OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

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Prepared children are better students. And it shows.

BPel Business Partnership for Early Learning

2008 Annual Report

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"When they come to school ready, we can do a lot more with them. We can build off what they already know and **we can go a lot further.**"

Diane Davis, teacher

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November 2008

The Business Partnership for Early Learning (BPEL) is highlighting the need for a different approach to early learning. In 2005, BPEL launched a project intended to reach young children and parents in their homes and give vulnerable children a fair shot at school success. Such efforts are critical in Washington, since many of our children start kindergarten as much as two years behind their peers in language and learning skills.

Early learning funding in Washington state is almost exclusively concentrated on children in formal programs at childcare centers and preschools.

But 45 percent of Washington children ages five and under are at home with their parents and another 21 percent are cared for by relatives, friends and neighbors. That means almost two-thirds of children statewide are largely overlooked by public and private funders seeking to ensure that all children are ready for school.

BPEL's project engages very isolated low-income families with diverse cultures and languages in a home visiting program that coaches parents to become adept teachers for their young children. The project is showing excellent results. Parents are learning effective teaching techniques and children are excited and ready when they enter kindergarten.

A fourth group of families has embarked on the home visiting program, and we are excited about witnessing their progress as they start on a journey of lifelong learning.

However, much more is at stake than the futures of the 300 children the program has served so far. We must offer a hand up to children likely to enter school with the largest preparedness gap, wherever they are. Otherwise, we risk leaving behind a large proportion of our future workforce and community leaders. BPEL's strategic investment and strong results can help the state fulfill its promise to ensure every child in Washington has a chance to succeed at school and ultimately, at life.

Please join me in supporting early learning strategies that provide all Washington children with the early learning experiences needed for school success. We are making investments that last a lifetime.

John W. Stanton
Chair, Business Partnership for Early Learning

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"3-year-old Samuel was

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I put him in a group with 4- and 5-year-olds.

Diane Davis, teacher

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Straight A's start with the ABC's

BPEL is a group of business and philanthropic leaders invested in closing the achievement gap. BPEL's approach involves identifying young children from the most hard-to-reach families and going to their homes to provide their parents with the tools, motivation and confidence to get them ready for kindergarten. BPEL is demonstrating through quantitative analysis the effectiveness of reaching the most isolated children at an early age.

The achievement gap within Seattle Public Schools is disturbingly wide. There are persistent differences in graduation rates between white students (74.1 percent), black students (53.6 percent) and Hispanic students (57.5 percent). Students with limited English also show much lower graduation rates (55.5 percent), as do students from low-income households (58 percent).

BPEL believes the achievement gap starts as a preparation gap. The state estimates that 75 percent of children from the lowest-income families are not ready for kindergarten. And most low-income children never attend a formal preschool or childcare center. To effect change in graduation rates and ultimately, in our economy and communities, we must go where the children are and ensure that the most vulnerable children develop the intellectual and social skills they need to succeed in school.

BPEL Reaches the Kids that Aren't Being Reached

86.5 percent have family incomes of $25,000 per year or less

40.2 percent have family incomes of less than $10,000 per year

47.5 percent are black, 31.3 are Asian, 14.3 percent are Hispanic, 5.1 percent are other races and 2 percent are white

More than two-thirds (68.4 percent) speak a language other than English at home

29 percent speak an Asian language, including Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian and Cham

24.9 percent speak an African language, including Somali, Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya

13.5 percent speak Spanish

Almost two-thirds (63.1 percent) have at least one sibling; 9.7 percent have four or more siblings

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"He was able to name his favorite book at age 3, which is very unusual for that age."

When Saadia Hamid first met Samuel Gebresus, she was worried.

The 16-month-old didn't speak a word. With four older siblings, he'd learned to get what he wanted by pointing and making noises. "I was really concerned," said Saadia, who works with the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) funded by BPEL.

Saadia taught Samuel's mother to encourage him to verbalize his needs. She wasn't sure it would work. But after a couple of months, the words started coming and the floodgates opened. "Once he started speaking, he never stopped," she said.

Saadia worked with Samuel for two years, visiting him twice weekly. She taught him about reading, recognizing shapes and colors, building and doing puzzles. By the time he began Head Start, 3-year-old Samuel was so advanced for his age his teacher put him in a group with 4- and 5-year-olds.

Head Start teacher Diane Davis said Samuel impressed her with his ability to pay attention, follow directions and express himself. While other 3-year-olds had trouble sitting still for more than a few minutes, Samuel was focused and ready to learn, she said.

"Samuel was able to name his favorite book at age 3, which is very unusual at that age. He used whole sentences. The other children used only one- or two-word responses," Davis said. "Samuel is fully engaged all the time.

Selamawit Gebresus, Samuel's mother, said he's so excited about school that he cries on Fridays when his Head Start class is not in session.

"He always cry when school not on," she said. "He say, 'Oh, not fair, Mommy. I want to go to school.' He's amazing."

