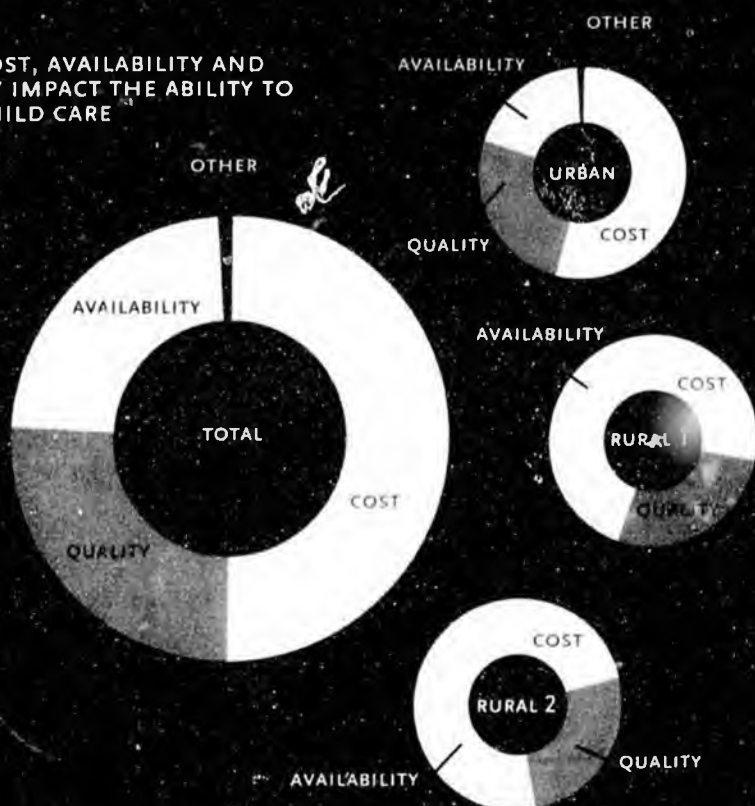
Finding quality early education and child care programs proved to be an issue both in rural and urban areas of the state.

**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.



FINDING ACCEPTABLE  
CHILD CARE

**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.

**MONTHLY COST**

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

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.

**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.

**MONTHLY COST OF FULL-TIME CHILD CARE**

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

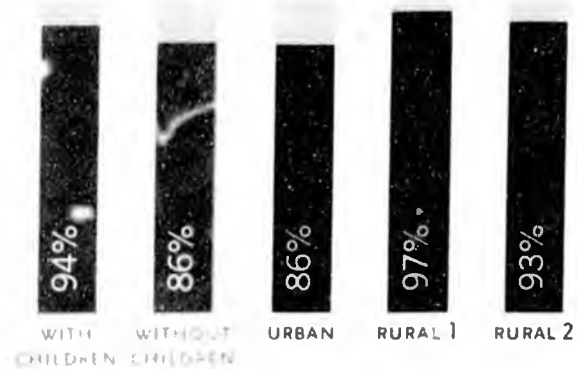


## 9 of 10 alaskans support funding

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

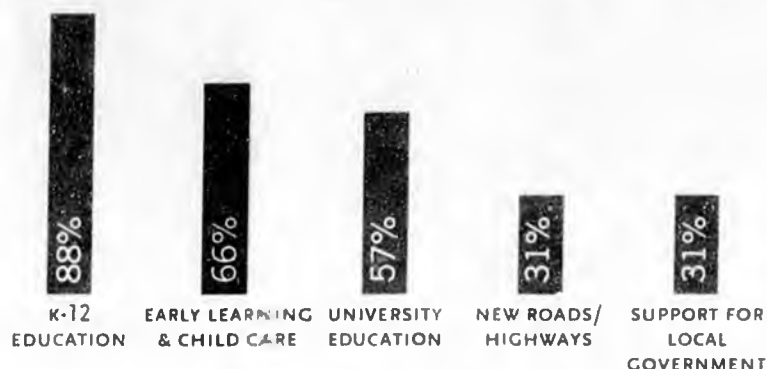


## alaskans place priority on funding early education and child care

*"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

This series of questions regarding perceived importance of state funding for early education and child care services in Alaska indicate that Alaskans place a high priority on funding for education in Alaska, with a high interest in 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



**SEED COUNCIL MEMBERS**

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**CHAIR ELECT:** CANDACE WINKLER Chief Executive Officer, Child Care Connection

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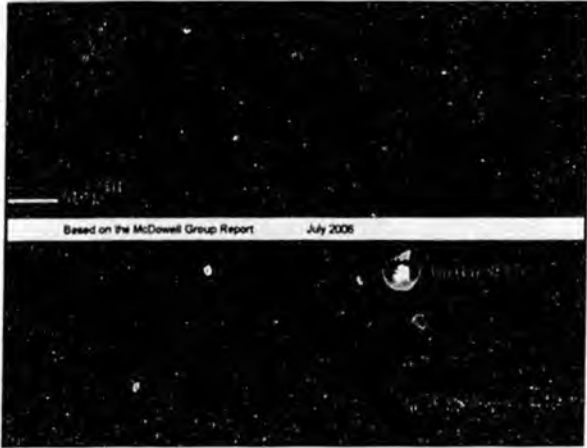
**PAUL SUGAR** Head Start Collaboration Director, Department of Education and Early Development

**CONSULTANTS AND STAFF:**

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**MARY LOU MADDEN** Madden Associates, Evaluator

**CAROL PRENTICE** SEED Program Manager, University of Alaska Southeast



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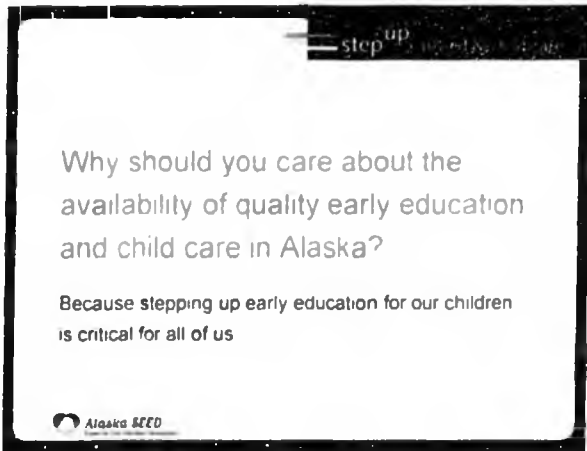
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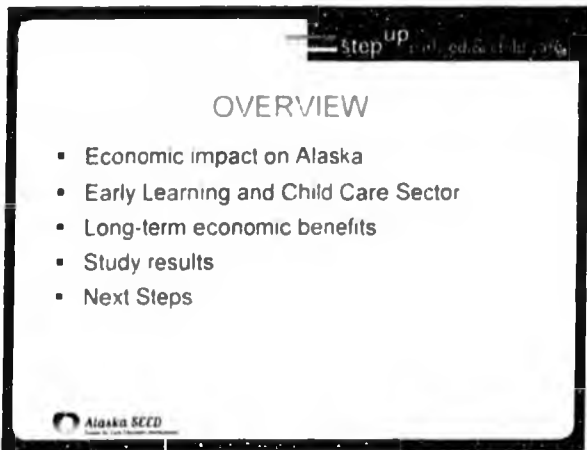
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## SCOPE OF THE ALASKA STUDY

