

**Early Childhood Iowa Council  
Diversity Advisory Group  
May 13 2009**

**Based on conversations across the state five gaps have been identified when considering Iowa's early childhood system and our increasing language, cultural, racial and ethnic diversity. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 an invited group of experts in early childhood and diversity came together to begin detailing recommendations to address these gaps.**

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**School Readiness Gap: Are all children starting school ready to be successful?** Gaps – by income, race, language, and ethnicity – that young children face at the time they enter kindergarten have been well-documented. Closing these gaps is fundamental to Iowa's success. Much fuller examination and recognition is needed of the underlying elements that can give rise not only to kindergarten entry readiness gaps, but to other gaps such as health disparities. Within the context of Iowa's school readiness work there are many ways to start looking at our present and planned work to assure that all programs and systems impacting young children and their families are prepared. Prepared to embrace the opportunity, within our increasingly diverse state to assure that "every child beginning at birth will be healthy and successful".

***Strategy One: Provide ongoing, focused, evidence based professional development and preservice***

Task One: Identify what is currently in place (PITC, AGAs)

Task Two: Identify national experts who could come and provide training in Iowa

Task Three: Identify resources and best practices

Action Step One: Contact West Ed

Task Four: Develop competencies and levels for teaching staff to drive preservice and professional development

Action Step One: Contact the Department of Education to act as a convener for this conversation (Penny)

***Strategy Two: Assure diversity is considered across school readiness system***

*Task One: Train parents to be advocates*

Action Step One: Train staff to provide advocacy support for parents

Action Step Two: For children not engaged in a early childhood program get information from the medical field on encouraging engagement

***Strategy Three: Blend Early Care and Education Settings***

Task One: Identify models that focus on reporting and fiscal accountability

Action Step One: Contact Kim Young-Kent, Tri-County in Waterloo/Cedar Falls

Action Step Two: Investigate out of state models (California, Washington and New Mexico)

Action Step Three: Identify options for technical assistance around auditing or accountability models

**Workforce Diversity Gap: Is our professional workforce as diverse as the children and families they serve?** Iowa's young child population is much more diverse than the working age population. At the same time, the elementary education teaching force is less diverse than even the adult workforce as a whole. As preschool and other early childhood programs are developed in Iowa and credentials of workers become requisites for certain positions, specific attention must be paid to developing a skilled, diverse early childhood workforce. A system must be developed that creates pathways to ensure that persons of color and persons with language backgrounds of the young child population can fill those roles. This includes both pre-service and in-service education opportunities and traditional and non-traditional sources of supports for educators to acquire skills, credentials, and salaries and careers commensurate with the skills they have. Done well, the development of the next generation of early childhood educators can offer employment and career development opportunities that help ensure the needed diversity within early childhood, provide family sustaining compensation within that workforce, and offer all children role models and adult teachers from diverse backgrounds.

***Strategy One: Conduct intentional and proactive recruitment of diverse populations into all professions affecting early childhood***

Task One: Identify best practices in recruiting diverse employees

    Action Step One: Research model programs and best practices

    Action Step Two: Include diversity questions in IWD workforce study.

Task Two: Train stakeholders on best practices for diverse employee recruitment

Task Three: Marketing to potential employees

    Action Step One: Identify current/potential interested employees

***Strategy Two: Provide grants or forgivable loans to encourage professional education***

Task One: Research existing funding that supports early care and education

Task Two: Market available programs to desired populations

Task Three: Explore possible partnerships with other organizations

**Participation/Access Gap: Do all children have access to and participate in needed early learning, health, special needs and family support services?** When enrollment and participation data are disaggregated by income, race/ethnicity, and language, there often are substantial gaps in participation and barriers to access to basic services, particularly in what are generally considered normative and developmental services. Closing participation gaps requires culture- and language-sensitive outreach, geographic and financial accessibility, and congruence with the values and cultural practices of families from different backgrounds and settings.

***Strategy One: Map services and families to assess needs geographically***

Action Step One: Revisit the ECI snapshot to update and disseminate.

Action Step Two: Disseminate through venues which will provide information to parents

Action Step Three: Investigate existing entities who have established “trust worthy” relationships with diverse populations

***Strategy Two: Partner with community organizations***

Action Step One: Develop a resource base of existing agencies that have developed trust

Action Step Two: Investigate possible mentoring/parenting support people and organizations to assist community with increased knowledge base around school readiness initiatives and support services

Action Step Three: Recruit from family friend and neighbor or more informal child care environments to identify school readiness initiatives and professional development options/needs

***Strategy Three: Funding resource examination to reduce eligibility and income barriers***

Action Step One: Investigate matching data with dollars

Action Step Two: Reexamine multi cultural principles and accountability issues within funding

Action Step Three: Create a clearing house of information network strategies incorporated with funding streams

**Cultural Awareness and Recognition Gap: Are all service providers culturally competent?** As children grow and develop, they develop cognitively and physically and they develop their own sense of self in the context of their home culture and that of the larger community. Young children develop gender, racial, and cultural identities and learn how to relate to people who are both similar to and different from them. While many elements of healthy child development are universal to children, different cultures place different emphases in development on individuality, separation and competition, family roles, methods of communication, and even notions of time.

