



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**  
**Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

*Ahead of the Curve: City Roles in Promoting Early Childhood Development*  
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*Speakers:*

**David Hollister**, Mayor of Lansing, Michigan

**Billie Young**, Manager, Northwest Finance Circle, and Manager, Child Development  
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*KYLE:* My name is John Kyle at the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities. Today, we're focusing on childcare and early learning, municipalities' roles in promoting early childhood development.

We have as guests with us today the Mayor of Lansing, Michigan, David Hollister. We have Billie Young, who has been working on implementing childcare policies and early learning initiatives in Seattle. And, Joan Lombardi, who is currently working with the Children's Project, but was formerly the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I think most of our listeners are interested in what municipalities have been doing. So I want to start with David and Billie. And Billie, since I know you have been working on these issues so long, can I ask you to just give us a little bit of information about what Seattle is doing as a city, as a municipal government, to take a lead on early childhood issues?

*YOUNG:* We've been involved since 1972 with childcare -- not me personally. I'm not that old. We began in 1972 because of Model Cities' efforts to revitalize cities. The city early on decided that it needed to play a role to help build the childcare system and help make care affordable and also of high quality.

We have a subsidy program that picks up where the federal subsidies leave off in terms of helping families bridge the gap between public support and self sufficiency. So we have a financial aid program. We also provide a lot of training, support, and health consultation to childcare providers to try to improve the quality of care. I've been here since 1984, and we've worked with three mayors who have been highly committed to childcare. Each one has made their own stamp and their own initiative. Most recently, Mayor Schell has initiated "Project Lift-Off," which is a community-wide partnership and has also become a countywide partnership to ensure that every child has equal access to high quality, affordable, effective childcare and early learning programs. Project Lift-Off has become a partnership that's very

exciting.

*KYLE:* Mayor Hollister, you're in a city in a different part of the country. What's going on in Lansing these days that affect these issues?

*HOLLISTER:* Well, the city is thriving, doing very well. One of our biggest challenges has been the quality of the schools. When I became mayor seven years ago, I got active in the U.S. Conference of Mayors. My first meeting, they didn't even have a committee on education. In the last two meetings, education has become one of the top priorities, which shows you the dramatic change of thinking among mayors and the relationships between schools and a city's vitality. Most mayors have come to the conclusion that, long-term, the cities cannot thrive if the schools are not thriving. There have been a number of efforts by legislatures and others to find ways to bring them closer together, including the mayors taking over some schools. I looked at that, had a chance to do that in Michigan, and chose not to do that. I created a special blue ribbon committee to look at how to improve the schools and asked the president of our local university, the president of our local community college, and a broad section of the community to look at ways that the community could intervene to improve the schools. That led them to a series of recommendations and to a citizens group to monitor the schools and get involved. We have 1,100 volunteer tutors in the schools one day a week. We started a truancy program, and there are a number of initiatives we could talk about there. But, it became clear after about a year and a half that it was too late in the process to improve the schools if you focus on delinquency and non-reading. We really needed to look at a separate, earlier intervention. So we created a second blue ribbon committee on "Ready to Succeed" with a broad section of the community, again the university playing a major role -- the president of the university -- and a local judge, who sees it from the criminal justice system. We made a commitment to this community that Lansing would become a model community for families with children 0 to 5. They met for several months, finished their process, and published a booklet, "The Early Years Are Learning Years: How Lansing Works for Kids."

*HOLLISTER:* It's a very comprehensive analysis of community needs. It puts together a matrix and a network of services, including family resource centers that are scattered throughout the county and the city where families can go to get information and interventions. A passport is given to families when a child is born at our local regional hospitals -- a passport to services to make sure that all children, regardless of income or family status, will have access to these various developmental services, including health, mental health, dental, social services, libraries, and our transportation system. We're in the process now of the early phases of implementation of that process.

Also, as part of the recommendation, we're working to improve our daycare system -- higher standards, uniform standards. Getting them accredited, a commitment that we're going to try and have citywide accreditation, including the school district-sponsored daycare. We have a very engaged and supportive superintendent of schools. We have General Motors, our local employer, embracing and being an active part of the initiative. We have a 25-plus inter-agency collaborative going on to try and work out all the various pieces so that the system is networked and working together. We have a public awareness campaign that I will be deeply involved in and have been involved in to bring public awareness to the needs of families with children. And we went after a state grant to implement this program and received a little

over three million dollars to do this over the next couple of years.