- To measure the economic impacts of the early education and child care sector on Alaska's economy
- Focuses on education and care of children under six years of age
  - Economic impacts measured in terms of employment
  - Spending on child care services
  - Plus of child care services in allowing Alaska families to earn income

Alaska SECD

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## ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ALASKA

### Working Parent Demographics

- 62 913 children under 6 in Alaska
- 63% (39 400) in households where all parents in workforce
- Represents 29 400 households

Alaska SECD

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2008 data

10/18

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10% of workforce need child care

\$850M

10,000 / yr. cost.

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

Living Arrangement	Percentage
Living with single mother in labor force	23%
Living with single father in labor force	12%
Living with two parents both in labor force	65%

Alaska SECD

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**ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ALASKA**

- 29,400 Alaskans can be in the labor force due to availability of child care
- This is 9.5% of Alaska's resident workforce
- Total annual wages approx. \$850 million (average of \$29,820 per family) possible due to availability of child care

Alaska SECD

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**EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SECTOR**

- Direct and indirect employment impact of 7,400 in sector workforce
- Combined wages = \$124 million

Alaska SECD

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7400 / 124,000,000

**SIZE OF COMPARABLE INDUSTRIES IN ALASKA**

Industry	Number of Workers
Workers in child care	6,500
Workers in transportation	6,400
Workers in residential and nonresidential building construction	6,000

Alaska SECD

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### EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SECTOR WAGES

PROFESSION	WAGE
INDERGARTEN TEACHER IN ALASKA	\$51,000
PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER IN ALASKA	\$26,000
CHILD CARE WORKER IN ALASKA	\$20,960

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AK AVE WAGE

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### LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- 29% higher high school graduation rates
- 20% higher college attendance
- \$143,000 additional annual income per capita, resulting from labor empowerment

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### LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- 20% lower crime incidence
- 20% lower welfare dependence

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### Household Survey Overview

- First set of data on this topic in Alaska
- 725 Alaska households
- Urban, rural I and rural II
- 58% of children in surveyed household had child care services

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### Household Survey Finding Care

- Of the 58% in care

Types of Child Care	Total (n=268)	Urban (n=122)	Rural I (n=112)	Rural II (n=40)
Preschool or child care center	49%	43%	27%	66%
Care at someone else's home	31	44	50	22
Care in your home	27	34	26	21
Head start	8	0	8	17
Before or after school care	8	7	11	2

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### Household Survey Finding Care

45% FOUND IT DIFFICULT

49% FOUND IT EASY

6% DIDN'T ANSWER OR REFUSED

Finding Acceptable Child Care

Alaska SEED

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step up  
ALASKA STATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Household Survey: Impact on Alaska Families

**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

 Alaska SEED  
Statewide Economic and Community Development

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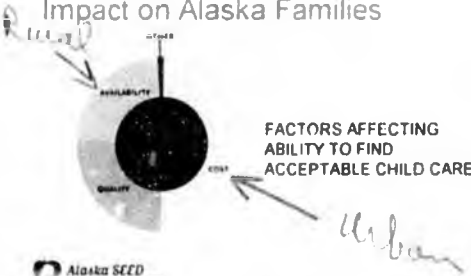
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step up  
ALASKA STATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Household Survey Impact on Alaska Families



FACTORS AFFECTING  
ABILITY TO FIND  
ACCEPTABLE CHILD CARE

 Alaska SEED  
Statewide Economic and Community Development

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ALASKA STATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Household Survey Impact on Alaska Families

**MONTHLY COST**

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

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

 Alaska SEED  
Statewide Economic and Community Development

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Household Survey Public Opinion



9 of 10 alaskans support funding

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

Alaska SEED

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ALASKANS PLACE PRIORITY ON FUNDING EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE



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WHERE ALASKA STANDS 2005

CHILD CARE REVENUE AND FUNDING



Alaska SEED

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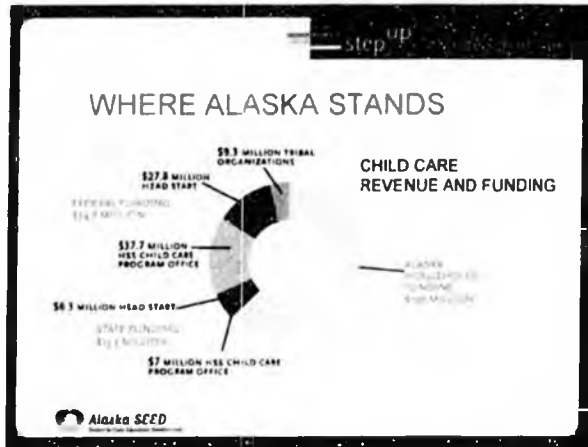
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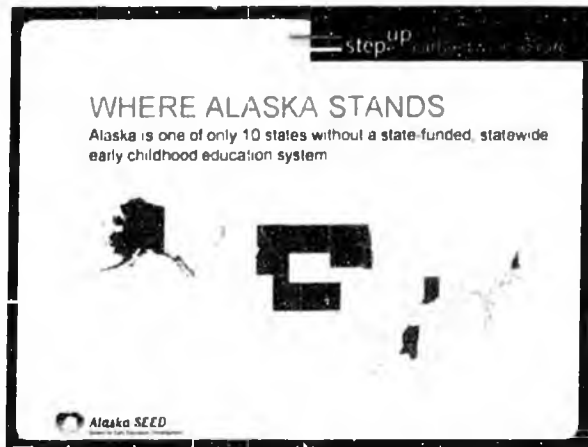
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- step up
- ### CURRENT INITIATIVES
- Professional Development and Compensation
  - Quality Rating System
  - Pre-K programs
  - Early Learning Guidelines
  - Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems
  - Strengthening Families Initiative
- Alaska SEED

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### How Public Officials Can Get Involved

- Support early childhood funding initiatives
- Meet with constituents
- Meet with early childhood advocates
- Dialogue with those in your "circle of influence"
- Share information
- Continue to seek solutions



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### REFERENCE

This piece serves as a condensed summary of the July 2008 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.



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List of Presenters: Investing in Alaska's Children  
House and Senate Committee on Health, Education and Social Services  
February 26-27, 2007

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- Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Initiative
  - Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children
    - Alaska Head Start Directors Association
  - System for Early Education Development (SEED)

## Quality Child Care and Professional Development

February 2007

Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children

### Problem and why it matters to Alaskans

Research shows that the needs of early learners are unique and that the best outcomes are achieved when teachers have adequate preparation.

