SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR EARLY LEARNING SUCCESS

Mississippi Early Childhood Summit
Natchez, MS
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Jim Squires, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow
Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes/
National Institute for Early Education Research
Agenda

- Childhood in Transition: A Tale of Two Systems
- Benefits & Challenges of School – Community Partnerships
- Ingredients for Success
- Responsibilities of Principals and Administrators
- Resources
- Q & A
Children Haven’t Changed; Childhood Has

"Next year, we have to start to school. You realize that'll be the end of life as we know it."

Children Haven’t Changed; Childhood Has
Are You Tuned to WIFM?
K – 12 is 20th Century Thinking

- Agricultural/industrial vs. custodial care model
- Early care and education vs. babysitting
- At-risk/struggling Kers support
- P-3 as an organizational and mental model for community leaders to bridge the 0-5 and K-12 divide
- Kindergarten as fulcrum
## Two Systems - Same and Different

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<th>Birth-5</th>
<th>K-12</th>
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<td><strong>Standards</strong></td>
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<td>Federal: Head Start Child Outcomes</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Required and optional</td>
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<td>Variety of Measures</td>
<td>Prescribed measures</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Qual.</strong></td>
<td>Varied by auspice (HS -&gt; MA)</td>
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<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>Varies from none or basic health/safety compliance to student/program outcomes</td>
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<td>SLDS</td>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>Parent fees, federal, state, local</td>
<td>Local, state, federal</td>
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KEY FINDINGS:

• Many Children Are Not School Ready: When asked to estimate the percentage of children in their current classes whom they believed were not “kindergarten ready”, teachers responded that 41% of their students were not adequately prepared. Indicators included the lack of basic skills such as name, color, and shape recognition as well as fine motor skills (holding a crayon, pencil or scissors).

• “High Number of New Kindergarten Students Who Are Not School Ready” Is Teachers’ Number One Challenge: Among twelve options, the lack of school readiness was identified as the top challenge facing kindergarten teachers, with one quarter (25.2%) of teachers choosing this option, followed by a “high number of students in the classroom” (chosen by 22.8%) and “high number of kindergarten students who misbehave/are difficult to manage” (chosen by 13.9%).

• Children Are Repeating Kindergarten: Seventy-one percent of the teachers had at least one child in their classroom repeating kindergarten.

• **Teachers Believe Their Schools Are Ready for Children:** Even though teachers reported almost half their students were not school ready, a high percentage (88.5%) of teachers felt their schools were “ready” for children entering kindergarten. Among annual activities noted to ease the transition were:
  - Kindergarten open house for new students and parents (81.9%)
  - Appropriate curriculum and adequate classroom resources provided to students and parents (80.2%)
  - Welcome letter and/or information packet describing kindergarten sent to students and parents before the first day of school (71.8%)
  - Preschool/daycare/Pre-K class visits to kindergarten in the spring or summer before children enter kindergarten (60.9%)
  - Parent/child teacher conferences (46.1%)
  - Transition planning for children with special needs (40.7%)
  - Questionnaires sent to all parents of incoming kindergarten students to gather useful information about them (40.5%)
  - Telephone calls to all parents of kindergarten students (37.4%)
  - Transition conversations between preschool/daycare/Pre-K teacher and kindergarten teacher (32.9%)

• **Teachers Want Improved Communication With Preschool Teachers:** Teachers suggested that enhanced communication between kindergarten and preschool teachers on Common Core objectives could alleviate problems down the road. As reported, 32.9% of the teachers surveyed currently have transition conversations with preschool teachers on a specific list of topics:
Why should public schools be involved with children before kindergarten?

- The line between early care and education is blurry.
- Schools have a vested interest in school readiness.
- Every community has an elementary school.
- All children have access to public schools.
- Schools can help child care and Head Start programs.
- Child care and Head Start programs can help public schools.

What roles should school-community partnerships play in early childhood?

- Partnerships support a seamless system of care and education, ensuring a smooth transition.
- Partnerships can help coordinate community resources to help all children achieve to high standards.
- Schools and community programs can help families develop and maintain social networks.
What facilitates school-community involvement in early childhood?

- School and community leaders can be influential organizers and supporters in partnership with other program leaders.
- Financial incentives can motivate leaders to overcome barriers.
- Families can help leaders understand the importance of preschool and kindergarten-elementary linkages.
- Shared professional development facilitates coordination.
- Federal leadership can motivate states and communities.
What challenges do school-community partnerships face in early childhood?