So we've been actively involved, making this a very high profile issue. We got the local newspaper agreeing to do monthly articles that would be submitted by people in the community, various elements in the community, talking about families and families at risk and families in need, regardless of income. All of our strategies are regardless of income so that we take this comprehensively, although the focus tends to be the families at risk.

*KYLE:* Joan, you've been looking at these things both from inside the federal government and from inside some major national organizations over the past decade or so. Are these city examples typical – one, kind of entering through a door focused on childcare, and one, entering through improving what happens to kids as they go through school, 0 to 5. Are there more cities like this out there? Is this something we need more of? Is this the right approach?

*LOMBARDI:* It's interesting because both of these examples I think reflect what we see happening across the country, which is that this issue has evolved over time. We've got heightened interest in it right now and we do see people coming to it from many doors. Ten years ago, we wouldn't even have had a conversation about childcare and early learning because those two things too often did not go in the same sentence. I think both what the Mayor said and what Billie talked about was how these things have progressed over time.

One of the reasons I think that's happening is if you look across the country, we've got about 19 million children under five, and 14 million of them -- 75% of them -- are in childcare on a regular basis for many hours a week. So I think just as the effort in Lansing realized that if you wanted to get kids really up to grade level and improve their education it was not only starting with your schools, but also taking advantage of what was happening in the earlier years. I think that's what we see going on across the country and certainly what we want to see more of.

One of the other things that the Mayor mentioned, we also see across the country. This is an approach that says when it comes to early education, we have to start with health, we have to involve families and we have to give kids early education. Those were the three parts of the readiness goal. Those themes are certainly reflected in the activities that I see going on across the country. In addition, I think in both of these cases, you had strong leadership in the mayor, and I think that makes all the difference.

*YOUNG:* Joan, I think you're right. What really sparked our mayor when he first came into office was a real concern about the state of education, just like yours, Mayor Hollister. And the fact that the schools have really been undergoing serious educational reform, but still aren't able to close that disproportionality gap. We're still having serious concerns about kids' ability to pass the state learning standards tests. So they've really begun to look at the fact that during the school day, we just weren't able to do enough to make the kind of difference that needs to be made. We have to look beyond the school day and before kids are old enough to enter school. And so that whole issue of how we get kids ready to succeed in school, and how do we make the system of early care and education one that will help kids get ready is really critical.

Welfare reform is another kind of hot button that has gotten our mayors very interested in the childcare system in that we have more and more very low-income families entering the workforce and needing care and needing care that will do more than warehouse their kids. I think the brain research has had a huge impact on people being more aware that those

early years really are extremely critical to children's future success.

*KYLE:* There's a history of mayor after mayor after mayor in Seattle being interested. We're having Dave Hollister's term of seven-plus years focused on these issues. I'm hearing, without actually hearing, listeners across the country saying, "My mayor is just not interested. My mayor is not doing this." What do you think would be the one or two brief statements or arguments that the folks who are involved in early learning and childcare programs, if they wanted to go and talk to their mayor or city councilmember about this would start with? How should they talk to ground that might be fertile, but might be hard and rocky at this point, that's not really willing and ready to hear these arguments? What are the arguments you'd start with? Dave, what convinced you? What would you use to convince one of your colleagues? And Billie, I want to ask you why you think mayor after mayor after mayor has been willing to take this on.

*HOLLISTER:* Due to my background as a former schoolteacher, I came at it as a proclivity. I had served 19 years in the legislature, and I was deeply involved in the human service network. I have done appropriations and budget for 16 years, so I really saw the linkages between education, public health, mental health, substance abuse treatment, prisons, and the whole thing. But most mayors don't have that background.

What captures mayors' attentions is probably two things. One, the biggest challenge people are facing right now is workforce development and clear education and getting early interventions. There's a lot of data that show that money spent in the early years saves money further down the road, and there isn't a mayor in America that isn't wrestling with the issue of workforce development.