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing recognition of the benefits of high-quality early care and education (ECE), particularly in terms of improved academic and developmental outcomes for lower-income children (Barnett, 2002). Quality in ECE is related to how a program is structured and what type of experiences children have within those programs, but one of the most crucial variables is teacher education and training (Dwyer, Chait, & McKee, 2000). In short, teachers with a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education or a related field tend to have higher-quality classrooms (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002)." (Ackerman, 2005)

Based on this and similar research, the Federal Head Start Agency has established a mandate that 50% of lead teachers hold an associate degree or better. Funding from the Federal Department of Education (through SEED) has allowed Alaska to make significant progress toward meeting that mandate. In the academic year 2002-03, 15.9% of Head Start teachers statewide had an AA degree or better. By academic year 2005-06 this percentage had increased to 38.3%. The federal funding Alaska has received for professional development has decreased significantly. For instance, SEED (System for Early Education Development), which has funded a significant portion of professional development opportunities for Head Start staff and other providers, ends in fall of 2007.

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While progress has been significant, Alaska still has a long way to go. There is a proposed federal mandate to raise the required educational level for lead Head Start teachers to a B.A. in early childhood education or a related degree. In addition, Head Start represents only a portion of the early care and learning sector. Providers in child care centers, pre-schools, and home-based care also need assistance in raising their level of professional preparation.

### Impact

There is a direct relationship between teacher/provider preparation and quality of care and education for children. In addition, the lack of standards for early care and learning teachers and providers results in low wages. This, in turn, results in a high turnover rate in this workforce sector. Turnover rate is a key indicator of quality. Alaska needs to break this cycle of low standards, low wages, and low quality. Providing opportunity for increased professional development is part of the solution to breaking the cycle.

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### Recommendation

Provide funding for those working in the early care and learning workforce sector to continue professional development. The average wage of a prekindergarten teacher is \$26,000 compared with an average salary of \$51,000 for a kindergarten teacher. Child

care workers received only \$20,000 per year compared to the overall average wage of Alaskans which is \$38,000 (McDowell 2006).

It is difficult for individuals working full-time and making such low wages to afford the cost of education. SEED has found that by providing tuition reimbursement to motivated individuals already working in the field, Head Start staff and others in the early care and learning field are able to progress toward completion of an AA or BA degree in early childhood education.

#### Outcome

Child care and education workers will increase their expertise and skill in early childhood education and will therefore be able to offer higher quality education to Alaskan children. In addition, when a workforce invests in their education, they are also much more likely to remain their profession, which also adds to quality care and education.

#### Cost

107 CDA (Child Development Associate Certification)(31 credits) = \$560,252

50 Associate in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$477,000

60 Bachelor in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$572,400

5 Master in Early Childhood (60 credits) = \$47,000

Administration: \$60,000

Mentors (33): \$123,750

Head Start Only Total: \$1,840,702

\*Based on 80% reimbursement of tuition and \$500 stipend to the workplace to account for time off for school.

# *Investing in Alaska's Young Children*

February 2007



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 prekindergarten trends contribute to Alaska's low scores on standardized third-grade tests, poor performance on the High School graduation Qualification Exams, and an unacceptable high dropout rate.

Investing in quality early childhood programs, including child care and preschool, makes sense. Scientific research shows critical brain development occurs between birth and age six. There are 63,000 children under the age of six in Alaska; systems are needed that support these children and their families. To this end, several agencies and organizations that work on behalf of young children and their families have developed recommendations to increase positive outcomes for all of Alaska's youngest children.

Two concurrent approaches are required to improve the outlook for Alaska's children. First, we must support families in their role as primary caregivers and as a child's first and best teacher. Second, families must have access to early childhood programs of high quality and affordable.

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## **Supporting Families**

Parents are the most significant influence in a child's life. They want their children to have a good start in life and most parents know that children learn from birth. But parents often don't have the tools or resources they need to help their child. In Alaska, many families with young children are unable to tap into intergenerational parenting knowledge and skills.

There is a need to link culturally competent and developmentally appropriate family support and parent education services in the home and in natural environments that children and families are engaged with—in early care and learning programs, medical homes, and community and faith-based organizations.

To assure that Alaska families have the tools and resources they need, the following steps are recommended:

- Encourage all early care and education programs to have a family support component with strategies to foster child development
  - Increase the engagement of parents, grandparents, and extended family in their child's learning by providing resources and incentives
  - Increase proven, family centered literacy programs and access to quality, culturally engaging reading materials
  - Provide access to a user-friendly, culturally competent, integrated service delivery system
- 

### **Early Care and Learning Programs**

39,400 children under the age of six live in households where all available parents are in the workforce. In addition, many parents elect outside care and learning opportunities for their young children. These families need access to child care and education that is high quality, accessible, and affordable. With only 22,000 licensed or approved child care, Head Start, or school district preschool spaces available, we know that there is a need for more regulated care that meets minimal standards.

A host of studies show that long-term benefits of quality child care and education include higher high school graduation and college attendance rates and lower incidences of crime and welfare dependence. One key indicator of quality care and education is the educational level of the teacher or care provider. Alaska must have standards in place to assure that this workforce sector has adequate preparation— and that wages are commensurate with the credentials. The average salary of a pre-school teacher in Alaska is only \$26,460 while the average salary of a kindergarten teacher is \$51,960.

We need to make certain that families in Alaskan have access to child care and other early learning opportunities. A recent study conducted by the McDowell Group found that 45% of Alaska households with children under six in a child care situation found it difficult or very difficult to find acceptable child care. 36% of these households 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. Head Start, the largest early learning program in the State, estimates that 30% of the Alaska's income eligible families have children enrolled in Head Start. Approximately 12,000 income eligible families and children do not have access to Head Start services.

Affordability of quality child care is a major issue for many Alaskan families. The average monthly cost of full-time child care, depending on the age of the child and location of the care, ranges from \$400-\$900. When asked which factor (quality, accessibility, or cost) had the greatest impact on their ability to find acceptable child care, cost was most often cited (50%). Only one in seven Alaskan households with children in child care services receives some form of child care assistance.

