



Collaboration for
Early Childhood
Strong Start, Bright Future

Presentation to the District 97 Board of Education

February 28, 2012



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Who We Are

- Public/Private Partnership initiated in 2002
- Partners include:
 - Village, D97, D200, Township, Park District, Library
 - Concordia, Triton
 - Children's Clinic, Parenthesis, Oak-Leyden
 - Child care centers, preschools, home providers
- Driving Issue → Assuring that ALL Oak Park Children have access to high quality early care and learning experiences.
- Model for creation of the Illinois Early Learning Council



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Strategic Planning Process

December 2007 Village of Oak Park and District 200 provided funding for a strategic planning process.

CHARGE: To develop an early childhood system in Oak Park that supports the vision of all children arriving at kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn by the time they enter kindergarten.



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Why Early Childhood? Why Create a System?



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Early Experiences Make a Critical Difference

- 85 -90% of brain development occurs by age 5
- Forty years of research have shown that high quality early learning environments and support for at-risk families lead to:
 - Lower rates of participation in special education
 - Lower rates of involvement with the criminal justice system
 - Higher rates of high school graduation
 - Higher incomes and rates of home ownership
- Investment in high quality early childhood programs produces aggregate rates of return of at least 7% -10% annually



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A Snapshot of Oak Park Children Birth Through Age 5

- There are 4,800 children in Oak Park under kindergarten age.
- 800 children are at-risk of school failure due to family income, special needs, or other factors.
- 66% of children under kindergarten age live in families with all parents working.
- There is a lack of services for infants, toddlers, and their families.
- 95 % of families use some form of non parental care; many families use a patchwork of care.
- Parents at all income levels report feelings of isolation and stress when seeking to locate early childhood services.



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Why Build an Early Childhood System?

1. Forty years of research and core Oak Park values establish a public obligation to assure that all children have access to programs and resources they need to become successful.
2. The scale of the challenge: a growing general population of children under six, 4800, and of young children at-risk, 800, require a coordinated approach.
3. In an era of scarcity and stress on the budgets of jurisdictions and nonprofits, it is essential to assure maximum leveraging and efficient use of existing resources.
4. Aspects of the challenge affect all public entities, nonprofits, and much of the private sector, and all stand to benefit if the challenge is successfully met.



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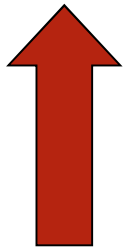
THE PLAN





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Vision for Oak Park: Children arrive at kindergarten
safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn



Every child has
access to high
quality early care
and education



All parents have
the information
and support they
need in their role
as a child's first and
most important
teacher



The most at-risk
children and their
families receive
intensive services to
ensure healthy
development and
school readiness



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Integrated Early Childhood System

Task Group/Executive Board

- Supervises Executive Director
- Acts as finance committee
- Promulgates recommendations regarding policy, direction

Collaboration Board

- Votes on all decisions
- Sets direction
- Adopts policies

Jurisdictional Oversight Board

- Reviews annual budget and audit
- Reviews program services and outcomes

Early Detection Screenings

- Establish system to assure all children birth to five receive periodic developmental screening
- Conduct vision and hearing screenings at preschools
- Implement follow-up processes to ensure all children needing assessments and services receive them
- Maintain accurate, up-to-date inventory of services and disseminate to all providers and families

Parent Information and Support

- Provide information about child development and services to every parent
- Offer every at-risk family intensive parent education/support
- Make available group support and periodic visits to all families
- Publish Early Childhood Resource Directory bi-annually

Professional Development

- Provide training programs in best practice and career development advice to preschool and child care staff
- Coach centers on quality improvement and qualify them for state recognition and financial incentives
- Provide leadership coaching to center directors
- Develop loan/scholarship program for college credit and training programs
- Offer annual symposium on critical early childhood issues

Public Preschool Coordination

- Coordinate outreach for, and referral to, all programs for at-risk children
- Lead curriculum planning, instructional improvement, and unified assessment by programs to ensure high quality
- Work with all early education providers to establish community expectations for incoming kindergarteners

Voluntary Database

Includes all children birth to five to monitor program participation, service usage and program impact

Includes staff of early care and education programs to monitor staff qualifications, professional development activities and participation in Illinois State quality enhancement programs to monitor impact of programs



