

WVHSA NEWSLETTER

The Importance of Collaborative Teams

By Traci Dalton Volume 12, Issue 4

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As the WV Head Start State Collaboration Director, I have the privilege of developing an understanding of the numerous effective local collaborative models around our state. Every community throughout West Virginia is benefiting from collaborative service delivery. The extremely high prevalence of blended, collaborative classrooms demand collaborative support structures to achieve the maximum potential of the collaborative design for children, families, and to maximize resources. Creating a collaborative support system does require each partner to work in new and different ways but is essential in attaining goals, supervising and hiring staff, delivering services to families, and making strategic decisions.

The importance of local county collaborative teams does not diminish as we approach or achieve universality. Rather, the importance of local collaborative teams after universality is only intensified. Local collaborative teams provide local expertise on early childhood issues, as well as, programmatic requirements. These teams provide an opportunity for local collaborative advisory leadership that can assist local decision makers in establishing and implementing strategic goals and programmatic operations.

The diversity of membership within county collaborative teams ideally positions this group to focus its work around systemic topic areas such as transition, school/ program improvement, professional development, curriculum, and oversight. Adoption of this type of framework for your local collaborative team, transitions the role of the collaborative team from system building and access building to more of a strategic role. It may also require local teams to identify individuals that have not previously participated in the local team but now may be needed.

This collaborative team structure would also likely require more frequent communication due to the on-going nature of this work as compared to the current structure of meeting to complete and submit one annual plan. Many teams around the state meet on a very frequent basis because they discovered value to working together in an on-going manner for their local system. How often does your team meet currently? Does your local team currently discuss or work on projects not related to the creation and submission of the annual plan? What changes, if any, in your current meeting structure would need to be made if a more strategic vision was adopted?

Collaborative Teams will continue to serve an important role well beyond achieving universal status. Local decision making will remain critical to address the unique needs of children, families, and our communities. I hope this has provided some food for thought as you think about the direction and role of your local collaborative team. If you would like more information about collaborative teams, please join us for the 2009 Pre-K Summer Leadership Institute in Charleston or contact me at Traci.L.Dalton@wv.gov or 304-558-4638, Clayton Burch at wburch@access.k12.wv.us or 304-558-2696, and Melanie Clark at Melanie.A.Clark@wv.us.

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For more information contact Becky Gooch-Erbacher, Executive Director at (304) 233-4450.

“Daddy and Me” Day Strengthens Family Bonds

By Charly Markwart

Dozens of CASE West Virginia Head Start students had the chance to spend an afternoon bowling and bonding with the fathers and father figures in their lives May 15, thanks to the organization’s “Daddy and Me Fun Day.”

Hosted at the Green Valley Bowling, Billiards and Indoor Mini Golf Center, the event saw more than 115 youngsters, parents, relatives and friends take part in a day of diversion planned in conjunction with the National Fatherhood Initiative, established to inspire male involvement in children’s lives.

“The reason for the initiative is that statistics show that male involvement is essential in a child’s development,” said Head Start Family and Community Partnership Coordinator Melissa Shinault. “A positive male role model is needed in a child’s life, and it doesn’t necessarily have to be a father; it can be a grandfather, uncle, or a brother. We have invited anyone who is involved in the child’s life to come here today and spend some fun time together.”

As the giddy noise of the children’s laughter and excitement and the sound of the proud and happy fathers echoed around her, Shinault marveled at just how many members of the Head Start community had taken advantage of the opportunity to share quality time with their little loved ones, and noted how much fun those kids and their adult counterparts appeared to be having.

“I think all of the kids are having a great time,” she said. “It’s good to see the parents involved in the kids’ lives like this; that’s one thing we really try to encourage through the Head Start program. And, I think this has been a great day for the dads, too, because they’ve been able to socialize with the other parents in the program, as well as spending a great day with their children.”

According to Shinault, CASE (Community Action of South Eastern) West Virginia had an abundance of much-appreciated assistance in providing the day of games, food and fun to the children and their families. The Green Valley Bowling Center and Little Caesars of Bluefield helped greatly with the day’s lunch and activities, while Applebee’s and other area businesses donated door prizes and treats for the children.