To assure that Alaska families have access to affordable, high quality early care and learning opportunities, the following steps are recommended:

- Increase early learning opportunities for young children
  - Increase the professional development opportunities and qualifications for early childhood educators and care providers
  - Institute appropriate compensation for teachers and care providers of young children
  - Implement a Quality Rating System (QRS) to help parents evaluate child care and early learning programs and support program improvement
  - Develop a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education
- 

### **Alaska's Early Childhood System**

To assure a comprehensive and coordinated approach, the following steps are recommended:

- Coordination at the policy level within State of Alaska government
  - Active participation with public/private partnerships such as the "Ready to Read, Ready to Learn" Initiative
- 

### **References**

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan (State of Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services)
  - Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (State of Alaska Depts. of Health and Social Services and Education and Early Development)
  - Economic Impact of Early Education and Child Care Services in Alaska (McDowell Group, 2006)
  - Alaska Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force Report and Recommendations (Sept. 2006)
- 

Recommendations were created and supported by the following early care and learning community partners working together for the best outcomes for Alaska's children:

#### **Alaska Childcare Resource and Referral Network**

- Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Initiative
- Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children
  - Alaska Head Start Directors Association
- System for Early Education Development (SEED)



## ALASKA STATE HEAD START

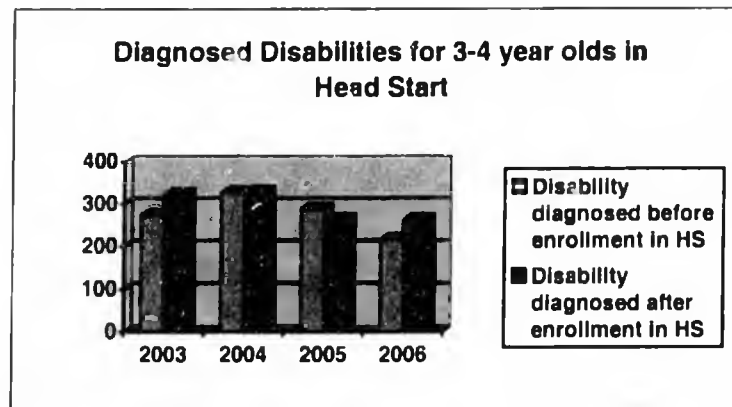
### FACT SHEET 2007

Prepared by the Alaska State Head Start Association

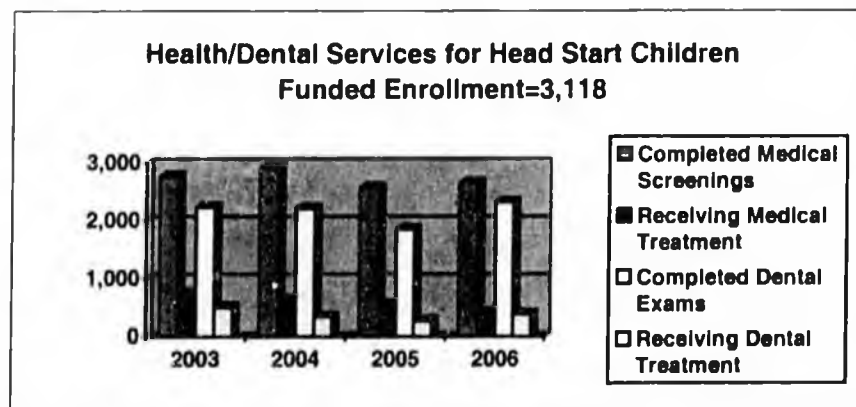
*State Head Start program funding helps 17 Head Start grantees across Alaska provide comprehensive education and support services to over 3,600 young children who live in poverty. Programs use state grants to address poverty of access; support the provision of high quality direct services for children and families; support training and professional development for Head Start staff, and meet the Federal twenty percent local match requirement.*

#### What are the results? (Source: Federal Program Information Report)

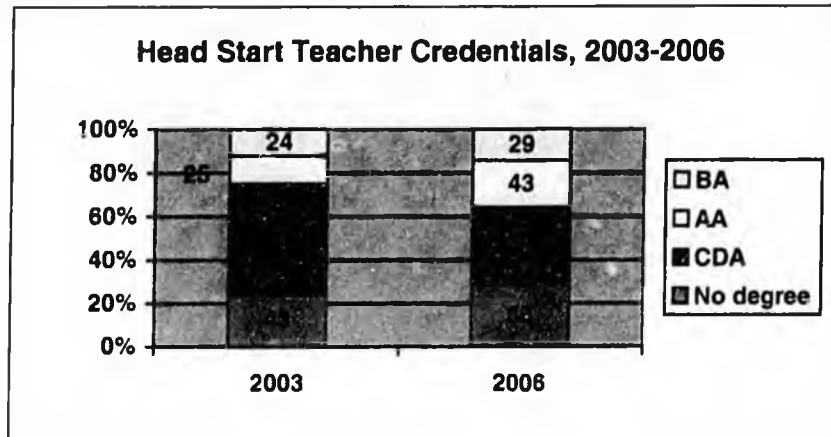
- ❖ **Early Intervention:** Alaska's Head Start programs have effective systems for identifying children with disabilities and connecting them with special education services. As the following chart illustrates, many of these children would have entered kindergarten with undiagnosed disabilities if they had not attended Head Start.



- ❖ **Medical and Dental Screening and Treatment:** 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.



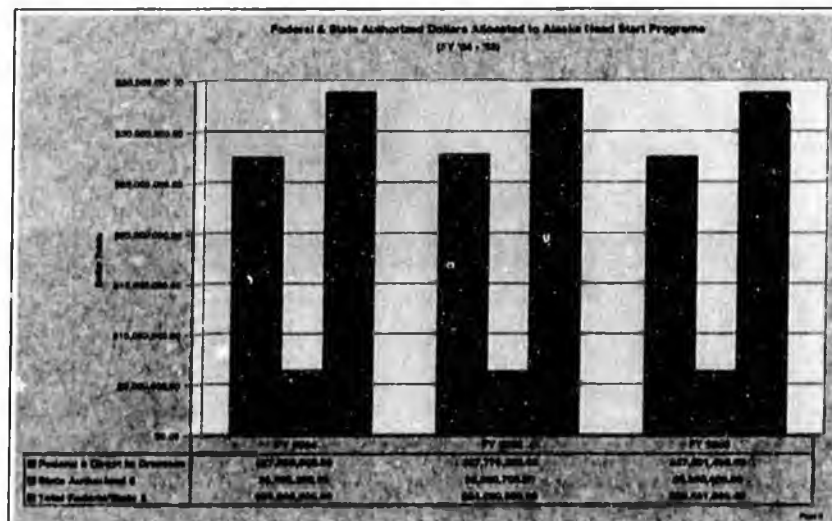
- ❖ **Quality Early Childhood Education Services:** Research shows that well-trained teachers are a key component of high quality child development programs. In spite of funding and distance challenges, Alaska's Head Start grantees have increased the number of teachers with BA degrees in Early Childhood 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.



- ❖ **Economic Impact:** In 2006, Head Start programs employed 926 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.

### What is the challenge?

- ❖ **Federal & State Head Start Funding:** Head Start funding from the state of Alaska has remained static for many years while the cost of providing services has continued to increase. In FY 06, federal funding for the Head Start program was reduced by 1%. This resulted in the reduction of early childhood health and education services for the nation's most at-risk children and families, according to a survey by the National Head Start Association (NHSA). The 2006 cut was imposed in the context of an estimated 11 % real decline (inflation adjusted) in federal funding from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2007, which could grow to even a higher 13 % under the proposed federal budget for 2008.



