

Born Learning Delegation

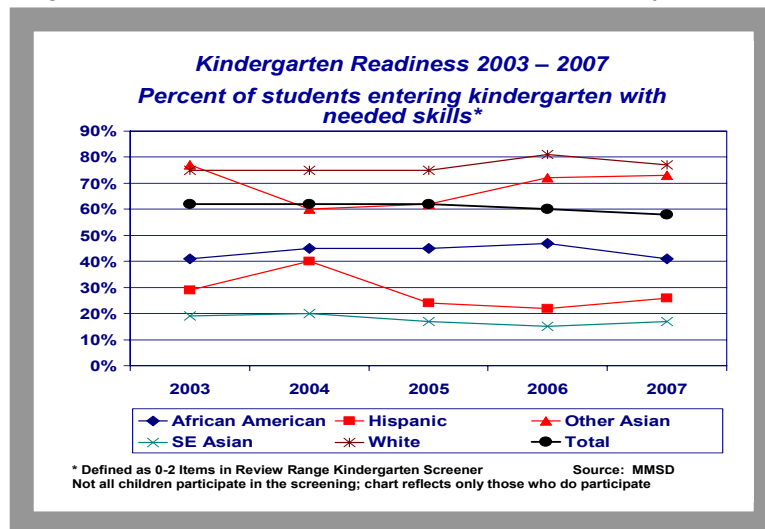
Children are cared for and have fun as they become prepared for school.

Research on early childhood development and brain chemistry is resounding—the first few years of a child’s life are the most important in his development. As more research becomes available, it confirms the story that has been developing over the last 20 years. Underwriting young children’s development can be the best investment society can make—with payoff in an individual’s academic success, a productive work life, and the creation of positive family and community relationships.

Even prior to our Agenda for Change, United Way of Dane County has been investing in early childhood. Our first initiative, Start Smart Dane County (early 1990s) improved system collaboration on childcare standards, childcare center learning, created a community reading initiative “Take 5” and the published of a Family Friendly Employer Best Practices Guide.

During our Birth to Four Initiative (2003 – 2004) we led a team of community leaders in partnership with the Wisconsin State Journal’s extended coverage of early childhood issues. The result was the acceptance of responsibility by community institutions for four categories of work: City of Madison (childcare), Dane County (child abuse prevention), Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) (exploration of 4-year old kindergarten), and United Way (parent support and education). We responded by expanding home visitation for first time parents at risk of abuse or neglect and developing Preschools of Hope.

Even with a variety of programs and supports (United Way invests almost \$1 million annually into early childhood) in Dane County, the results of kindergarten readiness from the Madison Metropolitan School District continue to decline. Last year only 58% of the children who were screened were considered ready for kindergarten success, a drop from 62% the previous year.



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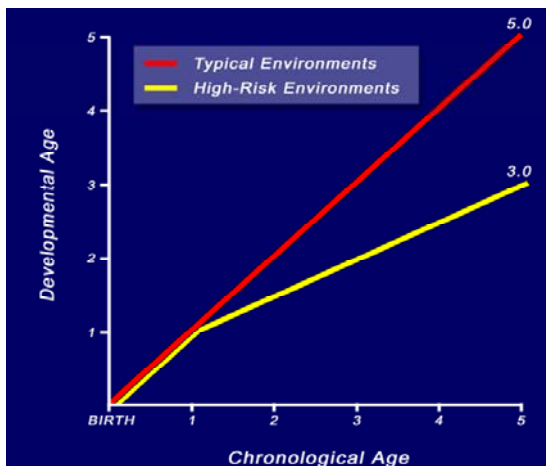
In 2006 United Way of Dane County conducted surveys with employees of our top twenty companies, donors at the leadership giving levels and child care providers. Over 500 individuals responded to the survey indicating that their choice for the best strategy for helping children become prepared for school was to help parent's understand their child's age-appropriate language, social and emotional development. One responder wrote in their comments: *"Well meaning parents may not have these skills, but would use them if they did. Many adults simply don't know how to help small children with language/reading skills."*

The Born Learning Delegation

In March 2007, we convened a group of community leaders to investigate, within the field of early childhood, ways in which we can improve kindergarten readiness through parent education and support. This group, the Born Learning Delegation, is selecting areas to investigate, gather data, and make recommendations for action. A mobilization plan will be developed in fall 2007 to create goals and strategies that can be implemented at scale for the greatest impact.