And the second, and one that's growing, and I think over the next decade will really be significant, is economic development. We have a major insurance company here that was thinking about leaving and we had to put together a creative incentive package. One of the things that they have seen as most successful is an onsite daycare center to which their employees have access. In fact, as we worked with them on the new facility, they decided to build the daycare center before the other building was complete because there was such a demand. They had a waiting list. They frankly wish they had doubled the size. A couple of our area hospitals use onsite daycare as a recruiting tool for nurses. There's a terrible shortage in this region of skilled nursing care. And having this option of onsite daycare gives you a competitive advantage. I think there's a growing sophistication and understanding on the part of labor to negotiate these kinds of benefits. That's a new trend. I've seen some recent trends about who's being unionized around the country. It's no longer autoworkers. In fact, the largest local in the UAW nationwide is state employees. And now you're getting more nurses and others unionized. As the union leadership changes from the more traditional male auto worker/manufacturing mode to a service oriented, much more diverse employment pool, you're going to find these kind of issues being raised by the new labor leaders, who are going to be women.

*KYLE:* Billie, do you have a clue as to why all your mayors have been supportive? Is it something in the water?

*YOUNG:* That's it. It's the water. You know, I think we've fortunately had three mayors, although they come from very different backgrounds, who all were really interested in education.

And like Mayor Hollister, I'm a former high school teacher. So, I've always come at it from an education perspective. This is an education system. This early learning field, this childcare field is about educating kids. And that has really worked. But my advice is to talk to your mayor and listen to the mayor about what he or she is concerned about. I think Mayor Hollister did a very effective job of showing that there really are a number of ways to come at this: economic development, workforce development, and crime reduction. There is some great data from the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids work that the National Police Chiefs Council has done on school failure (<http://www.fightcrime.org/>). One of the concerns mayors have is rapid growth, and do we have the infrastructure to deal with that growth? Part of the infrastructure that we need is that the more families are moving into our communities, the more childcare they're going to need. Are they concerned about their schools failing? Are they concerned about attracting workers to their communities? Is it about neighborhood development and neighborhoods thriving? Childcare is a very key component of neighborhood development. It's really finding out about their interests because the benefits of childcare and the need for childcare cross many domains.

*HOLLISTER:* I want to pick up on the crime piece as well because mayors focus on that. And you can have some fun with this. Our chief has been very active in recruiting volunteers to work in conjunction with the police department in doing various service programming. We started a program with RSVP, which is Retired and Seniors Volunteer Program," and every community has them. We deputize them, give them a police radio, a police shirt, and a car and told them to go chase down truants and bring them back to school. And the seniors absolutely love it. They go to the malls, they go to the video arcades, and they bring the kids back to school. Our crime rate in the city in the afternoon among teens has dropped 25%. And everybody wins. The schools are more pleased and happy. They've got kids back in school. The seniors feel important, and they're engaged. It relieves the police department and the school officials. It's a preventive strategy. It's a win/win for everybody. And it gets the mayor some good publicity at the same time. So think of these things creatively as you try virtually any option.

Our chief of police here has recently announced an effort with me identify 500 at-risk seventh graders and promise them a free two-year college education if they complete high school. That gives the kids an incentive to stay in school. It's going to be somewhat costly, but in the long term it's going to save us money. We're doing some creative stuff with the police department that has given us entrées into the schools and makes a connection between the schools and the human service system. When you talk to mayors, their eyes kind of glaze over because it's such a complicated system. There has got to be a way to engage the schools. And the schools have got to be open in the evenings and the schools have got to house human service programs so that the mom in the neighborhood who needs to get immunizations doesn't have to get on a bus and go downtown, but can get services in her neighborhood. That's what our family resource centers are going to be that grew out of our "Ready to Succeed" program. And a couple of those are going to be in schools. So we've got to make more of a connect between the schools. And mayors can do that. What I find is schools are not able to take the lead in improving the schools. There's no credibility. They've lost it. But mayors can bring credibility to that effort, and it's happening all over the country.

I think there is much more of an empathy and a window of opportunity right now for mayors to engage the schools and do almost any kind of creative programming. And the private sector is willing to partner. Virtually nobody has said "no" to anything we've asked, whether it's funding or apprenticeship programs or whatever we've asked. They're stepping

forward because they're throwing up their hands, and they know it's a big issue, but they don't know how to fix it, and they're turning to the human service network and saying, "Figure this out." And the underlying key -- if you remember nothing else, is collaboration and forming networks so that people aren't duplicating and stumbling over each other, and they've got different forms to fill out to get people into the system. That collaboration has to start at the front. The mayors can drive that because they hold a unique role in the community. The key is just getting them prepped with enough information to know what to say. Then, using the publicity and the bully pulpit that they have to drive it.

