

Y&E Lessons in Learning

SUMMER 2003

Youth and Education Program News

- Able to Play Project mobilizes communities to build playgrounds for all children
- New leadership effort helps communities improve teaching and learning
- Foster care initiative provides lessons in changing systems that serve children
- Programs "spark" communities to prepare children better for school

Communities, Children & Change

Picture a roomful of community members, representing different parts of town and different backgrounds, easing chairs up to the table. You see young and old, diversity in race and income. There are traditional civic leaders and grassroots leaders, thinkers and doers, talkers and listeners. Some provide services, others receive them. Some speak for institutions, others for neighborhoods.

These stakeholders come to the table around a common issue. Oftentimes it's the first time they've united around a common goal. There are new ideas, new voices, and new ways of working together. Together, they seek change.

Communities are central to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's mission "to help people help themselves." To support community-driven solutions to some of society's most intractable challenges, the Foundation is frequently a catalyst, convener, and unifier. We provide resources, space, and time. We facilitate the process of sharing, cooperating, and collaborating. We help expand partnerships, strengthen bonds, and form new relationships that add up to better lives and ways of doing things.

The overall goal of Youth and Education Programs is to increase learning by young people who are most vulnerable to failure. This edition of "Y&E Lessons in Learning" examines how community partnerships are working together in different ways toward this goal.

In a new Foundation program, six groups nationwide each have identified 25 Fellows to work collectively to improve teaching and learning in their communities. Called the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change series, this endeavor builds on the Foundation's long history of leadership development.

As you'll read in the Able to Play cover story, more than a dozen Michigan communities are beginning the exciting process of mobilizing resources to design and build state-of-the-art playgrounds for children of all abilities. Elsewhere, the SPARK initiative is uniting communities and states to create a smoother transition to school for youngsters who are likely to start school behind.



Finally, there are lessons of success from 11 communities that were part of the Families for Kids initiative. This effort provided an extraordinary example of how communities can change not only individual programs but entire systems, in this case state and local systems of adoption and foster care. The key was all stakeholders looking at the situation through the eyes of a child and aligning their behavior accordingly.

As we in Youth and Education seek lessons to learn, looking through the child's eyes is a lens we can use for much of our work with children, youth, and communities.

Gail McClure

Vice President for Programs

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Playgrounds Where All Kids Are Able to Play

In 1931, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation established the first school in the United States to integrate regular and special education students in the classroom. In honor of its 75th Anniversary in 2005, the Foundation is supporting a statewide effort in Michigan to help communities build fully integrated, universally accessible playgrounds and raise awareness about the benefits of children of all abilities playing together.

Imagine a childhood in which monkey bars are out of reach, seesaws are too dangerous, and slides don't accommodate you. For too many children with special needs—especially children who are physically challenged—play can be restricted and frustrating.

In response, the Kellogg Foundation's Youth and Education team is funding the Able to Play Project, a special effort to build barrier-free playgrounds throughout Michigan. These are playgrounds that not only greatly expand play opportunities for children with special needs but also serve as a rallying

point for communities to mobilize resources for integration and disability issues.

"Play is an absolute necessity for the development of children's language, motor, and social skills," says Gail McClure, vice president for Youth and Education Programs. "The idea behind the Able to Play Project is that these new play areas will be inclusive of all children—no one is left out."

This is precisely the vision of the National Center for Boundless Playgrounds,[®] the nonprofit organization coordinating the project. The Connecticut-based group was established in 1997 by a team of parents and child development professionals that was dedicated to working with communities

to create fully integrated, universally accessible play environments for all children.

Much of the inspiration for Boundless Playgrounds (BP) came from its cofounder and executive director Amy Jaffe Barzach and her desire to honor the short life of her son, Jonathon, who died of spinal muscular atrophy in 1995. Together with hundreds of volunteers and donations, Barzach's community built a special, inclusive playground in memory of Jonathon. After an article appeared in "Time" magazine, the phone began ringing. The concept of "boundless playgrounds" touched a nerve.

In 1998, Boundless Playgrounds grew, expanding with a grant from the Hasbro ➤





Boundless Playgrounds are designed to be fun, rigorous, and challenging places for *all* children—not just special needs kids.

► Children's Foundation to launch a national awareness campaign and to fund technical assistance to 24 communities. By mid-2003, BP had helped more than 60 communities in 21 states develop their own playgrounds.

Now BP is launching a major statewide effort in Michigan with a multimillion-dollar Kellogg Foundation grant. Most of the award will provide Able to Play challenge grants and technical, design, and support services to 13 communities.

"We're pleased these Michigan communities will have completed their learning and construction by 2005 when we celebrate the Foundation's 75th Anniversary," says the Foundation's McClure. "The Able to Play Project ties in very appropriately with the original vision of Mr. Kellogg to help children and create positive community change. This will continue that legacy."

Seven additional communities will receive smaller "seed" awards and design mentoring services. Other Able to Play applicants will be offered opportunities to attend BP's "basic training" workshops that review special play behavior and design criteria.

An ancillary component of the project includes a design competition that is intended to have long-term impact on the art and science of playgrounds. Education and outreach programs along with an upgraded Web site will provide help.

What makes a Boundless Playground unique?

Although traditional playgrounds may have been built with consideration of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Boundless Playgrounds play environments reach even higher to ensure that children with and without disabilities can play together, according to Jean Schappet, BP's cofounder and creative director.

"Boundless Playgrounds not only include the ADA focus on removing barriers to access, but also incorporate our organization's commitment to child development, rigor, and challenge for all children," Schappet adds. "We believe in the importance of play as an opportunity for learning."

In terms of barriers, federal guidelines require that 50 percent of a playground's elevated structure be accessible. On larger playgrounds, 25 percent of the elevated play platforms must be ramped. By comparison, BP requires that at least 70 percent of play activities serve children with physical disabilities, allowing for greater "integration" of all children.

However, BP play spaces are not just about wheelchair access. They are designed to address the needs of children with sensory and developmental disabilities, too. They are designed to be fun, rigorous, and challenging places for *all* children—not just special needs kids. ►

The Able to Play Project is funded by a special grant that is part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's 75th Anniversary, which will be formally celebrated in 2005. W.K. Kellogg

himself recognized the limited options and resources for children and families with special needs. After an accident, Mr. Kellogg's grandson, Kenneth, was permanently disabled. "[A]lthough I was amply able to pay the medical ... bills, I found it almost impossible to obtain adequate treatment for him ...," he wrote. "This caused me to wonder what difficulties were in the paths of needy parents who seek help for their children when catastrophe strikes, and I resolved to lend what aid I could to such children."



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION
FROM VISION TO INNOVATIVE IMPACT

Able to Play includes a component that promises to have long-term impact on the art and science of playgrounds.



Educational Benefits of Boundless Play

After a Boundless Playground was built at the Baer School in Baltimore, Maryland, principal Shari Huene-Johnson saw significant developmental growth in children with severe disabilities. Before the playground was installed, these students averaged a developmental growth of 1.7 months in each 6-month period. The rate more than doubled afterwards. "That's a phenomenal figure for us," says Huene-Johnson, "and directly attributable to our Boundless Playground, which we use as an outdoor classroom."



