

Iowa Financing Strategy for a Comprehensive Early Childhood System

“A Down Payment Approach”



The Financing Strategy was prepared by the Urban Education Network for the Early Childhood Iowa stakeholders. The Child and Family Policy Center provided staff support in this work. For additional information, please contact:

Charles Bruner, Executive Director
Child and Family Policy Center
218 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1021
Des Moines, IA 50309-4006
515/280.9027 phone
515/244/8997 fax
www.cfpciowa.org

Jim Wise, Executive Director
Urban Education Network
1225 Second Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50314
515/242.7955 phone
515/242.8118 fax
www.uen.k12.ia.us

Table of Contents

Urban Education Network of Iowa's Role and Actions in Developing a Resources and Financing Plan for Early Care	1
Summary: A Down Payment Approach	4
Excerpts from the Checklist Resource Book	9
Introduction	10
What all children need to start school ready to learn	11
Current status of children starting school "ready"	12
Child, family, and societal consequences of not starting school ready (including costs)	12
Effective programs, services, and strategies to improve school readiness	13
Investments opportunities to expand and/or establish effective programs, services, and strategies to meet needs and improve school readiness	16
Implementation design capable of efficiently and effectively developing a school readiness system (including infrastructure), when adequate resources are available	17
Resource and financing opportunities to initiate implementation	18
Financing and reinvestment opportunities to initiate and continue implementation and fully develop and sustain system	18
Education and mobilization strategy to secure resources	19
A Cross Walk Between the Down Payment Approach and Other Iowa Initiatives	22
Talking Points for Specific Audiences	24

Urban Education Network of Iowa's Role and Actions in Developing a Resources and Financing Plan for Early Care

The Urban Education Network of Iowa took a leadership role for developing a resources and financing strategy for a comprehensive early childhood system, within a larger statewide planning process. This section provides a description of UEN's role and actions that resulted in the Iowa Financing Strategy and Down Payment Approach.

Development of a Down Payment for Iowa's Early Childhood System: The Urban Education Network's Role and Leadership

Summary

The Urban Education Network is a coalition of Iowa's eight largest school districts. The UEN Superintendents and Board members meet to share mutual concerns and identify mutual concerns and priorities which impact the education of all children. In 2003, UEN members identified early childhood as an area of needed policy focus. Through a series of meetings led by the Superintendents and involving Board members, business leaders, state department heads, and others concerned with early childhood, UEN worked through 2003 and 2004 to developing a financing plan for an early childhood system.

On September 16, 2004, the Urban Education Network of Iowa endorsed the \$90 million down payment and agreed to promote it as part of its 2005 legislative agenda. The UEN's work has been integrated into the Early Childhood Iowa planning process involving over 300 Iowa stakeholders and its recommendations are aligned with those of the Iowa Learns Council.

History and Background

In 2002, the Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) organized an Achievement Gap Study Committee to examine trend data related to the growing achievement gap between poor and non-poor students, as well as between ethnic and racial groups. The UEN was aware that Iowa, like other states, was experiencing significant achievement gaps between poor and non-poor students, between schools with high percentages and low percentages of poor students, and among different racial and ethnic groups. The charge to the Committee was to review relevant data on the achievement gap in Iowa and develop an action plan and priorities in response to this examination. As part of their work, the Committee also reviewed successful efforts in Iowa and across the country to close the gap.

Through the work of the Committee, UEN determined that significant reductions in the achievement gap would require: school and community partnerships, a focus upon K-12 educational standards, and a comprehensive early care, health and education system for children birth to five. Such a early childhood system would ensure that all children have the opportunity to begin school "ready to learn." The UEN of Iowa found that currently too many of Iowa's children are entering school with untreated conditions affecting their physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional challenges, and lack of language development and cognition and general knowledge.

To address these issues, the UEN agreed to partner with the Iowa Empowerment Stakeholders and the Iowa Department of Health in their work under a Smart Start Technical Assistance grant and a Maternal and Child Health Early

Childhood Comprehensive Systems planning grant to develop a single, comprehensive plan for an early childhood system.