Particularly as a state is establishing programs and expectations for young children, an area previously left largely to the family, it is important to be explicit in recognizing and responding to differences across cultures. This can support parental and family participation in the program and work to alleviate tension between the culture of the classroom and the home culture of the child. In addition, children hear and can be influenced and harmed by prejudicial remarks or statements and by subtle, non-verbal actions or inactions by others. Persons working with young children need to know how to create climates that help prevent prejudicial activities and respond effectively when they occur.

***Strategy One: Evidence-based cultural competency training, modeled after PITC Module #4 as a base, for all professionals (teachers, health care providers, family support workers, DHS case worker, etc.).***

*The group did not believe that the training should be mandatory. Those of us in state government recently attended mandatory diversity training, and people were not involved. Instead we suggest that the training be tied to some sort of monetary incentive.*

We understand that there is a cadre of PITC trainers in Iowa and believe that it is possible for those trainers to teach outside audiences. (Beth Walling would know if this is possible.)

Task One: ECI needs to develop package of what it wants/needs in cultural competency training

Action Step One: Gather information about cultural competency trainings that are currently being used to form baseline.

Task Two: Develop cultural competency training, based on PITC Module #4, and included Iowa data

Action Step One: Review current trainings and PITC Module #4 and rewrite if necessary

Action Step Two: Increase capacity of PITC trainers for module #4

Action Step Three: Determine cost of training (supplies, trainer fees – a great use of professional development dollars? If so, perhaps write a grant.

Other thoughts on this strategy from the Cultural Competency group:

- Need funding for training videos. Could this come from professional development dollars?
- Possible to hold statewide cultural competency trainings – again, using professional development dollars?
- Possible partners: Iowa Head Start, Iowa Association for the Education Young Children, Iowa Community Action Association, HOPES, Healthy Family America, Family Supports
- Tie in with local empowerment boards
- Model this training after Every Child Reads Training
- Another good training is Undoing Racism
- Get training into colleges, community colleges, pre-service, in-service,
- Need trainings for doctors, nurses, primary care office staff
- First 5 has a doctor component, perhaps this person could “approve” cultural competency training
- Possible to have cultural competency training at annual conferences of professions – doctors, nurses, family support workers, etc.
- Stipends for participants?
- Follow-up after training, have participants do something and then report back. Accountability is important.

***Strategy Two: Think beyond the assumption of cultural neutrality.***

- This is the base. We hope that this will come out of training.
- As part of training, have a participant panel share experiences. – Deb’s example of accepting an egg roll – why so important to relationship
- Goal: saturate conferences with this.
- Have “Do You Know” posters/displays with facts – e.g. why it is important to take off shoes when entering home

Task One: What training is already available? What programs are out there?

**Stakeholder Planning and Decision-Making Gap: Are our system stakeholders and decision-makers as diverse as the families and children of Iowa?** Closing all these gaps requires explicit planning, which can be very enriching to all stakeholders at the state and local levels, as they learn about and appreciate both their own and others' cultural backgrounds and strengths. Doing so also requires constructing planning and decision-making tables that include individuals who have different cultural, language, and ethnic backgrounds to contribute their expertise to this learning. This may even mean adapting decision-making approaches to recognize that different cultures approach decision-making differently – in terms of consensual versus majority rule, time allotments for discussion and planning, and ways of establishing trust and a sense of shared experience across groups. Particularly when dealing with sensitive issues of race and ethnicity, decision-making tables should not always place individuals from different backgrounds in minority roles. Early Childhood Iowa and Iowa Community Empowerment are both in ideal positions to lead this thinking and effort to address the system decision-making and planning gap. Both process and product are important in developing early childhood systems that respond to the diversity of the young child population.

***Strategy One: Increase participation of people of diversity on councils, early childhood groups, etc. (by increasing awareness and engagement in early childhood system issues by DHR Commissions)***

Task One: Be intentional about recruitment of diversity groups to various boards, councils, etc.

Action Step One: Share information the local and state empowerment board to DHR-Das (Department of Human Rights-Division Administrators) (Shanell)

Action Step Two: Invite DHR Das to share information to their constituents about ECI regional meetings.

Action Step Three: Add DAs to ECI Council Distribution Group.(Jenny)

Action Step Four: Find opportunities to hook events or make presentations at events.

Action Step Five: Presentation to the HRCC-with all divisions. (ECI Co-Chairs)

Action Step Six: Incorporate Early Childhood needs/issues into the DHR Strategic Plan (Das)

### **What should the role of this advisory group be?**

- Advising on the work and pointing to effective models both within early childhood systems and outside early childhood systems (such as youth development)
- Aligning resources to support the work, what is out there already? Who is already working on this?
- Keeping the work and its issues from getting lost
- Developing tools (and a website?) to promote good diversity practices and cultural competency
- Raise the awareness around the importance of these issues and the disparities that exist in school readiness, health, program participation and other outcomes
- Encourage this conversation to be at every table across the early childhood system
- Expand our definition of “diversity”
- Assure a strengths based approach across the system

***The group decided to meet again later this year for a half day meeting to continue planning and to get feedback from the ECI component groups around these strategies and action steps.***