

To: Manistee ISD School Board Members
From: Cynthia Corey, Great Start Specialist
Date: December 20, 2011
RE: Kindergarten Readiness

I am writing to share the goal and mission of Great Start Traverse Bay/Manistee Collaborative is that ALL children will arrive at the kindergarten door ready to learn and succeed in school and in life. I shared a document yesterday with some local county statistics – there are 1521 children aged birth to five. We know that 90% of the brain architecture is built in those first five years and yet public spending during that same time frame is minimal. In our community last year 233 children or 48% of 3 & 4 year olds were enrolled in early childhood programs. Part of our work includes increasing the quality of programming provided for young children, but also to increase the access of quality programs for the remaining 52%. These young children are the future customers of the Manistee ISD – the green booklet or report called: “Achieving Great Futures” indicates that for every dollar spent in early childhood in our six county area that six dollars are returned to the community in savings. That’s a 600% return!

Some of the Early Childhood work that has already taken place in the past two years in Manistee included:

- An early childhood fund was started at the United Way of Manistee county
- A regional grant was acquired by the Collaborative to provide 3 year old scholarships, 43 children in the region received these scholarships along with home visiting support.
- Playgroup was re-instated last year with meetings once a month. Attendance increased to 10 parents with 12 plus children so a second playgroup was added per month in Sept 2011 funded through Great Parents/Great Start.
- PNC Bank has funded additional playgroup and parent support/education through a \$5000 grant through the United Way of Manistee County. Additional playgroup sessions in Manistee and out county sessions will also be added Jan to Dec of 2012. This grant includes purchase of developmentally appropriate toys and 2 educational kits that parents take home and work with their children.
- An early childhood network was created by the ISD to provide early childhood directors to have an opportunity to network, problem solve, and increase access to quality information.
- The United Way of Manistee purchased Creative Curriculum (a research based curriculum used in other counties in our region) for each of the centers and training was provided by the ISD.

As Mr. Crosby stated there are changes coming at the state level with the addition of the Office of Great Start at the Michigan Dept of Education. We will keep you informed of the implications this has for the children and families in our service area.