As part of this system development work, the Early Childhood Iowa (the overall planning group) created a framework containing six vital components to oversee implementation of the system. Further development of the scope and work of the components is occurring through work groups formed for each:

- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
- Quality Services and Programs
- Professional Development
- Accountability for Results
- Governance, Planning and Administration
- Resources and Funding

The Urban Education Network accepted responsibility for leading the Resource and Funding work group. Sue Donielson, consultant to the UEN, has served as a member of the Stakeholder group since its inception. She agreed to provide her leadership as a co-chair with Mark Draper for the Resources and Funding work group charged with creating a financing mechanism for the early care, health and education system. With Donielson's guidance and that of Jim Wise, Executive Director of the UEN, an agreement was reached with the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) to research and create such a financing strategy.

"A Checklist for Financing a Comprehensive Early Childhood System" is the result of the UEN planning process and the research and analysis conducted by CFPC. The Checklist provides the basis for proposing initial financing strategies and is composed of largely sequential issues and factors that need to be addressed in developing those initial strategies. It organizes the wealth of information about early childhood available both nationally and in Iowa that is needed to recommend a "down payment" financing approach. It also aligns the recommendations for a down payment with the other work of Early Childhood Iowa and with the recommendations from the Iowa Learns Council.

A "down payment" of \$90 million is proposed to begin the development of an early care, health and education system that assures "every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful" (vision statement of the Empowerment Stakeholder Group.)

On September 16, 2004, the Urban Education Network of Iowa unanimously endorsed the \$90 million down payment and agreed to promote it as part of its 2005 legislative agenda.

Summary: A Down Payment Approach

Defining and then financing a comprehensive early childhood system is a complex task. The Urban Education Network developed and organized a wide array of information based upon the key issues that needed to be addressed in order to develop a financing plan. The involved development of a checklist and use of that checklist in determining the types of actions that could be taken immediately to finance a system, a "down payment" for developing the system. This section describes that checklist and the initial down payment to developing that system.

A Checklist for Financing a Comprehensive Early Childhood System

There are many issues and factors that must be addressed in developing financing strategies for a comprehensive early childhood system. These issues and factors start even before discussing specific financing strategies – with a description of the need for and value of developing a system, what constitutes that system, and the capacity to begin implementing that system. They then go into the actual investment opportunities in the long-term and short-term and ways to secure those investments, concluding with strategies to secure the support to make those investments.

Some of the answers to different issues and factors are being developed much more fully through other work groups – including the services and supports that comprise that system, the governance and professional development and accountability structure necessary to maintain it, and the mobilization and public involvement needed to support it. At the same time, there is enough information on these issues and factors already known to begin to develop financing strategies.

The checklist approach provided here establishes the basis for proposing initial financing strategies. The checklist is composed of a set of those largely sequential issues and factors that need to be addressed in developing those initial financing strategies:

- What all children need to start school ready to learn
- Current status of children on starting school "ready"
- Child, family, and societal consequences of not starting ready (including costs)
- Effective programs, services, and strategies to improve school readiness
- Investment opportunities to develop system to expand and/or establish effective programs, services, and strategies to meet needs and improve school readiness
- Implementation design to efficiently and effectively develop system (including infrastructure)
- Resource and financing opportunities to initiate implementation
- Financing and reinvestment opportunities to continue implementation and fully develop and sustain system
- Education and mobilization strategy to secure resources

Continuing work is being undertaken to refine the responses to each of the issues on the checklist, but there is more than ample information and evidence to propose a substantial initial "down payment" on building that system which can be wisely used.

Further, this "down payment" can build upon existing programs and structures already in place in Iowa and can be of sufficient size to show impacts at a community-wide and statewide level. While the costs for a fully established early childhood system would require additional public investments in the \$220 to \$400 million range annually, a \$90 million increased commitment of public funds would enable immediate steps to be taken to build that system. Moreover, there is the longer-term potential for fuller system development through realized savings that result from improved school readiness and fewer future educational and social needs, provided that a strong results-based accountability system is built into the investment.

Unfortunately, there is no magic revenue source for making that initial \$90 million down payment investment. There are some opportunities for securing additional federal funding, primarily through Title XIX, that can and should be included in the mix, but the primary source for the down payment funding must be through state appropriation.