## **What are the Problems?**

Years of flat funding at both the state and federal level have eroded services and capacity across the state. The following information is based on federal Program Information Reports and an Alaska Head Start Association grantee survey conducted in December 2006.

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Palmer, Kasigluk, Hydaburg, Noorvik, Seward, and St. Mary's are among the communities that have lost Head Start services in the last five 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.
- ❖ CCS Early Learning, Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Play N Learn, Kids' Corps, and Fairbanks Native Association Head Start programs have either eliminated or reduced transportation services for children.
- ❖ Many programs have been hurt by dramatic increases in utility costs. For example, BBNA reports that utility costs increased from \$52,000 to \$96,000 over the past three years.
- ❖ Virtually all programs have cut staff.

## **Conclusion**

*A recent report prepared by the University of Alaska Southeast concerning the economic impact of child care and early education programs states that 66% of Alaskans believe that early learning should be a high priority for state funding. However, Federal and state funding cuts have led to fewer children in need receiving reduced levels of service even though Head Start program quality has improved. Without increased assistance hundreds more young Alaskans who are at risk of school failure will lose the proven benefits they gain through participation in quality Head Start programs.*

## **Child Care Assistance Program Fact Sheet**

### **What is it 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 (SEED 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. A very high percentage of families are being charged a great deal above the state reimbursement rate.

### **What needs to be done to improve it:**

- 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 be raised to 85% of the state median income. *There are currently many families that do not qualify for assistance but still can't afford to send their children to child care.*

September 2006

**"Ready to Read, Ready to Learn"**



Alaska's  
Early Childhood  
Investment

*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

R2R

## *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

*The Ready to Read,  
Ready to Learn Task  
Force holds its first  
meeting in November  
2005 at the UAA/APU  
Consortium Library.*



*Photo by Gene Storm*

## **ALASKA** *Ready to Read, Ready to Learn* **TASK FORCE**

Nancy Murkowski, Chair

Susan Anderson, President & CEO, The CIRE Foundation

Al Bolea, President, BP Pipelines Alaska, Inc.

Deborah Bonito, President, Southdown Mercantile, Inc.

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Sharon Gagnon, Ph.D., Board of Directors, Alaska Humanities Forum

Jack Griffin, Vice President, Essential Attire, Co-owner of Phillips 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 Emerita, Utsarvik College

Byron Mallott, Trustee, First Alaskans Institute

Barbara Nagengast, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals

Cathryn Rasmison, Trustee, Rasmison Foundation

Marilyn Rouffino, 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 Early 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/Esdras 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



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## 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 early literacy skills, family literacy skills, early learning skills and parenting skills 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.



*Photo by Gene Storm*

*Enthralled by a book, Christina Arehart (center) and toddler, Rylee Rossen, 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.*

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

Christian Nevell Bowser, 19<sup>th</sup> century author



# INTRODUCTION

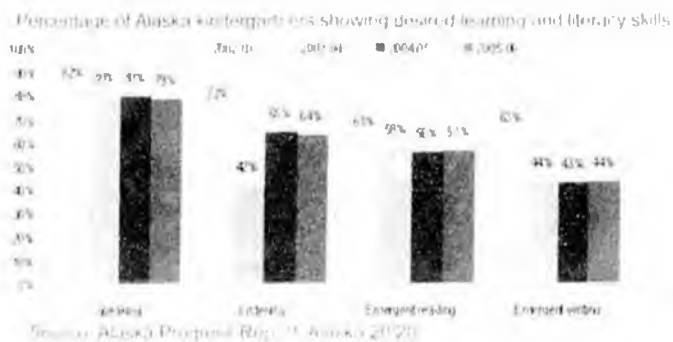
*Goal: Every child in Alaska arrives at school ready to read and ready to learn.*

*“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.



## *The Growing Movement*

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?

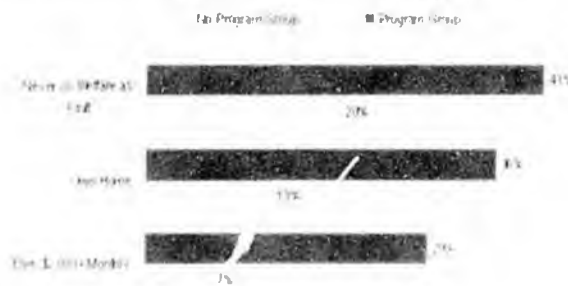
Recent research demonstrates what parents and early childhood educators have known for years: A critical period for brain development occurs between birth and age 6. Parents who read, tell stories and have positive daily interactions with their young child promote the child's brain development. Quality 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 any 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.

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.

Title: Economic Returns of Private Government Dollars Invested in Pre-K Through 3rd Grade



Source: Heckman, 2005

*"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.

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.



**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.  
Drawing by H.T. Chuganji

## *Guidance 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.



*Photo illustration by Gent Storm*

*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.*

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.

*Use case proven, family centered literacy programs to build and utilize the community.*

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 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 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 ELCs.
- Develop a voluntary and affordable early childhood education system statewide.

*Educate Alaskans about the societal 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 diverse funding from private, nonprofit, foundations 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, 6<sup>th</sup> 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 employees 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*

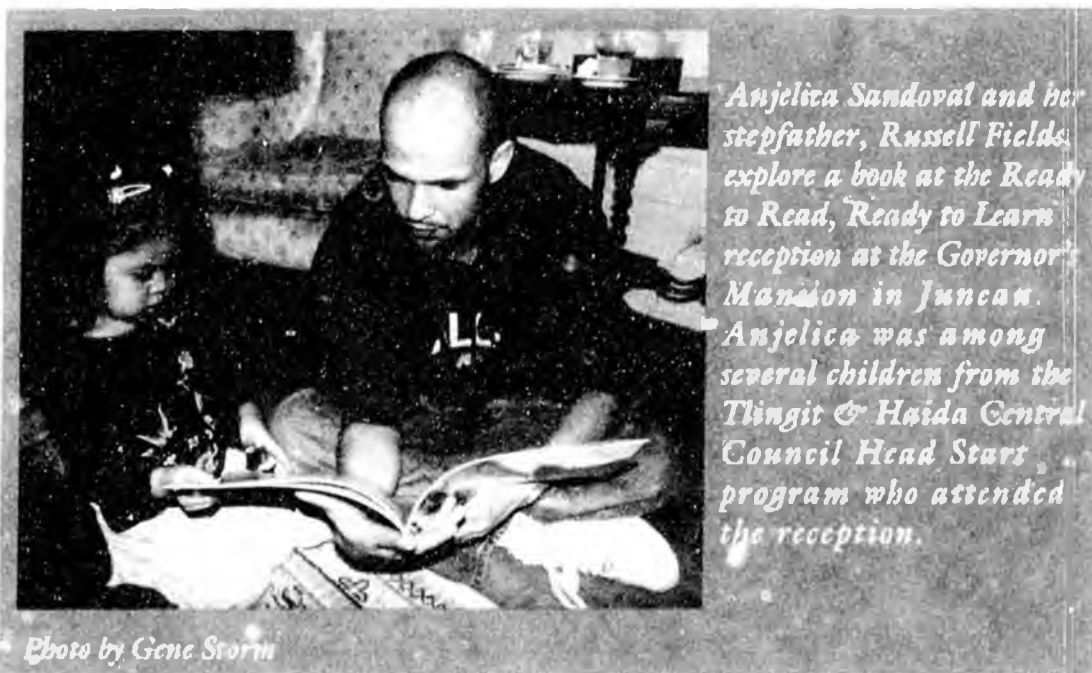
The support and leadership of the Rasmuson Foundation and The CRI Foundation in this initiative demonstrate philanthropic resources can help bring about change. This sector can galvanize financial and intellectual resources, command the attention of Alaska's political leadership, foster research and 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.



