

Five from Thrive

January 2009



News and Events

Findings Show Pilot Kindergarten Transition Program a Success:

In August 2008, 294 beginning kindergartners in four East Yakima elementary schools took part in the new two-week Kindergarten Transition Program supported by Thrive and Ready by Five, our [Thrive Communities](#) partner in East Yakima. The transition into kindergarten is a critical time for young children because it marks the formal entry into schooling and sets the foundation for future academic performance.

During the program, entering kindergartners spent a few hours each day with their new teacher in the classroom and at home. The focus of the program was for children to learn routines, procedures and expectations for school behavior, as well as establish relationships with their teacher and peers.

An evaluation of the program shows the first year was a great success. Some highlights from the preliminary data findings include:

- On a student survey, 86 percent of children answered questions about school and classroom routines and procedures correctly at the end of the two-week program. Questions included items such as "Where do you put your belongings in the classroom?" and "What do you do if you need to go to the bathroom?"
- Children were ready to begin academic learning on Day 1 of the real school year because they had already learned and practiced many of the routines and procedures that most teachers spend time teaching on the first day - and throughout the first week - of school.
- Principals reported that the incidents of children crying or refusing to comply on the first day of school was markedly reduced and in most cases eliminated by the kindergarten transition program.
- 99 percent of parents reported that they felt comfortable talking to their child's teacher and 98 percent reported that their child likes school.
- Teachers reported that the program had a positive impact on the transition into kindergarten for the children, and 86 percent said they would definitely teach in the program again in 2009.

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Karen Tvedt Named as DEL Interim Director:

Gov. Chris Gregoire has appointed longtime children's policy expert Karen Tvedt to serve as interim director for the state Department of Early Learning (DEL) until a permanent replacement is appointed.

Tvedt served as executive director of the Early Learning Council, a part of Gov. Gregoire's Washington Learns Steering Committee created in 2005 to study and improve education. In that role, Tvedt directed work to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on improving early learning outcomes for young children in Washington.

"I'm honored that the Governor has asked me to help continue the important work at DEL," Tvedt said. "I am looking forward to working with DEL staff and partners to make sure we continue to make children a top priority in our state."

Research Evaluation Results Now in on Thrive's Reading Readiness Initiative:

In one year and with the help of about \$1.5 million in [Reading Readiness](#) grants from Thrive by Five Washington and the state Department of Early Learning, a dozen community organizations in Washington state made a real difference in helping young children, starting in infancy, with their early language and literacy skills.

Program participants showed consistent and statistically significant increases in all of Thrive's priority outcomes:

- Increased knowledge that skills development starts at infancy.
- Increased understanding of how important it is to share books with their children to increase their school readiness.
- Increased engagement in and everyday use of five activities that promote literacy skills, including playing games to teach new words, reading/looking at books, singing songs, telling stories and cuddling during book reading or sharing.
- Increasing their child's access and exposure to books as a result of the program, including the frequency with which they bring books home to read to their children and visit the library.

Participants also contributed positive feedback about the programs: commenting that they and/or their children learned from the program; they liked receiving books and other informative materials; and they enjoyed other specific aspects of the program, such as the support from teachers and staff, the fun and educational activities, and the opportunity for them and their children to socialize with peers.

[Read the full report.](#)



Recipe for Excellence - Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Education:

We have a guest blogger this issue! Alvin Gilmore, Jr., Head of Giddens School in Seattle, encourages early childhood educators to use their classrooms as an environment for learning about diversity and describes the benefits of

teaching young children how we are all different and unique:

Seeing difference compels young children to ask questions that deepen their sense and understanding of those around them. Because early learning experiences help to shape self identity, classrooms populated with children from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds maximizes the potential for children to "think" deeply about who they are encountering and who they are. [Read more on Thrive's Blog.](#)

What You Can Do

Speak Up for Kids!

Proposed cuts in the state budget slash entire programs that kids need to be safe, healthy and succeed. Kids are counting on lawmakers to protect them - and pass a budget that supports families during tough times.

So the Children's Alliance invites you to take action - Children's Alliance has launched the [I'm Counting On You](#) Virtual Rally. You can...

- [Join the virtual rally](#) with your photo, video or story
- [Send a message to your legislators](#)
- Pass it on and [invite a friend to take action too.](#)

Be a voice for kids when they need it most! With your help the rally will continue to grow until our in-person rally on the capitol steps on [Have a Heart for Kids Day](#). (Mark your calendars - it's Feb. 27.)

Partner Resources

Grading Early Learning in Washington State:

Last week, the League of Education Voters (LEV) released its [2009 Citizens' Report Card on Washington State Education](#), revealing slightly improved - but still mediocre - grades for Washington's education system.

Investments in early learning and raising the bar for all children earned Washington state's report card the top grade of a C+. The report cites Thrive's creation of two demonstration communities in White Center and East Yakima as an improvement to early learning.

"Our 2009 Report Card shows that our state's investments in early learning through higher education made a difference in our kids' education," said Lisa Macfarlane, co-founder of the LEV Foundation. "However, proposed budget cuts to education could jeopardize future prospects for thousands of children across our state."

To find out more about the report's key findings for early learning, [read and view KING 5's story](#) or [download the full Report](#) [PDF].

Events and Activities

January 21: [January Spokane City Forum](#). Community First: The Way Forward Through Energy, Environmental, and Economic Systems Collapse. -- Spokane, WA

January 24: [Men Matter! Breakfast](#). Join Child Care Resource & Referral to recognize the deep value of men in child care. -- Tacoma, WA

February 8-13: [Pacific Northwest Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute](#). The Institute is designed to encourage participants to engage in deeper and higher-level thinking on the purpose and practice of their roles as organizational and community leaders. -- Seattle, WA

February 27: [Have a Heart for Kids Day](#). Reserve the day to stand up for kids! The day features advocacy training, work groups on the issues you care about and the opportunity to speak directly to your legislators. -- Olympia, WA

Let us know about an upcoming event, and we'll let others know. E-mail event information to heidi@thrivebyfivewa.org.

What's New

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Connect with Thrive by Five Washington on our new Twitter and Facebook pages. You'll find links to early learning articles, event alerts, new activities on our Web site and more... *Click the following buttons to follow Thrive:*



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