The research base is clear, however, that such investments can pay big dividends in improved student success and reduced social problems. A key to long-term sustainability and expansion of the investment is to track these gains and ensure they are reinvested into the strategies that produced the gains.

Minimum Down Payment

If Iowa is to develop an early learning system, there will need to be substantial additional public investments, at least in the \$220 million to \$400 million range annually, with a large share of that devoted to improving child care quality while retaining family affordability (the reason for the need for a public investment). Family strengthening and support services for vulnerable families, expanded early access and intervention programs for children with or at risk of developmental delays, broadened health and nutrition services that provide more comprehensive primary and preventive services, and enriched pre-school also are required.

While full investments cannot be made overnight, it is possible to make a substantial down payment of the investments that will be needed, making use of existing systems for that purpose. A down payment on an early learning system logically would include:

- Expansion of empowerment funding (to enable communities to build more comprehensive services and supports, particularly for evidenced-based family support, parent education, and home visiting programs)
- Expansion of Shared Visions and other high quality preschool programs, to move the state in the direction of funding enriched pre-school programs without fee at least to children at or below 140% of poverty

- Establishment of a quality rating system for subsidized child care to increase quality, coupled with expansion of funding generally to increase eligibility levels and maintain affordability and provide incentives for quality (through tiered reimbursement based upon quality ratings) and through professional development activities
- Expansion of early access through increased support, including efforts to broaden overall Medicaid funding for special education that provide incentives to area education agencies to do so
- Expansion of Medicaid funding support for primary and preventive health services for young children to include greater emphasis upon addressing developmental needs.

Investments in these areas build upon an existing infrastructure and also cover the goals and strategies within the Early Childhood Iowa Results Areas. The following represent expansions in each of these areas that could be effectively deployed in the next fiscal year and would be of a size sufficient to produce and measure impacts on a community-wide and state-wide basis, necessary for developing an accountability and reinvestment strategy.

The following are expansions in each of these areas that could be deployed effectively and would be of sufficient size to measure and track changes in school readiness on a community-wide and statewide basis. Included within these figures are the infrastructure costs associated with that system development and management:

- Empowerment funding -- \$25 million
- Shared visions and other state funded preschool programs -- \$15 million
- Quality/affordable child care -- \$ 40 million
- Expanded early access -- \$ 5 million (+ federal Medicaid match)
- Comprehensive health services -- \$ 5million (+ federal Medicaid match)

This represents a comprehensive overall investment of \$90 million that can be effectively and efficiently deployed and helps insure that all aspects of the comprehensive early childhood system are developed.

Excerpts from the Checklist Resource Book

The Urban Education Network produced a resource book that provided detailed information on each of the items on the checklist, from both national and Iowa sources. This section provides excerpts from that larger resource book, including summaries of the information and evidence available under each of the checklist items.

Introduction

A Checklist for Financing a Comprehensive Early Childhood System

The Smart Start and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems work in Iowa has involved over three hundred leaders in developing a comprehensive early childhood system.

Designing and implementing that system entails addressing a wide range of questions. The issues and questions that arise can seem overwhelming. At the same time, there is a wealth of both national and Iowa data and experience that can be drawn upon to address them.

This resource book is designed both to suggest a financing strategy and to serve as a resource to provide information on how questions and issues related to financing that system have been addressed. It is arranged in the form of an initial checklist of elements that must be addressed in developing and financing that system.

These are shown below. Separate sections of this resource book go into more detail on each, describing the information and evidence under each. Through planning work in Iowa and through national resources, checkmarks can be made for each of the elements on the list. While it may not be possible to answer all the questions that will need to be addressed in financing a fully developed, comprehensive system, more than enough is known to make a sizeable "down payment" on developing and financing that system.

The following is the checklist, arranged in a somewhat sequential order.

- What all children need to start school ready to learn
- Current status of children on starting school "ready"
- Child, family, and societal consequences of not starting ready (including costs)
- Effective programs, services, and strategies to improve school readiness
- Investment opportunities to develop system to expand and/or establish effective programs, services, and strategies to meet needs and improve school readiness
- Implementation design to efficiently and effectively develop system (including infrastructure)
- Resource and financing opportunities to initiate implementation
- Financing and reinvestment opportunities to continue implementation and fully develop and sustain system
- Education and mobilization strategy to secure resources

The Early Childhood Iowa Results Areas, Goals, and Strategies form the basis for completing this checklist and are interwoven throughout the sections.