Able to Play Project

- Statewide Michigan effort to build fully integrated, universally accessible playgrounds and raise awareness of the needs of children with disabilities
- Challenge grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$225,000 and technical assistance will help 13 communities open playgrounds by 2005
- Smaller seed grants and design mentoring for 7 other communities will support the development of additional playgrounds
- Scholarships for playground design and development workshops offered to all other applicants
- Through education and outreach—including collaborating with universities and conference presentations—Boundless Playgrounds will seek to influence future design of children's play environments

Play Is Vital to Children's Development

Children, regardless of ability or disability, learn to navigate their world through play. Evidence from research into brain development shows that challenging environments like well-designed playgrounds will encourage social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth for children.¹

One in ten children has some type of disability that makes it hard or impossible for them to play on a traditional playground. Boundless Playgrounds projects are designed with a difference. More than 70 percent of the playground is universally accessible to children with physical disabilities, incorporating sensory-rich activities. As a result, children with physical, sensory, and developmental disabilities, and children without disabilities, can actively, safely, and enjoyably play together, each at their own highest level of ability.

Often the play activities and equipment included specifically for children with special needs are especially enjoyed by children without disabilities, who could play anywhere.

¹ "Play is Essential for Brain Development," published by the Children's Institute for Learning and Brain Development

"When you can play in an environment without limitation, it truly is a 'boundless' experience."

► The process of creating Boundless Playgrounds is also about educating and changing communities.

"The more communities work with the people and children with disabilities, and the more young children of all abilities play together, the more all kinds of barriers disappear," says Leslyn Odom Clark, BP director of programs.

BP staff say that their playgrounds become a focal point for both children's play and community change.

"People drive hours to experience a Boundless Playground," says Schappert. "When they go back to their own communities, their expectations have been completely changed. They begin to demand that kind of play space.

"It's market-driven," she adds. "Playground equipment manufacturers respond to customers' needs. We've already begun to see that up to 12 additional playgrounds are spawned from each Boundless Playground developed. That's the beauty of what the Able to Play project will bring to Michigan—these play environments will serve as catalysts

where people will see what a playground can be and want to push their own community to do something just like it."

Boundless Playgrounds is working with the Pittsburgh-based Center for Creative Play, a nationally recognized leader in indoor spaces. The Center will work with Boundless Playgrounds to help two Michigan grantee communities first develop and then implement indoor projects.

The Michigan sites will receive assistance from BP and the Center, including coaching on how to raise matching funds, plan, build, and involve the community even more in their play environment projects. First, each community will assess its needs through a strategic planning process that involves adult stakeholders and children with and without disabilities. Then, BP and Center designers will work in collaboration with local landscape architects, architects, builders, design professionals, and playground project committees to develop play environments that meet the Able to Play criteria.

Then there's the matter of cost. There is no average cost of construction. But with such features as added ramps, educational activities, and safe, navigable ground surfaces, the total cost can range from \$150,000 to \$400,000 or more. Able to Play challenge grants will give each grantee a

strong start, but each grantee must mobilize its community to raise other financial and in-kind resources and, finally, drive the playground projects to completion.

To encourage participation, workshops were held throughout Michigan. Ultimately, grant applications were received from every region of the state. A national panel of judges made up of doctors, educators, nonprofit executives, and other professionals reviewed the applications.

"The judging was weighted in favor of applicants that demonstrated real community collaboration," says Dianne Noth, senior director of operations for Boundless Playgrounds, "as well as commitment to the concept of children and people of all ages and all abilities being able to play together." ✎



Visit www.abletoplay.org and take a "virtual tour" of a groundbreaking Boundless Playground effort.

Michigan's Able to Play Grantees

In addition to these grant recipients, all other applicants will be offered scholarships to attend Boundless Playground basic training, a three-day workshop on the design of playgrounds based on Boundless Playground Play Behavior Framework and Design Criteria.



The 13 Able to Play Grantees

Organization	Project Location	Type	Budget
Youth Sport and Recreation Commission	Dad Butler Playfield, Detroit	Outdoor	\$ 349,000
Washtenaw Intermediate School District	High Point School, Ann Arbor	Outdoor	392,883
Junior League of Kalamazoo	Upjohn Park, Kalamazoo	Outdoor	675,515
City of Wyoming	Metropolitan Health Village, Wyoming	Outdoor	225,000
Lansing School District	Henry H. North Elementary School	Outdoor	278,671
Sanilac County Community Foundation	Sandusky City Park, Sandusky	Outdoor	156,500
Saginaw Community Foundation	Kochville Township	Outdoor	398,000
Watersmeet Township School	Watersmeet Township School, Watersmeet	Outdoor	155,030
Hillman Community Education Foundation	Hillman Township Tournament Park, Hillman	Outdoor	211,000
Sault Ste. Marie Play Advisory Committee	New Elementary Building, Sault Ste. Marie	Outdoor	502,000
Battle Creek Community Foundation	Bailey Park, Battle Creek	Outdoor	472,075
Flint Community Schools	Summerfield-Longfellow Schools, Flint	Outdoor	326,800
Life Services System: Families Play Together, Learn Together	Life Services System, Holland	Indoor	863,734

The 7 Design Service Grantees

Six will receive \$25,000 awards, which include challenge grants, design mentoring services and materials from Boundless Playgrounds, and one will receive services from the Center for Creative Play.

Organization	Project Location	Type
West Ottawa Public Schools	Woodside Elementary School, Holland	Outdoor
People's Community Services	Delray Memorial Park, Detroit	Outdoor
Wing Lake Developmental Center	Wing Lake Developmental Center, Bloomfield Hills	Outdoor
Baraga County Community Foundation	Keweenaw Bay Children's Center, Keweenaw Bay	Indoor
Ingham County Parks	Hawk Island County Park, Lansing	Outdoor
Detroit Open School Parent Council	Detroit Open School, Detroit	Outdoor
Lenawee Community Foundation	Ellis Park, Blissfield	Outdoor

Youth-Powered Playground in Sandusky

In Sandusky, Michigan, population just over 2,400, high school students are leading a communitywide effort to help all children be able to play, using a powerful combination of youthful determination and drive. In fact, their Able to Play effort began years before Able to Play was launched.

In November 2000, a group of high school students decided to “gift” a revitalized playground to their community. The K.I.D. Committee (Kids Illustrating Determination) was the brainstorm of a high school senior, Mandy Nesbit, who rallied fellow students to begin raising money for new and safe playground equipment for the city. Nesbit enlisted the guidance of one of her teachers, George Lesacki, and the teens went to work raising money.

“When Mandy graduated, I took over as president,” says Beth Morningstar, who had served as a volunteer in the project, and just finished her junior year at Sandusky High School. “We had been concentrating on fund-raising, but when we learned about the Able to Play matching grant, we were inspired to write the grant proposal.”

Lesacki is quick to point out that it was Morningstar who took the initiative to write the grant herself, then meet with other students for their input. “She took it as a personal challenge and growth opportunity.”

Meanwhile, students continued fund-raising efforts, using every tool from can and bottle drives to a discount golf cart sale. Even the elementary schools have been involved through “Penny Wars,” in which elementary classes compete by bringing in piles of pennies. By May 2003, the K.I.D.S. Committee had garnered \$20,000 toward the Able to Play effort.

“The entire community is behind us, from our school board to our local businesses. The Sanilac County Community Foundation even awarded us a matching grant,” says



**“This is just the latest
in a series of community efforts the
students have gotten behind.”**

Momingstar. “We’re a small community, and we are competing for funds with things like a new hockey arena the community recently funded. But people here are very supportive and pull together.”

“The students have really taken this idea and run with it,” says Lesacki. “This is just the latest in a series of community efforts the students have gotten behind. We don’t look at the park project as that remarkable. It’s just the way young people are here.