We are midway through our work and have developed much data to share that illuminates the issues in Dane County. This data leads us to believe that we can put strategies in place to help parents and informal caregivers provide the

By age 5, many children in high-risk environments are already developmentally behind. This gap only grows over time – undermining school readiness and success in life. Dr. Craig Ramey, Georgetown University



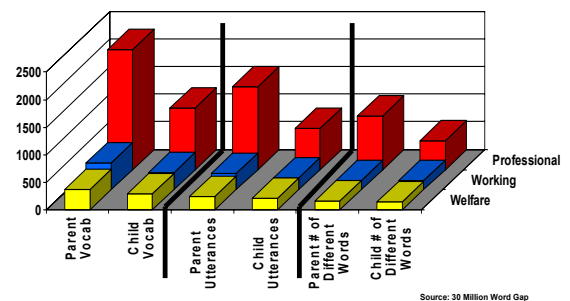
stimulations and experiences that are important for a child's successful start in school.

Why it matters

- The quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society as an adult can be traced back to the first few years of life. From birth until about 5 years old a child undergoes tremendous growth and change. If this period of life includes support for growth in cognition, language, motor skills, adaptive skills and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and later contribute to society. However, without support during these early years, a child is more likely to drop out of school, receive welfare benefits and commit crime. (Arthur Rolnick, Sr. VP and Director of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.)
- In 2006, 42% of children who were screened prior to entering school did not have age appropriate skills. The remaining sixteen

Vocabulary gap huge between different social economic statuses.

Families' Language and Use Across Income Groups



"Creating a warm, loving, language-rich environment for children to play and interact has a huge impact on their brain development and readiness for learning."

Art Rainwater, Superintendent of Madison Metropolitan Schools and Co-Chair of the United Way of Dane County Born Learning Delegation.

districts in Dane County are not uniformly assessing K-readiness ahead of kindergarten entrance.

- Children from middle-income families are read-to approximately 1,000 hours by the time they start kindergarten; children from low-income families only log 25 hours.
- Children from literacy poor homes arrive at school with vocabularies of 800 -1000 words vs. 8,000 – 10,000 words for children from more literacy- affluent homes.
- By the time they start kindergarten, children living in poverty hear 32 million fewer words than children from homes of professionals.

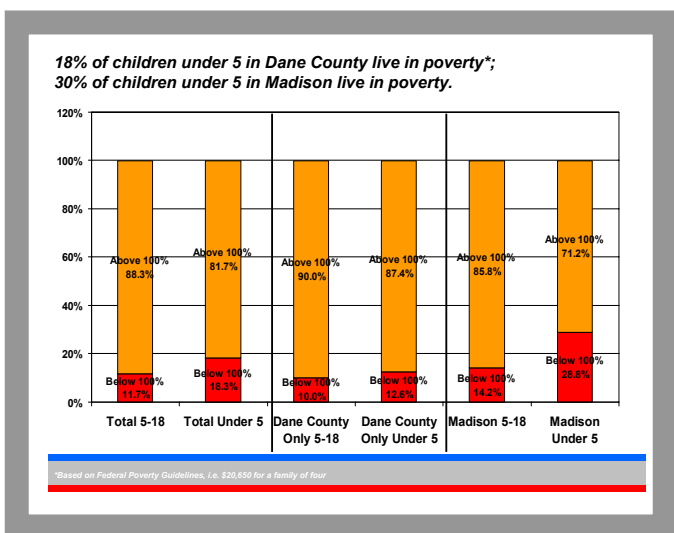
are living in poverty based on 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.¹ The Delegation is focusing on specific strategies to reach these children.

With the cost of child care averaging between \$183 and \$274 per week in Dane County, it is increasingly difficult for families to afford. This means a family’s annual cost for one child in child care would be between \$9500 and \$14,200, over 50% more than a year of undergraduate education at the University of Wisconsin. If all 28,000 children needed child care, the cost of that care would be between \$266 and \$397 million. If the State budget is passed as written as of June, 2007, Child care subsidies for low income families with children in child care will remain flat for the next two years. These subsidies have been frozen for the past two years. By 2009 this will constitute a 16% reduction in support per child.

Madison has established a rigorous accreditation system for child care providers. We count 134 city and/or nationally accredited child care and preschool programs and 666 that are licensed or certified. There are programs, such as the Launching Into Literacy partnership that provide training to child care providers on curriculum they can use in their settings to encourage school readiness for their children.

We know that of the 5,000+ children in Dane County that are living in poverty, only 3,309 are reported as being in some type of child care with only 20% of them participating in accredited child care, preschools or Headstart program. As a result, there are approximately 1,700 children, living in poverty and under the age of 5 in Dane County that are being cared for by either their families, friends or neighbors. As strategies are developed the Delegation will take into account the unregulated care that is being provided to many of our children in poverty.