What all children need to start school ready to learn

- ☑ Parents have the primary responsibility and play the most important role in young children's development.
- ☑ The First National Educational Goal stresses parenting support and education, health care, and quality early learning environments as keys to school readiness.
- ☑ Research has determined that multiple factors contribute to young children's development:
 - *Competent and confident parenting* (at least one, and preferably two, parent figures who are consistent throughout the early years and provide nurturing, protection, and stimulation and with whom the child bonds)
 - *Health and nutrition* (adequate food and nutrition and exercise for physical and mental growth, protection against and response to disease and injury, and early identification and treatment of special physical, developmental, and mental health needs)
 - *Guidance and instruction* (help and practice in developing large and small motor skills; language, pre-literacy, math, and cognitive development; and social and emotional development)
 - *Constant, stable, appropriate supervision* (continuous adult oversight and support that enables the child to safely explore the world)
 - *Safe and supportive communities* (safe conditions within the child's immediate environment, including environmental and physical safety and open space, and supporting social networks including friends and neighbors who contribute to a positive, language and experience rich, environment for all young children)

These are all incorporated into the Early Childhood Iowa Results Areas, Goals, and Strategies.

- ☑ Children's school readiness is multi-dimensional, and all dimensions are important to further learning:
 - Physical well-being and motor development
 - Social and emotional development
 - Approaches to learning
 - Language development
 - Cognition and general knowledge



Current status of children on starting school “ready”

- ☑ National studies show large gaps in “what children know and can do” by socio-economic status, race, home language, and parental factors.
- ☑ While language and pre-literacy gaps are most prevalent, gaps in social and emotional development are considered by early elementary educators as most problematic.
- ☑ National and Iowa data show consistent gaps at fourth grade on reading and mathematics tests, a good lagging indicator of kindergarten readiness and good predictor of school and lifelong success.
- ☑ Other states which have kindergarten assessments (Maryland, Minnesota, Vermont, Missouri, etc.) show that up to half of children entering kindergarten are lagging in some area of development, and 10-20% are substantially behind.
- ☑ Child Trends analysis suggests that children with significant health and behavioral health concerns and those with family instability needs are most vulnerable to school problems (1/4 of students).
- ☑ Des Moines School district data show gaps at kindergarten entry similar in size to those at third grade, when broken out by free-and-reduced price lunch (FRPL) participation, race, English as a second language status, and enrollment at an elementary school with a high proportion of FRPL students.



Child, family, and societal consequences of not starting school ready (including costs)

- ☑ Poor outcomes in the earliest years of life have been traced to multiple future costs and problems, including:
 - ☑ medical costs for care of preventable health conditions
 - ☑ child welfare, foster care, mental health and juvenile justice costs for addressing social and emotional damage to children
 - ☑ compensatory and remedial (special education) education costs for addressing learning difficulties and school behavioral challenges from absence of developmental environments
 - ☑ welfare costs and lost economic activity due to an undereducated and skilled adult workforce
 - ☑ criminal justice costs due to inability to find place in mainstream society

- ☑ Indications of rising costs to Iowa are evident in the increase in the prison population and prison expenditures and the growth of special education expenditures as a share of the education budget.
- ☑ The biggest cost to Iowa is related to lost economic opportunity due to overall skills, in part as measured by lack of major progress in increasing high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment of Iowa students.

☑ **Effective programs, services, and strategies to improve school readiness**

- ☑ There are a number of research-based programs and services that have shown their effectiveness in improving meeting young children's needs and improving different dimensions of school readiness among children. Iowa has implemented, but generally only on a small-scale, demonstration basis, programs and services in most of these areas. These relate to the Early Childhood Results Areas, Goals, and Strategies.
- ☑ Strengthening parenting (Results Area: Secure and Nurturing Parents)

The research on home visiting, as a stand alone service, has been mixed, but there are a number of programs that work on strengthening parenting that have shown strong, research-based results. These include the Nurse Parent Partnership home visiting model developed by David Olds, the IDHF Initiative, and Early Head Start. Healthy Families America and Parents as Teachers are two programs that also have shown merit as promising practices.