*YOUNG:* I think the other thing that's been helpful that you just helped me remember, Mayor Hollister, is also getting our mayors out to childcare programs and early learning programs so that they can see what it is, see how it works, and see the kids. It's pretty hard to be out in programs and be with kids and not get excited about the opportunities there for early learning and the opportunities for cities to help make those systems better.

*LOMBARDI:* I think too, Billie, you can use many doors to get to this issue. Although we wish that everyone would be as enthusiastic as what we're hearing here, not all policy makers are at the point where they understand why it's important, particularly the focus on the quality of childcare. One thing I think that's helpful is if you put the numbers on your table specific to your city, i.e. how many children actually are already in childcare environments on a daily basis. And what an opportunity that is to promote education and get the principal of the local school involved in that discussion with you. Get the business community to be the one that's delivering the message. Maybe not the early childhood community -- we're not always the messenger any more. So it sounds like those are the things that are working in a lot of other places.

*YOUNG:* I like your idea about the unlikely messengers. That's been really helpful for us. We just did a very comprehensive needs assessment because our mayor said, "Show me the numbers" and "show me what the needs and gaps are." Because this issue is so huge I'm not sure what's the right role for the city. Where do we dig in? How do we make a difference in a system that's so huge?" Not everybody is [Chicago] Mayor [Richard] Daley, who can write a five million-dollar check to start a huge accreditation campaign, which is really great.

We did a very thorough needs assessment. And we have a PowerPoint presentation we did that might be useful to others because we included a set of slides in the beginning that could be easily adapted that built a very strong case for early learning and out of school time programs. If people go to our website you can look at that and all the research that we did in the various studies. (<http://www.cityofseattle.net/humanservices/fys/children.htm>)

*LOMBARDI:* What key numbers were the most important to have?

*YOUNG:* What was really interesting -- we quantified the cost to the business community when childcare is problematic for employees. It came out to -- I'm terrible with numbers -- something like \$120 million a year that our business community is losing because of lost productivity due to childcare problems employees have. That was very influential. The other thing that was very influential was the cost of care for families, because I don't think our mayor and our council realize that, in Seattle anyway, the cost of childcare for the first four years of a

kid's life is two and a half times the cost of tuition at the University of Washington for four years. When people heard that, they just went, "Whoa, something is wrong here!" So that was very effective.

*KYLE:* In talking about dollars, let's talk about where we're getting the money to support these kinds of programs. Mayor Hollister has mentioned that nobody has told him "no" and that he's gotten a state grant. Where do you start? Where are some of the sources that you've either used that are municipal dollars that you've applied or raised for this? And what outside of city government? I know in both cities, you've done some things that are pretty much municipal sources, and you've also done things that have reached beyond what the city could afford to support. Give us some things that you think another city might consider or look at or examine. Mayor?

*HOLLISTER:* Probably the most important thing that we've done is create a forum, which is an inter-agency collaborative, and have better sharing of current dollars. For example, we have a kind of convoluted system where we have a series of city services, then you have school services. Then you have a lot of the human service delivery system -- a county system, which is governed by a different set of commissioners elected at different times, and so they're accountable to different people. Getting the county health officials who have access to dollars and programs in the same room with city officials who have a different set of demands meeting at the same time with school people who have still different funding sources. Having the formal, regular, disciplined evaluation assessment, sharing of information, agreeing on a common entry form so we're not duplicating, overcoming some of the issues of privacy and all of those complex issues. So that you get the sense of sharing and comradeship among institutional partners. That's really been the most effective thing we've done.

