

Statement of Commitment to Partnerships for Early Childhood

State Board of Education
October 7, 2005

THE VISION

For the good of all children now and in the future, Nebraska must put a priority on developing a collective will among all stakeholders – schools, parents and families, taxpayers, policymakers, business and industry, civic organizations and the general public – to value, commit to, and establish a seamless continuum of early childhood care and education from birth through eight years of age.

DESIRED OUTCOME

All young children in Nebraska have access to high quality early childhood programs and services.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The State Board of Education is committed to state and local early childhood partnerships for establishing policies that contribute to assuring that all young children in Nebraska have access to high quality early childhood programs and services.

To achieve this outcome, the State Board of Education supports the following priorities and recommendations developed by the Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Study Leadership Team and stakeholders across the state.

Partnership Priority 1: Equitable opportunities for access to high quality, inclusive programs and services are provided for all children from birth through age eight and their families.

Recommendations:

- 1) Implement statewide full day/every day kindergarten.
- 2) Expand the Nebraska early childhood grant funded program to increase the availability of collaborative community based prekindergarten for all 3 and 4 year olds.
- 3) Establish expectations for supporting best practices, which encompass class size and active learning environments in kindergarten through third grade.
- 4) Ensure access to high quality early childhood education and care services for all children birth to age three whose families would choose to access such services.
- 5) Establish a system for exchanging information with families about the development and learning of young children from birth through age eight.

Partnership Priority 2: High quality environments are created in order to achieve maximum benefits for all children from birth through age eight.

Recommendations:

- 1) Strengthen state and local infrastructure to address all aspects of the early childhood system including: governance, accountability, and regulations/standards; staff preparation, professional development, and compensation; and family information and support.
- 2) Require highly qualified staff with current knowledge to implement early childhood programs for children from infancy through third grade.
- 3) Ensure best practices are implemented in all settings across prekindergarten, kindergarten and primary level programs in areas including, but not limited to, teaching, standards, curriculum, assessment, inclusion, diversity, transitions, and adult/child ratios.

Partnership Priority 3: Community partnerships are established to achieve efficient use of resources and optimum outcomes for children.

Recommendations:

- 1) Coordinate and share resources to facilitate collaboration and partnership at the state and local level to achieve high quality early childhood services that meet the unique needs of young children who are typically developing or who have disabilities.
- 2) Encourage regional partnerships to establish Early Childhood Specialist positions within each regional area to provide technical assistance to local early childhood programs.

Partnership Priority 4: Community support is strengthened to address and respond to the needs of young children and their families.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support and join the efforts of other state agencies and groups to create a common knowledge base throughout Nebraska of the importance of the early years and related issues regarding early education and care.
- 2) Create a statewide network to collect and disseminate information regarding early education and care issues.

Partnership Priority 5: Adequate financing is provided to implement quality services that support the health, development, and learning of young children.

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop an early childhood endowment fund to support the implementation of quality programming throughout Nebraska.
- 2) Identify public funding streams and maximize their use to provide quality services to all children including children birth through age eight.