



Establishing an Integrated System of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs and Services in Oak Park

Erikson Institute
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Beginnings

- Initiated in 2002 -- impetus came from Oak Park Elementary School District 97
- Driving Issue: ➔ Achievement Gaps between student groups in public schools. Gaps sometimes as wide as 35-40% between white and African American Students and between white and low income students
- Fragmentation -- lack of communication and coordination, widely varying levels of quality in early care/educational programs.



How and What

Outreach and inclusion of all key stakeholders

Facilitated meetings led to agreement on vision and mission for an organization to lead a coordinated, integrated and strategic agenda to improve early learning and care experiences for all children.

Established in 2003 as a nonprofit organization, the Collaboration became a public/private partnership in which all of the local governmental agencies contribute financially and participate through staff and/or board involvement

Flat decision-making structure. –consensus based

More than 60 active partners:

- Village, Elementary and High School Districts, Township, Park District, Library
- Community College, Universities
- Health Care Providers, Developmental Service Providers, Early Intervention
- Child care centers, preschools, home child care providers



Vision:

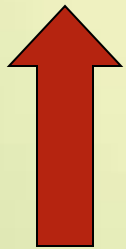
Every child will have access to high quality early care and educational experiences and support to families so that all children will have the opportunity to develop their full potential, and feel loved and valued in our caring, diverse community.

Mission

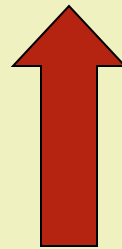
The Collaboration leverages, expands and integrates the resources of all providers of early childhood services and supports to ensure that every child has access to high-quality programs and services that foster physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development during the critical first five years of life.



Children arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy,
ready to succeed and eager to learn (IL ELC)



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



Collaboration Council

- Sets strategic direction
- Approves board member nominations
- Approves annual budget

Board of Directors

- Acts on all decisions (through consensus process)
- Adopts policies
- Supervises executive director

Intergovernmental 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



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 information and support services they need
- **System Outcomes:** Oak Park has a high quality, coordinated early childhood system, that aligns with k-12 districts and state programs and strategies



Funding Environment

- At Adoption of the Strategic Plan in 2009 – State budget collapsed, foundation and corporate funding was reduced
- Oak Park's diversity is a strength and presents special challenges -- number of at-risk children while significant is not great enough to qualify for much targeted funding available from the state and many foundations



Local Solution

- Three largest jurisdictions in Oak Park – Village, Elementary and High School Districts agreed on the vital importance of high-quality early childhood services to their missions. ... “a stake in the ground issue”.
- Established an Intergovernmental Agreement to purchase services from the Collaboration for Early Childhood to establish an integrated system of high quality programs. Pro bono legal opinion that provided the framework for the IGA was written by Darryl Davidson of Miller Canfield
- Five year automatically renewing term on the IGA and Contract for services. Value after 3-year ramp period is \$1.2 M



Key Components of the IGA

- Recitals provide historical, statutory and research-based rationale
- Establishes a governance structure to review and provide guidance on the contract for services and establishes an administrative structure to oversee all legal and fiscal activities related to the IGA
- Specifies financial obligations of each party and provides for a clearly defined process and calendar for each party to terminate participation in the IGA
- Allows for the purchase of Services to implement the strategic plan