We had gotten some private funding. We have gotten the state funding. We've also put some of our own city funding in the pot as well. When you do that, it really gets peoples' attention. For example, I've got a staff person that works almost exclusively out of my office on educational programs and on youth-related programs. We have made it a priority in the State of the City address to hold the State of the City address outside of City Hall and almost exclusively in human service delivery places. So we go to the schools, we go to different agencies and talk about the importance of education and highlight and bring onstage programs and program providers and kids. And people relate to kids. Do not be afraid to turn to them and let them be your advocates as well. So, we have multiple strategies. I would say probably the least important of them are hard dollars out of the city budget. But have some of the hard dollars come out of the city budget -- for example, when the school district had to discontinue middle school sports because of some budget cuts, we picked them up. So, we financed middle school sports. The school district had to make a number of cuts, and we picked up those programs. Then, we started our own programming through dedicated money that the city council set aside for youth programming.

Now we've made it a priority. We simply said youth programming is going to be a priority. I led the effort to pass a school bond issue, which eventually did fail. But having the mayor out there day after day is important and shows the linkages between the systems -- the city system and the school system. But taking it one step further and engaging the pre-school advocates as well. And continually being available and open to them. And advocate for them and work with them so that when you do get in the room and make those resource allocation

decisions, you feel like you are trusted partners, not competitors.

*KYLE:* Billie, what do you see as some local finance initiatives?

*YOUNG:* We started with Model Cities dollars, which then became community development block grant dollars. I'd say roughly a third of our program is funded by block grant. And the majority of it is really from city general fund. It actually may be another third is general fund and another third is the Families and Education levy. In 1990 we passed a levy which is basically a property tax that raises about nine and a half million dollars a year for a host of services related to supporting families so children can succeed in school. And childcare gets a big chunk of the Families and Education levy dollars.

We also get some funding from the state. We get funding from the McKinney for Homeless Kids' childcare. We have some private foundation dollars, and that varies depending on different projects that we're doing. We've had Department of Labor dollars, Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, and the Workforce Reinvestment Act that was previously I think the Private Industry Council. Those funds don't currently come to us. They go to the county. But we have a partnership, and it's a good source of funds for childcare for people in work training. We also get USDA dollars because we operate a food program for family childcare providers. And we're working with banks to set up a facilities fund using Community Reinvestment Act funding from banks.

I'm most excited about a recent project that we're working on in conjunction with our local foundations. The city issued a challenge grant to the local foundation community through Philanthropy Northwest, which is the grant makers' forum. Our challenge grant said that for every two dollars that you invest in early learning and out of school time projects that fit the Project Lift-Off agenda, we'd match it with a dollar. And that has become very exciting. Already we've more than doubled our money and the foundations are really excited about it and have developed a learning community. They're in the process of becoming educated about early learning and other school time issues. They're going to be issuing joint Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the first time. The first project is going to be about Kith and Kin, or Family, Friends, and Neighbors Care. I'm really excited about that. It's not only leveraged traditional dollars, but leveraged what I think will be a stronger commitment to giving in our foundation community.

*LOMBARDI:* What I think both of these comments reflect is that the money has really been coming from multiple sources and a combination of public and private. But we also should remember that we've had an enormous expansion of childcare dollars since '92. We've had the historic increases in Head Start. We've got communities that are now using Title I dollars. I think the big challenge is keeping those increases coming, particularly next year as we go into the reauthorization of TANF. It'll be important to not only assure that those funding streams continue, but continue to grow. We've got about three and a half more dollars coming from TANF into childcare to fund a range of activities, quality and access. And the challenge is going to be to keep those coming. We had a new fund that I'm sure some of your cities applied for that was authorized in a bipartisan way last year -- the Early Learning Opportunities Act -- that would allow communities to fund an array of early childhood services. The future funding of that is now threatened, and we'll have to be very vocal about keeping those funding streams that we have earned in the last few years going and growing.

*YOUNG:* Joan, that also makes me think about the fact that a very important rule for cities is this public advocacy on the federal and state level to increase funding and to improve policies for childcare and early school time. That's an important thing that mayors and councilmembers can do, even if they don't spend a dime themselves, though, of course, I hope they will. But putting pressure on the federal government and the state governments to fund these programs is a very important thing that we can do as local governments.

The other thing that we have done is funded grant writers and have provided grant writing technical assistance and training for community-based agencies -- our local childcare research and referral network -- to help them bring money into the system. It doesn't necessarily come to us, but it comes to them from the foundation community to improve services. So for very small amounts of money, we're funding grant writers and building capacity in the system.