In general, parenting education, family support, and home visiting programs are most effective to the degree to which they: (1) maintain consistent and skilled staff to provide services, (2) are part of more comprehensive services available to families, including quality early care and education services for children, and (3) reach and engage families, particularly young parents experiencing parenting for the first time, that are most vulnerable.

Iowa has a wealth of demonstration programs that show promise in providing such family strengthening services, including the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program (FaDSS), Healthy Families, and Parents as Teachers. In addition, family service workers in Head Start and other family development specialists in community action agencies often fulfill these roles.

- ☑ Health and nutrition (Results Area: Healthy Children)

Use of primary and preventive health care, as well as for illnesses and injuries, has been shown to be related to child health and development. Financial access to health care is recognized as one key component to receiving that care.

In addition, the content of care – both prenatal care and infant and young child care – is important to insuring that children’s health and development needs are met. This involves well-child visits that address developmental and emotional aspects of health as well as medical ones. A variety of demonstration efforts – through the ABCD Initiative supported by the Commonwealth Fund and the SECC Initiative – have demonstrated their effectiveness in identifying and addressing health and development needs.

Clearly, early identification and treatment, as well as prevention, of environmental hazards that lead to such childhood morbidities as lead poisoning, are keys to achieving school readiness. Lead poisoning has been identified as a very significant factor in explaining educational gaps between poor and non-poor students.

Finally, good nutrition and exercise is known to be important to healthy development and connected to school readiness. The federal WIC program, which provides both nutritional counseling and coupons for specific nutritious foods and supplements, has been shown to be a very cost-effective program.

Iowa has been selected as one of five states to participate in the Commonwealth Fund’s ABCD Initiative, with a particular focus upon expanding developmental services for Medicaid children.

Early intervention to meet special needs (Results Area: Healthy Children)

Many childhood conditions, if detected and treated early, can be much more successfully addressed than if no action is taken. This includes identification of developmental disabilities and delays and special health care needs. This involves careful assessments and follow-up services, with both IDEA and Medicaid providing some entitlements to early intervention, as well as federal financial support.

Iowa’s Early Access Program is the state’s early intervention system serving children with a high probability of developmental delays or a developmental delay under Part C of IDEA. This service provides specially designed instruction in a variety of settings including child care, preschool and schools. Iowa provides child care for special needs children under Part B of IDEA.

Quality early care and education (Results Area: Secure and Nurturing Early Care and Education Environments)

Research is clear that high quality child care supports child health and development, while poor quality care can actually do harm. This is particularly true for lower income children.

Tiered rating and reimbursement systems and incentives for child care workers to get child development certifications or degrees are proven ways to enhance the quality of child care, but overall low reimbursement rates for child care jeopardize the quality of care. High quality child care requires skilled caregivers (with credentialed teachers the surest way of such assurance for center-based care), reasonable caregiver to child ratios, developmentally appropriate curriculum, and adequate physical settings.

TEACH and GAIN-type programs also have shown success as incentives for workers to become credentialed or certified.

Many families prefer family child care or family, friend, and neighbor care, particularly when their children are very young. There also are proven strategies for enhancing such care, generally providing supports and incentives for caregivers.

Iowa is developing a tiered rating system, although it is unclear whether there will be resources to provide for the tiered reimbursement that other states have used to improve quality. Iowa's low subsidy eligibility level (140% of poverty) limits the reach of the state subsidy program and produces a big cliff effect for families earning slightly above that amount. Iowa is unlikely to be able to improve quality without also addressing the issue of affordability, which means expanding the eligibility for subsidy while introducing tiered reimbursement and other supports to improve quality.

Enriched and universal pre-school (Results Areas: Secure and Nurturing Early Care and Education Environments and Children Ready to Succeed in School)

Some of the strongest research on the cost effectiveness of early childhood services relates to enriched pre-school programs – Perry Pre-School and the pre-school component of the Chicago Parent-Child Centers. Most research showing high returns-on-investment (ROIs) of pre-school programs has involved children in low-income families, where the gains in reduced social costs (special education, juvenile and adult corrections, and school dropout) are likely to be the greatest.

