

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CITY NETWORK
MARCH/APRIL 2007

Thank you for your ongoing interest in strengthening early care and education. If you have any questions about the network or this Update, contact Tonja Rucker, Senior Program Associate, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) at: rucker@nlc.org, phone – 202/626-3004 or fax – 202/626-3043. The YEF Institute staff wants to thank all of the members of the Early Care and Education City Network for working so diligently on behalf of young children. Your dedication and commitment to strengthen early care and education provides numerous families with resources that improve their quality of life. We look forward to working with you and continuing to build upon the successes of initiatives launched in your community.

NLC NETWORK NEWS

- **Upcoming YEF Institute Audioconference:** Municipal officials and city staff are invited to register for a free, hour-long audioconference to learn new ideas, strategies, and innovations to promote school readiness that will take place on April 19, 2006 at 4:00 PM Eastern Time. It will feature local elected officials and senior city staff who are working to create a local infrastructure and design programs that lay the foundation to improve students' outcomes well into high school and college. Many city officials realize that quality early care and education is important to economic development and a sound investment to ensure that local governments are able to cultivate, attract, and retain a skilled workforce. Municipal officials and city staff are invited to register for these free, hour-long audioconferences to learn new ideas, strategies, and innovations to help children, youth, and families succeed. For more information, see http://www.nlc.org/iyef/events_audioconferences/1607.cfm.
 - **April 19, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. EST** – *“Supporting School Readiness: A Critical Economic Investment for Cities”*
- **Early Registration Now Open for National Summit on Your City’s Families! Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2007.** City officials and their school and community partners can register early for the 2007 National Summit on Your City’s Families, which will take place Sept. 30-Oct. 2 in San Antonio, Texas. The Summit is the nation’s largest gathering of city officials and community partners who are working to improve the lives of the children, youth, and families in their communities. Local leaders who participate will learn about innovative strategies in a wide range of areas. Significant discounts are available to participants who register before July 16. This is also a great opportunity to begin organizing a city-led team of local elected officials and senior municipal staff, school district leaders, community groups, and youth, to attend the event. To register or find out more about the Summit please visit: <http://www.nlc.org/iyef/index.aspx>.
- **Summit on Media Violence and its Impact on Children, April 17, 2007.** Under the leadership of 2007 President Bart Peterson, mayor of Indianapolis, NLC is working to initiate a national dialogue on the role cities can play in protecting children and youth from the harmful effects of violence in the media. To open this dialogue, Mayor Peterson will host a one-day Summit on Media Violence and Its Impact on Children for city officials and other key stakeholders on Tues., April 17 in Indianapolis.

With up-ticks in violent crime rates and youth violence in many large cities across the country, the issue of media violence and its contribution to aggressive behavior has emerged as a major focus for policymakers. The Summit will offer city leaders an interactive review and roundtable discussion of: the issue of media violence and its impact on children; perspectives of law enforcement experts, researchers, and the entertainment industry; why government leaders have a stake in responding to children's increasing exposure to violent media; and the role that local governments can play in raising parental and public awareness. Participation in the Summit is by invitation only, but city officials who are interested in attending should e-mail us at karpman@nlc.org.

- **Adopt the Platform for Strengthening Families.** NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families*, developed by municipal officials from cities of all sizes and regions of the country, outlines four essential tasks that are necessary for sustained progress to be made on behalf of children, youth, and families. The platform also offers a menu of action steps in seven areas to provide city officials with ideas for getting started. More than 40 cities in 23 states have now formally adopted the platform and are using it as a framework to guide and assess local action and a way to highlight their commitment to helping young people and their families succeed. Cities can formally adopt the platform through a city council resolution, mayoral proclamation, or other public announcement. View the List of Cities and Learn How to Adopt the Platform: <http://www.nlc.org/iyef/a%5Fcity%5Fplatform/>.