“We couldn’t have done this without all their help,” said Shinault. “It’s just been such a great day all the way around. My biggest fear was that we wouldn’t have very many turn out, and we’ve had a great attendance. The owner of the bowling alley came up to me and told me how surprised he was at how many kids were here and how well-behaved they have been. I think everyone has had a great time and I am just so happy with how the event has turned out.”

Head Start is a free, income based program. CASE WV serves Mercer and Summers counties offering pre-kindergarten education to three and five year old children, as well as support and resources to families. Launched in April, Early Head Start is a similar program offering child development services to pregnant mothers and infant/toddlers from birth to three years of age.

Early Head Start in Fayette County

by Keith Young

Fayette County Child Development, Inc. is a small single purpose agency in southeastern West Virginia. Fayette County Child Development, Inc has been in operation since 1982 serving 248 Head Start children and families. In 2009-10 the program received an Early Head Start grant to provide services to 32 infant/toddlers and 8 prenatal families.

After receiving the Early Head Start grant the agency found there were some huge obstacles to overcome in operating a successful Early Head Start program. The first obstacle faced was working with the fact this was going to be a brand new program for our county. Fayette County is a tight knit family based community that relies on extended family to watch children more than allowing programs to do so.

After a very detailed approach at getting the word out, recruiting and selling the program to our community, the program is now in a position where there are over 70 income eligible children on the Early Head Start waiting list. This means the enrollment applications double the number of children wanting in the program versus children being served.

There were two additional obstacles facing the program, seeking and hiring qualified staff, as well as, completing all the brick and mortar projects. The program successfully completed the hiring of qualified staff and the brick and mortar projects were completed on time. "Some staff hired met minimum requirements for Early Head Start while others are currently completing their Infant Toddler CDA. We have worked with local colleges and staff will begin taking courses towards a Early Childhood Development Degree in the summer" stated Keith Young, Director, Fayette County Child Development, Inc. *All of this was done within 90 days of official notice of receipt of the award.*

The Early Head Start program's Home Based infant/toddlers and prenatal families began home visits on March 1. The Center Based infant/toddlers doors opened on March 8. Both the Home Based and Center Based options are fully enrolled and are now in the third month of providing services. The program has continued many practices from the Head Start program into the Early Head Start program such as Fatherhood Involvement activities and working with families to further their education. Community wide partnerships have flourished as every available resource in the county to provide a comprehensive program for our children and pre-natal families has been utilized including; WIC, Birth-to-Three, Board of Education, pediatricians, the local birthing clinic and local schools.

The Early Head Start grant funded through the ARRA funds have created jobs in the community and is being used to provide comprehensive services to infant/toddlers and prenatal families.

In Fayette County there is only 1 day care facility that serves infants. That program only serves approximately 12 infants/toddlers. Where does that leave the rest of the children needing a strong, supportive program for child development? They are looking at us to become the leader in this area for this population.

Mr. Young stated, "Early Head Start has been a blessing for this community. Although we have been aware of the need for Early Head Start for sometime, we never dreamed that the demand would be this high. It has also enriched our overall program. The newly hired Early Head Start staff have brought an energy and passion to our program that has had a positive impact on the whole program. We are now able to work more closely with soon-to-be parents and children at an earlier age to better prepare them. In working to get the Early Head Start program running, it also re-energized the Management staff. We were forced to re-examine the Performance Standards, Management Guide and Service Plans. This allowed us to take another look at our program and make improvements that might have gone overlooked. I am very thankful for the opportunity given to Fayette County Child Development Inc and believe our community, program and more importantly families, will be enriched by the EHS program."

West Virginia Ranks as one of the top Ten States Offering Pre-k

By Clayton Burch, WVDE

West Virginia chalked up one of the top 10 spots for state preschool education, according to the annual survey of state-funded preschool programs released on Tuesday.

"It is evident that West Virginia understands the importance of early education," Gov. Joe Manchin said. "Our ultimate goal is to provide high quality, nutritional pre-K to all children in the state because we know that early learning and development is paramount to their future success."