“Everyday moments are teachable moments. Parents can learn practical ways to influence early literacy and math skills.”
*Ave Bie, Partner, Quarles & Brady and Co
 Chair of the United Way of Dane County
 Born Learning Delegation.*



Scope and Dimension

Census data tells us there are 27,914 children in Dane County under the age of 5. All children need quality experiences in the early years so they become ready for a successful start in school. Parents are recognized as their child’s first teacher and as the Delegation considers the scope and dimension of its work, it recognizes that regardless of income, every parent hungers for information on how to help their child be successful. However, research tells us that children from low income homes are more like to come to school without those basic skills. In Dane County 18%, or 5,024 of children under 5

¹Federal Poverty for a family of four in 2007 is \$20,650

Potential Approaches

Recognizing the important role of parents and other caregivers, regulated and not regulated, the Born Learning Delegation is considering several approaches that would focus on getting important information and resources to all families and children.

In surveys conducted by United Way of Dane County in 2006, respondents indicated that the physician is the most credible source for advice on child development and that in addition to their family, they were most likely to access information about caring for a child from their physician. The Delegation is exploring ways to work with physicians in the community around assessment and distribution of critical information to parents at the developmentally appropriate time.

Research also tells us that the best time to reach a parent is immediately after their first child's birth with a focus on the quality of the mother-child interactions. The Delegation recognizes the value of in home parent support and education and will be looking further in to that strategy which already exists in our community but is limited in how many parents can be served.

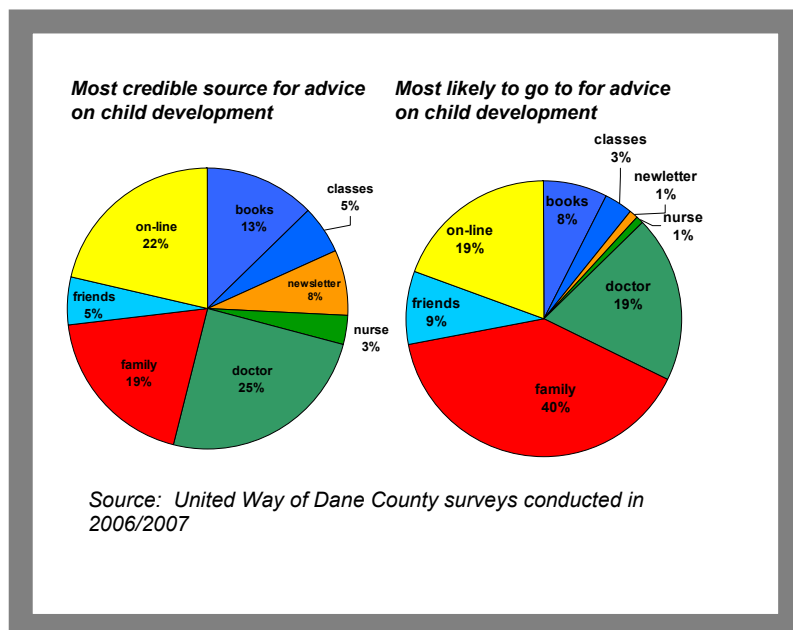
Due the numbers of children that are in care and the access child care providers have to parents, the Delegation is considering the role of caregivers other than parents and how to encourage, develop and support their role in helping to prepare children for school success and provide information to parents as they interact daily with them. Both formal and informal training opportunities are being discussed.

Moving Forward

United Way of Dane County's Born Learning Delegation will be evaluating and determining which strategies will have the greatest impact for Dane County. The delegation is interested in strategies that can be taken to scale to reach the greatest number of children under 5 and their families and caregivers and have the highest impact on their school readiness.

A mobilization plan will be issued in October of 2007 with greater detail on plans and strategies.

Jack Shonkoff, Editor of the book "From Neurons to Neighborhoods" said, "**The development of intelligence, emotions, and social skills is highly inter-related. How children feel is as important as how they think, and how they are treated is as important as what they are taught, particularly with respect to their readiness to succeed in school.**"



Investing in early childhood has huge investment returns.

- Investing \$1 in early childhood development brings a return on investment of \$17 – with tangible results measured in lower crime, fewer single parents, higher individual earnings and education levels.
- For every State \$1 invested in four-year old kindergarten, \$68 is returned in savings to the education system.

This 68% cost savings over the remaining K-12 years (est. of \$140+ million) is due to reductions in special education, reductions in grade retention and improvements in learning productivity.

Data Source: Art Rolnick, Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Data source: An Economic Analysis of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in WI