CITY SPOTLIGHT: Seattle, Washington (Pop.563,374)

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

Under Mayor Greg Nichols, as well as under former administrations, Seattle has had a long history of developing cutting edge strategies to support early care and education. While the city began its child care work in 1972 with a focus on affordability, it quickly expanded to encompass issues of quality, access and supply. Aware that informal child care — often referred to as family, friend, and neighbor care (FFN care) — is often the type of care that children are in while parents are working, the city is supporting providers to help boost school readiness and equip young children with resources that may help them succeed in life. Below is a list of initiatives and programs that have made Seattle a leader in this work.

Project Lift-Off

The City of Seattle has played a leadership role in expanding residents' access to quality early learning and out-of-school programs. Project Lift-Off began as a City of Seattle initiative in 1999 to embrace each of Seattle's and King County's children and youth between birth and age 18. The goal was to create a system of early child care, education, and out-of-school-time activities that is affordable, easy to access, and highly effective. It sought to ensure youth and children's health, well being and school readiness; promote the academic, social and emotional success of school-age children and youth; and create a community of adults who put kids first.

With the mayor and city council's support, the Project Lift-Off team looked at existing research on child and out-of-school time care, created a partnership with the School District to reach more parents, and they made a special effort to reach out to communities of color. All of the research

and community ideas were put into a draft Action Plan. The team, led by the city's Human Service department, took this action plan to major funders and people with resources. Area supporters included the Chamber of Commerce, the Labor Council, Church Council of Greater Seattle, African-American churches, Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, United Way, community college district, Department of Education, the Governor's Commission on Early Learning and the NW Grantmakers Forum. With help from these groups, early care and education programs were launched city-wide.

Today, the United Way of King County's Children's Initiative has merged with the countywide Project Lift-Off and the newly merged initiative is called SOAR -- Helping Kids Reach for the Sky. SOAR increases the community's momentum of helping kids. It also furthers United Way of King County's emphasis in actively solving community problems and continues the work Project Lift-Off and its partners began years ago. United Way of King County has been working to ensure that key business and opinion leaders understand the importance of early learning, and momentum for the program has tremendously increased. Both the Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five, a new public-private partnership, came into existence in 2006, bringing a new level of energy and commitment to improving efficiencies and consolidating efforts around early learning within the state. With the Children's Initiative and Project Lift-Off working together as SOAR more resources and expertise are being focused on early care and education.

Families and Education Levy

In November 1990, Seattle voters approved a groundbreaking initiative for the future of the city's children. The Families and Education Levy, which provided support to children and their families both in and out of school, was designed to help all Seattle's children become school ready, succeed academically, and graduate from high school. The Families and Education Levy programs proved so effective, in schools and communities throughout Seattle, that voters renewed the levy in 1997. The \$69 million, seven-year levy supported programs in five areas, contributing to the success of children around the city.

Voters approved an expanded Families and Education Levy Proposition in 2004. While the Levy continues to fund many of the programs instituted in past levies, there is a sharper focus on preparing children to be ready for school, improving academic achievement, and helping students complete school. In its first year, the Levy helped 1,555 Seattle children and youth meet the outcomes of kindergarten readiness, academic achievement, or not dropping out of school. Through the Levy's investments in early learning, 77 children entered kindergarten ready to succeed. An additional 4,918 children were immunized against disease. A Levy Oversight Committee, composed of Mayor Greg Nichols, City Councilmember David Della, two school board representatives, and eight citizen representatives directs the use of levy funds.

Culturally Relevant Child Care Task Forces

In order to bridge language and cultural gaps that prevent some families from accessing financial support and quality care, Seattle and King County funded three task forces to improve the quality of child care for Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African American families. Strategies include community mobilization, coalition building, and enhanced professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. The task forces provide ongoing support to child care providers seeking accreditation. They also have brought national leaders to Seattle to encourage and provide assistance to providers who are on the accreditation pathway. In addition,

task force members provide local and national leadership in support of a wide variety of government and private initiatives intended to increase resources for children of color.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

