



Build's Learning Community and MICHIGAN

The Build Initiative is a multi-state partnership that helps states construct a coordinated early care and learning system that responds to the needs of young children from birth to five and their families, so that children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed in school. Build serves as a catalyst for change and a national resource on early learning. As a participant in Build's Learning Community, Michigan joins the Build states, national experts and others, to exchange information and share ideas and best practices.

Background

Michigan has a strong history of innovation in its early childhood programs and initiatives. Innovations have included a state-funded school readiness program, infant mental health services, early learning standards, a state mandate for special education eligibility from birth, and secondary prevention programs.

Michigan built on its strong history of collaboration and innovation when it designed the strategic planning process for a comprehensive early childhood system and sought to become a Build learning partner state to support this effort. The Build team also has served as the Leadership Team for the comprehensive early childhood system planning.

Concurrent to these efforts, Governor Jennifer Granholm came into office with early childhood as one of her public policy priorities. The Governor charged her Children's Cabinet with bringing forward a plan to address early childhood needs. With the leadership of the Children's Cabinet and committed early childhood leaders, significant progress toward implementation of the Great Start system was made in the last year.

Early Learning Partnerships

Michigan used a stakeholder-based, web-supported process to produce its strategic plan for the Great Start system. The Great Start for Kids website received over 250,000 "hits" from Michigan citizens participating in "community conversations" that solicited input for the strategic plan. Additionally, hundreds of stakeholders participated in workgroups, meetings and a summit.

The Governor's Children's Cabinet and its early childhood workgroup, the Children's Action Network, have been intimately involved in the conceptualization and implementation of the state and local level infrastructure for the Great Start system. Build team members have provided staff support and leadership at every stage of the Great Start system development.

System-Building Planning and Progress

The "blueprint" or strategic plan for the Great Start system was completed in November 2004, with funding support from the federal Maternal and Child Health, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant.

In February 2005, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) was created to oversee and assure the implementation of the Great Start system. The ECIC is a non-profit corporation, which operates within the public and private sectors simultaneously. The ECIC has three core goals:

- Serve as a clearinghouse of information, resources and technical assistance for early childhood system building efforts;
- Serve as the convener for the Great Start system, bringing the private and public sectors together in the leadership, strategic development and financial support of the Great Start system; and
- Fund and support local Great Start Collaboratives.

Great Start Collaboratives, convened by Intermediate School Districts, will be the local planning and decision making entity for the Great Start system. They will create and enact a strategic plan for the development of a local comprehensive system of early childhood services and supports. The Great Start Collaboratives will receive funding from the ECIC to support their infrastructure development and implementation. All state-funded programs for children from birth to kindergarten will be integrated in the local Great Start Collaborative plan.

A “Request for Proposals” has been released to provide funding for the first phase of Great Start Collaboratives. Additional funds will be provided to support capacity building in communities not yet ready to implement their Great Start Collaboratives.

Challenges for the Future

It is an exciting time for Michigan as the implementation of the Great Start system moves ahead. The ECIC is strongly committed to building a sustainable, high quality early childhood system for all young children in Michigan. The primary challenge that Michigan faces in the implementation of the Great Start system is a financial one. Michigan’s economic recovery has lagged behind those of other states, and public funds for early childhood system development are limited. The ECIC will solicit funds across all sectors, spreading the word about the economic imperative of early childhood investment.

To learn more about Michigan’s Great Start system, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation or Build Initiative work in Michigan, please visit www.greatstartforkids.org, or contact:

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