



# Preschool Collaboration Tool

## IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOUNDATION

### COLLABORATION: MORE THAN THE LAW, IT'S ESSENTIAL

Community collaboration is a critical component of Iowa's new state-funded voluntary preschool program. School district leaders interested in participating in the preschool program must "convene and conduct" community collaboration to develop a plan that increases access to quality preschool, with priority given to children most in need. Experience shows that effective community collaboration is the key to developing and implementing an integrated system of services ensuring *all* children and families have access to high-quality preschool.

Research is clear: high-quality preschool benefits young children, particularly those considered most at-risk for school failure.

Unfortunately, studies reveal many Iowa children currently do not have access to quality preschool.<sup>1</sup> Community collaboration brings different entities to the table and encourages creative, flexible thinking. Comprehensive community planning provides a systematic approach that blends funding streams, coordinates efforts and minimizes the barriers that undermine access to quality preschool.

*"The most successful policy initiatives recognize the critical role that **parents and communities** play in the care and education of young children. These efforts also encourage integration of existing programs, services, and funding streams into a flexible and comprehensive system of supports for children and families."*

- NGA Center for Best Practices

For more information, log on to

<http://www.subnet.nga.org/educlear/achievement/index.html>

<sup>1</sup> NIEER (2005) The State of Preschool; The State Preschool Yearbook

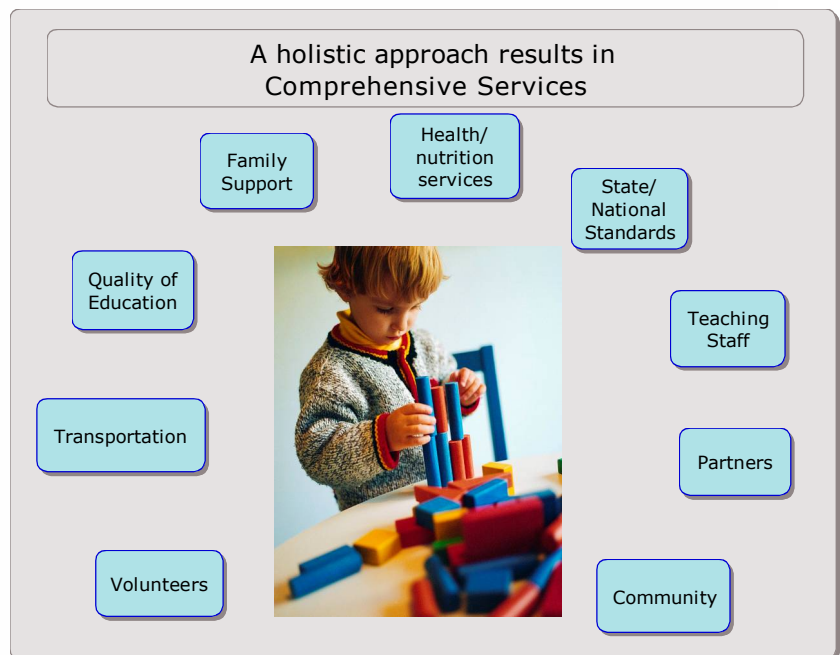
Hegland, S. & Oesterreich, L. (2006) Inclusive Classrooms for Preschoolers with Disabilities. Iowa State University Extension PM 2031.

Hegland, S., Peterson, C., Hyun-Joo, J., Oesterreich, L. (2003) Iowa Child Care Characteristics and Quality; Midwest Child Care Research Consortium

Collaboration is not unique to Iowa. Communities and states across the nation understand the importance and benefits of a community approach to increasing access to quality preschool. For example, Wisconsin's Department of Instruction developed a state-wide initiative to promote community collaboration to increase access of quality preschool for four-year-olds. More information can be found at [http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/Resources\\_collab.htm](http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/Resources_collab.htm) ). In 1993, the National Association for the Education for Young Children summarized key elements of various state and community comprehensive early childhood planning efforts<sup>2</sup>. **The following summarized components provide guidance for school district leaders preparing to engage in effective community collaboration.**

## Key Elements of Community Collaboration

- ❖ **A holistic approach** to the needs of children and their families that stresses collaborative planning and service integration across traditional boundaries of child care, education, health and social services.
- ❖ **Active involvement of all players**—providers, practitioners, parents and community leaders from both public and private sectors - in all aspects of program planning and delivery.
- ❖ **Systems that promote and recognize quality** through licensing, regulation and accreditation.
- ❖ **Equitable financing that ensures access for all children and families** to high-quality services.
- ❖ **An effective system of early childhood professional development** that provides meaningful opportunities for career advancement to ensure a well-qualified and stable workforce.



<sup>2</sup> NAEYC. (1993). A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development.

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