The Family, Friend & Neighbor Project at Child Care Resources (CCR) is a comprehensive, community-based network of supports and resources for family, friend and neighbor caregivers and the children in their care. The project is funded by the city government, private foundations, and CCR's unrestricted funds. CCR partners with a variety of community-based organizations to create a system of support for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers in Seattle/King County. Resources and information are reaching caregivers through library systems, parent education programs, family and community centers, faith communities, employment specialists, public health programs, and more. CCR has developed an extensive Play & Learn Network in Seattle/King County. Eleven community-based organizations sponsor nearly 40 Play & Learn groups serving many different neighborhoods. The model is built upon children learning through play, and caregivers and parents enjoy spending time with each other. Over 20 different organizations belong to the Play & Learn Network as sponsors or partners. Sponsor members provide facilitation and organizational "ownership" of a Play & Learn group; partner members provide facilities, equipment, or other resources. CCR brokers community collaborations and provides technical assistance including facilitator training and curriculum support.

For additional information about the city's early care and education programs contact: Billie Young, Division Director, Early Learning & Family Support, 206-386-1143 or billie.young@seattle.gov.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT:

UTILIZING PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS TO PROMOTE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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.

At some time everyone has somehow benefited, either directly or indirectly, by public park and recreation programs. These facilities and programs can provide a myriad of low-cost or free early care and educational programs that positively affect the developmental outcomes of young children and enriches the life of parents and family members. It is important to raise awareness about how to utilize and promote how parks and recreation departments can advance early care and education initiatives within a city. Benefits to cities can include expanding access to children entering school ready to learn, families becoming more stable, and early childhood programs becoming a valuable asset for local economic development.

Elected officials and senior city staff persons are embracing the critical importance of the early childhood years and are working together to strengthen the existing early care and education infrastructure in their cities. When city leaders focus attention on early childhood issues they can be an important catalysts for change. Local elected officials can capitalize on their influence and visibility with the general public and other policymakers to foster widespread support for local early care and education programming carried out by local parks and recreation departments.

THE STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Strong cities are built on a foundation of strong families. The steps elected officials take to strengthen families, with an emphasis on young children, are among the most important investments to make in the vibrancy of a community. Departments of parks and recreations are uniquely positioned to help parents improve developmental outcomes in young children through quality and comprehensive early care and education.

The philosophy of early childhood education is largely child-centered education. The focus is on how parents or caregivers can provide children with opportunities to actively explore, manipulate, interact with, and learn from their environment. During the early years, play and imagination is encouraged and leads to positive self expression and spontaneity. Parks and recreation departments can implement programs that promote positive lifestyles for young children and their families. Many parks and recreation departments offer trainings/programs that inform parents and give them hands-on activities to create authentic learning experiences that encourage their children to investigate, create, discover and increase their understanding of the world.

Research suggests that families that take advantage of recreation programs tend to be closer and more cohesive, having a greater chance of creating healthier relationships. By enrolling in educational programs and participating in recreation activities together, family members elicit feelings of loyalty, trust, harmony, teamwork and goodwill. Programs and activities can encourage family members to create positive routines and lifestyle changes. Additionally, they create early learning opportunities for children that equip them with the skills and knowledge base to enter school eager and ready to learn. Early care and education programs often result in family experiences that create positive memories and often lead to long-term participation at the local recreation center. In fact, many recreation activities develop life skills which stay with participants through their adult lives.

Departments of parks and recreation can serve as a city's signature attraction for families with young children. Organized events and educational learning sessions that promote quality early learning and support parents who may feel isolated can promote positive parent-child interactions and strengthen the overall well-being of families. Elected officials can use their influence and position to utilize parks and recreation departments to shape the city's identity as place where parents with young children are supported and nurtured.

WHAT CITY LEADERS CAN DO:

- **Encourage the parks and recreation department to sponsor a city-wide “Early Care and Education Day” to promote the importance of early learning.** This day-long event may consist of a number of fun activities for parents and young children including games, music, contests, arts and crafts, and an early learning area for preschoolers. At the event, the city may distribute parent packets that contain a directory of city resources and practical advice on how to create a quality early learning environment for children. This would also be a great opportunity to collect feedback from parents about how the city can use their resources to better support parents.