*Anjelica 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. Anjelica was among several children from the Tlingit & Haida Central Council Head Start program who attended the reception.*

*Photo by Gene Storm*



## END RESULTS

*We'll know we're successful 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.
- 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) Kasie Guthrie, Brenda Venasquez, 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

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Alaska Humanities Forum

**Michele Brown**

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Superintendent, Anchorage School District

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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  
**S**UCCESS **6**

  
*The CIRI Foundation*



*Thank you for your support!*



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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](http://bornlearning.org)

**Children's Defense Fund**

[childrensdefense.org](http://childrensdefense.org)

**Every Child Matters**

[everychildmatters.org](http://everychildmatters.org)

**Minneapolis Federal Reserve**

[minneapolisfed.org/research/studies/earlychild](http://minneapolisfed.org/research/studies/earlychild)

**Mind in the Making**

[mindinthemaking.org](http://mindinthemaking.org)

**National Governor's Association**

[nga.org](http://nga.org)

**National Institute for Early Education Research**

[nieer.org](http://nieer.org)

**Pre-K Now**

[preknow.org](http://preknow.org)

**Qualistar Early Learning**

[corra.org](http://corra.org)

**Smart Start North Carolina**

[smartstart-nc.org](http://smartstart-nc.org)

**State of Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines**

[educ.state.ak.us](http://educ.state.ak.us)

**State of Alaska, DHSS, Division of Public**

**Assistance, Child Care Program Office**

[hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/ccare](http://hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/ccare)

**System for Early Education Development**

[seed.alaska.edu](http://seed.alaska.edu)

**Talaris Research Institute**

[talaris.org](http://talaris.org)

**Thrive by Five**

[thrivebyfivewa.org](http://thrivebyfivewa.org)

**Voices for America's Children**

[voices.org](http://voices.org)

**Zero to Three**

[zerotothree.org](http://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: [artiquehd.com/artists/bio/artist/7](http://artiquehd.com/artists/bio/artist/7)



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**Qualistar Early Learning**  
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**"Ready to Read, Ready to Learn"**



Alaska's  
Early Childhood  
Investment

**2/28/07**

**PRESENTA-**

**TION:**

**STRENGTHEN-**

**ING THE**

**FAMILY**

**INITIATIVE**

# strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

## Partners

Alaska's State Leadership includes:

- Office of Children's Services, Department of Health & Social Services
- Alaska's Children's Trust Fund
- Teaching and Learning, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
- Child Care Programs, Division of Public Assistance
- Women, Children and Family Health, Division of Public Health
- Resource Center for Parents and Children, Prevent Child Abuse America Affiliate
- Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- System for Early Education and Development (SEED), University of Alaska Southeast

## ALASKA

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Significant SFI promotion practices, policy changes, or efforts:

- The SFI Leadership Team is made up of managers/decision makers from a wide variety of programs serving children.
- Five early care and learning programs piloted the Strengthening Families Alaska model. Teams from each program completed pre and post Self Assessments, attended an orientation and developed implementation plans. Programs were supported by face-to-face training events and continue to participate in a "Learning Network" which meets monthly to discuss family support issues and resources.
- Key staff from early childhood programs and child protection services have engaged in regional meetings to look at options for integrating key elements of the approach into existing policies, procedures, training opportunities and enhance their partnerships.
- Two Alaska Universities have begun incorporating the SFI framework into their early childhood and social work courses and practicum experiences.
- The Child Care Program is exploring possibilities for incorporating the SFI concepts into child care licensing.
- The Alaska Children's Trust is a member of the "SFI Learning Community" sponsored by the National Alliance of the Children's Trusts.

**The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan (ECCS) has integrated family support throughout the health, mental health, and early care and learning components of the Plan, including a recommendation to:**

- Embed family support and parent involvement components (**Strengthening Families**) in early care and learning programs.

**strengthening families**  
**THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION**

Developed by the  
 Center for the Study of Social Policy  
 Funded by the  
 Jons Duke Charitable Foundation

**EARLY YEARS MATTER!**

- The ongoing interaction between early experience and genetics affects the architecture of the maturing brain and the function of the immune system
- As it emerges, the quality of that architecture establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all the learning, behavior, and health that follow

Jill F. Stuebel, M.D., Center on the Developing Child, Presentation 1/18/17

**Relationships - the "Active Ingredients" of Early Experience**

- Nurturing and responsive interactions build healthy brain architecture that provides a strong foundation for learning, behavior, and health.
- When protective relationships are not provided, persistent stress results in the activation of physiological systems (e.g., elevated blood cortisol) that can disrupt brain architecture by impairing cell growth and interfering with the formation of healthy neural circuits.

