



SUPPORT FOR EARLY LEARNING & FAMILIES

March - April 2011

## NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

After many months of winter, it is refreshing to see trees and flowers beginning to bloom. In the throes of winter, I frequently have to remind myself of the promise of spring. It happens every year, and I'm grateful for the predictable beauty of a Northwest spring.

Just like the predictability of spring, we know that in 2011 nearly 6,000 babies will be born in Clark County. We also know that a baby's brain is remarkably unfinished. A child's brain will develop more rapidly between birth and their fifth birthday than any other time in their life. The experiences children have shape how they learn, regulate their emotions and ultimately who they become.

Daily we hear about the economic challenges facing us nationally, statewide and locally. Clark County has been hit particularly hard with a high unemployment rate. As I write this, policymakers and advocates in Olympia are engaged in a fierce battle regarding the state budget. However, there are big problems for children in our state and our community. A recent United Way of Washington update reported:

"Too many of our kids are starting kindergarten unprepared.

According to the Department of Early Learning (DEL), the WaKIDS 2010-2011 pilot involving 2,600 students from across the state shows "nearly one-third of children enter kindergarten below expected skill levels" in all four domains of learning (e.g. physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and language). The WaKIDS pilot results showed 31% to 74% of our kids are starting kindergarten behind in the individual domains. When kids start behind, they may need costly remediation, special education, and/or grade repetition once in the K-12 education system. A recent report from Governor Gregoire revealed that: (1) nearly 3,900 students repeated kindergarten or first grade in the 2006-2007

school year costing our State \$10 million; and (2) early learning improvements alone can save our State \$27 million per year in grade repetition costs."

There is a high cost to our state and our community when children don't have the safe, loving, nurturing experiences they need. Certainly parents, grandparents and other caregivers are the life-long support system for our children. However, the truth is that family stress and fewer resources have left young children vulnerable.

The growth and development of the babies born this year is as predictable as spring -- it will happen. Babies do not wait until our budgets balance or our income increases, each experience they have is laying the foundation for their future. The only real question is how willing are we as a community to invest our time, talent and our resources in children in Clark County.

Children Can't Wait. For 2011, SELF has adopted the theme or anthem of Children Can't Wait. You will start to read and hear this phrase often during the upcoming year. We believe this is a call to action for our community that indicates in Clark County we care about our children, and we are willing to support efforts to ensure that all children thrive.

"We should invest public resources in our young children, not only because they will be more productive citizens later, but also because it says something about the value we place on the quality of their lives as an important goal in its own right."

-Jack Shonkoff, Science, Policy and the Young Developing Child

**Debbie Ham**  
Director of SELF

## WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

The "Week of the Young Child" is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The goal of this week is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and recognize early learning programs, services and teachers making a difference in the lives of these young children. Please join us in celebrating the "Week of the Young Child" April 10 through 16.

Here are some ideas to celebrate the "Week of the Young Child."

- Reach out and thank parents, teachers and adults who work with young children.
- Support early learning programs with time and resources.
- Support local, state and federal policies that support high-quality early learning opportunities for all young children.
- Spend time with a child.

## LOVE, TALK, PLAY

SELF has partnered with Thrive by Five and will be launching its "Love, Talk, Play" campaign in April. This long-term campaign has been created to reach parents of children age three and younger, so they have the knowledge, confidence and skills in three key areas, giving their children the best possible start in school and life...LOVE, TALK, PLAY. In upcoming weeks, our partners

will be involved by distributing valuable resources and materials to parents provided by Thrive by Five. SELF has received funding from Thrive by Five to carry out this important campaign within our community. We hope you will get involved and support our efforts with LOVE, TALK, PLAY.

## AN INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

The 3,000 square-foot Early Learning Center that will be installed on the new Vancouver Community Library's third floor is a signature element of the new library, and hands-on evidence of the library district's long-time advocacy for early literacy. With a colorful array of interactive structures and displays, the ELC will engage children birth to five years in activities that enhance brain

development and social skills. It also will provide resources to help parents and caregivers develop their own skills in helping children develop their full potential. Most of all, the center will be about having fun at the library while obtaining the skills for reading readiness.

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## IT'S KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION TIME

In order for schools to properly prepare budgets for the fall and make sure they are ready to accommodate student needs, registering a child for kindergarten in the spring is very important. Many schools receive their budgets from the state based on kindergarten enrollment long before September. Registering children in the spring helps schools prepare with the proper number of teachers to receive incoming students. Late registration leads to overcrowded classrooms and puts extra stress on children and teachers as the school responds to enrollment numbers. Please help your child and your school by registering early.

Below is a list of information and websites regarding 2011/2012 kindergarten registration and other special events to support incoming kindergarteners:

**Battle Ground Public Schools** – Registration begins April 18 through 21.  
<http://battlegroundps.org/?q=node/424>

**Camas School District** – For information go to:  
<http://camascommunications.blogspot.com/2011/03/kindergarten-orientation-events.html>

**Evergreen Public Schools** – Registration begins Monday, April 11.  
<http://www.evergreenps.org/AboutEPS/Pages/KindergartenOpenHouses.aspx>

**Green Mountain School District** - Kindergarten Round-up will be April 29 from 12:45-1:45. Children will experience the kindergarten classroom and parents will get a chance to talk with the PTSA and staff about the school. Registration packets are available in the office now. Call (360) 225-7366 with questions.

**Hockinson School District** – Registration begins March 28.  
<http://www.hock.k12.wa.us/news.cfm?story=68625>

**La Center School District** – Registration begins on April 18 – 29  
[http://www.lcsd.k12.wa.us/web-content/Pages/Elementary\\_School/KINDERGARTEN.pdf](http://www.lcsd.k12.wa.us/web-content/Pages/Elementary_School/KINDERGARTEN.pdf)

**Ridgefield School District** – Contact South Ridge Elementary at (360) 619-1500 or Union Ridge Elementary at (360) 750-7600 to find out more about kindergarten registration.

**Vancouver Public Schools** – Registration begins on April 12.  
[http://portalsso.vansd.org/portal/page?\\_pageid=153,2137706&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://portalsso.vansd.org/portal/page?_pageid=153,2137706&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

**Washougal School District** – Registration for children entering kindergarten at Cape Horn-Skye, Gause, and Hathaway elementary schools for the 2011-2012 school year will be held May 2 – 6, 2011 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the school where the child will attend. [www.washougal.k12.wa.us](http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us)