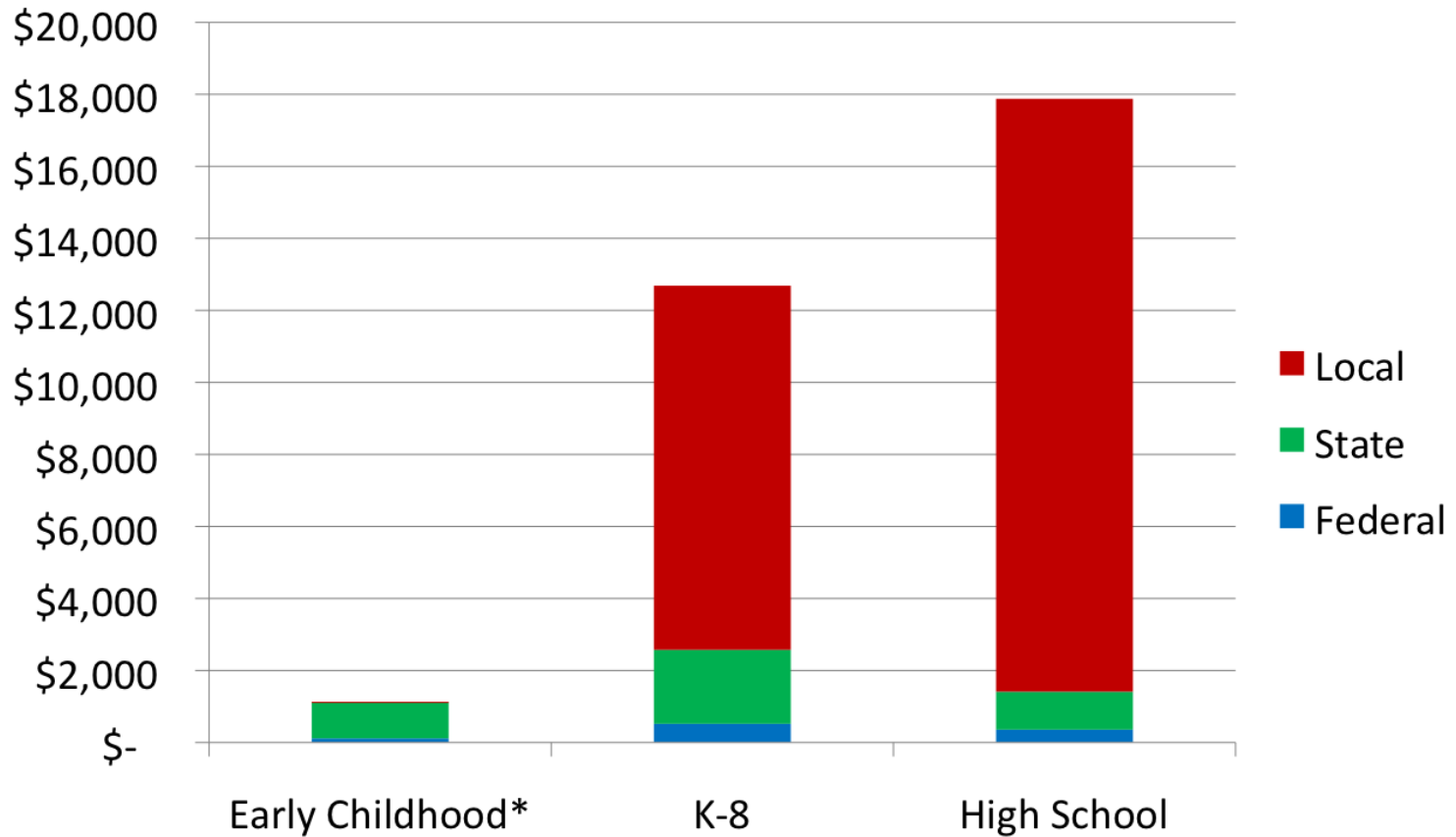
Governance and Operating Structure





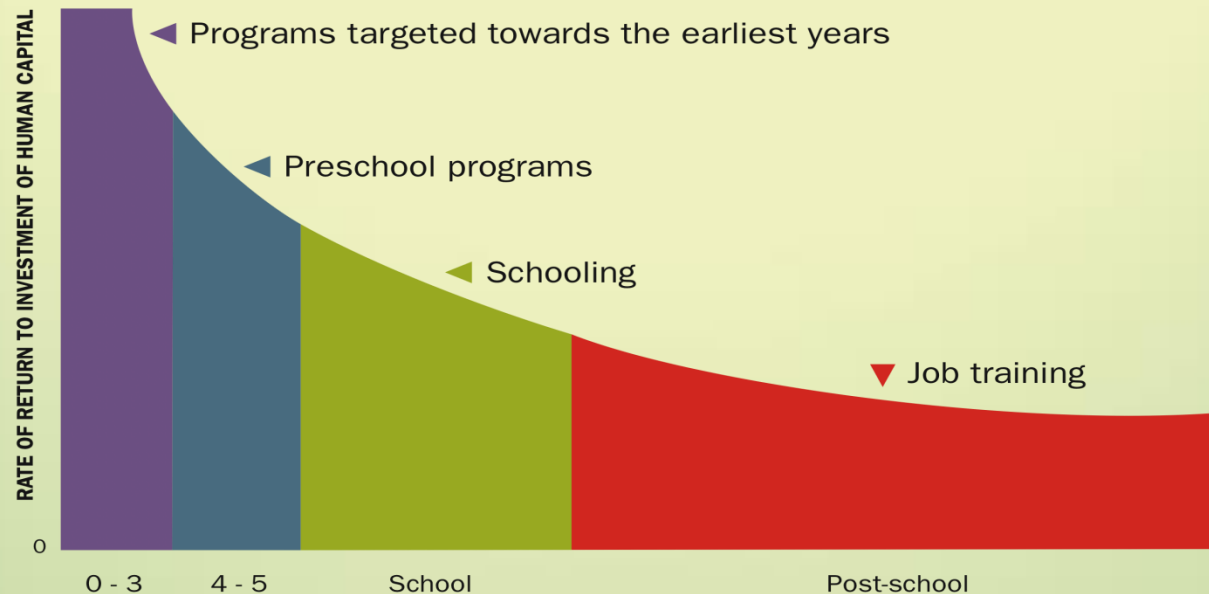
Steps Taken to Achieve Agreement

- Tied effort to core values of Oak Park and mission of three jurisdictions.
- Strong relationships with key leaders, village president and elementary and high school district board Presidents, and influential board members of each body.
- Established a core working group of representatives and CEO of the 3 jurisdictions to guide the effort, share concerns of each body and ensure they are addressed
- Strong public campaign
- Identified simple funding formula that each jurisdiction could support





Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested



Source: Heckman (2008)



Questions?