- **Convene quarterly joint trainings for parks and recreation senior staff and child care providers.** There may be a disconnect between recreation department staff and informal and formal child care providers. City sponsored workshops might address topics of brain development, developmentally appropriate activities, school readiness indicators, and how programs offered at recreation centers can promote early childhood development. In addition, the two groups may wrap up the day by outlining ways the department can support young children and their parents. This type of dialogue and networking can promote awareness and strengthen the working partnership between caregivers and city parks and recreation staff.
- **Sponsor a “Parents With Young Children Evening on the Town.”** Over 60 percent of U.S. households with children under the age of six have both parents in the workforce and more married mothers are working to increase their family’s income. Parents with young children often feel overwhelmed and often would like a little bit of personal time. For one night a month, parks and recreation departments could open their doors for two hours of games and learning activities so that parents can have a quiet dinner on the town.
- **Make available parks and recreation vans and buses to parents to attend parent education and leadership trainings.** Agencies and organizations often convene meetings and events to support parents and their young children. Attendance has always been a challenge and parents often cite transportation as a major obstacle to attending these events. In many instances, parks and recreation departments often have vans and buses that may be used to pick up parents at designated locations throughout the city. This may boost attendance and get parents more involved in activities that promote family well-being.
- **Consider needs of young children in designing parks and outdoor programs.** When planning for future parks and outdoor spaces, cities should consider the advice of early education advisors. Their advice is more likely to ensure high quality programming and developmentally appropriate equipment for young children in early childhood facilities, schools, parks, and facilities designed for educational purposes.
- **Help increase funding.** Cities can provide funding to start or augment existing parent education programs, or partner with local non-profit organizations to seek funding through public and/or private sources. Potential funding sources include: city general funds, Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money, community foundations, state or federal family support grants, literacy grants, or funding from school districts.

CITY EXAMPLES

The cities listed below are using their parks and recreation programs to promote early learning and strong families.

- **District of Columbia.** The District of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department helped to sponsor an event to help revitalize the entry point to Marvin Gaye Park in Washington, D.C. Participants teamed up to help create a "Learning Trail" for young children by painting a pre-existing trail with cognitive learning games so that parents

walking young children can engage them in fun learning activities. Park benches and signs were installed along the path to reinforce the importance of early learning. Early learning trails can be utilized as a way of linking together individual 'learning objects' encountered in museums, gardens or historical sites, to help young children make sense of their experiences and to share stories.

- **Collinsville, Illinois.** The City of Collinsville believes that the criteria of a well-rounded community recreation program should activities for young children and their family. City staff designs low cost and free programs for the entire family, with an emphasis on young children. Let's Explore! is a program designed so that parents and their young children, ages 3 to 5, can enjoy a stories about different topics and then children complete their own special art project with some help from their parent or accompanying adult. *Mommy & Me!* promotes creativity while the parent and child design a t-shirt for Dad or Grandpa for Valentines Day! *Playground Pals* are designed for moms and dads who are searching for an opportunity that allows their youngster to engage with others. This unsupervised and unstructured program is designed for free play and personal interactions at all levels. It is the perfect atmosphere to expand social groups and develop muscle motor skills. *Playground Pals* is not a drop off program and requires parent/guardian participation. *Big Wheel 500 Drivers* are designed for ages 2-6. The program convenes annual Big Wheel 500. Each driver must have their own tricycle or training-wheel bicycle and helmet to participate. The race takes place at a local park and medals and bike accessories are awarded to winners in each age division with ribbons awarded to all drivers.
- **Hillsboro, Oregon.** The Hillsboro Department of Parks and Recreation have designed classes to help young children develop important skills for learning and for social interaction. The goal is to combine learning and imaginative play with other children in a supportive and friendly environment. There are numerous classes designed for children ages birth to kindergarten. The *Mind your Manners* class (3 - 5 years old) addresses learning about table manners, gift giving, conversation, grooming, how to shake hands, telephone etiquette, classroom/playground manners, and respect for elders/persons of authority. These basic subjects are presented in a creative & enjoyable student participatory program. The *Kinder Learn & Play* (Kindergartners only) class is designed for fun activities and games to reinforce what they are already learning with the alphabet, their name, spelling, writing, and recognizing shapes & colors. The *Imagination and Creation Combination* class starts children off in the art of memory making by encouraging them to create their own memory albums. They learn how to scrapbook their family, pets, friends, school, sports, etc, and create their own album by the end of class.

