



**Collaboration for
Early Childhood**
Strong Start, Bright Future

Invoice

Date: August 13, 2012

To: Oak Park Elementary School District 97
970 Madison Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Amount: \$50,000.00 for fiscal year 2012-2013
(\$35,000 in support of Public Preschool Coordination and \$15,000
in support of general operating expenses)

For: Support of the work of the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care
and Education in fostering high quality early care and educational
experiences and support to families so that all children arrive at
kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn.
Activities and programs described in the Attachment A of Contract
Between Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and education
and Oak Park Elementary Schools, District 97.

Contact Person: Carolyn Newberry Schwartz
Executive Director
Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education
Oak Park Village Hall
123 Madison Street, Room 209
Oak Park, Illinois 60302
708-613-6122
cnewberry@collab4kids.org



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Mr. Peter Barber, President
Members, Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Board of Education
Dr. Al Roberts, Superintendent
970 Madison Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Dear Mr. Barber, Members of the Board of Education and Dr. Roberts:

I am pleased to provide you with a report on the accomplishments of the Collaboration over the past year. The support of District 97 has been essential to the success of our efforts. We would be happy to attend a Board meeting to apprise you of our progress if you would like. I also would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

We thank you for your leadership in supporting the discussions around the growth of the Collaboration to implement a fully integrated early childhood system for Oak Park. It is a very exciting prospect! We do believe that our efforts will provide significant benefits for all of Oak Park's youngest children.

Very sincerely,
Carolyn Newberry Schwartz
Executive Director



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FISCAL YEARS 2011 – 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

Investing in Oak Park's Future: A Strategic Plan for the Partnership for Human Development serves as the organizing framework for the Collaboration. With more than 40 agencies participating, the Collaboration works to overcome the fragmentation and scarcity of services endemic to the early childhood field by leveraging and integrating all of our community resources to better meet the needs of the youngest children and their families. Our key initiatives include the advancement of Professional Development, Parent Information and Support, Developmental Screening and High Quality Preschool for All and Head Start Programs. With District 97's support the Collaboration has made substantial progress towards the implementation of this systemic approach. The following are highlights from the past year.

Goal 1: To ensure that all at-risk children in Oak Park attend high-quality preschool (part day or enriched full day) and to ensure that all publicly funded preschool programs in Oak Park provide the educational experience needed for children to arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed.

Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Board of Education substantially underwrites the coordination of recruitment of at-risk children to publicly funded preschool programs (ABC Toon Town, Oak Park River Forest Day Nursery, District 97, and CEDA Head Start), as well as quality assurance and professional development within the programs.

Outreach and Recruitment: The Collaboration has established relationships with 21 social service providers to create referral and communication processes in an effort to ensure at-risk children are enrolled in the programs. The Collaboration has also identified outreach strategies and engaged an outreach worker to increase awareness of the preschool programs including recruitment at WIC offices, encouraging building owners and managers to provide information to families with young children in their buildings, and conducting outreach at hair and nail salons, grocery stores, churches and so on. During the past academic school year, 21 children who would have missed the opportunity to participate in a high-quality preschool program were identified and enrolled in the publicly funded preschool programs over the past three years.

Curriculum and Instruction: The Coordinator for the publicly funded preschool programs spends time throughout the year observing each program. Over the past year, the Coordinator has provided extensive technical training and support to the faculty of the four programs on the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD, an assessment tool. During the past academic year she began to use the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching to inform her classroom observations, and to provide guidance in improving teacher practices in the classroom and identifying goals for professional growth of the faculty.

Common Screening and Assessment

The four publicly funded preschool programs continue to use ESI-R as a common screening tool and Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System to assess the children's growth and learning. Plans are underway to improve inter-rater reliability and consistency in the use of the data. The group spent considerable time during the past year revising weights assigned to the eligibility criteria, removing criteria that were subjective in nature or that could not be verified. This work was done in conversation with the Collaboration's database committee and in cooperation with District 97 administration.

Goal 2: To develop an Information System that describes Oak Park's very youngest children and leads to a consent-based data collection effort that tracks the impact of the Collaboration's programs.

Through a commitment by the Oak Park Township in January 2010 to provide \$10,000 funding per year for two years, the Collaboration has successfully implemented critical first steps toward establishing a comprehensive information system about our very youngest children and the impact of our efforts. This initial work supports the development of an Information System to support the work of the Publicly Funded Preschool Programs (PFP). While the PFP Information System currently stands on its own, it provides the foundation for a more comprehensive system that will include all Oak Park children aged birth to five, with the goal of linking to District 97 to create the foundation for a P-20 system. The development of this comprehensive system is integral to the Collaboration's Strategic Plan. The current database is comprised of three components:

- Child Population component that includes data on the number and location of Oak Park's at-risk preschool children;
- Recruitment and Referral component tracks data to provide information about which recruitment and retention strategies are most effective amongst hardest to reach families;
- Voluntary Child Outcome component tracks the impact of participation in the programs.

A committee comprised of people with expertise in database development and management and system interaction, early childhood research, District 97's superintendent, curriculum coordinators, and student assessment staff guides this effort.