“The students meet in my classroom every Tuesday morning, and I am just there for feedback. It’s their meeting, and they throw their ideas out there. Beth Morningstar has really been a go-getter.”

There are only about 1,400 students in the entire school district. “What they lack in numbers they make up for in enthusiasm,” says Lesacki. “When our community recreation director went to the first Able to Play grant writing meeting, she came back with the impression that a community build idea was too labor intensive—that a company should be hired to build the play structure. But our students wanted ownership. They said, ‘No way, we’re going to build it.’”

That’s exactly the community spirit that impressed Boundless Playgrounds. “With us, the community builds the playground with the guidance of professionals, and those professionals do what needs to be done for safety and reliability,” says Debbie Midford, program manager at the National Center for Boundless Playgrounds. “But it definitely takes a community effort.”

In Sandusky, it takes the kids. The community involvement lessons Nesbit learned in Sandusky have remained important to her, even as she finished her freshman year at Northern Michigan University, nearly 400 miles from home. “I love getting involved,” she says. “It gives me a kind of joy to make a difference.” After her first year in college, she’s changing to a dual major in criminal justice and environmental science because, in part, it will provide opportunities to work with communities.

When Nesbit learned Sandusky had received the Able to Play grant, she skipped down the halls of her university dormitory, shouting for joy.

U.P. Community Rallies Around Playground

When your remote community averages 100 to 150 inches of snow over a very long winter, providing indoor play opportunities for children is a critical need. In their Able to Play proposal, the Sault Ste. Marie Able to Play Advisory Council made this need dramatically clear by including



a photograph of a child bundled in winter gear, in a wheelchair, gazing at a mound of snow covering the city's outdoor playground. Point made.

Even more dramatic was the way the community rallied around the effort to

become an Able to Play grantee. Just three years before, the community had thrown its support behind an outdoor playground project, and the Council was a little concerned there might be a "been there, done that" attitude about supporting an indoor play space.

The concern was unwarranted. "There was still so much energy and enthusiasm for doing something like this together," says Kerry O'Conner, who chairs the Board of Directors for the Chippewa Community Foundation.

Tony McLain, chair of the Sault Ste. Marie Able to Play Advisory Council, completely agrees. "We invited a handful of key people to help put together the Able to Play proposal, but before long we had volunteers coming forward from everywhere in the community. This kind of project has really built community will and energy.

"I've spent most of my career working in communities that really don't have the resources that many communities have, and to see our community come together like this, around a project like this, is really fulfilling," says McLain,

who retired as school superintendent in January. "What it means is that you have a community that's working for itself, using all of its resources, to do things for its children of all abilities."

One very creative feature of the Sault Ste. Marie play space is that it will actually be a kind of hybrid—an outdoor Boundless Playground in an enclosed play space with a 25-foot ceiling. "It'll be kind of like a playground in a gym," says O'Conner, adding that such a play space will allow more independent play than do interior play spaces focusing on serving the disabled, which require more staff involvement.

O'Conner points out that approximately 16 percent of the young people ages 5 to 20 in the community have some kind of disability. "We wanted a place where all kids could play together, those with and without disabilities. This will add tremendously to what young children can do during our long, harsh winters."

McLain adds that the indoor Boundless Playground project will serve a far larger area than relatively isolated Sault Ste. Marie. "We will literally serve most of the Upper Peninsula, parts of Canada, and expect to draw visitors from the northern Lower Peninsula as well. Altogether, we expect to draw visitors from a 350-square-mile area."

An additional draw for the Sault Ste. Marie Able to Play project is that it plans to combine the best of universally accessible play spaces with regularly changing educational experiences, such as interactive exhibits about Upper Peninsula history and culture, separately funded by local efforts. "We want to meet the needs of universal accessibility to all children, while also providing educational opportunity on a lot of different levels," says O'Conner. "This will provide an experience that kids will want to come back to over and over during the year."

For Heather MacDonald, a social worker who is the parent of a child with disabilities, the indoor play space will provide play opportunities unavailable anywhere in the Upper Peninsula. "The sensory play is very important to my twelve-year-old daughter—she loves it," says MacDonald, "and the fact that it will be available all year round in our own community is very exciting.

"Plus, I work with a lot of families who are really struggling, and many of them can't afford to have a lot of toys and things that are stimulating and fun in the home. But the ability to go someplace nearby, without charge, is really going to help them."



Kellogg Foundation Promotes Youth Voices in Special Comic Book



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W.K. Kellogg as a comic book superhero?

That's one possible concept in a special project designed to engage young people and promote youth voices as part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's upcoming 75th Anniversary.

Involving as many as 75 aspiring artists and illustrators, the project's main goal is to increase young people's understanding of philanthropy, giving, and volunteering. A team of student artists will produce a comic book with these themes to be published in 2005, the anniversary year.

The effort is the result of a unique partnership between the Kellogg Foundation and Worldstudio Foundation, a New York-based group dedicated to fostering the education of student artists, architects, illustrators, and graphic designers. For each of three years, Worldstudio is awarding 25 scholarships to minority students at art schools and colleges nationwide. The scholarships total \$1,500 each.

"They really appreciate the recognition even more than the financial support," says Roben Stikeman, the program's director.

The competition is juried each year by a roster of New York City illustrators. Awardees combine their passion for their art with a commitment to giving back to their community.

"The whole idea is to give young people a comic book that will inspire them and educate them on the ideals of philanthropy and giving back to their community," says Mark Randall, vice president of Worldstudio Foundation.

From the scholarship recipients, a select group of students is offered a summer internship with a professional mentor. The result of this collaboration will be a six-page comic strip to be included in the final book. Many students also will work with a fiction writer to help them craft the story.

To highlight this unique mentoring program through completion in 2005, future issues of "Y&E Lessons in Learning" will feature work by the student artists. To learn more about Worldstudio Foundation and the scholarship recipients, visit www.worldstudio.org.



The First 24 Artists

Pictured left to right:

- Lily Kim, Margaret Berg, Mary Pelshak, Erwin Lian,
- Gamaal Tyrone Wilson, Wonravee Chavalit,
- Cayetano Ferrer, Sutida Boonjindasap, Trung Lac,
- Francisco Araujo, Daehyuk Sim, So Ngo Ng,
- Ferhana Ferdous, Tomoe Sasaki, Tran Do,
- Alice Li, Justin Morgan, Patrick Rocha,
- Ayuna Collins, Jenny Pan, Daniel Barker,
- Cheng-Ju Wen Chang, Andrew Thornton,
- and Shores Alaudini.

Tomoe Sasaki

This page is from the comic created by Tomoe Sasaki, an art student from Japan studying at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

“In my artwork, I am emphasizing the depiction of human emotions. I often use ‘unreal’ skin colors so that the viewer cannot tell the ethnic background of the model. Doing so, I am trying to make all viewers relate their emotions to my painting and feel something without stereotyping.”

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Patrick Rocha

This frame is from the comic created by Patrick Rocha, a Mexican-American art student from Kansas City studying at the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

“In future chapters of my life, I would like to continue what I am doing now, which is learning, creating, and giving. Back home, I was involved with the local muralists to help create public art that was innovative and precise. This is what I would love to keep doing in the future, sharing my work with communities.”