RESOURCES

International Federation of Park and Recreation Administration (IFPRA) — IFPRA is the unique international organization that represents parks, recreation, amenity, cultural, leisure and related services. IFPRA represents every aspect of parks, recreation, amenity, open spaces, countryside and culture. The administration works and devises training and qualification standards. For more information see: <http://www.ifpra.org/>.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) — NRPA promotes public awareness and support for recreation, park and leisure services as they relate to the constructive use of

leisure and thereby to the social stability of a community and the physical and mental health of individuals. NRPA strives to promote public awareness of the environmental and natural resource management aspects of recreation and leisure services. The organization also utilizes holistic approaches to promote cultural understanding, economic development, family public health and safety, by working in coalitions and partnerships with allied organizations. For more information see: <http://www.nrpa.org/>.

White Hutchison Leisure and Learning Group — This multi-disciplinary consulting, design and production company specializes in predominately family- and children-oriented leisure, entertainment, shopping, dining, play, recreational and learning facilities of all types. Since 1989, over 350 clients throughout the world have been served and the company's projects have won 10 different first place awards. For more information see: <http://www.whitehutchinson.com/>.

Forest Service Research and Development — This is the largest forestry research organization in the world and the national and international leader in forest conservation. It is part of the Forest Service, the largest agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the research contributes to the advancement of science and the conservation of many of the nation's most valuable natural resources. Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) scientists carry out basic and applied research to study biological, physical, and social sciences related to very diverse forests and rangelands. For more information see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/>.

Useful websites:

The National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries (NATLL) — NATLL aims to create and support high quality play opportunities with its members throughout the UK. It offers advice and support, training, toy appraisals and information and ideas. Services available include publications and resources and a free telephone information service for anyone planning, setting up or running a toy or leisure library. For more information visit: www.natll.org.uk.

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) — NCB offers a range of play resources and publications. They include Heuristic Play with Objects - Children of 12 - 20 months exploring everyday objects and numerous other resources such as videos, brochures, and play products. For more information visit: www.ncb.org.uk.

Child Care and Early Childhood Research Connections — The site offers a comprehensive and easily searchable collection of nearly 9,000 resources from the many disciplines related to child care and early education. For more information visit: <http://childcareresearch.org/discover/index.jsp>.

National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) — NPPS is the leader in research, training, and development of safe play areas. NPPS helps the public create safe and developmentally appropriate play environments for children by delivering training and services about outdoor play and safety. For more information visit: <http://www.playgroundsafety.org/about/index.htm>.

Publications:

The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds by Kenneth Ginsburg, The Committee on Communications and Committee

on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health., American Academy of Pediatrics, October 2006. This report addresses a variety of factors that have reduced play, including a hurried lifestyle, changes in family structure, and increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of recess or free child-centered play. The report offers guidelines on how pediatricians can advocate for children by helping families, school systems, and communities consider how best to ensure play is protected as they seek the balance in children's lives to create optimal development. This resource is available on the Web at:

<http://www.aap.org/pressroom/playFINAL.pdf>

Benefits of Play in Children: Age Specific Interventions by Karen DeBord and Nick Amann, North Carolina State College of Agriculture, 2000. The author describes some play techniques that can be used to help children cope with a variety of stressful situations. The play techniques outlined prove to be a useful tool for people who work with children. Ideally, the skills and attitudes developed through the use of these play techniques will be transferred to all caregivers daily interactions with children. The underlying concern of this effort is to promote the health and well-being of children. The resource is available on the Web at:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/human/disas4.html>.

