

**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CITY NETWORK
JULY/AUGUST 2005**

Thank you for your ongoing interest in strengthening early child care and education. If you have any questions about the network or this Update, contact Abby Hughes Holsclaw, Program Director for Early Childhood and Family Economic Success, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, National League of Cities at: holsclaw@nlc.org, phone – 202/626-3107, or fax – 202/626-3043.

NLC NETWORK NEWS

- **2005 National Summit on Your Cities Families-** There is still time to register and organize a team to attend the 2005 National Summit on Your Cities Families. Members of NLC may register by August 15th for the fee of \$425 and non-members may register by the same date for \$500. The summit will feature two nationally prominent keynote speakers on its first full day. Carol Bellamy, president and CEO of World Learning and its School for International Training, will open the Summit. Bellamy has just completed her tenth year as executive director of UNICEF and previously spent 13 years as an elected official, including service as the first woman to be elected president of the New York City Council. NLC President Anthony A. Williams, mayor of Washington, D.C., will address the summit to discuss the vision he has for municipal roles in improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Also, an initial list of workshops has been posted to the YEF Institute's website. For more information, go to http://www.nlc.org/Newsroom/Nation_s_Cities_Weekly/Weekly_NCW/2005/07/04/5603.cfm or www.nlc.org/iyef.

- **2005 NLC Congress of Cities-** Online registration is available for the 82nd Annual Congress of Cities and Exposition, which will take place December 6-10, 2005 in Charlotte, NC. With general sessions, workshops, and exhibits, the Congress of Cities conference provides local elected officials and municipal staff the chance to team up and learn from each other, to network, and to lineup new ideas that can assist America's cities and towns. For more information, visit: http://www.nlc.org/Conferences_Events/Congress_of_Cities_Exposition/.

CITY SPOTLIGHT:

PASCAGOULA, MS (Pop: 26,200)

NOTE: This spotlight provides an opportunity to gather ideas from other network members. You are encouraged to share information about your local efforts, so that we can spotlight your activities and best practices in a future update.

While much of the city of Pascagoula's plans are in progress, we believe it is important to showcase smaller cities commitments to early childhood success. Moreover, Pascagoula's extensive plans will hopefully spark new ideas among Early Childhood Network members striving to accomplish similar goals.

The City of Pascagoula, Miss. recently accepted a challenge from The ChevronTexaco Company and the Phil Hardin Foundation of Meridian, Miss. to become an “Excel by 5 City” — a community-based education project focused on young children in Mississippi communities.

For several years, the city of Pascagoula has wanted to build a successful pre-school program in the community. For example, the city partnered with their local Head Start program to build one pre-school facility at a school site. Recognizing past efforts and challenges that the community has faced in trying to initiate a broader pre-school program, ChevronTexaco stepped up to aid the city in their quest to build a system of early learning in Pascagoula.

Pascagoula is not alone in receiving assistance. ChevronTexaco and Phil Hardin Foundation will also support three additional cities in Mississippi that are launching the “Excel by 5 Community Initiative”. Additional sites include Cleveland, Petal, and West Point.

Excel by 5: An Early Childhood Initiative

The Excel by 5 Community Initiative (Excel by 5) is designed to give communities and those responsible for early child care and education a structured set of achievable steps toward becoming an “Excel by 5 City” through a certification process, regardless of the size of the city.

The effort will help communities focus on supporting pre-kindergarten children and their families through identifying available resources and existing best practices. The primary goal of the program is for children to be ready to learn when they begin school at age five.

To accomplish this goal, the program boasts an Excel by 5 standard certification program that formally recognizes communities for their progress in supporting young children and their families. The program helps cities identify gaps in community service; promote community collaboration and volunteerism; promote economic development; and implement best practices in children’s education, health care, safety, and child care.

The National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives (NCREC) at Mississippi State University is coordinating Excel by 5 under the direction of Annjo Lemons. The program was developed in coordination with ChevronTexaco, employees at the National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives, and a diverse volunteer work group of early childhood service providers.