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Benchmarks for Success



- **Child Outcomes:** Every child arrives at kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn
- **Service Delivery Outcomes:** Parents and children receive the early childhood care and education and parenting education and support services they need
- **System Outcomes:** Oak Park has a high quality, coordinated early childhood system



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Accomplishments to Date



- Supported the creation of professional development plans at 12 sites and provided professional development advising. As a result, 27 early learning providers enrolled in college level courses earning a total of 192 credit hours – a 22% increase in the number of staff at targeted centers raising their educational qualifications.
- Provided mentoring and technical guidance to five child care centers, four have achieved a star level score of two.
- Supported the development of a standard referral form for the Illinois Early Intervention System, standardized referral and communication process for Child Family Connections (CFC) 7.



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Accomplishments to Date

- Identified and enrolled 78 children in publicly funded preschool programs and Head Start program for at-risk children who would have missed this opportunity without the Collaboration's outreach and coordination efforts.
- Completed the development of the three components of the database that supports the work of the publicly funded preschool programs.





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Current Funding Landscape

Due to state fiscal woes and changes in grant making priorities of regional foundations that have provided funding in the past, Oak Park is unable to garner significant operating support from outside sources.

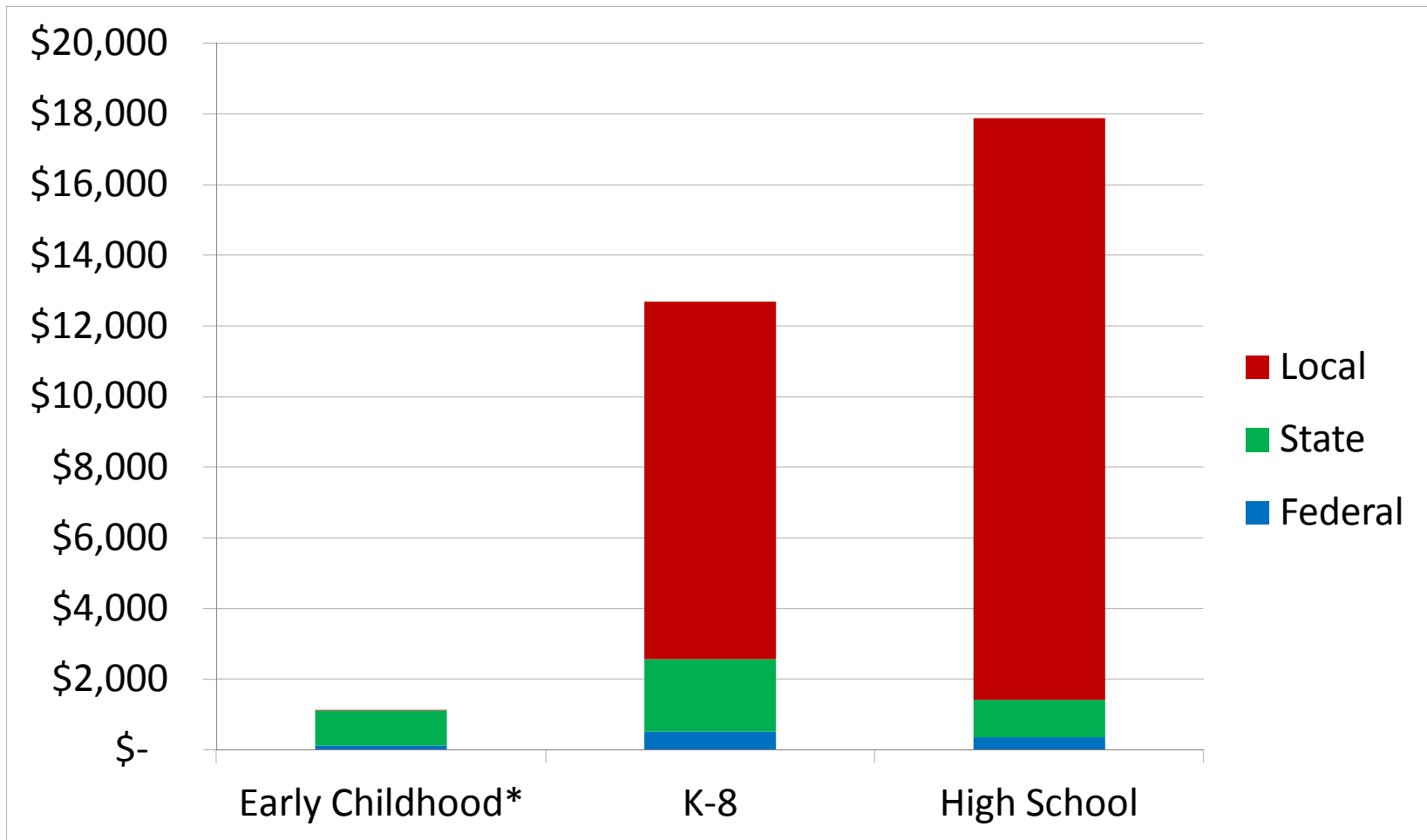


Viable funding streams identified in 2009 to support the full implementation of the Collaboration's strategic plan are no longer available.



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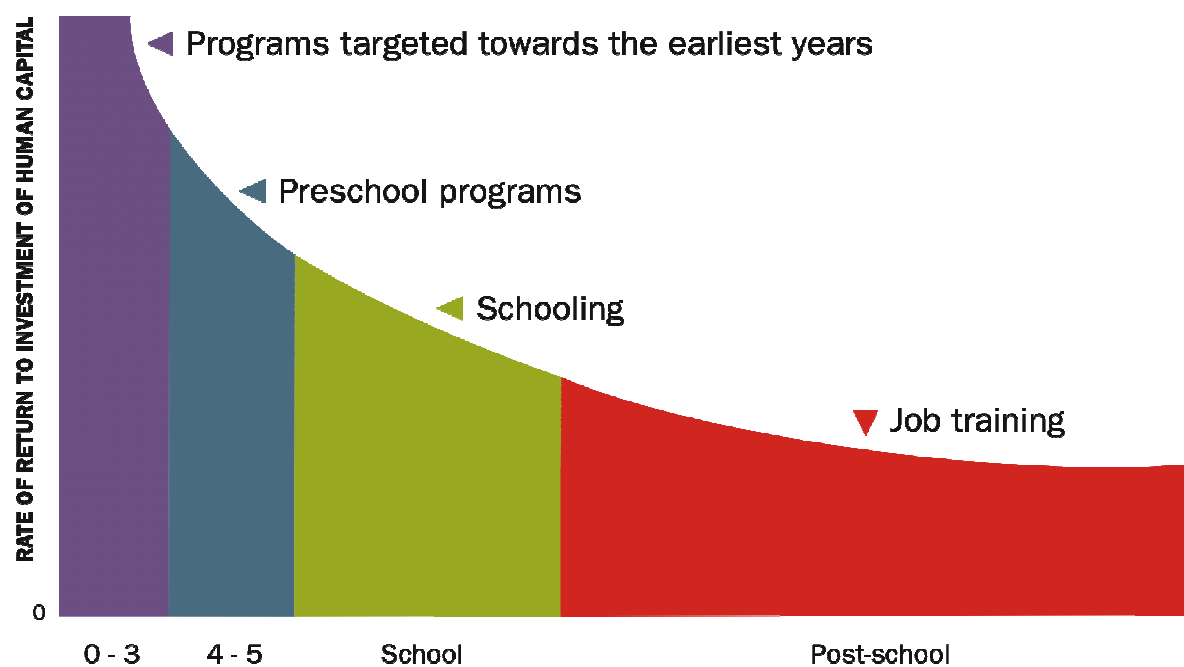
Oak Park's Investment Gap





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Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested



Source: Heckman 2008



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A Smart Investment

Investing in children under kindergarten age to establish a well-coordinated system of early childhood services that can significantly narrow the achievement gap before children enter kindergarten and reduce the need for special education and remedial services, social investments in education, the criminal justice system and other social and health programs.





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“The real question is how to use available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: invest in the very young”.

James Heckman, University of Chicago Professor of Economics, Nobel Prize winner, 2000.



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Request to District 97

Affirm the critical importance of developing a fully integrated early childhood system as vital to the work and success of District 97.

Engage in a leadership role to convene a working group of board members and a lead administrator from District 97, District 200 and the Village to explore/identify strategies for establishing a fully integrated early childhood system in Oak Park.