At the same time, quality pre-school programs for three- and four- year-olds have been shown to benefit all children, and integrated programs can be particularly beneficial to lower-income children.

For over a decade, Iowa has supported Shared Visions, its own pre-school program for lower-income children (up to 130% of poverty, higher than Head Start's eligibility of 100% of poverty). Further, Shared Visions has been well-researched and shown to be effective in improving child development and school

readiness. It remains a small program, however, able to reach only a small portion of all eligible children.

Natural Supports and Supportive Communities (Results Area: Safe and Supportive Communities)

While parents are their child's first and most important teacher, children live in neighborhoods and communities and also need supportive adult figures, safe places to go and play, and community resources such as libraries and parks takes a village to raise a child," relates to these natural networks of support.

While government cannot be a substitute for these natural supports, it can help to support them and encourage their involvement with families with young children. This is best achieved at the local level, where faith institutions, civic groups, and local resources can be linked into services and supports for young children and their families. Local empowerment boards have not only supported a variety of family strengthening programs, but often have tied these into other community resources. Local involvement makes particular sense in helping to build upon natural networks or support and draw in voluntary and civic institutions, In addition, it is at the local level that most private resources are likely to be secured, where United Ways and local philanthropic and business efforts can be enlisted to support school readiness.

Investment opportunities to expand and/or establish effective programs, services, and strategies to meet needs and improve school readiness

- Currently, public investments (federal, state, and school district) on the education and development of very young children (0-5) pale in comparison with investments in school-aged children or college-aged youth. Iowa invests only .12 cents per young child for every \$1.00 invested in each school-aged child and .19 cents for every college-aged youth.
- In terms of school readiness program and service areas:
 - Early Access serves only 1.7% of the state's infants and toddlers, although its own goal is to reach 2 % and national studies suggest that closer to 6% of infants and toddlers could benefit from such services.
 - A Midwestern study rated much of Iowa's child care as poor. Moreover, Iowa's subsidy level is among the lowest in the country, serving less than 12% of children that could be served under federal guidelines (federal law allows use of federal child care funds up to 85% of the state's median family income).
 - Enriched pre-school for lower-income children, Head Start and Shared Visions combined serve only approximately 61% (1) of all three and

four year-olds in the state at 130% of poverty or below, leaving more than 6,000 (2) children unserved. Iowa data shows that fewer than 18% (3) of all 3-5 year olds in the state are in high quality pre-schools, those meeting NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start standards.

- While there have been dramatic advances in the number of young children covered by health insurance, due to expansions of the Medicaid and HAWK-I programs, some young children remain uncovered. Even when covered by health insurance, however, many young children do not receive comprehensive primary and preventive health services (as shown in an Iowa Foundation for Medical Care study of EPSDT) and children on Medicaid and HAWK-I have particularly difficulty obtaining dental care.



Implementation design capable of efficiently and effectively developing a school readiness system (including infrastructure), when adequate resources are available

- ☑ Iowa has in place a state and community partnership in flexibly designing many school readiness approaches to meet individual needs and assets – Community Empowerment.
- ☑ Iowa has a unified state system for providing child support subsidies.
- ☑ Iowa has an enriched pre-school funding and accountability structure, Shared Visions, with experience working seamlessly with Head Start.
- ☑ Iowa is developing a tiered rating system.
- ☑ Iowa is developing early learning standards and pre-school standards.
- ☑ Iowa has a well-regarded special education system with an early intervention component that is being integrated with child mental health and child welfare services
- ☑ The ABCD Initiative is creating a more integrated and powerful role for health in meeting developmental needs.
- ☑ Smart Start technical assistance and the HRSA grant have involved critical stakeholders and a very broad-based community in designing an early learning system approach.