As Director of Excel by 5, Lemons will work with community leaders in all four pilot cities to foster greater family involvement, health, and early intervention services for young children. The communities will strive to earn Excel by 5 certification in recognition of their family-friendly policies. If the project is effective during the pilot phase, NCREC may replicate Excel by 5 in rural communities in other states.

Pascagoula’s Excel by 5 Initiative

On April 5, 2005, the City of Pascagoula held a kick-off meeting to formally explain the Excel by 5 Initiative to key community stakeholders and invite them to be part of an Excel by 5 Coalition. More than fifty residents participated representing various community-based organizations, children's groups, businesses, health care offices, and child care facilities.

The kick-off meeting provided an introduction to Excel by 5 to the community. Recognizing that community support and involvement are key to a successful initiative, Pascagoula School District Superintendent Dr. Hank Bounds invited various groups within the community to the meeting. Dr. Bounds underscored the importance of Pascagoula supporting early childhood success.

In June, the City of Pascagoula hosted four town meetings focused on each of the four Excel by 5 focal point areas, which include community involvement, early childhood education, family and parent support, and health care. Town meetings helped city stakeholders assess existing services in the community and also helped identify gaps in services.

Existing services identified include an active department of health, which offers immunizations, mental health services, and several organizations focused on helping families increase child safety. Among the gaps in existing services, the community lacks affordable child care, transportation to help families reach services, opportunities for socialization for special needs children under two years of age, and overall coordination of services.

Based upon the town meetings, the Excel by 5 director is helping the city of Pascagoula develop an action plan. Pascagoula stakeholders will have the opportunity to review the plan, make changes, and officially adopt the plan as they move toward creating an Excel by 5 community. Upon formal approval, the city's coalition of stakeholders will initiate steps toward the program's certification process.

The city anticipates that the certification process will take two years. During the two-year period of time, the Excel by 5 Pascagoula Coalition will work toward implementing the certification elements described below. Upon successful completion, the city will be deemed an Excel by 5 Community.

Excel by 5 Certification

In order to qualify for the highest level of Excel by 5 certification, Pascagoula's plan will include an extensive list of requirements. The program involves four focus areas. These areas, which are managed at a local level and are unique goals for Pascagoula, include community involvement, early childhood education, family and parent support, and health care. Based upon these categories, Pascagoula anticipates adopting the following action steps:

Community Involvement

- Complete an inventory of existing resources in the community for children 0-5 and their families;
- Hold at least three community-wide special events and document participation and results (examples include: health fairs with screening and immunizations, "Family Days" with storytelling and a book fair, and parenting workshops);
- Designate a community director of early childhood services;
- Search for additional agencies/entities to extend needed services;
- Demonstrate widespread utilization of early childhood services;
- Begin mentoring a new community to the Excel by 5 program.

Early Childhood Education

- Develop and implement a process to inform all community child care centers or homes about licensing requirements and training opportunities;
- Strive to have thirty-five percent of previously non-licensed family child care providers licensed;
- Set a goal to have at least forty percent of the staff of licensed child care centers exceeding the number of staff development hours required by licensing standards;
- Work toward at least forty percent of licensed child care centers having forty percent staff members with a Child Development Associate, AA, degree in child development or a BS degree in child development, special education, early childhood education, or elementary education.

Family and Parent Support

- Offer a “Going to School” program/seminars;
- Develop a parent support packet that includes a letter to parents from the mayor/superintendent, a checklist of things to look for in child care centers, a milestone information chart by age, and other information on helpful community resources;
- Offer parent training/support classes on a quarterly basis;
- Advertise free legal services for eligible families in need of assistance;
- Implement a resource library/center that includes programs such as an educational toy lending program, and adult basic education/GED, adult literacy, English as a second language classes.