Jill F. Stuebel, M.D., Center on the Developing Child, Presentation 1/18/17

**Early Childhood Adversity Can Influence a Range of Lifelong Outcomes**

- Research on the biology of stress helps explain some of the underlying causal mechanisms for differences in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health that are associated with poverty, maltreatment, and discrimination




Jill F. Stuebel, M.D., Center on the Developing Child, Presentation 1/18/17

- **Positive Stress**- moderate, short-lived stress responses, such as brief increases in heart rate or mild changes in stress hormone levels

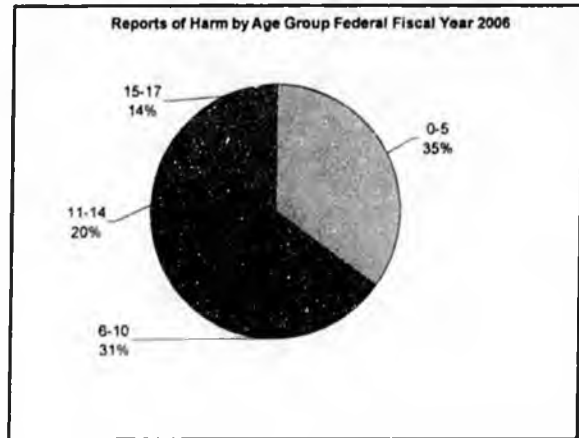


- **Tolerable Stress**- could disrupt brain architecture but is buffered by supportive relationships that facilitate adaptive coping



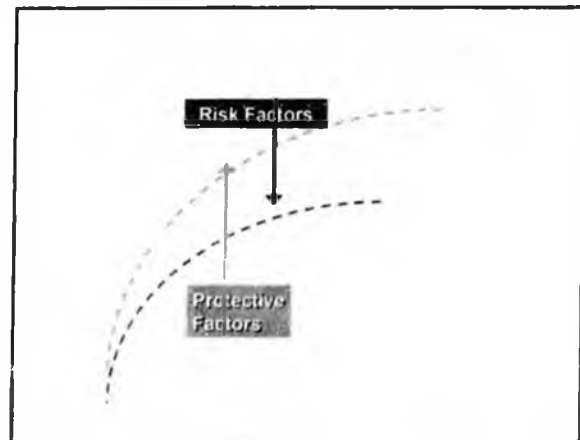


**•Toxic Stress-** strong and prolonged activation of the body's stress management systems in the absences of the buffering protection of adult support



**Developmental Science Points Toward an Integrated Two-Pronged Approach to Promoting Health Development**

- Universal and coordinated access to prenatal care, primary health services, and early care and education options to support families, facilitate child well-being, and detect problems in health or learning that can benefit from early intervention.
- Targeted and early provision of services for children experiencing toxic stress to reduce disruptions of the developing nervous and immune systems that can lead to later impairments in learning, behavior and both physical and mental health.



**strengthening families**  
THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

**In the beginning, CSSP was seeking a strategic, feasible approach to child abuse prevention that was:**

- systematic
- national
- reached large numbers of very young children
- would have impact long before abuse or neglect occurred

**Paradigm Shift**

- Old ideas:
  - "at risk" labels
  - highlighting bad parents
- New idea:
  - Go where the kids already are
  - Universal, non-stigmatizing, educational approach
  - Acting before anything bad happens

The hypothesis was that early care and education programs could be central because they offer:

- Daily contact with parents and children
- Uniquely intimate relationship with families
- A universal approach of positive encouragement and education for families
- An early warning and response system at the first sign of trouble



### New Child Abuse Prevention Framework

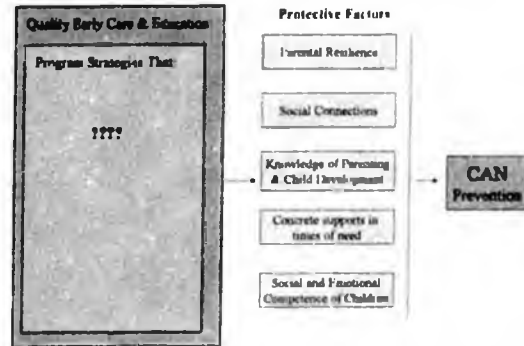
- Based on strengths (like family support)
- Linked to hard evidence (important to child abuse prevention advocates)
- Based on what early childhood programs already do
- Understandable to many partners

### Protective Factors

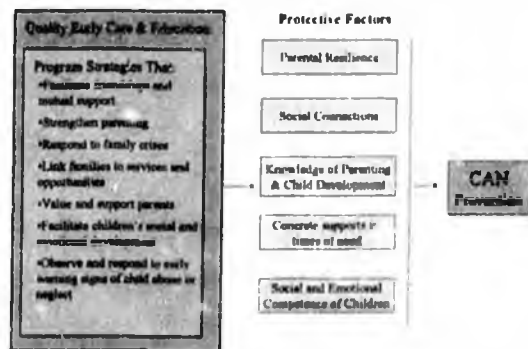
1. Parental Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children



### How Early Childhood programs contribute to prevention of child abuse and neglect



### How Early Childhood programs contribute to prevention of child abuse and neglect



Early care and education programs can serve several critical roles for young parents:

- as a primary source of information and support for young families
- as a gateway to outside services or supports such as health or mental health services, transportation, and even education, housing and jobs
- as the key early warning system when families or children are in trouble.

## A few persuasive States

- Alaska
- Arkansas
- Illinois
- Missouri
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island
- Wisconsin



## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Tammy Sandoval, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Children's Services, DHSS  
Mary Rosenzweig, Executive Director, Alaska's Children's Trust Fund  
Claudia Shanley, Systems Reform Administrator, OCS, DHSS  
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Candace Winkler, Executive Director, Child Care Connection, Child Care Resource and Referral Network Representative  
Carol Prentice, Program Manager, SEED, UAS  
Shen White, Parent Representative

## Alaska's Goals

- To highlight and expand the valuable role that early care and education programs play in their efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect
- To actively engage the early care and education community in becoming key stakeholders in carrying out child abuse and neglect prevention strategies

- To enhance collaboration between the Office of Children's Services, Child Protection Program staff and the early care and education community statewide
- To link early care and education and child protection programs systems change efforts into a cohesive plan for statewide implementation

## Pilot Programs

- Boys & Girls Clubs ANCH
- Open Arms FBKS
- Juneau Montessori School JUNEAU
- RurAL CAP Child Development Center ANCH
- Bristol Bay Head Start Program DILLINGHAM



## PILOT PROGRAMS

- Completed Pre & Posts Self-Assessments
- Developed Implementation Plans
- Attended orientation and training
- Participated in monthly "Learning Network" teleconferences
- Received mini-grants of \$10,000

**AREAS WITH AT LEAST 30%  
IMPROVEMENT on POST-ASSESSMENT**

- 5 - Facilitate Friendship and Mutual Support
- 1 - Strengthening Parenting
- 2 - Respond to Family Crisis
- 3 - Link Families to Services & Opportunities
- 4 - Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development
- 5 - Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of CA/N
- 4 - Value & Support Parents

**The Leadership Team is:**

- Facilitating discussion with key staff from early childhood programs and child protection services to look at ways to strengthen partnerships and options for integrating key elements of the approach into existing policies and procedures, and training opportunities.
- Working with early childhood training and education programs to use consistent vocabulary and goals regarding protective factors in their curriculum.
- Promoting the Strengthen Families model through presentations at conferences and workshops.
- Working to expand the Strengthening Families principles statewide.

**Policies that Affect Child Health and Development  
Extend Beyond Access to Medical Care and  
Education**

- If we really want to promote better outcomes for children, then we must apply the science of early childhood and early brain development in an integrated fashion to a broad range of policies....