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"When the home visitor came and asked us if we wanted to join the program, I was skeptical. I thought my son was too young to learn. But now, I think I made an excellent choice because **he is far ahead of other kids."**

Cory Hoang, parent

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Early Learning Makes House Calls

BPEL gives families the support they need, when and where they need it. The BPEL strategy is to make a difference by implementing an early educational model designed for the families it aims to reach. Since the hardest-to-reach children are not enrolled in formal programs, BPEL's project sends workers directly to the home to provide parents and primary caregivers with tools and training to enrich their children's intellectual and social development.

The home visitors share the families' languages and cultures, which helps establish trust and enables rich experiences and strong results.

The BPEL Demonstration Project Has Two Main Components

Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) is a research-based school readiness program for 2- to 3-year-olds and their parents. Paraprofessionals provide home visits weekly over a two-year period and bring gifts of books and educational toys. They provide parent coaching by modeling behaviors that stimulate early learning. Similar programs elsewhere have proven highly successful, raising participants' high school graduation rates to those of higher-income students.

Play and Learn Groups are informal gatherings of children and their parents led by a trained facilitator. The groups improve children's social and emotional skills, reduce isolation and provide the essential experience of learning through play. Groups meet weekly at neighborhood-based locations close to families participating in PCHP.

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"Some kids, they were shy the first day... But he was ready to start."

Demani Chin was a busy 2-year-old, brimming with energy and unable to sit still.

Sovannary Hok, who worked with Demani in the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) for two years, said at first the little boy would jump up and down and run from room to room.

An only child cared for during the day by his grandmother, who speaks little English, Demani rarely saw other children and was unfamiliar with focused learning.

Over time, Hok's twice weekly visits to the boy's South Seattle home settled into a routine. She read with Demani and taught him colors and shapes, modeling these skills for his grandmother. Demani learned to pay attention and his grandmother learned how to guide him and enhance his learning.

By the time he began Head Start classes, Demani was engaged and ready to learn. Madina Mohamed, the assistant Head Start teacher in Demani's classroom, noted how he came into the classroom each day and promptly put his jacket away, got his name tag and washed his hands.

He asked to be excused when he finished eating, and when his teacher put on music to signal the start of clean-up time, he responded.

"He's a really good kid," she said. "He knows what to do in the classroom."

Demani's mother, Kelly Chin, admits that her son's first day of Head Start was tearful—for her. "It was hard for me to let him go," she admitted, smiling. "He was like, 'Don't cry, Mommy. It's okay.'"

For Demani, the transition to preschool was a smooth one. "Some kids, they were shy the first day. They didn't want to come," Mohamed said. "But he was ready to start."

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"Azikin was really excited

to answer questions. She jumped in and took the initiative."

Genisha Wea, teacher

An "A" for effort - and for results

Both parents and children are high achievers. A pattern has emerged of solid progress in the first year, followed by an even higher rate of development in the second year.

Overall, parents showed statistically significant increases from baseline to end of year one, and from end of year one to end of year two, on all assessment items observed by the home visitors. Parents reported an increased understanding of their role in helping prepare their children for school, improved parenting skills and a greater commitment to participate in the education of their children.

Children increased their pre-literacy skills in language use, reading and print concepts for all items measured at the end of year one and the end of year two. Ninety-one percent of children improved in their ability to be attentive and concentrate and 84 percent of children improved in understanding and completing activities appropriate for their age. Eighty-three percent of children improved in their ability to follow rules.