Health Care

- Identify and address at least two health issues that promote the health and safety of children ages 0-5 in the community. Topics may include immunization, health checkups, common symptom recognition, first aid, and transportation and home safety;
- Develop and implement a process to ensure children have appropriate developmental health screening assessments;
- Utilize mental health professionals to develop and implement a service plan to address maternal mental health problems as well as mental health programs for children 0-5 years of age.

High-Level Support

Although they are in the initial stages of the project, the city of Pascagoula is enjoying tremendous support from the Excel by 5 initiative announcement. Mississippi First Lady Marsha Barbour is involved in supporting the overall program and believes it will be a successful and beneficial effort.

First Lady Barbour stated, “Early childhood programs are key to preparing children to learn, to thrive, and to become productive citizens. Fundamental to success, however, is the involvement of parents, families, educators, caregivers, employers, social service organizations, the public and private sector. Supporting young children in a thoughtful and caring way could be the most important thing any of us will ever do. That’s how critical this is. If we all work together, we can get this right.”

First Lady Barbour continued, “Our children – and ultimately the entire state – will reap these benefits as a result of the company’s further investment in Mississippi with this generous grant.”

Noting that past initiatives in the city have tried to create a system of early learning, Mike Mangum, Pascagoula City Councilman, commented, “Individual agencies may have worked toward early childhood success, but on a smaller scale. However, Excel by 5 pulls the whole community together, all working towards one direction to reach the same goal.”

Councilman Mangum believes that by giving children the best tools possible early on they will be well-prepared to learn by the time they reach kindergarten. Additionally, Councilman Mangum sees an opportunity for a strong early childhood initiative to strengthen the local economy.

Financial Resources

ChevronTexaco is providing \$650,000 to the Excel by 5 Initiative, which is being distributed among the four cities launching the program. The City of Pascagoula will receive \$28,500 of these funds. Also, the Phil Hardin Foundation of Meridian, MS donated \$35,000 to the city for additional support.

The City of Pascagoula funds will help support a part-time community director of early childhood services. The duties of this position will include:

- setting dates for quarterly coalition meetings;
- coordinating three community wide events such as health fairs and family days;
- disseminating the results of children’s education, development, and care needs assessment;
- gathering data for accountability purposes;
- working with the coalition to begin mentoring a new community;
- assisting the coalition in identifying and implementing the process of finding and communicating with parents of children ages 0-5;
- providing and distributing information for parents on services provided for their children;
- working with the community coalition to train parents to use information;
- coordinating the development of a Family Support Referral System to link parents to resources; and
- coordinating the development and implementation of a process to inform all community child care centers and homes about licensing requirements and training opportunities.

The funds will also be used to support community activities and the development and distribution of resource materials.

ChevronTexaco Pascagoula Refinery General Manager, Roland Kell, explained that the role of early childhood education in economic development is vital and noted he is proud to support Pascagoula’s Excel by 5 Initiative.

“Chevron is privileged to help develop and fund a program which helps communities build capacity to deliver long-term positive educational and economic benefits,” Kells said. “It is clear that the right early childhood experiences set the stage for life-long success – in the classroom and beyond.”

Tom Waycaster, vice president for educational programs and research for the Phil Hardin Foundation, said, “Excel by 5 challenges leaders to examine the state of early childhood education and care in their communities and then to apply specific standards to make improvements.”

The City of Pascagoula is hopeful that after two years, when funds have been depleted, the Excel by 5 program will have increased in reputation and shown itself to be a wise investment, thus capturing additional support from volunteers, local businesses and industries, and other community-based organizations. As part of their efforts, the city will look at ways to ensure that the program is sustainable.

City Impact

City leaders believe that the Excel by 5 certification process will have a strong effect on Pascagoula— including not only ensuring that children will be ready to excel in the classroom but also boosting local economic development.

The Pascagoula community trusts that the certification will showcase the city as a child-friendly town thus increasing the city’s ability to attract new businesses and industries. Additionally, the city has already experienced an insurgence of partnerships and the community will be built through the initial planning process of the initiative.

Through this effort, municipal leaders anticipate that they are on the right track to be labeled as a city that is a great place to raise a family and one that meet the needs of every child from birth.