Resource and financing opportunities to initiate implementation

- ☑ Empowerment has created the opportunity and will to draw upon local as well as state and federal resources in building an early learning system.
- ☑ Parents currently pay the vast share of the cost of care for child care and cannot afford more – so funding must come from other sources.
- ☑ Opportunities exist to receive federal financial support for certain aspects of enhancements, particularly around Medicaid and developmental health.
- ☑ Incentives could be developed for special education to expand investments in early learning, through modifying funding arrangement between state and area education agency.
- ☑ Iowa has many known programs where effective investments could be made, but this will require new state resources coupled with a commitment to accountability.
- ☑ Some investments also have offsets that could be included in analysis (e.g. increasing salaries also increases tax revenues), as well as economic development implications.



Financing and reinvestment opportunities to initiate and continue implementation and fully develop and sustain system

- ☑ Building an early learning system will require major, long-term commitments of resources, but will have major, long-term benefits that more than justify the investments.
- ☑ While that level of funding cannot be expected overnight (or could be effectively deployed, as elements of the system need to be developed), a "down payment" approach can be initiated
- ☑ With a "down payment" approach of sufficient size, impacts can tracked on a community and statewide basis – on school readiness and on special education and other service expenditures
- ☑ Identified savings from these services could be committed to expanding the investments, over time, to build the full system
- ☑ Such a "down payment" approach also is in keeping with research and evidence on effective investments from a state economic development perspective
- ☑ Investments in early childhood contrast very favorably with other "results buying and results selling" alternatives for state government



Education and mobilization strategy to secure resources

- ☑ At a community level, business leaders in both Council Bluffs and Des Moines have made major commitments to early learning, recognizing its importance to economic development
- ☑ Two economic development related Governor's Task Forces – Iowa Workforce 2000 and Imagine Iowa (2010 Planning Council) – have recommended investments in early care and education as an economic development tool
- ☑ Iowa law enforcement officials, through Fight Crime Invest in Kids, have publicly endorsed investments in early childhood
- ☑ There are multiple constituencies that can be enlisted to support new investments, provided that the request is concrete and credible

Cross Walk with Other Iowa Initiatives

The Urban Education Network sought to ensure that its work complemented and aligned with other planning activities in the state. This section describes how the down payment aligns with other major state work on early childhood.

A Cross Walk Between the Down Payment Approach and Other Iowa Initiatives

The Urban Education Network sought to ensure that its work complemented and aligned with other planning activities in the state.

The Table on the next page provides a cross walk between the recommendations of two other very significant entities who are conducting systems development work for early childhood – the Empowerment Stakeholders – now called Early Childhood Iowa – and the Iowa Learns Council. Early Childhood Iowa has provided leadership in the development of a systems approach to early childhood for three years. Influenced by their work, Governor Vilsack appointed the Iowa Learns Council to conduct further examination of what would be required to invest in an early childhood system. Both Early Childhood Iowa and the Iowa Learns Council have established specific recommendations on how this important system development work should continue.

The cross walk provides an at-a-glance comparison of how the \$90 million down payment approach aligns with and supports the recommendations from both Early Childhood Iowa and the Iowa Learns Council.

Early Childhood Iowa –
Goals and Strategies

**Down Payment
 Financing Approach**

**Iowa Learns Council
 Team One Recommendations**

Increase access to and use of preventive, holistic services
 Increase dental care, prenatal care

\$5 million in comprehensive health services (+XIX match)

Dental, Health

Increase access to and use of social, emotional, and mental health services

\$5 million expanded Early Access

Universal access to parent support programs
 Research/evidence based home visitation
 Research/evidence based parent education

\$25 million expansion for community empowerment

Increase local investments, through empowerment and private sources, to expand existing child and family support programs
 Increase HOPES funding by \$400,000
 Increase local investments, through community empowerment and private sources, to improve early education

Increase access to high quality, affordable early learning environments
 Increase access to expanded reimbursement rates for providers demonstrating quality
 Professional development

\$40 million child care subsidy and quality

Expand accredited family-based and center-based child care
 Professional development – PITC/TEACH
 Implement a quality rating system, with incentives, “achievement bonuses”
 Funding to support extended day and full-year quality child care

Increase access to high quality pre-schools, Shared Visions, Head Start

\$15 million for Shared Visions, enriched pre-school

Fully fund Shared Visions
 Funding for fully inclusive diverse pre-schools not based on income guidelines

