



How Everyone in the Community Can Contribute to Early Care and Education (ECE)

Adapted from *The School Readiness Playbook: A Guide for Community Partners*,
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Government

- ▶ Increase investments in ECE efforts, tying new investments to research on effective ECE policies and practices.
- ▶ Provide low- or no-interest loans to ECE programs to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- ▶ Establish meaningful tax advantages for family-friendly businesses.

Employers

- ▶ Assess employees' needs regarding finding reliable, quality ECE and ensuring that their young children are ready for school by kindergarten.
- ▶ Provide child development and parenting information using such communication vehicles as break room and restroom bulletin boards, lobby and elevator posters, in-house newsletters, all-employee emails, paycheck inserts or attachments, and many forms of social media.
- ▶ Educate and inform employees about vouchers, Dependent Care Plans, and tax credits to help parents afford high quality early education programs.

Early Childhood Programs

- ▶ Provide families with information about what school readiness is (and isn't) and how parents can promote school readiness at home.
- ▶ Implement a curriculum that is evidence-based, inclusive, and proven to result in increased school readiness.
- ▶ Engage families in programs that facilitate smooth transitions from early childhood programs to school.
- ▶ Recognize and respect individual family culture to support positive identity development for each child.

Families

- ▶ Read, sing and tell stories to children from birth on.
- ▶ Take children to the library, museums, parks and the zoo.
- ▶ Attend, ask for, and/or organize events for young children.
- ▶ Ask your employer what resources are provided for families.
- ▶ Explore county and state services to learn about the components of high-quality early care and education and resources available to help pay for licensed programs.

Family Support Professionals

- ▶ Organize parent education workshops or learning events.
- ▶ Act as a case manager and navigator of resources for the community to increase trust and help connect families to services.
- ▶ Share information about home visiting, parent education and assets-based family support approaches such as Strengthening Families, with neighborhood and civic associations, faith organizations, and schools.

Schools

- ▶ Create a welcoming and inclusive environment for families that offers multiple ways to listen to parents' needs and expectations as part of the school system's culture. Host focus groups, community cafes, or other gatherings that accommodate family work schedules.
- ▶ Partner with other organizations to share school readiness and kindergarten registration information with families in their primary languages and have interpreters at parent and community meetings so that all families can be included in school activities.
- ▶ Develop a partnership with early childhood programs and create a system to share children's developmental assessment information to maximize a smooth transition to kindergarten.
- ▶ Invite Pre-K families to join PTAs.

Human Services

- ▶ Consider how each agency includes families in designing needed services and how those services contribute to school readiness. Share this information with public and private organizations and funders.
- ▶ Engage those who are not fluent in English or are isolated from the community by geographic, cultural, social or economic factors.
- ▶ Collaborate with other service providers and community partners on an ongoing basis to expand, coordinate, and improve inclusive ECE programs and services.
- ▶ Develop shared newsletters, shared staff training and other joint efforts.
- ▶ Host workshops on ECE issues and collect information about family needs that can be shared with community coalitions.

Health Care

(Health Care Professionals, Clinics, Hospitals)

- ▶ Educate families, patients and staff about the importance of early brain development for later school success and how health is a critical component of school readiness.
- ▶ Model the behaviors that stimulate brain development so parents can see the best ways to interact with their babies and preschoolers.
- ▶ Promote the importance of every child having a consistent primary health care provider or “medical home” that will help children be physically ready for school.

Philanthropists

- ▶ Invest in ECE efforts for the long-term (8-10 years). Realize it takes at least 8 years and a lot of agencies working in concert for culture change to take hold. Consider collaborative funding with other philanthropists.
- ▶ Support initiatives that focus on the whole child, including health and social-emotional development, not just cognitive achievement.
- ▶ Fund or co-fund public awareness efforts to promote a common understanding of ECE across the community.

Unions

- ▶ Advocate for readily available ECE and parenting information in work places and for a fund to help parents afford high quality child care.
- ▶ Partner with groups to offer professional development for child care workers who are union members.
- ▶ Include information about the importance of quality ECE and school readiness in union trade publications, websites and conferences.

Libraries

- ▶ Create inclusive early childhood activity spaces including developmentally appropriate toys and materials for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as well as materials for parents and caregivers.
- ▶ Offer a preschool or kindergarten reading club and/or story time for parents and young children.
- ▶ Provide meeting space to community groups working to increase school readiness.

Museums

- ▶ Provide inclusive learning areas and exhibits that inform parents, caregivers and the public about positive child development and school readiness.
- ▶ Partner with school districts for field trips, professional development, and parenting activities, especially around transitioning to kindergarten for immigrant and low-income families.
- ▶ Work with civic groups, nonprofits, and businesses to provide scholarships to help families and educators visit museums.

Parks and Environmental Organizations

- ▶ Train outdoor educators to understand how young children learn, for example, not by lecture, but by doing. Create activities especially for preschoolers.
- ▶ Host a treasure hunt using geo-mapping equipment to find small treasures that make being outside especially fun. www.geocaching.com/play
- ▶ Join any one of a host of national campaigns around connecting children and nature that have local membership action kits.

Civic, Community, Trade and Professional Organizations

- ▶ Invite ECE experts to speak at organization meetings.
- ▶ Adopt a child care, pre-kindergarten, Head Start or family support program and encourage members to volunteer regularly.
- ▶ Include information about the importance of school readiness in professional and trade association publications, websites, and conferences.

Faith Communities

- ▶ “Adopt” school readiness programs, offering financial support and other resources, use of facilities, and/or volunteers.
- ▶ Include information about healthy early childhood development and school readiness in professional training and education programs for clergy and lay leaders, hospital chaplains, and seminary students.
- ▶ Host forums and events for the public and policy makers that enable members to share their ideas about how to increase school readiness.

Media

- ▶ Create and disseminate messages that inform the public about the importance of quality ECE.
- ▶ Make sure coverage includes the state of school readiness in the community, highlighting problems and solutions under way.
- ▶ Serve on ECE coalitions and volunteer in community efforts to increase school readiness.

Law Enforcement

- ▶ Develop and/or reinforce a vision of law enforcement that regards ECE efforts—family support and parent education, voluntary home visits, and other services to families with young children—as crime prevention strategies.
- ▶ Use professional and trade association journals, social media, conferences and meetings to inform law enforcement professionals about key ECE issues, including new research on brain development and the societal benefits of ECE.
- ▶ Participate in public forums that share information about the importance of the early years and school readiness and their connection to crime prevention.

Architects, Developers and Building Trade Professionals

- ▶ Encourage clients to create rooms for family classes and meetings, areas for mothers to nurse their infants, and early care and education facilities in workplaces, parks, housing and commercial developments, and other public places.
- ▶ Build or improve ECE and child health facilities.
- ▶ Include instruction about early care facility design and construction in the curricula of architecture schools as well as in training and apprenticeships in the building trades.

Volunteers

- ▶ Read to young children at libraries, hospitals, clinics, schools, ECE programs, and family resource centers.
- ▶ Use non-English language skills to help recent immigrants gain access to school readiness resources for their young children.
- ▶ Serve on the Boards of nonprofit organizations that provide ECE programs and services for young children, grandchildren and their families.

Students

- ▶ Spend time talking, reading, singing, or playing outside with younger siblings and relatives. Take younger children to a park, museum or library.
- ▶ Have school clubs take on the issue of school readiness as a volunteer effort, a publicity campaign or a debate topic.
- ▶ Get together with friends or a service group and raise money to buy and donate children’s books to ECE programs.