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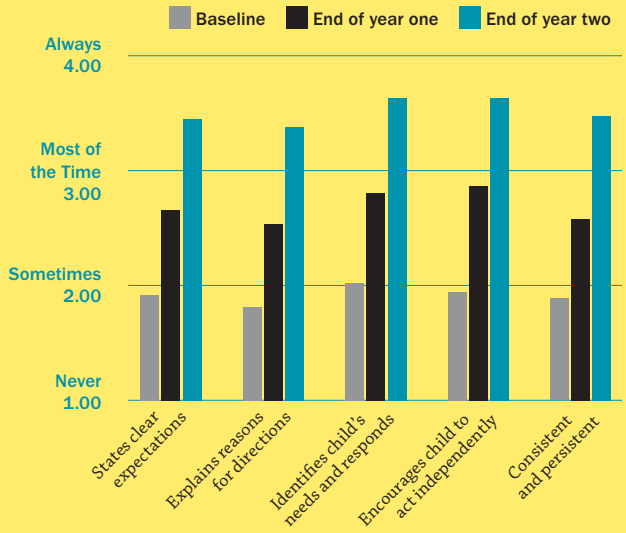
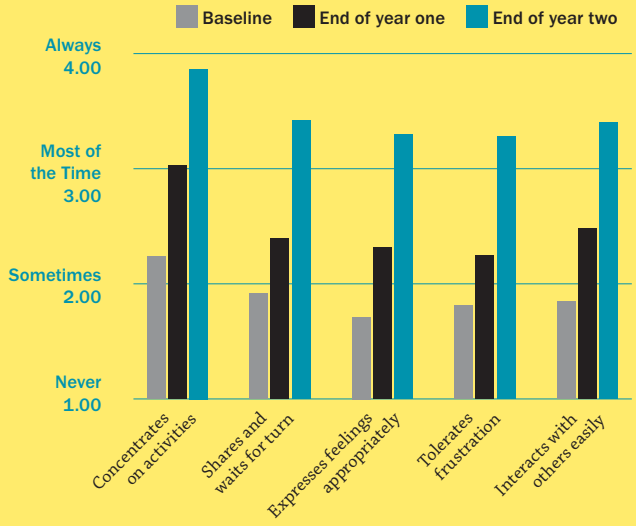
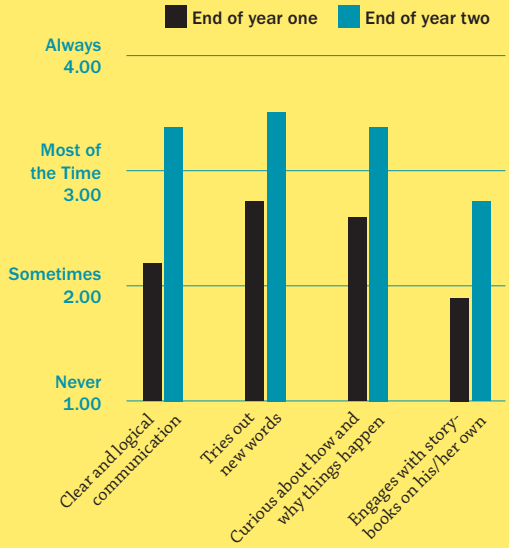
PARENTS' PROGRESS: baseline through year two



CHILDREN'S PROGRESS: baseline through year two



Children's pre-literacy progress



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"I get excited just thinking about the program and how

I was able to help Manny progress

when he was so young."

Michelle Mitchell-Brannon, parent

Skilled Providers are Trusted Partners

The agencies that deliver the Parent-Child Home Program to families in their communities are highly qualified, offer a range of services that can assist families who ask for help in other areas, and have staff who speak the languages and are from the cultures of the families served.

Atlantic Street Center is a private nonprofit organization founded in Seattle nearly 100 years ago. Each year, Atlantic Street Center provides academic assistance, early literacy, parent education and support, leadership development and mental health counseling to approximately 3,000 multi-ethnic, low-income families. Through its child and youth development activities and family support programs, the agency aims to build skills, strengthen families and promote self-improvement.

Neighborhood House was formed in 1906 to provide assistance to Jewish immigrants. It now offers comprehensive services to public housing residents and low-income individuals. The agency's main program areas are family and social services, early childhood education, employment and adult education, youth education, community health and transportation. More than 27 different cultural groups and 19 different languages are represented in the communities Neighborhood House serves. Many of its clients are refugees from war, famine or political oppression.

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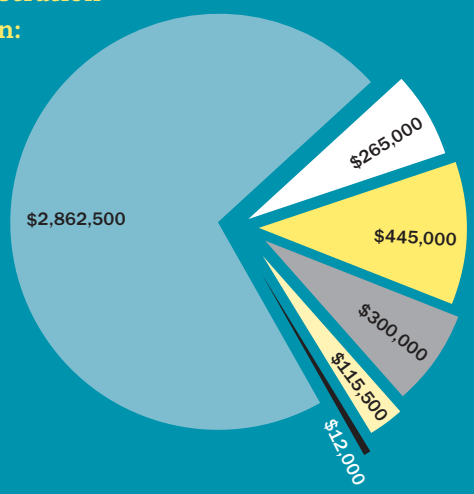
Children: A Smart Investment

High quality early learning programs such as PCHP are a cost-effective approach to improving school achievement, graduation rates, workforce readiness, job productivity and community engagement. Research and experience indicate that BPEL's holistic approach is highly effective in reaching those communities that need help the most.

Budget for five-year demonstration project serving 400 children: $4,000,000

- Parent-Child Home Program
- Play and Learn Groups
- Evaluation
- Staffing/Project Coordinator
- Communications
- Administrative Costs



FY 2009 Budget

Parent-Child Home Program	$652,284
Play and Learn Groups	$46,076
Evaluation	$88,425
Staffing/Project Coordinator	$85,000
Communications	$18,000
Administrative Costs	$2,000
Technical Assistance from national PCHP	$7,000
Total	$898,785

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Diane Davis, teacher

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The Business Partnership for Early Learning Fund has been established at The Seattle Foundation, a 501 c3 organization, to support the work of BPEL. The Seattle Foundation is classified as a public charity, and contributions to the Fund are tax-deductible at the maximum amounts allowable.