*HOLLISTER:* When it comes to advocacy, there's a fine line between advocacy and education. And every community has available to it cable television. And cable has an obligation to provide channels for local community education programs. I would say they probably only use 7 to 10% of the capacity that those facilities have. They're running reruns time and time again. If you can get the human service network folks talking to each other and programming that, you can do a real public education process for virtually nothing. And, if you were really creative, you could get some high school kids, who know that technology and would enjoy doing it, to do the technical work on the programming. And then you bring in people on a regular -- weekly, monthly basis, whatever it might be. And you make that thing rerun a dozen times over the week because it's such vacant programming. And you can do a very sophisticated education program that would border on advocacy, but wouldn't be advocacy.

*KYLE:* I like that notion, Dave, and I don't want to lose that. But I want to get a question back to Joan about smaller communities -- cities 50,000, 30,000 and smaller in terms of the array of funding. Do you see that those are accessible to smaller communities and what advice can you suggest about how to get access to those various -- both federal as well as other sources of funding that you have heard mentioned?

*LOMBARDI:* I think the biggest challenge for smaller communities is coming together so that you've got a coalition of people trying to access dollars rather than individuals trying to access dollars that may not normally flow to smaller communities. I think coalitions are important. I think being creative in who are the people that are doing the asking. The media has been mentioned. The police have been mentioned, and I would really echo the new voices, and particularly I think "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids" has done a terrific job at the national level of having law enforcement also doing some of the advocating. I think it's really putting together a broad-based coalition that includes the private sector, the police, and some of the newer voices to try to access new dollars.

*KYLE:* We talked about some quality issues earlier, but I want to jump into a particular issue that I know affects child care and early learning program. And that's about staff and retention of staff, attraction of staff, benefits for staff, salary and wage issues for staff. What have you seen that's happening in your communities about these issues? Are you able in Lansing or Seattle to use the offices of municipal government to get these issues better addressed? What's going on in your communities?

*YOUNG:* I think we're doing a couple of things. For a number of years we've been helping to raise community awareness about the issues of wages and turnover and staff preparation for the work. It's very important work in early learning. Former Mayor Rice and current Mayor Schell both are very concerned about the wage issue and about the high rate of turnover and have been able to talk articulately at teacher rallies and annual worthy wage days for childcare. They're very concerned about that issue.

However, as a the municipal government, we have, I have to confess, struggled with what is our role to really make a difference. We had our childcare staffing task force in the early '90s that really looked at what the city could do. What is the city's role? We did a number of things that came out of that task force. We had childcare providers, teachers, business representatives, and people from the University of Washington and some councilmembers -- a whole range of interested persons struggling with that question of what's the city's role. And we ended up deciding that because we have a subsidy system, one thing we could do is raise our reimbursement rates and keep them as high as possible, which we have done and are continuing to try to do.

We also started a business partnership, pairing businesses with childcare providers. The idea is that the businesses provide in kind donations to the childcare programs and that the programs are then able to take the savings and turn those into wage increases. That has been moderately successful. I think one of the good side effects of that is we've raised a lot of awareness and concern about the issue in the business community members that have participated. And the providers who participated have made significant gains in their wages.

We also have lobbied the state to fund wage enhancements for childcare providers. The state is doing a pilot project for \$4 million. And lastly, because of Project Lift-Off, we instituted TEACH [Teacher Education and Compensation Helps] in our state, and the city kicked off the TEACH program, which is a teacher education and compensation program that's modeled from North Carolina. And the city is investing \$100,000 in providing TEACH scholarships and bonuses to teachers in early learning programs that get training. (<http://www.childcarenet.org/TEACHpage.htm>)

I think that's one we're still struggling with. It's a tough one. I'm really excited the San Francisco CARES [Compensation and Retention Encourages Stability] program. They're giving stipends to teachers who achieve different levels of educational achievement. ([http://www.dcyf.org/204\\_2\\_earlychildhoodcare.htm](http://www.dcyf.org/204_2_earlychildhoodcare.htm))

*LOMBARDI:* The key to quality is the relationship between the person caring for a child and the child and families themselves. We've come some way over the last decade in beginning to get people aware of the status and working conditions of the childcare workforce. But we've got a long way to go. We know from a recent study, for example, that wages have been stagnant over the last few years. In fact, the latest research has been telling us that it's harder now to recruit and retain staff than ever before and that programs are actually having to recruit less qualified staff than they were even a few years ago. So that's the alarming part of it.

