

**Visioneering
Unified Legislative Alliance
LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL - 2008**

Proposal: *It is requested that the Visioneering Unified Legislative Alliance include in its list of priorities for the 2009 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 completed a needs assessment and strategic planning process in January 2008. Members representing 60 organizations from 13 cities across the region envision a comprehensive early childhood system in which:

- Affordable, high-quality early care and education are widely available in south central Kansas
- Social/emotional and mental health interventions and services are available to families with young children
- Communities equip parents and families with skills to enhance their child’s learning and development.

To this end, the Birth – K Alliance made a joint application to bring state funds into south central Kansas to fund the comprehensive early childhood system.

Describe the regional impact or significance to South Central Kansas:

- Roughly 23% of Kansas children, birth to five, live in the south central region
- Roughly 33% of Kansas children, birth to five, *with risk factors* live here

Given the concentration of population and the demonstrated ability of the south central region to set and achieve regional goals, we are confident that legislative support for comprehensive early childhood services will disproportionately benefit this region. If the Birth – K Alliance’s application to fund the system is successful, we will bring \$3.9 million new state dollars into the south central region.

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

Job growth:

A comprehensive early childhood system 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 high quality child care in order to participate in the workforce.

Education:

Decades of research show that access to high quality, comprehensive early childhood services dramatically improves the life outcomes for children. Data from multiple longitudinal studies compare individuals who took part in comprehensive early childhood programs and comparison groups of their peers who did not. These studies consistently indicate that high quality early childhood programs are the best way to improve academic outcomes in K-12 education. Children who participate in high quality, comprehensive early childhood services:

- Are less likely to require special education services
- Are less likely to repeat a grade
- Score higher on achievement tests
- Have a higher rate of high school completion

Per capita income (also economic and social impacts):

The same longitudinal studies also indicate that program participants

- Are more likely to be employed
- Are less likely to require welfare
- Have significantly fewer lifetime arrests
- Have significantly higher median annual earnings.

Taken together, these studies indicate that *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 from 13 cities across the region. This Alliance has applied for funding to implement the comprehensive early childhood system for south central Kansas so that all children enter Kindergarten ready to learn. The administrative 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 Kansas Coalition for School Readiness: Local membership includes parents, prominent business leaders, law enforcement, early learning advocates and practitioners and other interested Kansans. The Coalition is equipped to engage grassroots partners in advocacy efforts.

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

Four community foundations have created designated funds where local philanthropic investments can be marshaled for the purpose of implementing the early childhood comprehensive system plan.

The Wichita Community Foundation

The Greater Newton Community Foundation

The Community Foundation of Greater Butler County

The Wellington Community Foundation

Draft of proposed legislation: (if applicable)

During the 2008 legislative session, the adopted budget created two new programs: the Kansas Preschool Program and the Kansas Early Childhood Block Grant. During the 2009 legislative session, the Birth – K Alliance advocates any budget action that cements investment in these two programs because they will bring new state dollars into the region. We also advocate any legislative action to improve quality and hold programs accountable to make sure every dollar is being maximized to provide the greatest impact.

The Kansas Preschool Program should maintain the core elements of the Kansas Pre K Pilot, specifically: providing families and children access to the highest quality public and private programs; ensuring quality by adhering to nationally recognized standards; holding programs accountable through the use of the Kansas Quality Rating System and an independent evaluation to make sure that every dollar spent is well spent; and focusing on our most vulnerable children first.

Programs funded through the Early Childhood Block Grant must use evidence based approaches to achieve outcomes that enhance school readiness for at-risk children.