- Teachers may not be prepared to work with children.
- Administrators may not be prepared to work with children, families, or teachers.
- Programs view each other as competitors for limited resources and children.
- Differences in credentials and compensation can create barriers.
- Coordination can be complicated and time-consuming.
What are the key issues for partnership development?

- Preschool and kindergarten teachers need training in early childhood education.
- School and preschool administrators need training in early childhood development and learning.
- Preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators need training in family engagement and cultural/linguistic/economic diversity.
- Program administrators and teachers must understand and use common data to improve services/outcomes.
- Teachers and administrators need training and time to work across programs.
One Rural School-Community Partnership: Grand Isle Elementary School (VT)

Problems: rural isolation; limited resources; limited facilities; kids “not ready” for kindergarten; competition for students

Drivers: common problems; same families; same kids; available facility; “out of the box” leadership; shared commitment; complementary needs for school district, childcare providers, Head Start, and families

Solution: School-community partnership as a community resource
How Grand Isle Approached It

Process:

1) One person had a contagious vision.
2) District superintendent supportive of the concept of a school-based public-private partnership. School board presentation met with approval.
3) Principal and school’s EC coordinator convened community forum on ECE needs and resources; reaches out to EC providers through R & R and Head Start.
4) School develops RFP with following criteria:
   - School will provide classroom year-round free of charge.
   - AM program will be inclusive, reserving slots for EC SpEd/EEI.
   - Staffing will be collaboratively arranged based on needs (AM-certified teacher, EC SpEd, CC provider; PM-CC providers); later included Head Start
   - $ (school contributes facility, Title I), SpEd, transportation; CC charges fees for non-AM portion, CC subsidy, CAFNP; HS wrap-around support services for eligible children and staff, inc. home visitor

5) Proposals solicited from interested CBOs reviewed by community panel (conflict of interest addressed as a barrier)

6) Collaborative developmental screening and enrollment process

7) Consistent assessment tools and reporting protocols

8) Joint professional development as a learning community

9) Collaborative communication to families
Ingredients For Improvement

VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVE + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = IMPROVEMENT

VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVE + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = CONFUSION

VISION + INCENTIVE + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = ANXIETY

VISION + SKILLS + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = SLOW CHANGE

VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVE + ACTION PLAN = FRUSTRATION

VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVE + RESOURCES + = FALSE STARTS/TREADMILL

From T. Knoster (1991)/ Enterprise Group Ltd.
National Assoc. of Elementary School Principals suggests that Principals:

- Embrace the pre-K-3 early-learning continuum;
- Ensure developmentally appropriate teaching;
- Provide personalized learning environments;
- Use multiple measures of assessment to guide student learning growth;
- Build professional capacity across the learning community; and
- Make schools a hub of pre-K-3 learning for families and communities.
What Do You See?

I'm developing mobility of thought...

I'm developing a sense of story and enhancing my story comprehensions.

I'm developing cooperation.

I'm developing more elaborate language.

I'm practicing cooperation.

I'm developing a sense of story and enhancing my story comprehensions.

What is this teacher doing? The children are just playing!!

I'm following a mental plan.

I'm problem-solving.

I'm making generalizations about the properties of various objects.

I'm developing hand-eye coordination.

I'm organizing and conceptualizing my world.

I value play as an important medium for learning. I have developed a broad range of developmental skills with the focus on play. This program provides children with play experiences that enable them to develop and accumulate their own knowledge!

I'm developing classification skills.

I'm developing number concepts.

I'm developing gross motor skills.

I'm learning how to take turns.

I'm learning to "decenter" my viewpoint.

I'm developing my balancing system.

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Tools for Supporting Leaders in Recognizing and Improving Quality

- Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS)
  - Instructional Support
  - Emotional Support
  - Classroom Management

- Danielson Framework for Teaching

- Early Childhood /School Age Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)

- Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)

- Performance-Based Assessment (TS GOLD, WSS, COR, KEA)
Selected Resources

- National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
- Leading for Early Success: Building School Principals’ Capacity to Lead High-Quality Early Education (National Governor’s Assoc., 2013)
- Guidance on Serving Preschool Children Through Title I (US Education Department, 2012)
- Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013)
- Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO)
CEELO
Center on Enhancing
Early Learning Outcomes

www.ceelo.org
info@ceelo.org