

**Visioneering
Unified Legislative Alliance
LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL - 2007**

Proposal: *It is requested that the Visioneering Unified Legislative Alliance include in its list of priorities for the 2008 legislative session state legislation supporting local efforts to implement a **comprehensive early childhood system** that prepares children for success in school and in the workforce.*

Background of issue (i.e., relevant data, history):

The Birth to Kindergarten (Birth – K) Alliance of Visioneering Wichita has recently completed a needs assessment and strategic planning process. Members representing 60 organizations from across the MSA agreed on the following priorities:

The Birth – K Alliance envisions a comprehensive early childhood system in which:

- Providers of early care and education have opportunities and resources to improve the quality of early childhood services
- Children and families have access to high quality early childhood services
- High quality parenting education opportunities are desirable and accessible

Describe the regional impact or significance to South Central Kansas:

The Birth – K Alliance conducted a thorough needs assessment of early childhood services and concluded that without investment and support, the early childhood service delivery system in the Wichita MSA will fail to provide an adequate foundation for school and workplace success. Every part of this proposal is directly recommended by the findings in the regional needs assessment.

Describe the relationship of the proposal to job growth, per capita income and/or education:

Job growth:

A comprehensive early childhood system (including child health, parent outreach, and high-quality child care) is part of the infrastructure that allows parents to go to work.

A strong system can attract and retain a young workforce. In Sedgwick County alone, over 15,000 families rely on child care in order to participate in the workforce.

Decades of research show that access to high quality, comprehensive early childhood services dramatically improves the life outcomes for children. Data from one 40-year study conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation compares individuals who took part in a comprehensive early childhood program and a comparison group of their peers who did not. Study results are listed below:

Education:

The program group at school age, compared to the non-program group,

- was less likely to need special education (15% vs. 34%)
- was more likely to have high academic achievement at age 14 (49% vs. 15%);
- was more likely to graduate from high school (66% vs. 45%);

Economic and social impact and per capita income

At age 40, the program group,

- was more likely to be employed (76% vs. 62%);
- was less likely to use welfare (14% vs. 29%)
- had significantly fewer lifetime arrests (36% vs. 55% arrested five or more times)
- had significantly higher median annual earnings (\$20,800 vs. \$15,300).

This study and others like it indicate that these **long-term savings amount to at least a \$7 return for every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood programs.**

Persons/Organizations/Groups with primary responsibility for advancing proposed legislation (please provide contact information, including telephone and e-mail):

The Birth – K Strategic Alliance of Visioneering Wichita. The Visioneering process brings together 60 member agencies and organizations (membership list available) from across the MSA. This Alliance has applied for and received funding to expand its capacity to create an “early childhood system for south central Kansas so that all children enter Kindergarten ready to learn.” The fiscal agent for Alliance work is the Sedgwick County Early Childhood Coordinating Council (SCECCC).

Co-Champion of Birth – K Alliance: Lorraine Dold, 267-5437, ldold@rui.org

**Co-Champion of Birth – K Alliance: Teresa Rupp, 682-1853, trupp@childstart.org
SCECCC: Cayla Wasson, 267-3535, cwasson@rui.org**

The local membership in the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness includes prominent business leaders (CEO's and large company presidents) who are prepared to work on this effort. The Coalition is equipped to engage grassroots partners in letter-writing campaigns and grassroots partners in engaging the Kansas Chamber of Commerce for support of the issue. (List of local membership available)

Coalition: Anne Maack, 682-1853, anne.maack@KansasSchoolReadiness.org

The Wichita early childhood message-framing team resulted from a process designed to help local advocates advance the need for increased investment in early childhood services. A project of Kansas Action for Children funded by the Kansas Health Foundation has provided training, facilitation and funding for local partners to successfully promote birth to K investment.

Facilitator: Greg Meissen, 978-3843, greg.meissen@wichita.edu

Draft of proposed legislation: (if applicable)

During the Governor’s Conference on Early Learning this past September, Governor Sebelius announced that she plans to introduce a multiyear early childhood education program to the Legislature when it reconvenes in 2008. Our local delegation will be considering whether to make this issue a priority for the state of Kansas.

Supported by a grant from the Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Birth – K Alliance of Visioneering Wichita has worked on a data-driven plan for building a comprehensive early childhood system for the Wichita MSA. This effort is matched at the state level by a two-year process resulting in a roadmap called the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan. The Early Learning Coordinating Council responsible for the statewide plan has recently been charged to develop policy recommendations to ensure that early childhood programs are held accountable and investments are maximized. So, the legislation isn’t written yet but will be the culmination of years of work by statewide and local stakeholders and experts.