The State of Preschool 2009 showed that West Virginia ranked fifth nationally for enrollment and adequately funded its program, coming in at 13th for spending per child. The per-child expenditure in West Virginia is approximately \$8,700. In addition, West Virginia met seven of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"This report solidifies that West Virginia is moving in the right direction," West Virginia Superintendent of Schools Steve Paine said. "Research shows that high-quality pre-K can help improve the educational success of all children. Pre-K also can decrease dropout rates, crime and delinquency, and improve economic productivity and health." Nationally, the report showed that the average amount states spent per child, when adjusted for inflation, declined from \$4,179 to \$4,143 in 2009, ending an upward trend. Real spending per child declined in 24 of 38 states with programs.

Total enrollment and spending increased, but not in every state. In nine states enrollment actually declined and 12 states provided no state pre-K for their children. Other key findings showed modest growth in some areas and vast discrepancies between states:

- Enrollment nationally increased by more than 81,000. More than 1.2 million children attended state-funded preschool education, 1 million at age 4.
- Total funding for state pre-K rose to more than \$5 billion, state funding increase of \$446 million, about half the increase of the previous year.
- Twenty-three of 38 states with state-funded preschool failed to fully meet the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) benchmarks for teacher qualifications and 26 failed to meet the benchmark for assistant teacher qualifications.
- Programs in seven states met fewer than half the quality standards benchmarks.

Oklahoma remained the only state where almost every child had the opportunity to attend a quality preschool at age 4. The other top 10 states were Arkansas, **West Virginia**, New Jersey, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois, Louisiana and Tennessee.

"With more families facing economic hardship, publicly supported preschool is more important than ever," said W. Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University and the report's author.

Barnett cited new research published in the journal *Child Development* showing that low family income has disproportionately more negative effects on preschool-age children than on older children and adolescents. Those effects include higher school dropout rates, lower income as adults and greater adult health problems.

"We need to get the recession babies on a progression path so they don't carry the scars for a lifetime," Barnett said.

He called on the federal government to place greater emphasis on providing aid to states for educationally effective pre-K programs.

"As pure economic stimulus it is hard to beat pre-K programs," Barnett said. "Pre-K is a high-return investment in our children's future that will help pay for the deficits we run now. In the meantime, it generates jobs in local communities, with virtually none of the money spent on imported goods or services.

"The alternative of cheap child care with low standards may reach more families, but it is bad policy, doing little to improve child development or the quality of our future work force."

For the full report visit <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>.

Fishing Anyone?

By Jean Cutlip



The Wirt County Collaborative Preschool held an excellent parent involvement fishing day trip to the Wet Lands in Elizabeth WV. This was organized by the board of education staff and the Head Start staff in the county. There were 23 men (fathers and grandfathers) that attended and supported the children and teachers.

Many mothers and grandmother also attended and involved themselves in the fishing. Volunteer Melanie Woodyard provided the bait.



Dwight Goff the school principal has been and advocate for the preschool and a supporter of families and the collaboration for three years. We wish to thank him. Without his involvement in the preschool we could not have the excellent program we have now.

**Your West Virginia Head Start Association
2009-10 Board of Directors**

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Friends: Edith Redd, Tim Salmons, Terri Wontrobski

UP & COMING

2010 WVHS Association Meeting Dates

6/08 & 09 /10	Waterfront Place Morgantown, WV
11/12/09	To be announced

2009 WVHSA Board of Directors Meeting Dates

6/17/10	Conference call
8/12/10	Charleston, WV
9/09/10	Charleston, WV
10/14/10	Charleston, WV

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

***West Virginia Head Start Association's
Annual Pre and Fall Conference
November 16, 17 and 18, 2010
Embassy Suites, Charleston WV***

***MISSION
STATEMENT***

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***The West Virginia Head Start
Association's Mission Statement for
2002-2009***

Speaking with one voice for West Virginia's young children and families by:

- involving parents as decision makers,
- advocating for high quality services,
- strengthening partnerships on the local and state level,
- providing statewide training for early childhood programs, and
- circulating key information to local Head Start programs.