Families for Kids: A Powerful Approach to System Reform

THE FREEDOM TO PURSUE LOCALLY DEFINED METHODS WHILE SPEAKING A COMMON LANGUAGE OF DIRECTIONS AND VALUES ALLOWED FAMILIES FOR KIDS SITES TO MOVE MOUNTAINS. • IT IS RARE WHEN ANY LARGE UNDERTAKING TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE SUCCEEDS ON MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS—IMPROVING THE LIVES OF TENS OF THOUSANDS, CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS, INFORMING NATIONAL POLICY, INFLUENCING A FIELD'S CORE PRACTICES, IMPROVING COLLABORATION, AND EMPOWERING NEW VOICES.

Families for Kids (FFK) is such a rarity, by most all accounts. Funded from 1993 to 2000 by the Kellogg Foundation, the \$38.5 million reform initiative sought to promote the timely placement of "waiting children" into loving, permanent homes. Permanency for children languishing in foster care who would not be returning to their biological families was the initiative's main focus.

As FFK was being conceived, national foster care statistics clearly pointed to a crisis, particularly for children of color, teens, sibling groups, and those with other special needs. Between 1982 and 1992, the number of children living in foster care had swelled from 262,000 to 442,000. By 1994, there

were approximately 500,000 children in foster care. Up to 100,000 of these children would not be returning to their biological families yet only about 19,000 annually were being placed in adoptive homes, and those few fortunate enough to be adopted were spending an average of between 3.5 to 5.5 years in "temporary care," often moving frequently from one foster home to another.

By 1999, child welfare systems in FFK's 11 implementation sites* had placed approximately 60,000 children into adoptive homes and guardianships. A substantial increase in placement rates and significant decreases in the time children spent in institutional care were also

achieved, according to "Families for Kids: Final Cluster Evaluation Report," prepared by Walter R. McDonald & Associates in 2000.

What lessons can FFK's approach offer for others pursuing system reform? Evaluators and project directors suggest that two features of FFK's underlying structure were especially important in driving successes.

First, the Foundation did not advance a particular model of service as the centerpiece of reform, though such "one-size-fits-all" strategies dominate the recent history of child welfare reform. Instead, after broad consultation, the Foundation ➤



Pictured after their adoptions are seven of the 60,000 kids placed in loving, permanent homes by Families for Kids implementation sites (1993–1999).



Lessons Learned

FFK's Common Language of Desired Directions and Values

One Vision: “A loving, *permanent* family for every waiting child.”

One Perspective: A commitment to “see reform through the eyes of a child.”

Six Outcomes (or “Practice Standards”) to Reshape Systems of Care:

- One year to permanency for each waiting child
- One stable foster care placement
- One family-friendly assessment
- One caseworker or casework team
- Comprehensive support for families
- Elimination of the current “backlog” of waiting children

A Set of Values Embraced by All Sites:

- Assume a fresh start is possible and shape new systems of care
- Practice diversity and community engagement
- Invest in people and building collaborative relationships
- Pursue a multitude of approaches simultaneously
- Expand the reach of known best practices

Frequent National Networking Meetings and “Summits” to

- Teach and build commitment to the “common language”
- Widen the circle of allies
- Help sites negotiate the challenges of system reform

► developed a vivid “common language” of directions and values to guide the entire initiative.

Second, the Foundation provided sites with the freedom and resources to develop their own programmatic methods to achieve shared aims. This balancing act between prescribed structure and freedom to innovate created fertile ground for both local experimentation and initiative-level accomplishments.

In the long run, the close fit that developed in many states between site innovations and community needs allowed strong local constituencies to form and help pave the way for new fiscal support after Foundation implementation grants ended.



A Common Language of Directions and Values

The overarching aim of the initiative was embodied in an exhortation as ambitious as it was memorable: “a loving, *permanent* family for every waiting child.” Putting the focus squarely on permanency, this vision suggested that all waiting children deserved and could be placed with “forever families.” To make the vision real, participants willingly committed to *see reform through the eyes of a child*, gauging every decision by its likely effect on waiting children. Systems themselves were to be reshaped by six new outcomes (or “practice standards”):

- one year to permanency
- one stable foster care placement
- one family-friendly assessment
- one caseworker or casework team
- comprehensive family support
- elimination of the current “backlog” of waiting children

An infrastructure of values rounded out the lexicon. The new language provided rallying cries as well as ideals to guide change. “We had never used these words before,” says Elizabeth Brandes, assistant director of the Catawba County Department of Social Service and a North Carolina FFK leader. “They became ‘mantras’ that were placed on bulletin boards and ‘chanted’. They determined best practices and promoted a philosophical shift in this agency that endures today.”

To judge system performance through the eyes of a child became a transforming personal vow for many project directors and their colleagues. Because of the clarity and emotional force of this and other elements of the common language, together with the Foundation's insistence on improved data tracking, many children and youth who had been "lost" in sites' foster care systems became visible, and their need for permanency became a single-minded priority for FFK staff. Barriers to permanency—such as system fragmentation and lack of coordination, lengthy placement delays due to court processing, cultural insensitivity to children and families of color, lack of staff training, and limited placement options—were attacked with new resolve and confidence.

The Freedom to Pursue Locally Defined Methods and Models

While the common language offered the broad outlines of change, sites were encouraged to experiment and innovate—to take full account of community needs, exploit opportunities as they arose, and respond to local constraints. "Freedom and flexibility were pervasive throughout the initiative," says Wendy Lewis Jackson, program director at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation and former Kent County, Michigan, FFK project director.

Site innovations fell into the six broad categories illustrated below.

1. Diversifying and Engaging Stakeholders

All sites were required to conduct "community >

Foster Care: Most Frequently Asked Questions

What is foster care?

"Foster care" is a general term describing children who are living away from their homes under the care of the state (supervised by child welfare agencies).

Who provides foster care?

Foster care is typically provided by a nonrelated family, a relative, a group home, or a residential facility. Almost half of all children living in foster care are staying with nonrelated foster families.

How many children are in foster care in the United States?

A total of 542,000 children were in foster care on September 30, 2001, when the most recent data were captured.

How old are these children?

Only four percent are under age one. Half are between the ages of one and 10, while the rest are age 11 or older.

What is their racial makeup?

Children of color make up nearly two-thirds of all children in foster care, though they constitute only a little more than one-third of the child population in the United States.

How long have these children been in foster care?

Though foster care is intended to be temporary, 44 percent have been there for more than two years, while 32 percent have been there more than three years.

What happens to these children?

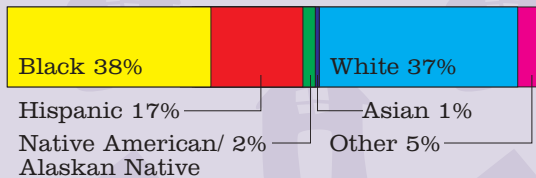
Of children leaving the system in 2001, 57 percent were reunited with their families, while 21 percent were placed in adoptive homes or guardianships in 2001. Of these placements, 50,000 were adoptions.

When is foster care problematic?

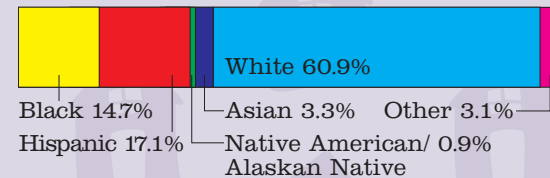
Studies have demonstrated that children with long stays in foster care—particularly those with multiple placements—are much less likely than children placed in permanent homes to finish high school, achieve job stability, and avoid destructive behaviors like premature pregnancy, trouble with the law, drug use, and repeating the cycle of abuse and neglect when they become parents.

For more general information, see www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org.