Key accomplishments over the past two years include:

Information Sharing Agreements

The Collaboration secured in-kind legal consultation to develop an interagency information sharing agreement and a privacy and security policy to support information sharing between the Collaboration and each of the four agencies. It was able to obtain agreement from three of the four participating agencies to share information (CEDA Head Start continues to withhold their consent). The Collaboration is working with District 97 and monitoring changes in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to help secure CEDA Head Start's participation in the PFP Information System.

Database Development

The Collaboration was able to secure significant in-kind professional consulting to develop and set up a hosted system using open-source software thereby reducing the start-up and ongoing costs for the project. All three of the components of the database are developed and in use. The database committee helped District 97 establish data collection methods at kindergarten registration to ensure more accurate

information about children's preschool experiences and has helped to establish coding and data sorting strategies to make the information more meaningful.

Data Collection and Use

The Collaboration obtained agreement amongst all the participating agencies to use the same intake forms and eligibility screening tools and criteria to establish consistent baseline information for participating children across all programs. It also secured agreement amongst the participating agencies to use the same assessment tool (Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System) to monitor children's progress. The Collaboration provided training and extensive technical assistance in the use of the assessment system.

Data entry for all three systems began in July 2011. Cleaning and categorizing data to ensure accurate information is obtained in response to queries is an ongoing effort. Significant time has been put into developing strategies to improve the completeness of the data and this effort will continue over the next two years. The Collaboration has begun to identify preliminary queries and research questions to answer questions about children served, program effectiveness, and outreach strategies.

Goal 3: To increase participation in professional development activities by early care and education providers and to promote and support involvement of the providers in Illinois State quality enhancement initiatives.

The goal of the Collaboration's professional development programs is to improve the quality of early childhood education programs by engaging staff in regular and increasingly intensive professional development activities. The Collaboration focuses its efforts on 10 unaccredited centers caring for over 600 predominantly low-income children; a strategy that allows the Collaboration to maximize its limited resources and leverage support from foundations. It has been a conduit of information, support, and training for centers through five core professional development programs.

Training: Increased professional development activities at 10 child care centers and preschool sites involving up to 112 staff members. Program offerings include a 12-workshop series for each of two years (2010-2011 and 2011-2012) focused on developmentally appropriate practice. As a result of the trainings, 39% of staff exceeded the 15 credit-hour minimum requirements for licensing standards established by the Department of Children and Family Services during 2011, an increase of 7% from 2009.

Creating Professional Development Plans: The Collaboration works with 10 targeted centers, including the River Forest Community Center program at Oak Park River Forest High School, to establish individualized professional development plans for each staff member. Directors are supported by the Collaboration as they work to use their staff's plans to create a Center Professional Development Plan. As a result, 27 early learning providers enrolled in college level courses earning a total of 192 credit hours. This represents an increase of 22% in the number of staff in targeted centers raising their educational qualifications in early childhood. Thirty staff members are enrolled in 314 credit hours for the current academic year. One center director enrolled in a Masters level program in early childhood program administration, one director is working to complete a bachelors in early childhood, one has enrolled in an early childhood certificate program, and one has enrolled in the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership's certificate program.

Quality Rating Scale: The Collaboration also provided mentoring and technical guidance over the past two years to six full-day, full-year child care centers to support their participation in the Illinois Quality Rating System to achieve a star level score to raise their child care reimbursement rates from the state. Based on initial assessments, these centers would have earned a 0 or a 1. After the mentoring, four centers achieved a two star rating. One center made substantial improvements and narrowly missed a 1 star rating. At the time of writing this report four of the centers are scheduled to submit applications to the Illinois Quality rating scale to either receive an initial score (one center) or to improve their current score (three centers).

Director's Roundtable and Family Child Care Provider Round Table: The Director's Roundtable is a formal network of center directors from a wide range of early childhood programs, including many of the targeted centers. The group meets six times per year (average attendance is 10-15) and provides opportunities for peer learning, support, and training. During the past two years, the focus of the Director's Roundtable included topics vital to systemic improvement of early childhood: creating professional development plans, how to include staff development in meetings, motivating and retaining staff, connecting to Illinois state quality improvement systems like the Quality Rating System, and the Gateways Credentialing and Registry system. The Collaboration initiated a Family Child Care Provider Round Table in April 2012.

Symposium: By leveraging tremendous volunteer resources in the community and raising additional funds from private sources, including District 97 PTOs, the Collaboration is able to offer a high-quality learning and networking opportunity at low cost to a broad-based audience. More than 325 people participated in the 2012 Symposium, *Wild About Wellness: Growing Healthy Children in Mind, Body and Spirit*.

Goal 4: To ensure that all children birth to five receive periodic developmental screening and to ensure that health care and early childhood care and education providers are informed about issues that impact children's optimal development.

The Physicians Network: In July 2010, the Collaboration received a CATCH grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics to develop a referral and communication process for pediatricians and family practice physicians to use for children who may have developmental delays. Collaboration members participated in the development of the Illinois Standardized Referral Form for Early Intervention and a follow-up communication report for physicians, child care and preschool providers, and social service agency staff to use. We secured the adoption of the use of this form by Child Family Connections (CFC) 7, the state Early Intervention service center for the West Cook Region — a key step to increasing screenings and rates of referral by physicians in local practices.