Talking Points for Specific Audiences

This section puts into brief talking points many of the key findings and rationales for the Urban Education Network's down payment recommendation. These can be adapted and used for presentations to a variety of groups. At the end are specific talking points that deserve special emphasis with different constituencies:

- Corporate and Business Leaders and Chambers of Commerce
- Law Enforcement Officials
- Parents
- Legislators
- Teachers and Principals

Talking Points

The Urban Education Network's Leadership Role

It is time for Iowa to make a major commitment to investing in early childhood. Research, as well as common sense, tells us that investments in early childhood are among the best investments we can make. The Urban Education Network has taken a leadership position in recommending that a minimum down payment of \$90 million in state funding should be made to expand existing early childhood services, drawing upon research on effective programs and with built-in expectations and accountability for improvements in school readiness in the short-term and school and life success in the long-term.

The Urban Education Network reviewed a vast array of information on evidence – both nationally and in Iowa – in taking this position. In a year-long process that involved business leaders, state agency heads, and members of the early childhood research and provider community, the Urban Education Network developed its down payment approach as part of a larger statewide Early Childhood Iowa planning process for developing a comprehensive early childhood system. Although the funding does not go directly to school districts, UEN has taken this position because it believes that an early learning system is critically important to insuring all children start school ready to learn and succeed.

Evidence and Rationale for a Down Payment

The following provides an outline of the evidence and rationale for this investment:

- Both brain research and child development research provide conclusive evidence of:
 - the importance of the first years of life to lifelong learning
 - the universal needs of young children for health and nutrition, stability, nurturing, and guidance and early education
 - the need for growth and development across physical, social and emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and approaches to learning dimensions of school readiness.
- While the majority of children start school sufficiently prepared to meet school expectations, a significant portion start school behind and a growing minority start significantly behind.
- While schools can and should close the achievement gap and help all children succeed educationally, they can only narrow that gap if actions are not taken during their earliest learning years (pre-natal to five) to help insure they start school with a basic foundation for success.
- Effective programs and services exist that can better insure that children start school ready, including health, early intervention, parenting education, quality early care and education, and pre-school programs. Their impacts are greatest if they all are available to children who need them.
- Iowa has the foundation for building a comprehensive service system to achieve school readiness – but currently invests very little in them
- The consequences are that too many children experience difficulties in school from the outset, with future social costs in remediation programs, retention and

- school dropout, and even delinquency and crime. Studies show high positive long-term results from investing in early childhood.
- Iowans support greater investments in early childhood, and now is the time to make such investments. Iowa can be a leader among the states in preparing all its children for school and for success in the 21st century economy.

Key Points and Connections

A minimum down payment of \$90 million (for health and early intervention, parenting education and support, early care and education, and pre-school) can be used effectively and is of a sufficient size to show – and be held accountable for – immediate results in improving school readiness. It is the most important investment – from both an educational and an economic standpoint – that Iowa can make today.

- The down payment represents a responsible way to begin financing the Iowa Learns Council recommendations and the Early Childhood Iowa Stakeholders Group comprehensive early childhood plan.
- This investment is research-based, accountable for results, and emphasizes strong community leadership through both schools and community empowerment boards.

Special Emphases for Different Constituencies

The following are additional points to emphasize with different constituencies.

Corporate and Business Leaders and Chambers of Commerce

- Investments in early childhood has strong, positive returns in producing the skilled workforce needed in the 21st century and reducing social costs and consequences of school failure.
- Quality early childhood programs also contribute to the local economy and enable working parents to be more productive as employees.

Law enforcement officials

- Early childhood programs are known to reduce delinquency and crime and represent the most effective crime prevention strategies.

Parents

- Affordable, quality early childhood programs make parenting easier and more effective and rewarding.
- Children who start behind make teaching harder and can disrupt the education for all.

Legislators

- Investment in early childhood is an efficient and effective use of tax dollars, and the public recognizes and supports these investments.

Teachers and principals

- It is easier and more productive to help children learn who start school ready and whose parents are participating in their child's education.
- Effective school readiness strategies will make it easier for schools to meet new accountability standards.



Urban Education Network
1225 Second Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50314
515/242.7955 phone
515/242.8118 fax
www.uen.k12.ia.us