The good news is that we are starting to see some state salary initiatives. I think it's very important for municipalities to be actively involved in working with the state on behalf of the early childhood workforce issues to try to get more investment. There is quality money set aside in the childcare fund. There is the ability to use education dollars in partnership with childcare money to begin to address the wage issue. The TEACH program that Billie mentioned

is now in almost 20 states and growing. It should be in every state, and it would be great if the cities would partner with the state in enhancing the number of people that could get scholarships and stipends through that program. But even that program alone is not enough. Billie mentioned the CARES program in California. There's a wages program in North Carolina. Those take the issue one step further and not only give scholarships to people who are furthering their education, but then give them quarterly or monthly enhancements directly in their paycheck so they can stay in the jobs once they have better qualifications. There is no reason that those things can't be happening in every state. They should be happening in every state.

There have been some bills introduced around rate increases and around salary enhancements. Next year, we're hoping at the federal level that we will see legislation included in the reauthorization of childcare that would specifically address the issue. It's long overdue.

*KYLE:* I think one of the things that I've seen that cities can do is to be a model. There are municipal employees who are doing some of this work. Cities can make sure that those who are city employees are being paid at levels of pay and receiving benefits that can be held out there as exemplars. Exemplars that really are what we're asking for, what people are asking for in terms of what the needs are, matching their qualifications and matching the expertise that they're exercising. I think city governments can show leadership in this regard.

*LOMBARDI:* They can also offer their benefit packages to the childcare community. I think that lots of places are thinking about that. And that's another direction to go. A lot of childcare providers have no health benefits.

*KYLE:* So the cities can be the large group, as opposed to the tiny group that the childcare providers themselves are.

*YOUNG:* We're in fact working with a local group of employers called Employer Champions trying to look at how the system is financed overall. It's not financed as a public good, but as a market good. And until we revolutionize the way childcare is financed, we're not really going to be able to systemically solve the issue of wages and staff turnover and benefits. So the number one goal of Project Lift-Off is to revolutionize the financing of childcare and out-of-school time programs. We're part of a national research project called The Finance Circle with Minneapolis, Kansas City, Fairfax County, Virginia and a county from New Hampshire. We're looking at developing some new financing models that will ensure a higher quality system, more affordability for parents, and a well-compensated, stable workforce for the field. The city is leading the local finance circle effort in our county, which we call The Northwest Finance Circle, in trying to bring stakeholders together to take a hard look at how the system is financed and how we could do this differently.

*KYLE:* How do you think folks can get citizens involved to talk about these issues, to get citizens to talk to municipal officials, to get citizens to vote on these issues? Mayor, you talked about outreach to the public. You talked about media campaigns or working with the newspapers. Taking that a step further or modifying that, getting citizens to be the ones who will tell you and tell others, and vote this way -- vote these issues.

*HOLLISTER:* I know in Michigan -- I don't know about all around the country -- most of our

council meetings are televised. Anybody can speak. They are always heard. People are generally very deferential and let people speak and make their points. I think we use special ceremonies and highlight programming. We honor workers. We honor successful programs. We honor students. We do everything we can to provide a public forum on a regular basis. Every Monday night it's just expected that there will be some kind of ceremony or some kind of a presentation that will inform the community about a specific service. It's free, and it's empowering for people who become engaged. The first time they come down they're terrified. It takes a couple of times to do it, but they find that other people in the community do it. In fact, we've done some polling – about 60-plus % of the people watch the city council meetings at least once during the week. And as I've indicated, those are repeated several times. So if they don't see it on Monday night, they might see it on Tuesday at 2:30 in the morning, because they're just running the darn thing over and over. So it's a very cost effective and easy way to get involved.

You take it all the way up to lobbying. There's a whole spectrum of opportunities. But trying to get the mayor to be out front, trying to educate city councilmembers to speak intelligently, creating a forum where people feel comfortable, addressing real serious issues, and then giving them an outlet and acknowledging them and giving them credit are all part of a long-term strategy. And also engaging your business community. When you get the head of one of the major employers saying "we think this is really important and we want to be part of that process," it gives more credibility. Going to the local newspaper -- local newspapers have sections that are dedicated to regular points of view or opinions.