Percent in Foster Care



Percent in Child Population



Sources: Foster care data was taken from "The AFCARS Report," Preliminary Estimates as of March 2003 (8); population statistics were drawn from "Census 2000."

► visioning" activities to engage a broad range of stakeholders in the process of shaping reform. While Foundation leaders constantly stressed the importance of diversity and community engagement, they refrained from providing a visioning "script"; instead, sites were encouraged to devise their own methods, and they responded by developing a wide range of different strategies: town meetings and forums, public hearings, interviews with target groups, scientific surveys, retreats for lawyers and judges, children's art shows, toll-free numbers, and media campaigns. Ultimately 14,000 stakeholders from 30 distinct groups registered their concerns and hopes for change—including many affected children and families who had never had a voice in reform.

2. Adapting Key Operational Terms

As reform efforts progressed, a high degree of consensus developed about the definitions of key operational terms. "Permanency," for example, came to stand for a multitude of different options that could ensure loving and legally secure families, yet not all sites embraced the same options. In states where populations of Native American waiting children were large, guardianship became an important—even indispensable—permanency option, because many tribes do not recognize the termination of parental rights and adoption as valid child placement practices. Because of differing demographics and cultural values, however, other sites, like Kent County, "had a difficult time establishing guardianship as a preferred option," says Jackson.

3–4. Addressing Outcomes and Developing Service Models

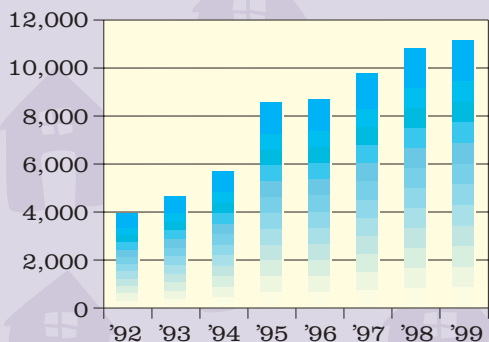
While sites as a group worked on all six outcomes, individual sites chose to address some outcomes but not others in their programs. These decisions reflected realistic assessments of community needs and local capacity.

"The number-one issue that came up in the visioning phase of Kent County FFK was that our community didn't feel that they had access to child welfare system decisionmaking," says Jackson. "We built a model to bridge that divide." Called the Kent County Family and Community Compact, the model utilizes conferences involving families and community members to help determine permanency options for

Major Achievements by Families for Kids

FFK Stimulated Large Increases in Adoptive and Guardianship Placements

Legally finalized adoptive and guardianship placements increased steadily, numbering approximately 60,000 across all sites by 1999.



Adapted from findings presented in "Families for Kids: Final Cluster Evaluation Report," Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc., June 2000. This report and a related report, "Through the Eyes of a Child: Lessons Learned by Project Directors of FFK," can be found on the Foundation's Web site at www.wkkf.org/YE under Publications and Resources.

Numbers to Notice:

- The annual number of adoptions and guardianships tripled from 3,800 to more than 11,000 between 1993 and 1999
- The permanency placement rate increased 17 percent (1993–1995)
- Permanency placement rates increased for Caucasian, African-American, Native American, and Asian children
- Permanency placement rates for children of all special needs groups and in all age categories under 18 increased
- The percentage of children adopted within one year after parental rights were terminated increased

Beyond the Numbers, FFK Sites ...

- Ultimately institutionalized and in some cases expanded selected innovations
- Diversified the stakeholders engaged in reform planning and system decisionmaking
- Informed new federal foster care and adoption policies
- Raised public awareness of the plight of waiting children locally and nationally
- Made data-driven decisionmaking a norm in site child welfare systems
- Established powerful collaborative relationships between child welfare agencies and the courts
- Demonstrated conclusively that it is possible to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care

This image from an exhibit of children's art associated with South Carolina's Families for Kids shows how children in foster care yearn for permanent, loving families.



children. Though it addresses only three of FFK's outcomes, it has successfully responded to Kent County's greatest community needs: establishing community trust and engagement in the child welfare system and reducing by 20 percent the number of children of color coming into its care, says Jackson.

"Washington State FFK focused in areas where it was already strong and had special in-house expertise. To address the one-year-to-permanency and stable foster care placement outcomes, it developed a "prognostic staffing" model that has allowed staff to predict which children have a high likelihood of staying in foster care too long, so that permanency plans for them can be made early on," says Barb Fenster, the site's community relations director. This process initiates another intervention called "concurrent planning" that prevents delays in permanent placement by recruiting families

committed to working simultaneously to reunite children with their biological parents and to becoming adoptive families immediately if reunification fails.

In spite of the great diversity of models across all sites, there was unity of purpose because of FFK's common language. "We were all polishing the same gem, and the gem was permanence," says Marie Jamieson, director of Washington's FFK.

5. Using Data for System Management and Decisionmaking

Perhaps nothing changed child welfare practice more than the increased use of data. At the outset of the project most FFK sites—like child welfare systems across the country—had little useful data. FFK's intense evaluation methodology and the backlog reduction outcome played major roles in making data an indispensable aspect of practice. Still, use of data varied widely across sites. North Carolina FFK developed statewide performance measures tied to the FFK outcomes. Using research data to identify key problems for specific groups of waiting children, Washington State discovered and addressed the problem of infants staying too long in care. South Carolina and Kansas used data to educate the public about the number and characteristics of children needing families. Pima County created a model to track and hasten the movement of children toward permanency.

6. Institutionalizing Reforms

Sites also found different ways to institutionalize their innovations. The State of Kansas has now privatized most of its child welfare system services, integrating the FFK outcomes into service

contracts for contractors. North Carolina is integrating the outcomes into its public system statewide. In Washington and Massachusetts, cadres of FFK veterans based in private agencies offer system change assistance to colleagues within state systems and to policymakers.

These and other FFK legacies are not only maintaining and in some cases expanding models developed during the initiative's formative years, they are also sponsoring a new generation of system change initiatives inspired by the old but enduring common language.

"I really feel FFK is a useful prototype for other initiatives," says Lauren Frey, director, Massachusetts Families for Kids at Children Services of Roxbury, Inc. "It brought to the fore key Foundation values but allowed—and still allows—sites to craft system reforms most appropriate for them." ❏

** FFK's 11 implementation sites: Pima County, Arizona; Kansas; Massachusetts; Kent County, Michigan; Mississippi; Montana; New York City, New York; North Carolina; Ohio; South Carolina; and Washington State*



NEW PROGRAM FOCUSES COMMUNITY LEADERS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE



To fulfill its mission "to help people help themselves," the Kellogg Foundation invests in individuals, institutions, and communities that are seeking lasting improvements to society.

One of the Foundation's most important tools in achieving change has been leadership development.

In January, the Foundation launched the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change (KLCC) series, which seeks to help local communities play a more effective role in meeting their own challenges. Six communities have identified 25 Fellows each to work together to improve teaching and learning by mobilizing resources and building public will. KLCC aims to mobilize and support grassroots leaders, especially from within communities that traditionally have been left out of the public policy and community decisionmaking processes. Emphasizing a participatory leadership model, KLCC urges people of diverse backgrounds to apply their respective strengths and knowledge toward solving problems and realizing a new collective vision for their community.

This community-based program builds on the Foundation's long history of leadership development. During its 21 years, the Kellogg National Leadership Program produced more than 700 alumni who "graduated" from the three-year curriculum. When the program ended in 2001, the Foundation decided to shift focus to developing collective leadership within communities.