Including welfare reform, housing, family and medical leave, adult mental health, and environmental protection, among others.

**Young Children and their Families  
Need Champions**

"The time has come to address significant inequalities in opportunity, beginning in the earliest years of life, as both a moral responsibility and critical investment in our nation's social and economic future."

Jack P. Shonkoff, M.S., Center on the Developing Child, Presentation 1/18/07



**THANK YOU!**

a new, effective, and affordable  
strategy for child abuse and  
neglect prevention



strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION/CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY

a new, effective, and affordable  
strategy for child abuse and  
neglect prevention



strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

# a new, effective, and affordable strategy for child abuse and neglect prevention

Contrary to the worry of some parents, quality early childhood programs may strengthen the bond between parents and children rather than weaken it – and when a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, an early childhood program that reaches out to parents may be the best prevention strategy. In 2003, staff from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (the Center) conducted intensive research on early care and education programs across the country whose exemplary work strengthens five protective factors known to be correlated with reductions in child abuse and neglect:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

The Center's work is the first time that research knowledge about child abuse prevention has been strategically linked to similar knowledge about good quality early care and education to explore the role that early childhood programs can play in strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect. The Center's research, reinforced by counsel from a national advisory panel of experts in child abuse prevention, early childhood education, and family support, has led to the development of a new framework for preventing abuse and neglect that recognizes a central role for early childhood professionals.

"Our work found that small but significant changes in programming and staffing of early childhood programs offer an effective new strategy for supporting parents under stress and preventing harm to children," said Judy Langford, project director. "These changes enable programs to respond quickly and effectively to help families that are struggling or children who are at risk of harm or who exhibit challenging behaviors," she added. "And the good news is that any program can make changes with a small investment in resources and planning."

The findings are supported by a recently released longitudinal study, conducted by Arthur Reynolds at the University of Wisconsin, of children and families served by a federally funded early childhood program in the Chicago public schools. The

Chicago program used resource coordinators to help parents receive the support and services they needed to care for their children at home and to foster social support among parents. The 18 years of research show that children who attended the preschool intervention program, compared to those who did not, had a 52 percent lower rate of maltreatment by age 17.

## SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FROM EXEMPLARY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS:

Many existing early childhood programs already operate in ways that strengthen one or more of the five protective factors. It is the intent of the new strategy to help practitioners understand the greater impact of what they are already doing and to encourage them to supplement their programs in affordable ways so that they will be more powerful forces against child abuse and neglect.

The five protective factors that are at the heart of the new prevention approach are interrelated, and strategies aimed primarily at achieving one factor often contribute to achieving another as well. These are some of the strategies that the Center discovered in their research that contribute to child abuse and neglect prevention:

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support. Programs offered many opportunities for parents to get to know each other, develop mutual support systems and take leadership roles. Strategies included sports teams, potlucks, classes, camping trips and field trips, advisory groups, board leadership and volunteer opportunities. Special outreach to fathers and extended family members was common.
- Strengthen parenting. Programs offered many ways for parents to get support on parenting issues when they needed it—a class or a support group, opportunities to meet with teachers, family support workers or other staff, home visits, or resources from a lending library. Most programs had classroom designs or technology that allowed parents to observe their children easily. Both parents and staff described the importance of the everyday opportunities at the centers for parents to understand their children's behavior and respond to it more effectively.

*Our work found that small but significant changes in programming and staffing of early childhood programs offer an effective new strategy for supporting parents under stress and preventing harm to children.* — Judy Langford, project director

- Respond to family crises. In addition to day-to-day contact between teachers and parents that helped develop good relationships and support parents every day, good programs offered extra support to families when they needed it through designated family support workers or other staff who had the time, training, and expertise to connect families to the support they needed. All programs responded when families faced illnesses, job loss, housing problems, and other issues.
- Link families to services and opportunities. Programs offered parents links to job training, education, health providers and other essential services through their networks in the community. Most programs had family support workers on staff who helped to assess family needs and goals and connect them to services and supports. Mental health consultants were part of almost every program, helping parents and staff work effectively with children who had been excluded from previous programs for challenging behavior, and helping to destigmatize mental health services for children, parents, and staff.
- Value and support parents. Because the relationship between parents and teachers is essential to the programs' ability to connect with parents, support, training, and supervision of teachers to help them do this effectively was very important. Program leaders were involved in many day-to-day activities and were very accessible

to staff and parents. Teaching staff were encouraged to take initiative in their relationships with families and address concerns when they arose, knowing that they had back-up from supervisors and other staff within the program. Many staff members were especially recruited

- Facilitate children's social and emotional development. Many programs used "I Can Problem Solve", "Second Step" or some other curriculum focused on helping children to articulate their feelings and get along with others. Parents in many of the programs described how the curriculum influenced their perspectives on their children and their behavior toward the child when children brought home what they learned in the classroom.
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect. All programs trained and supported staff to observe children carefully and respond at the first sign of any difficulty. Programs used indicators such as frequent absences, missing payments, late pick-ups, or signs of parental stress as opportunities to proactively reach out to families and connect them with family support or other services. Special protocols for child abuse or neglect reporting allowed programs to provide continuity and support for families that were the subject of reports. Parents at several programs backed up the effectiveness of this strategy with personal stories of how the programs had helped them

alter situations that were dangerous for children and how they continue to be involved with the program. Most programs also developed ongoing relationships with staff at child protective services to ensure that children were safe and parents got the services they needed.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTER

To support early childhood programs in effectively addressing all five protective factors, the Center makes available the following resources, which will help strengthen existing program elements and identify affordable and workable additional elements.

- Descriptions of the exemplary programs studied and the ways in which they build protective factors against child abuse and neglect.
- A program handbook and self-assessment tool for programs that are interested in enhancing their ability to support and strengthen families.
- A website with information on the exemplary programs and other tools.
- Recommendations for early childhood infrastructure improvements that would allow early childhood programs to more effectively implement these strategies.
- Research review on protective factors and their links to reducing child abuse and neglect.

# strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

## ABOUT STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

This program was created with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation in New York and managed by the Center staff Judy Langford and Nilufer Abbas. You can contact them at [judy.langford@cssp.org](mailto:judy.langford@cssp.org) or [nilufer.abbas@cssp.org](mailto:nilufer.abbas@cssp.org).

## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY

The Center for the Study of Social Policy promotes public policies and programs that support children, families and their communities, improve the lives of low-income and disadvantaged children, and help them reach their full potential. The Center works in partnership with researchers, funders, state and local government, and private foundations to provide policy, research, and technical assistance to improve the lives of children and families.

[www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org)

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*Stan Hubbard*

Signature of Camera Operator

*5-29-2009*

Date

**3/13/07**

**PRESENTA-**

**TION:**

**CITIZEN**

**REVIEW**

**PANEL**



2002

**Alaska Citizen Review Panel  
Annual Report**

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