The Birth – K Alliance recommends championing resulting legislation that supports our local systems efforts.

*“Research indicates that the most important factor in selecting capable and effective employees is their character, not their education or experience. Character is defined as a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied in the work place. Character development occurs in an individual’s brain during the **first five years of life.**”*

Professor Gerald Graham, W. Frank Barton School of Business at
Wichita State University

Preparing for Submission:
Questions to Consider
Please send **updated** responses to
Self-Help Network by **3 PM, Nov 1, 2007**
Visioneering Wichita
Unified Legislative Agenda



Background Information:

Name of group/ organization:

The Birth to Kindergarten (Birth – K) Alliance of Visioneering Wichita

Name of your principal ULA item(s):

State legislation supporting local efforts to implement a **comprehensive early childhood system** that prepares children for success in school and in the workforce.

Name of person(s) who will organize effort for legislative item(s):

- Lorraine Dold and Teresa Rupp are the Co-Champions of the Birth – K Alliance.
- Chris Johnston is the Chair of the Sedgwick County Early Childhood Coordinating Council which is the fiscal agent and ultimately responsible for the area Early Childhood Comprehensive System Plan.
- Anne Maack is the Associate Director of the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness and is available to organize local legislative efforts.
- Greg Meissen is the Facilitator of the Wichita early childhood message-framing team which will prepare a campaign for increased investment in early childhood.

Additional resources to organize effort for legislative item(s):

- The Wichita B – K Alliance of Visioneering Wichita: This team from across the four-county MSA has applied for and received funding to completed an early childhood comprehensive system plan based on an assessment of community needs.
- The Wichita early childhood message-framing team: This team of twelve area leaders has been trained by the Kansas Health Foundation to champion increased investment in early childhood services and has committed to working on distributing the message widely in the Wichita area. They have applied for a \$10,000 grant to assist in the effort.
- The Kansas Coalition for School Readiness: Local membership in this Coalition includes a team of prominent business leaders (CEO's

and large company presidents) spearheaded by Barry Downing who are prepared to work on this effort.

Describe any previous efforts regarding the legislative item(s) during previous legislative sessions:

Previous efforts have focused on bringing existing financial resources into the Wichita area. There have been no Wichita-specific legislative efforts around early childhood education that we are aware of.

Planned Session Activities:

Describe plans to communicate legislative item(s) during legislative session, including ways to engage legislators & public:

Strategies, parties involved and time planned

Wichita partners will support policy and advocacy efforts at the state level by educating the delegation from the Wichita MSA through the following vehicles:

- Grassroots: The Kansas Coalition for School Readiness is equipped to engage grassroots partners in letter-writing campaigns in the area.
Time: Anne Maack's time is dedicated to this work
- Grasstops: The Coalition for School Readiness and its local business leaders are prepared to engage the Kansas Chamber of Commerce for support of the issue.
Time: Members will dedicate time to engaging the Chamber
- Tours: The Coalition will conduct tours of high-quality early childhood education programs for the Wichita MSA delegation
Time: Anne Maack's time is dedicated to this work
- Event: The Wichita early childhood message-framing team has planned a communication campaign that includes developing a message, inviting leaders to an informational event, and equipping leaders to deliver the message.
Time: the team has dedicated time for one collective event and for message delivery in smaller venues

Describe recruitment of local officials or other representatives to participate in committee testimony or in meeting with state legislators:

- Both the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness and the Wichita early childhood message-framing team will be able to recruit and prepare local officials to testify during the legislative session.

Identify any legislators who will carry the bill or be key players in advancing the legislative item(s):

There is quite a bit of legislative momentum behind early childhood systems. Governor Sebelius has named early childhood as one of her priorities and has plans to include a significant investment in her proposed budget. Matching her interest, thirty state legislators attended the Governor's Summit on Early Childhood last month. The event was bi-partisan and prominently featured Speaker of the House Melvin Neufeld who supports early investment. Many of the Wichita area delegation have expressed support as well.

What challenges do you expect during the legislative session and what plans do you have to address them?

Our biggest challenge will be an audience that sees early childhood initiatives as short-term solutions for a narrow band of interest rather than effective investment in the long-term well-being of the community. We will address this challenge by strategically framing the issue so that policy-makers and the public understand the ultimate educational and workforce benefits of an early childhood system.

Please send to Center for Community Support & Research, Wichita State University Box 201, Wichita, KS 67260-0201 or Fax (316) 978-3593. E-mail to scott.wituk@wichita.edu