KLCC is structured around a series of two-year sessions designed to create a "critical mass" of leaders in six communities. With 150 participants in each session, KLCC will be able to affect more people in the new program than it did with the old, according to Rick Foster, a Foundation vice president for programs.

"The new series hopes to help leaders develop their skills within their community," says Foster. "The common thread will be an in-depth examination of an issue and how leadership can be mobilized to deal with it within a geographic location."

"We Fellows have learned how to build a 'gracious space' where we all feel free to speak."

The first session will focus on change in schools and educational settings. The six sites include both urban and rural areas with high populations of underserved residents who are vulnerable to poor achievement. Each group will receive up to \$200,000 to cover program costs, rather than stipends to individual participants. Subsequent sessions in KLCC will have different themes.

Two organizations are helping coordinate KLCC. The Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC, brings experience in school improvement. Throughout the series, Seattle-based Center for Ethical Leadership will conduct research on how leadership changes and evolves in the six communities as a result of the series.

For more information, see www.wkkf.org/Programming/LearningOpportunities.aspx.



Theresa M. Herrera, left, KLCC Fellow and instructional aide, Laguna Middle School, New Mexico, helps sixth-grader Kerrie J. Cheromiah with schoolwork on campus.



Mark Thompson, KLCC Fellow and project manager for the new Laguna Acoma High School, and Phil Sittnick, KLCC program coordinator, taking a tour of the school's progress.

LEARNING AND LEADING

"KLCC has brought together individuals from our community who did not know each other," says Anita Big Spring, a KLCC Fellow on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. "Fellows offer different points of view, but have learned to share respect for each other. We have learned how to build a 'gracious space' where we all feel free to speak."

Big Spring is one of 25 Fellows who are learning to build relationships across community boundaries, creating a sense of trust in their group. They have met several times to tighten their focus on a community goal of decreasing the dropout rate of young reservation students.

The participating Fellows have been selected by local organizers in each community. They will participate in workshops or other training about four days per month and work with mentors. The 150 Fellows will come together to share and learn from each other at two national gatherings. The first is scheduled in late July in Chicago.

"We expect the Fellows to teach us a lot about what it takes to mobilize communities to improve education for marginalized and underserved students," says Youth and Education Program Director Valorie Johnson, who is co-leading the first session. "They will bring new voices, new thinking, and greater resolve to confront tough issues like high dropout rates in their communities."

SIX KLCC COMMUNITIES AND COORDINATING ORGANIZATIONS

BUFFALO, NEW YORK **Public Policy and Education Fund of New York**

Fellows will work to close the academic performance gap between the school district's white students and their African-American and Latino peers. Preliminary plans include devising a specific project to improve the public schools.

EASTERN CIBOLA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO **New Mexico Community Foundation and Laguna Pueblo Department of Education**

With a brand-new high school scheduled to open in fall 2003, the Fellows want to increase student achievement by integrating the traditional knowledge, languages, and cultural history of its mostly Native American and Hispanic students into the curriculum. The Fellows hope to attract talented students (who often choose to commute to other schools) and gain community support for the new school by strengthening existing school restructuring efforts and assisting with program and curriculum development.

EDCOUCH, TEXAS **Llano Grande Center for Research and Development**

Using print, broadcast, and online media, the Fellows in Edcouch plan to persuade the community that improving educational outcomes for its mostly Latino and heavily migrant/working population is essential to the long-term social and economic health of the region.

FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION, MONTANA **Salish Kootenai College and Ronan School District No. 30**

Fellows on the Flathead Indian Reservation will focus on reducing the alarming and disproportionate dropout rate among Native American youth on the reservation. Preliminary plans include developing a series of dropout prevention programs for use at local schools.

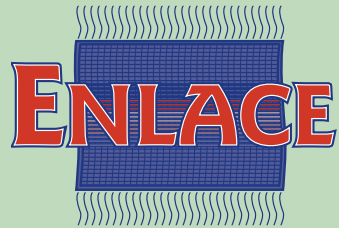
MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA **Migizi Communications**

Fellows in the Twin Cities aim to change the process of adopting public education policy through leadership development and discussion among the area's major cultural communities, which include Native Americans, African-Americans, African and Asian immigrants, Latinos, and others. Preliminary plans are to improve communication among the various education stakeholders and involve a more diverse array of community leaders in the educational decisionmaking process.

NORTHWESTERN WISCONSIN **New Paradigm Partners Inc.**

In an effort to boost enrollment in local post-secondary education programs, the KLCC Fellows in northwestern Wisconsin will focus on strategies to persuade residents of the benefits of lifelong learning. Fellows will serve as educational guidance counselors to their communities.

PROGRAMS TARGET MINORITY-SERVING



For decades, the Kellogg Foundation has supported programs that are responding to increasingly diverse student populations attending the nation's colleges and universities. Since 1990, the Foundation has funded a series of initiatives targeting minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education.

The last initiative in this series, ENLACE (ENGaging LATino Communities for Education) is an ambitious model to increase Latino student success along the K-16 educational pathway. ENLACE is made up of 13 partnerships of colleges and universities, K-12 schools, community groups, and families in 7 states. The lead partners are Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education.

In April, a Presidential commission pointed to ENLACE's promise in its recommendations to President George W. Bush. The commission's report, "From Risk to Opportunity: Fulfilling the Educational Needs of Hispanic Americans in the 21st Century," praises ENLACE for its community-driven approach, which includes research-proven strategies and promising educational practices. The report also noted ENLACE's work to demonstrate impacts with evaluation at project and initiative levels.

Meanwhile, a crowd of 330 students, parents, and educators from all the sites gathered in Miami for the annual ENLACE networking conference. There, the Kellogg Foundation released its own report, "Weaving a Path to Success for Latino Students," which details successful strategies emerging from the 13 sites. The report outlines three keys to boosting Latino success:



1. CREATING A SEAMLESS PATHWAY TO COLLEGE
Aligning family resources, school curricula, and scholastic standards with the expectation of a college career.

2. STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS
Intensive, one-on-one attention for students and parents, to help guide students to all available support—from mentoring and tutoring programs to college prep courses.

3. CHANGING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Engaging schools and colleges at the community level to create better opportunities for underserved students. Strategies include leveraging private and public resources, attracting new partners, and finding creative ways to finance college for all Latinos.

For more information, visit the Kellogg Foundation Web site at www.wkkf.org/ENLACE or the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans site at www.yic.gov.



INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

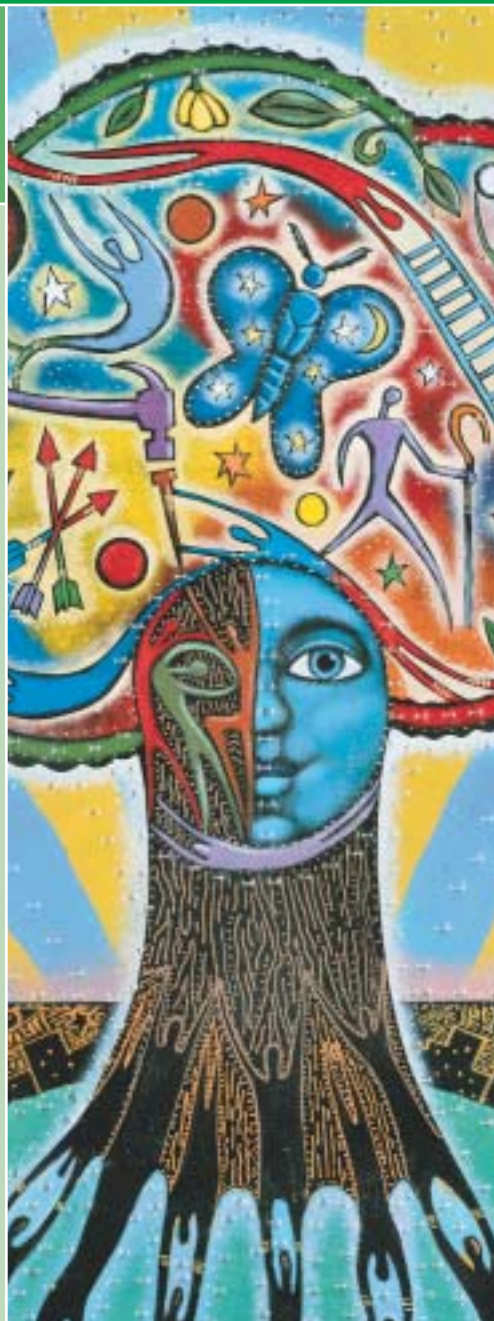
A “REAL” TAKE ON NATIVE AMERICAN HIGHER ED