Additional Resources:

For information on Excel by 5, including the leaders of the initiative, visit the webpage for The National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives at http://www.ruralec.msstate.edu/news/2-1-05_lemons.htm.

To learn more about the City of Pascagoula, visit their homepage at <http://www.cityofpascagoula.com/>.

For information on ChevronTexaco’s sponsorship of the Excel by 5 program, visit <http://chevron.com/products/about/pascagoula/news/excelby5.shtml>.

More information about Rural Early Childhood is available at ruralec.msstate.edu.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTING FATHERHOOD INVOLVEMENT

NOTE: Strategy spotlights can help spark ideas that might be appropriate for your community. If you have additional approaches to contribute on this month's topic, please pass them along so we can add them to this list for future use.

Fathers can play a critical role in the successful development of their children. Fathers often make unique contributions to their children's lives and can help to foster confidence and security as a child develops. The presence of strong, committed, and involved fathers is of great importance; however, many fathers struggle to play active roles in the lives of their children for several reasons. Municipal leaders interested in increasing the parental involvement of the fathers in their communities can look to a growing number of initiatives that exist to increase fatherhood participation in childhood in other cities.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Research on the effects of fatherhood involvement indicates that an active father can increase his child's self-confidence, academic success, and overall quality of life. Due to four decades of decreasing numbers of active fathers, it is now more important than ever for city leaders to engage in fatherhood involvement campaigns. Several initiatives have been developed to encourage fathers to become active in their children's lives, and increased fatherhood involvement is an achievable and important mission for communities to continue to pursue.

Absent Fathers Matter

Fathers may tend to stray from active parenting for a variety of reasons. Our society may sometimes send the message that it is the primary responsibility of men to support the family financially; thereby, placing engagement in the lives of their children as a low priority.

Research on the absence of fathers in the lives of their children has been increasing in recent years. Studies show that since 1960, fathers have become less and less involved with each passing decade. Today, there are 23 million children that have no father present in their lives.

According to experts, fathers' parental involvement can directly contribute to increased levels of confidence, self-esteem, and achievement among their children. Research shows that, as compared to children lacking an engaged father figure, children with two committed and involved parents are:

- higher academic achievers;
- more ambitious;
- less likely to drop out of school;
- less susceptible to peer pressure;
- less likely to get in trouble with the law;
- less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol;
- less involved in criminal behavior;
- more emotionally stable with fewer behavioral problems;
- more self-protective and self-reliant;
- at less risk of abuse or neglect; and

- at a lower risk for teen suicide.

Initiatives across the country are being developed to engage fathers in an effort to increase the participation of fathers in children's lives. Such initiatives serve not only to encourage men to be active fathers, but to educate them on how to best become involved.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO

City leaders have a unique opportunity to become involved in local activities that encourage fatherhood involvement. Ideas for city leaders to introduce to the community include:

- **Dad Work Day:** Support and help organize a community-wide day for fathers to bring their children to work. This may help fathers to bridge the gap between their work and family lives. If fathers live outside the home from their children, this will also help children better understand who their fathers are and what they do.
- **Father's Fair:** Organize an annual Father's Fair, where fathers gather with their children to play games, engage in sporting events, take rides, win prizes, etc. The event may be hosted in a city recreation center or park. The Father's Fair will expose city resources, facilitate peer networking, and provide a chance for the city and other community based organizations to offer services and assistance to fathers in need.
- **Create Father Friendly Agencies:** Provide publications in doctor's offices/ waiting rooms that are geared towards men to encourage fathers to feel comfortable bringing their children to these settings. By offering magazines, posting flyers and posters, and providing other materials that males find of interest in local child care or health care offices, fathers will feel more comfortable and welcome and find that their presence is expected.
- **Best Dad Contest:** Sponsor a "Best Dad" contest in which children can submit nominations for their fathers. Prizes can include movie tickets for a father and his children or a dinner at a local restaurant. A "Best Dad" could be featured in a brief article in the local paper each month. This will increase fatherhood pride and chosen fathers may serve as role models to other fathers.
- **Father's Book Club:** Local libraries sponsor host a monthly book club for fathers and their children. The book club could feature books of the month appropriate for different age levels which will increase residents familiarity of the city's library system. Book clubs would also promote literacy and encourage enjoyable activities for fathers to take part in with their children.