One example relates to our Project Parent, and we asked the local newspaper if they would agree once a month to print an article. And then working with various service agencies and university, community college, people who are knowledgeable. And then feeding that on a regular basis.

Now the key is follow-through. Because once they make that commitment, you've just got to bird dog it. But we've gotten a logo identified and the local newspaper, when they run the article, runs the logo. It's not unusual to have an editorial supporting what the local efforts are. So there are lots of strategies that don't involve a lot of money but are very empowering.

*KYLE:* Billie, have you seen positive outcomes from the efforts around early childhood that your city has taken and differences from three generations of mayors ago?

*YOUNG:* I think that we definitely have. For one thing, I think our childcare system is fairly organized because the city invested in a lot of infrastructure. We helped to build a very strong research and referral system that is extremely effective. We also built a very strong afterschool intermediary organization that is, again, very effective. I think we're seeing a sort of baseline quality of care has risen because of our outreach onsite training and nurse consultation services. So yeah, I think we see a real difference. And I think that certainly the key stakeholders have, because of our history of involvement, come together quite readily to collaborate on these issues.

*KYLE:* Your efforts in Lansing are somewhat more recent, Dave, but what are you looking for in terms of the outcome that you hope to see and what ways of measuring those are you trying to put in place?

*HOLLISTER:* Well, we are very fortunate to have the university close by, and they're willing to use us as a guinea pig and to work with us on evaluation measures as well as the community college. We have spelled out in our booklet measurable outcomes at different intervals. And we'll be able to measure whether we've gotten accreditation, to measure whether we did the PR campaign, measure the parental centers being established. We have gotten those done. We know that we now have in this city parent education centers, a resource center to which people can go. We have a staff of not only volunteers, but some VISTA volunteers assigned to them. We've actually hired staff, and we've got the passport in place but not implemented. So within a year, we'll be able to do a better job of evaluating.

We created a forum for professionals to network together, and that collaboration is happening. And the book that we published is a very professional, thoughtful analysis of what the problem is and what the strategies are that work. There are evaluations built in, and we're going to be accountable. I have agreed to do a regular accountability to the public at a few of the various forums that I have, keeping people informed. So I'll have a better answer for that about a year from today.

*LOMBARDI:* I think what we're all seeing across the country is we've got some outcomes in the fact that more people are involved more families are engaged. There appears to be more communication going on between the early childhood community and the schools. Where you have infusion of third-party dollars, which I think Billie was after in the Finance Project work, you have increased quality going on in those programs. But I think the outcome issue is still in its formative stage. People are still trying to figure out: Are we looking at community outcomes? Are we looking at program outcomes? Are we looking at child outcomes? And I think we're really looking at all of the above. To get child outcomes, however, we're going to really have to have a more intense focus on improving the quality of care. And we know that.

*KYLE:* Joan, one of the questioners was asking about outcomes for children in advantaged families, as opposed to so-called disadvantaged families? What are the outcomes for children in childcare who are coming from intact families where the families are reading to them, they're spending time with them? Are we going to see outcomes in those programs, too, on a child basis?

*LOMBARDI:* What we're after is to try to begin to look at what are the child outcomes across income groups, what's working best for different kinds of groups, what's the intensity of service that you need for one group compared to another? But again, I think those discussions are still only really starting. There's a lot of discussion in the field about how to measure those and the appropriateness of different kinds of testing. I think really where we've seen progress over the last few years is beginning to get a sense of what should be the goals of the community and how do they begin to measure community-wide what the outcomes are, and then how do you link that to child outcomes?

*KYLE:* Billie, I want to you to tell us what your website is. You inferred that there is more information there.

*YOUNG:* Our website is

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/humanservices/fys/projectliftoff/default.htm>

*KYLE:* The Lansing Ready to Succeed Blue Mountain Committee booklet, “The Early Years Are Learning Years: How Lansing Works for Kids,” can be downloaded in a 28-page PDF file. Go to: <http://www.msu.edu/dig/ga/ready/blueribbonreport.pdf>.

For ongoing information about NLC’s efforts in childcare and early learning, go to our website, <http://www.nlc.org/iyef>.