A new book explores the perseverance and vision of tribal elders, educators, and students who have shaped the development of Native American institutions of higher education. Called “Real Indians,” the book was published in May by the American Indian College Fund.

The Kellogg Foundation funded the effort as part of the Native American Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI). Formally operating from 1995 to 2002, NAHEI sought to expand educational opportunity and access for Native students, who, as a group, have among the lowest rates of educational success. NAHEI focused much work on tribal colleges, which were founded in response to Native students' failure rates at majority colleges. The tribal schools offer a brand of higher education that combines accredited academics, personalized instruction, and indigenous culture.

“Real Indians” features photographs and first-person stories of 40 scholars, students, and leaders who are seen in settings that break from stereotype. Photographed by Andrea Modica, college presidents ride motorcycles, fix cars, or wear hats backwards. The stories of personal inspiration, humor, and wisdom are testament to the power of community-driven educational solutions. For more information, see www.collegefund.org.



MSIs: THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS



Already facing populations of students of color that are growing rapidly, minority-serving institutions (MSIs) are confronting a “generation gap” in leadership. With qualified presidents, deans, and senior administrators already in short supply and a wave of Baby Boomers about to retire, the looming shortage of leaders is becoming a critical issue.

To help develop the next generation of leaders, the Youth and Education team has awarded a \$6 million grant to create the Kellogg MSI Leadership Fellows Program. Partners in the effort are three collectives of MSIs—the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), and National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.

“The core mission of our institutions remains the same,” said Dr. Antonio Flores, president of HACU. “But the growing diversity of our society brings ... the need for leadership that bridges political, racial, cultural, and economic boundaries.”

In addition to traditional administrative training, Kellogg MSI Leadership Fellows will be trained in the collaborative fiscal and political strategies that are increasingly a part of running a minority school. The first group of Fellows will gather in Washington, DC, during the first week of August. The program is coordinated by the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

For more information, see www.msi-alliance.org.

A SPARK for Communities to Better Prepare Kids for School



To increase early learning by children who are vulnerable to poor achievement, current Youth and Education programming includes a major initiative, SPARK, and a range of strategic grants focusing on related issues such as engaging parents, building literacy skills, and increasing policy education.

From this body of work, a major goal is a better understanding of how schools, families, and communities can work together to support children's learning outcomes. Over time, how do these partners apply their skills, practices, and resources in ways that always respond to children's needs?

The SPARK initiative is uniting communities and states to create a smoother transition to school for youngsters who are likely to start kindergarten behind. Working in seven states and Washington, D.C., SPARK seeks both "ready children" and "ready schools" that are prepared to serve all children now and in the future.

Children now will benefit from supports provided by parents, early education providers, teachers, and other partners who align their resources for kids. Future children will benefit when early learning and elementary school systems are permanently aligned. For SPARK, a centerpiece of alignment is a smooth transition to school that becomes a process of months or years—not days.

In May, the Kellogg Foundation's Board of Trustees approved funding for a five-year implementation phase for eight SPARK sites:

FLORIDA

The Early Childhood Initiative
www.teachmorelovemore.org

GEORGIA

**Georgia Early Learning Initiative /
United Way of Greater Atlanta**
geli.policy.net/

HAWAII

Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture
www.keikisteps.info

MISSISSIPPI

**Children's Defense Fund / Black Community
Crusade for Children Southern Regional Office**
www.childrensdefense.org

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico Community Foundation
www.nmcf.org

NORTH CAROLINA

SmartStart / North Carolina Partnership for Children
www.ncsmartstart.org

OHIO

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton
www.srssofcharity.org

WASHINGTON, D.C.

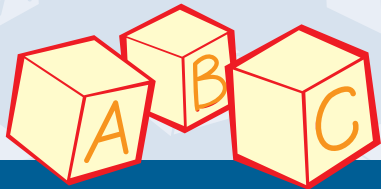
National Black Child Development Institute
www.nbcdi.org

How SPARK sites will smooth the transition from early education programs to the early grades

- Create a shared goal for child readiness and align standards
- Align teaching quality / professional development training and expectations
- Collect and share student data
- Create collaborative governance structures such as "transition councils"
- Seek early childhood accreditation for K–3 classrooms
- Build broader, informed leadership
- Work to increase family involvement through culturally appropriate strategies
- Build parents' skills and support them through partners or learning advocates

**For more information,
see www.wkkf.org/SPARK.**

A video posted on the Web site shows how SPARK seeks to align early learning and early schooling systems.



Defining “Ready Schools”

A growing number of states are adopting formal definitions of “school readiness.” Most define readiness by focusing not only on children but also on schools and families and communities. But educators often stumble over the term “ready schools” because few agree on which learning environments, curricula, and teaching practices actually constitute them.

Seeking a clearer definition, the Youth and Education team made a grant to High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, a recognized innovator in early education, which will create concrete assessment tools and resources for schools wishing to improve learning environments for children.

The effort aims to create consensus on components of ready schools and gain a better understanding of this important aspect of a child’s learning process. Significant work has focused on helping to ensure that children are ready for school—largely through investment in quality preschools and instructors. But few resources have been invested in schools to ensure that structures and practices allow them to integrate programs that support those early education efforts.

“Research shows that high-quality preschool education improves children’s readiness to enter elementary school, but these benefits may diminish if children enter schools that are not ready to educate them,” says High/Scope Senior Research Scientist Larry Schweinhart.

For more information, visit www.highscope.org.



Getting Kids Ready Sooner, Not Later

Eighty percent of all learning disabilities are linked to reading ability, and reading is fundamental for educational success. But early literacy screening is not mandated in the United States. One result is that 38 percent of fourth graders nationwide cannot read an age-appropriate book.

To help identify reading problems sooner, the Kellogg Foundation has awarded a grant to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) to support early screening for children at risk of failure in school. The grant will fund training for early education teachers and caregivers in Georgia and one other state. The eventual goal is to reach 60 percent of all the states’ four-year-olds.

“We appreciate the Kellogg Foundation’s support in helping us reach very young learners at a critical stage in their development,” says James Wendorf, NCLD’s executive director.

Early screening is a key component of the Foundation’s SPARK initiative, which includes a Georgia community site that will partner with NCLD’s “Get Ready to Read!” effort.

“The lessons we’re learning in Georgia will be very useful later on,” says Roberta Malavenda, the state coordinator.