CITY EXAMPLE:

Bryan, Texas has launched several parent education and parent involvement initiatives. With input from the Center for Successful, Bryan made a commitment to reach out to fathers of early age children to help them understand the importance of their roles in nurturing their children. They recently hosted facilitator-training conferences for early childhood educators interested in reaching out and engaging fathers in their programs. They have also conducted a six-week father program for the fathers of children in the local Head Start program.

Resources

- *The Department of Health and Human Services-* The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sponsors an initiative to support the roles of fathers in families. They offer information about programs designed to help low-income fathers obtain the skills they need to provide financial and emotional support for their children. This information can be utilized to encourage fathers in any situation to play more active roles in the lives of their children. For more information on fatherhood involvement initiatives with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, visit: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/index.shtml>.

Also, the United States Department of Health and Human Service's Toolkit for Fatherhood provides fathers and other individuals with tools and information related to fatherhood and fathering. It can be accessed at <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/fi-tools.shtml>.

- *The Center for Successful Fathering-* Dr. Ron Klinger became involved in fatherhood involvement programs in 1992 and created The Center for Successful Fathering in 1995 as a response to children who were growing up without a father figure in their lives. In the past few years, CSF has worked with over 100,000 fathers and children across the nation. These "dads" include biological fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, godfathers, friends, and mentors. For information on the Center for Successful Fathering, visit www.fathering.org.
- *Social Policy Action Network-* As states and cities mobilize to increase father's involvements in the lives of their children, the need for appropriate strategies is growing. The Social Policy Action Network offers a guide intended for state legislators, governors, and agency officials looking to best serve fathers. For more information, visit: www.span.org.
- *The National Fatherhood Initiative-* The National Fatherhood Initiative's mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers. The NFI sponsors unique outreach opportunities to encourage involved fathers across the country. One project in particular was NFI's "Golden Dads" campaign. In collaboration with renowned jazz musician Dave Koz, NFI recognized "every day" dads on the streets of five major U.S. cities. Fathers spotted spending quality time with their children in these cities were approached on the spot and given a free Dave Koz "Golden Slumbers" CD, the NFI brochure "10 Ways to be a Better

Dad” as well as a “Golden Dad” pin and a gift certificate for Auntie Anne’s Pretzels. For more information, visit: www.fatherhood.org.

- *Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Grants*- 8 states (CA, CO, MA, MD, MO, NH, WA, and WI) have received Responsible Fatherhood demonstration grants or waivers through the Office of Child Support Enforcement. The grants or waivers will allow them to test comprehensive approaches to encourage more responsible fathering by non-custodial parents. Each state project is different but they all provide a range of needed services such as job search and training, access and visitation, social services or referral, case management and child support. For more information, visit: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/fi-prog.shtml>.

Resources for Communities

2005 KIDS COUNT Data Book Online

The 16th annual Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Book is available and includes an easy-to-use online database that allows you to generate custom graphs, maps, ranked lists, and state-by-state profiles. To learn more, visit: <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/databook.jsp>.

AFT Launches Resources for Educators of English Language Learners

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is introducing its first instructional materials targeted especially to educators of Spanish-speaking English language learners (ELLs). AFT has launched the brand-new educators’ site on ColorinColorado.org – a free resource to help preK-3 educators of English language learners, created by the AFT and the Reading Rockets project of public broadcasting station WETA. The site features instructional practices for teaching reading and content, strategies regarding the appropriate placement and assessment of English language learners, a toolkit on effective outreach to Hispanic families, and other practical, research-based information. Visit www.colorincolorado.org for more information.