Children's Outdoor Play & Learning Environments: Returning to Nature by Randy White & Vicki Stoecklin, White Hutchison Leisure & Learning Group, 2007. The article highlights preferences for outdoor spaces that are completely different from the areas called playgrounds that most adults design for them. The authors discuss the importance of outdoor space and developmentally appropriate learning environments for young children. The resource is available on the Web at: <http://www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/outdoor.shtml>.

Play: Essential For All Children, by Joan Packer Isenberg and Nancy Quisenberry, Association for Childhood Education International, 1988. The legendary and highly regarded report presents ACEI's beliefs about play and cites the supporting research and theory. Then, authors then describe the guiding principles and practices for play experiences. Finally, ACEI's call to action on play is presented. The Association recognizes the need for children of all ages to play and affirms the essential role of play in children's lives. The report is available on the Web at:

<http://www.acei.org/playpaper.htm>.

Developing Early Childhood Facilities (Volume 1) by Carl Sussman, Amy Gillman, and Cindy Larson, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Oct 2006. This report assists organizations that are planning to renovate, construct or improve their child care facilities. The publication identifies steps in the real estate development and financing process, and helps child care providers and their partners overcome the hurdles that every project faces. Information is provided on carrying out early feasibility and planning activities, putting together a project development team, selecting and acquiring an appropriate site, raising money, and completing construction. The report is available on the Web at:

<http://www.lisc.org/content/publications/detail/3518>.

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES

Quality Child Care: A Guide for Working Parents — A survey conducted by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) recently found that preschool is one of the most important issues for working parents. Ninety-one percent of respondents, primarily union-member parents, rate

preschool as very important and essential in order to work. The CFT's new guide contains complete survey results, child development facts, community resources to help Californians find child care, and ways unions can better negotiate for child care in their contracts. To learn more visit: <http://www.firstclassteachers.org/resourcesmain/downloads/quality-child-care.pdf>.

Head Start Fellowships Program — The National Head Start Fellowships Program is now accepting applications for the 2007-08 Fellowship year. The National Head Start Fellowships Program offers individuals the opportunity to gain federal experience first hand from nationally recognized leaders. Fellows work in the Office of Head Start, contributing their special skills and perspectives from the field to support national initiatives and priorities. They work side-by-side with senior managers, policymakers, and researchers. The 2007-2008 Fellowship year is from October 2007 to September 2008. Applications are due on April 13, 2007. To learn more and to download the application visit: <http://www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>.

The Fourth KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot — The snapshot highlights the 15.7 million children in immigrant families living in the United States. Although 80 percent of these children were born here and are entitled to the same support other citizen children receive, "linguistic isolation and lack of economic resources put children in immigrant families at greater risk of growing up without the opportunities they need to succeed." See how your state rates and learn more, in this online brief. To order a print copy from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, contact Carol Rickel at: http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/snapshot_immigrant.jsp.

Kinship Care Legal Resource Center Launches! — This new site, from the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, is designed for these caregivers and those working with them. It's packed with information on financial assistance for kinship care providers, many of whom don't access traditional child welfare supports, legal information about relative placement, and a guide to state policies on medical consent, educational consent, school enrollment, and licensing. To learn more visit: <http://www.abanet.org/child/kinshipcare.shtml>.

Validating A Tool for Comparing Early Care and Education Program Costs — The CT Early Care and Education Finance Project developed the tool to estimate the operating cost of center-based early care and education. The tool is an interactive spreadsheet that estimates the costs of operating a "generic" center or school-based early care and education program for preschool aged children. To learn more visit: http://www.ctkidslink.org/pub_detail_311.html.

Fit Source: Physical Activity and Nutrition Resources for Child Care Settings — Fit Source is a web directory that links child care and after school providers to a wide variety of physical activity and nutrition resources? Housed within the website of the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), Fit Source offers links to activities, lesson plans, healthy recipes, information for parents, and many other downloadable tools that can be used to incorporate physical activity and nutrition into child care and after school programs. Resources are organized by age: infant/toddler, preschool and school-age. To learn more visit: <http://fitsource.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/fitsource/>.

