

**Virginia Early Childhood Education
Task Force**

Business Plan Recommendation to the
ISD 706 Board of Education

January 5, 2009

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Business Plan recommendation continues earlier efforts of the Virginia Early Childhood Task Force. With initial direction from the Task Force, detailed sub-committee work was conducted to outline a program plan that will prepare every young child to enter Kindergarten ready for learning success. This plan was developed based on the **School of the 21st Century** (21C) model selected by the Task Force. We are pleased to report that after approaching Yale, our initiative has been accepted into the 21C network!

The overall themes of the project are: A) integrating preschool services, and B) increasing the capacity of parents, child care providers, and the school in preparing our youngest children for learning success. This initiative is being developed to accomplish the following five goals:

- Goal #1: To improve early connections between the school and parents, children, and care providers.
- Goal #2: To increase participation in quality early childhood education.
- Goal #3: To increase families' knowledge and actions that promote healthy child development.
- Goal #4: To strengthen the contribution of child care providers in preparing children for Kindergarten.
- Goal #5: To increase community support and partnerships with early childhood services.

II. BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY

Our focus is on developing an early childhood "hub", co-located with the district's K-3 program. Following the 21C model, we plan to transform the traditional school into a year-round, multi service center providing high-quality, accessible services from early morning to early evening. We are committed to selecting evidence-based models and practices within this initiative.

Six program components are proposed: outreach, expanded preschool, health services, family support & involvement, school-age program, and linkage with child care providers. Each of these is summarized below:

Outreach

In addition to using general media sources, the hallmark of the project's outreach will be old-fashioned, face-to-face, 'welcome wagon' visits. These visits will include useful gifts, early childhood information, and incentives for participation in early childhood programming. Target audiences include expectant and new parents, and families of young children who have just moved into our community. Special efforts will be made to reach underserved populations by partnering with organizations that represent and serve them. Finally, community-wide family events will be held each spring and fall to promote early childhood programming.

Expanded Preschool

Working toward eventual integration, the plan calls for phased enhancements to bring all on-site preschool classrooms into compliance with Head Start Performance Standards. All partners have embraced the adoption of the research-based High-Scope curriculum and assessments. On-site extended day and summer services are also proposed for preschoolers. Other key elements of this component including Head Start co-location, a single application/enrollment process, and exploration of integrated classrooms, can be implemented once an expanded facility is in place.

Health Services

The Health Services component emphasizes a variety of prevention efforts. The Task Force recommends that Head Start’s comprehensive health and developmental screening process be utilized by all on-site preschool programs. There is a dual focus in the area of nutrition to improve the nutritional quality of snacks and meals served in the school, and to provide nutrition education for parents. The plan expands upon current dental health efforts, including partnerships to bring additional hygienist clinics, and possibly restorative dental services, on-site at the school. The proposed large muscle activity room (for use by on-site programs, child care providers, and the public) can be implemented as part of an expanded physical facility.

Family Support & Involvement

In addition to ECFE classes and family nights already in place, parent education opportunities will be increased and extended from Pre-K through Grade 3. These opportunities include speakers, specialty classes, a parent library, and enrichment activities for parents to do at home that relate to the High-Scope preschool curriculum. Additional support will be available from Family Advocate staff whose roles include home visiting, information & referral, and support to maintain consistent attendance and retention of children in early childhood programming. The project will also utilize an Advisory Council through which parents can give input on programming.

School-Age Program

Kindergarten transition meetings will be conducted for all Pre-K students each spring. Information about each child will be transferred to the Kindergarten teachers, school nurse and principal. A number of summer programming components are also recommended. On-site summer child care for children K-6 will be added at Parkview, including implementation of the Summer Lunch program. Summer enrichment and academic opportunities will also be added, including a summer school reading and math intensive for K-3, possible collaboration and expansion of the College for Kids enrichment program , and a back-to-school transition week for Pre-K – 3 during August.

Linkage with Child Care Providers

Support offered through this component will be available to child care center staff, family child care providers, and informal (family, friend & neighbor) caregivers. Services will include training; learning kits and other materials through a lending library; home visits to provide coaching and child observation; mentoring; and support to establish a local provider association. Providers will also be trained in the High-Scope assessment and encouraged to follow-up with parent conferences.

III. RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is a collaborative venture, and will involve multiple programs and organizations in the delivery of coordinated services. As such, successful implementation will require having a lead position to act as ‘glue’ for the entire initiative. **The Task Force recommends that funding be committed for the 21C Coordinator position to lead implementation of this Early Childhood Initiative.**

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APPENDIX A: Participating Early Childhood Education Task Force Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representation</u>
Anna Amundson	Mesabi Family YMCA Child Care
Stephanie Arduser	PTSA
Laura Bachschneider	PTSA / St. Louis County Human Services
Dr. Michael Butner	Physician
Paul Cerkvenik	School Board Member
Alicia Cope	PTSA / Business Sector
Bill Culbert	Business Sector
Lindsay Engel	ECFE
Skip Ferris	AEOA Head Start
Deb Fisher	AEOA Head Start
Phil Johnson	School Superintendent
Bill Hafdahl	School Board Member
Laurie Harvey	PTSA
Dawn Heisel	Virginia Public Library
Dennis Hendricks	School Board Member
Dave Johnson	School Board Member
Mike Krebsbach	Parkview Elementary Principal
Mary Lemieux	Kindergarten Teacher
Robin Licari	ECFE Coordinator
Nevada Littlewolf	Virginia City Council
Kristin Lofgren	Range Mental Health Center
Wendy McAllister	School Board Member
Kathleen Murray	VRMC Foundation
Terri Nystrom	Business Sector
Alane O'Bryan	AEOA Head Start
Jan Povroznik	Business Sector
Tim Riordan	School Board Member
Heather Seppala	PTSA / Family Child Care Provider
Dr. Kenneth Sussman	Physician
Sue Swanson	Range Mental Health Center
Esperanza Teman	ECSE Teacher
Emily Zeidler	Kindergarten Teacher
Whitney Crettol	Facilitator