A New Legal Web Site Dedicated to Securing the Right Preschool Education

A new Web site, "Starting at 3," developed by the Education Law Center is designed to provide detailed state-by-state information on preschool laws, litigating pre-K claims, and other resources to help attorneys and advocates secure an entitlement to high-quality preschool programs. "Starting at 3" also provides direct technical assistance to attorneys and advocates involved in litigation and policy initiatives. Visit “Starting at 3” at <http://www.startingat3.org/>.

National Child Care Teacher Awards

Tylenol and the Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation are offering grants of \$1,000 to child care teachers throughout the 50 states and Washington, D.C. Applicants are required to design a project that demonstrates educational, social, and emotional benefits to children as well as to the role of the teacher. For eligibility requirements or to request an application, visit <http://www.childcareabc.org/grants/ta/aboutTA.asp>. Applications are due on Dec. 2, 2005.

Ready, Set, Go: A Blueprint for Starting a Child Advocacy Organization

This online guide, published by Voices for America's Children, can help adults and groups channel their passion and enthusiasm to improve the lives of children. It addresses the main

issues facing fledgling nonprofits and advocacy groups, helping organizations get started and establish a child advocacy presence. Visit <http://www.voices.org/ready> for more information.

Advocacy Toolkit on Early Learning

National, state, and local policies have a tremendous impact on the financing and quality of early childhood education. For this reason, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers a comprehensive guide to getting involved and making a difference - everything from getting organized and building strong coalitions to engaging the public and the media. For more information, go to <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/toolkit.pdf>.

Connect for Kids Toolkits

Connect for Kids' toolkit section has hands-on resources on a wide range of topics - everything from school safety, health and nutrition, and paying for college to fun summer activities and after-school ideas. For more information, visit <http://www.connectforkids.org/toolkits>. Also, see Action Central at http://www.connectforkids.org/action_central.

Research and Reports

Television Viewing Associated with Negative Outcomes in Adulthood

Research indicates that children who watch a lot of television in childhood are more likely to suffer academically and not obtain a university degree. In addition, they are more likely to have behavior problems. In this long term study investigators followed children from infancy to the age of 26 to examine the long-term consequences of television viewing. For more information, please visit: <http://cdwire.net>.

Young Parents More Likely to Physically Abuse and be Aggressive with their Children

Children born to young parents are much more likely to experience abuse from either their mother or father. In the current study, the authors studied the prevalence and rates of co-occurrence of partner abuse and child abuse (male partner to female partner, female partner to male partner and parent to child aggression). Past studies indicate the presence of one type of abuse (i.e. partner violence) greatly increases the chance of aggression against children involved in the relationship. For more information, please visit: <http://cdwire.net>.

How to Exercise Flexible Work: Take Steps with a “Soft Touch” Law

In the U.K., a new “soft touch” law gives some employees the right to ask their employers for a change in work arrangements. The brief describes how U.K. employers partnered with government on work-life balance, highlights findings about flexible work, and identifies issues to explore in any U.S. adaptation.

For more information, go to http://www.clasp.org/publications/work_life_brf3.pdf.

Preschool Benefits Social Security

According to a new paper by Robert Lynch, providing all impoverished 3- and 4- year-old children with great early childhood education programs will benefit our nation's future Social Security system. In “Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff,” Lynch analyzes the monetary return to society of preschool education, including providing Social Security with a surplus by 2021. Among the evidence showing benefits to investing in early childhood

education for poor children is that such children grow up to join the workforce at higher skill levels, becoming net contributors to the system. Read the full report at www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/772.

Basic Facts about Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 18

After a decade of decline, the proportion of low-income families is rising again and millions of children of low-income parents find themselves without the basics, despite a majority of them living in households with working parents. More than one-third of children in the United States live in low-income families and 17 percent live in poor families. The National Center for Children in Poverty has a new overview. See <http://www.nccp.org/> for details.

For more information on children, families, and poverty, including state-by-state breakdowns, visit the Child Trends databank at <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/>.