The effort will serve a variety of children representing a range of incomes and racial backgrounds, with an emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable youngsters. The grant also will be used to develop, test, and demonstrate a Spanish-language version and to convene a national forum on early literacy screening, which will inform state and federal policy.

For more information, visit www.getreadytoread.org.



Leaving No Parent Behind

A grant to the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence will help develop a leadership training program for parents of preschool children. This effort builds on Prichard's award-winning efforts to train parents to become better advocates for student achievement.

"This is the first time the Prichard Committee has been involved in an early-childhood initiative of this magnitude," says Executive Director Robert Sexton.

Prichard will work with the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Office of Early Childhood. Prichard seeks to apply its experience in parental involvement in elementary and secondary schools to early care and education settings.

Meanwhile, the Committee's national training affiliate, Parent Leadership Associates (PLA), has developed a number of tools designed to help parents better understand how they can work with schools and effectively use data to advocate for change.

"Leave no parent behind—that's our goal," says Adam Kernan-Schloss, president of KSA-Plus Communications, which is a part of PLA. The partnership has coproduced a series of parental involvement guides. One is called "No Child Left Behind: What's In It for Parents?" and it clearly explains parent involvement mandates in the federal law.

A new two-volume series, "Closing the Achievement Gaps," helps parent leaders and community activists identify and analyze the learning gaps in their schools, and then use this knowledge to advocate for needed changes in areas such as student placements, teacher assignments, and funding.

"Research shows that what the family does is more important to student success than family income or education," says Kernan-Schloss.

PLA's goal is to train parents in such skills as using data, understanding standards and assessments, recognizing teacher quality, and working with school principals to advocate for changes that truly make a difference in student learning.

"We work with a real mix of parents, some without a high school education, some with college degrees, and the dynamics are very interesting," says Nita Ruby, a PLA trainer who is based in Mississippi. "We see the parents who don't have a lot of education gain a lot of confidence. They learn to analyze the data, talk with principals, and develop programs. When they come back and share their experiences, there's a little lightbulb that goes on—'hey, I can do this!'"

A Spanish-language version of "No Child Left Behind: What's In It for Parents?" is available on the publications tab at www.wkkf.org/YE. For more information about Parent Leadership Associates, see www.plassociates.org.



Promoting Learning Early and Often

To increase policy education and greater awareness of the importance of quality early education, the Kellogg Foundation has made a grant to the Trust for Early Education, a newly formed arm of the Education Trust that is focused on gathering and disseminating sound data and information on preschool education.

With the grant, the Trust for Early Education will produce a series of papers, including an easy-to-understand overview of the nation's early learning system. This will be designed to serve as a primer for public officials, advocates, and parents seeking a better grasp of the state of early education.

Other articles are expected to include recommendations for improving Head Start, an overview of teacher quality, and options for creating universal pre-K systems. Each paper will be distributed broadly using media strategies as well as other communications strategies.

The Trust for Early Education is funded primarily by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

For more information, visit www.trustforearlyed.org.

Countdown to Kindergarten:

The School Transition Becomes a Year-Long Celebration



Five-year-old Jessie grinned down at the words on his yellow T-shirt: "I'm Going to Kindergarten!" Although Jessie couldn't read, he knew what the words meant. And so did the 3,000 other five-year-olds enjoying a Countdown to Kindergarten celebration day in Boston last year.

"Our goal is to support families and children making the important preschool-to-kindergarten transition," says Ginny Zanger, vice president of The Children's Museum, which runs the four-year-old Countdown program.

The Museum collaborates with Boston Public Schools, Boston Public Library, the city's Head Start staff, and the mayor's office. "We had all observed independently how isolated parents are during the kindergarten transition and how difficult it is for them, particularly immigrant parents, to navigate their children's enrollment," Zanger explains.

Countdown targets families for a full year preceding kindergarten. There's "open school" or "preview" time at schools, which decide on strategies to welcome new parents. Parents can choose to send children to any city school, and brochures printed in seven different languages encourage families to start making comparative visits to kindergarten classrooms the year before their child starts school. Registration is recommended in January, when there are more choices—not in late summer.

"The mayor's office now grants city workers time off to make these kindergarten visits," says Zanger, "and because of P.R. campaigns, so do many local businesses and the University of Massachusetts."

Parent outreach and communications strategies are critical. Multilingual brochures are available at child-care centers,

doctors' offices, libraries, and housing projects. Videos also explain the school enrollment process and other issues.

"We have 20 partner urban organizations that are deeply committed to the program's success," says Zanger. "We meet every six weeks and undertake an annual retreat. One activity born of this collaboration is Kindergarten Days."

Some 100 businesses donate gifts to this event. In early August, postcards go out to incoming kindergartners. They're invited to their local library to receive a gift bag with a free book (donated by Scholastic Books) and a yellow T-shirt to wear to a Countdown to Kindergarten celebration and on the first day of school.

"Library staff help children who come fill out library cards. They read them stories and show parents how to find age-appropriate books and check them out," Zanger says. "This is the first library visit for many parents and children."

At the celebration, youngsters can board a school bus for the first time, meet teachers, and get their picture taken. The program is winning awards and receiving national recognition. Last year, the city of Cambridge worked with the Museum to create a similar program.

"We look forward to sharing our ideas," says Zanger. "And now that we have the services of a superb evaluator, we'll find out which ideas are working best, which families we reach, which zip codes pick up gift bags, if the number of children coming to first grade without kindergarten is decreasing, and if early enrollment is increasing."



"Our goal is to support families and children making the important preschool-to-kindergarten transition."

Youth and Education Team Sees Two Program Directors Retire

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was originally created to address the child welfare interests of its founder, W.K. Kellogg. Today, a talented team in Youth and Education Programs works to continue the legacy of supporting the education and healthy development of young people.

Last winter, two program directors left this group upon their retirement from the Foundation. Leah Austin retired in November 2002, after 10 years of service. Among other accomplishments, Leah led the Middle Start initiative, a successful effort to improve middle-grades education which began in Michigan and then expanded to other states.

With prior experience directing the Family, School, and Community Initiative at Marian College and the Indiana Youth Institute in Indianapolis, Leah brought to the Foundation great understanding of issues such as school reform, youth development, and public engagement, particularly in disadvantaged communities. In February, Leah accepted a position as vice president for program development at the Lumina Foundation for Education in Indianapolis.

Tyrone Baines retired in March 2003. Before joining the Youth and Education staff in 1988, Ty was executive assistant to the chancellor at North Carolina Central

University (NCCU) in Durham. Having begun his career at NCCU in 1972 as director of the public administration program, Ty served the university as a faculty member and in several other capacities. Now he returns to NCCU to assist with its institutional development and teach part-time. He also will form a management consulting firm, Tyrone R. Baines and Associates, from his new home in the Raleigh/Durham area.

At the Kellogg Foundation, Baines directed the Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships (KYIP), a program in three Michigan communities to increase opportunities for young people. Launched in 1987, KYIP was one of the Foundation's most innovative efforts to involve community-focused youth programming.

Ty Baines has seen a remarkably varied career, serving in such capacities as U.S. Army captain, Fort Leavenworth Federal Prison teacher, and child welfare social worker. Most recently, he served on a half-dozen local boards, including the City Commission of Battle Creek.

We wish Ty and Leah the very best. The team expects to announce the addition of two new program directors soon.



Tyrone Baines



Leah Austin

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Youth and Education Team



Credits: Y&E Lessons in Learning

- Gail McClure, Vice President for Programs
- Editor—David Cournoyer, Communications Manager
- Design and Writing—Pace & Partners
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