RESEARCH AND REPORTS

The Early Childhood Cluster Initiative of Palm Beach County, Florida: Early Implementation Study And Evaluability Assessment by Julie Spielberger and Paul Goyette, Chapin Hall, 2007. Chapin Hall evaluated a pre-kindergarten program in Palm Beach County, Fla., which has a goal of providing low-income children with a high-quality, year-round preschool experience. The program consists of an education curriculum with documented results, low teacher-child ratios, the use of trained and certified teachers, and an intensive program of activities designed to strengthen parent involvement. The report found that while the curriculum was successfully implemented during the initiative's first year, work remains to fully integrate the program into the school setting. The report is available at:
http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1451.

Is Kinship Care Good for Kids? by Tiffany Conway and Rutledge Q. Hutson, 2007. More than 2.5 million children are being raised by grandparents and other relatives because their parents are unable-for a variety of reasons-to care for them. A number of states have utilized subsidized guardianship programs as a way of supporting these "kinship families." Some wonder whether kinship care is a good thing-and how we know this. This fact sheet is available at:
http://www.clasp.org/publications/is_kinship_care_good.pdf.

Responsive Workplaces: The Business Case For Employment That Values Fairness And Families by Jodie Levin-Epstein, March 2007. More and more, working parents have dual-and dueling-responsibilities on the job and at home. Some employers have adapted and made their workplaces responsive to working parents, This article-reprinted from Mother Load, a special report from The American Prospect on family-friendly workplaces-addresses the business case for workplaces that respond to families' needs. The article is available at:
http://www.clasp.org/publications/responsive_workplaces.pdf.

State of Preschool 2006 Yearbook, by W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., Jason T. Hustedt, Ph.D., Laura E. Hawkinson, M.P.A., and Kenneth B. Robin, Psy.D, NIEER, 2006.. The 2006 *State Preschool Yearbook* is the fourth in a series of annual reports profiling state-funded prekindergarten programs in the United States. The 2006 *Yearbook* presents data on state-funded prekindergarten during the 2005-2006 school year. The report is available at:
<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf>.

Conceptualizing a “Strong Start”: **Antecedents of Positive Child Outcomes at Birth and Into Early Childhood** by Cassandra Logan, Ph.D., Kristin Moore, Ph.D., Jennifer Manlove, Ph.D., Child Trends, February 2007. What Maternal Factors Help Form a "Strong Start" in Life? A variety of elements of a mother's circumstances before and during pregnancy are associated with a child having a strong start in life. Child Trends' latest research brief examines factors associated with positive outcomes for children. The report is available at:
http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2007_02_12_RB_StrongStart.pdf.

Close to Home: State Strategies to Strengthen and Support Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care, by Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, National Women’s Law Center, February 2007. This report offers a summary of key research and an array of strategies for supporting the FFN care that millions of working parents rely on for their children. In particular, many low-income

children—who are often most at risk for starting school behind their more advantaged peers and stand to benefit the most from a good early learning environment—are in FFN care. The report is available at: <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/CloseToHome2007.pdf>.

Roots of Decline: How Government Policy Has De-Educated Teachers of Young Children, by Dan Bellm and Marcy Whitebook, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley 2006. This report analyzes labor trends for the early care and education workforce over the past 25 years - notably, an overall decrease in educational qualifications, and persistent wage stagnation - in the light of federal and state policy, and makes a series of recommendations for reversing these downward trends. The full report is available at:

http://www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/roots_decline06.pdf.

Early Steps with Ready Schools by Alyssa Alston, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2006. In this report, the School Readiness Project at the Council of Chief State School Officers examines learning and accomplishments from state teams focused on developing Ready Schools in six states: Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia. The report presents each state's efforts to support children's transition to kindergarten; encourage continuity and alignment between early care and education programs and elementary schools; and ensure high quality learning environments. The full report is available at:

<http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/Early%20Steps%20with%20Ready%20Schools.pdf>.