



Preschool Collaboration Tool

IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOUNDATION

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Community collaboration is a key characteristic of Iowa's state-funded preschool program. Effective collaboration between school district leaders and other key community stakeholders can result in high-quality preschool programs that benefit children, families, providers and the community in significant ways.

❖ **Increases access to quality preschool**

Working together, community partners develop flexible, creative plans that increase program quality and expand access to include all children, with priority to those children deemed most in need. Benefits include:

- Expansion of available preschool slots (if needed)
- Increase in quality preschool program components through shared funding, resources and expertise
- More cost-effective use of resources, materials, staff and space not possible when working in isolation

❖ **Provides comprehensive services to children and families**

Collaboration ensures high-risk children can access part-year, part-time quality preschool programs that otherwise might be unobtainable. Collaboration also promotes children's physical, emotional and social well-being through comprehensive services which typically include:

- "Wrap around" or extended-day child care
- Transportation services between early care and education settings
- Developmental screenings – including health, hearing, and vision screening
- Referral to other agencies providing health insurance, health care, immunizations, nutrition services, mental health and oral health services
- Family education and support services

❖ **Creates inclusive preschool classrooms**

Collaboration creates more flexibility to meet state mandates on serving children in the least restrictive environment and minimizes labeling of children regardless of ability, family income or ethnic background.

- By the year 2010-11, districts are required to have 75% of children (ages 3-5) with IEPs served in least restrictive settings
- Blended funding streams allow children with different backgrounds, income levels and ability levels to be served in the same classroom settings

❖ Results in fewer transitions for children

The preschool years are an important time for children to develop healthy attachments to adults. Minimizing the number of different care and education settings children experience each week reduces stress and promotes positive emotional and social development by allowing children enough time to bond with early childhood professionals. Results of collaboration include:

- Daily transitions are minimized when children receive preschool and extended child care within the same setting
- Weekly transitions are minimized when providers work together to streamline services and limit the number of care and education settings accessed by children throughout the week.

❖ Unites communities around the needs of young children and families

Collaboration brings different people and voices to the table and encourages problem-solving, even between groups with limited or no collaboration history. Collaboration can turn competitors into partners. Benefits include:

- Engages school district leaders and teachers in conversations about the needs of all preschool-aged children, not just those with special needs
- Allows providers from different settings and programs to share knowledge and support one another
- Helps schools provide smooth transitions for children and families between preschool and kindergarten
- Paves the way for schools and early learning providers to align instruction between preschool and kindergarten
- Demonstrates a commitment from school leaders that this is a *community effort*, not just a school district effort

“Better coordination can maximize resources and avoid duplication of effort; it also has the potential to improve the quality of preschool programs and lengthen the service day to meet the needs of working families...Better coordination cannot provide all the resources needed to serve all eligible children – let alone those presently ineligible who could benefit from high-quality pre-k experiences – but it can increase efficiency, streamline service delivery, and help develop a higher-quality, more responsive system for families and children.”

- Stebbins & Scott. 2007. *Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K.*

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