As a result of the CATCH grant, the Collaboration published and distributed a Developmental Referral and Services Directory for physicians and child care and preschool staff. The Directory is also available on our website, www.collab4kids.org.

The Physicians Network hosts two breakfast meetings each year attended by an average of 30 people. Topics this past year included: Evaluation and Treatment of ADHD in a Primary Care Setting, and the Science and Culture of Picky Eating.

Hearing and Vision Screening: During the past year, the Collaboration screened on average 1,026 preschool age children at 30 child care and preschool sites. Children whose test results indicate a concern are referred for additional assessments and the Collaboration stays in touch with the parents to make sure that they follow up on the referrals.

Goal 5: To offer a continuum of services to all families with children birth to five.

Directory: The Collaboration revised and published the 2012 edition of the Early Childhood Resource Directory in January 2012. A searchable, online format of the Early Childhood Resource Directory was launched on the Collaboration's website in March 2012. This biennial publication presents information on community organizations, child care centers, and other resources, in addition to material on selecting quality providers, health and safety, transitioning to kindergarten, and early reading activities. Twelve thousand copies will be distributed throughout the community.

Community Awareness: With a significant grant through Community Works, the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation is funding an Early Childhood Parent Education Campaign. The project is designed to increase access to information about key benchmarks in children's early development in order to increase understanding of the importance of developmental screening, the availability of developmental services and ways to access them. The guide book *Watch and Help Me Grow: Developmental Milestones Birth to Five* was produced this summer. It will be distributed during early fall and a web page on the Collaboration's web site will be created to make the information easily available online. This effort will support the attainment of universal developmental screening for all children age birth to three years old living in Oak Park and River Forest by increasing parental (or customer) demand for this service from their child's primary healthcare provider.

Advocacy: The Collaboration has been working with key stakeholders to educate Oak Park residents about the impact of the state fiscal crisis on Oak Park jurisdictions and service providers, and their ability to maintain programs and services. The Collaboration is represented on the Illinois Early Learning Council, and members are active in several of its committees.

- The Collaboration raised more than \$70,000 over the past year through a major donor campaign.

Plans for 2012-2013

Priority work over the next year will focus on increasing the understanding of the preeminent importance of investment in Oak Park's youngest children as a smart policy prescription for wise use of scarce funds, and the best way for Oak Park to make a meaningful commitment to its vision of affording all of its children an opportunity for success. Plans for expanding and developing activities include:

1. The Collaboration will continue to strengthen the single point of entry for hard to engage families by refining outreach and follow-up strategies within Oak Park and with preschool and service providers in adjoining communities to ensure that the hardest to reach families are engaged in preschool programs.
2. The Collaboration will identify ways for staff (in addition to the directors) from the publicly funded preschool programs to meet quarterly to strengthen a shared learning community and continue improving curriculum and instruction across programs.

3. The Collaboration will participate in planning a joint in-service activity for the publicly funded preschool programs including the special education staff from Districts 97 and 90.
4. The Collaboration will begin to use the Publicly Funded Preschool Information System to inform program improvement strategies for the preschool programs and share learning with District 97 to support the development of its kindergarten program.
5. Professional development training in developmentally appropriate practice will continue. The training over the next year will focus on social-emotional development in children birth to five. Professional development advising for the 10 targeted centers will continue as will mentoring to agencies participating in the Quality Rating System. The Collaboration will also explore ways to continue to connect providers to state quality improvement and professional development programs and systems in order to leverage more resources into Oak Park.
6. The Collaboration will continue its Directors Round Table and continue to develop the Family Child Care Provider Round Table.
7. The Symposium will continue to be a signature annual event of the Collaboration.
8. The publication of the developmental guidebook *Watch and Help Me Grow* will increase parents' access to information about key benchmarks in children's early development; increase understanding of the importance of developmental screening, the availability of developmental services and ways to access them. The Collaboration will work over the next year to ensure that the guidebook is distributed broadly to families in Oak Park and River Forest. This effort will support the attainment of universal developmental screening for all children age birth to three years old living in Oak Park and River Forest by increasing parental (or customer) demand for this service from their child's primary healthcare provider.
9. The Collaboration will continue to provide hearing and vision screenings to all children enrolled in preschool in Oak Park as part of our core commitment to assuring that children receive the services and support they need to develop to their full potential.
10. The Collaboration will continue to play meaningful roles in community-wide initiatives like combating childhood obesity, engaging in public health initiatives, and participating in jurisdictional committees as requested to promote the interests of Oak Park's youngest children.
11. The Collaboration has agreed to play a leadership role in revising nutrition and physical activity standards for child care centers and preschools that hold an Oak Park Business License as one of the strategies identified by Oak Park's Pioneering Healthy Communities group.
12. The Collaboration will partner with Parenthood and other family support agencies to identify ways to increase home-visiting programs for at-risk families.