



May 26, 2004

Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! Mobilizes the Public to Support School Readiness

Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! is Connecticut's statewide, multi-year communications and mobilizing campaign in support of the following public goal:

*"All children born in Connecticut beginning in 2004 will enter kindergarten healthy, eager to learn, and ready for school success."
—Adopted by the Early Childhood Alliance, 2003*

Friends and Champions

With the help of our "Friends of Connecticut's Young Children" and "Children's Champions", the campaign seeks to inform parents and the public about the importance of children's readiness for school and to persuade citizens to act in ways that benefit our young children.

"Friends" are people who support the public goal and give us permission to use their names on our website. It's an easy and free way for anyone in Connecticut to help make a difference for our young children.

The Case for Quality Early Care and Education

Children's experiences during their earliest years set the stage for their later development and success. Yet, not all of our children are ready for school when they reach the kindergarten door. With only one child for every three adults in Connecticut, we can't afford for any of our children to fall through this "preparation gap." And with \$5 - 6 billion invested in the state's K-12 public education system each year, we must ensure that our dollars are spent wisely.

A study by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank estimates a 16% annual rate of return on dollars invested in quality early childhood development programs. These savings accrue from reduced spending on special education services, reduced welfare



Ready Rabbit

assistance, higher taxes paid for higher earnings, and reduced prison costs. Connecticut has exemplary models for getting children ready for school ... such as our School Readiness Program and HUSKY health care system... and Connecticut research has proven that quality early childhood programs work. Our challenge is to make certain that all children have access to successful programs like these.

We all have a stake in closing the "preparation gap". The Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! campaign will shine a light on the needs

For more information, visit the Ready Set Grow...CT Kids website at www.readysetgrowctkids.org.

of our young children and their parents and support statewide efforts to identify workable solutions.

How Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! Began

Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! is rooted in Connecticut's participation in the Early Care and Education Collaborative. This multi-year project is coordinated by the Communications Consortium Media Center and was created to design and implement strategic public education strategies aimed at creating the public will to expand both the supply and the quality of early care and education resources.

Connecticut Voices for Children is the organizational partner representing Connecticut on the collaborative, joining the Association for Children of New Jersey, Center for Florida's Children, Citizens for Missouri's Children, Colorado's Children's Campaign, Kansas Action for Children, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children and Voices for Illinois Children.

After months of sitting at the Early Care and Education Collaborative table and learning from successful early child-

hood campaigns in partner states such as Illinois, Florida, and Pennsylvania, Connecticut began planning for its own statewide communications campaign that would move the early care and education issue in a positive direction for our young children.

In the Spring of 2003, the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (a growing consortium of Connecticut organizations and individuals committed to improving developmental outcomes for young children) adopted a public goal that states: All children born in Connecticut beginning in 2004 will enter kindergarten healthy, eager to learn, and ready for school success. In collaboration with the Alliance and under the banner of this public goal, the Ready, Set, Grow... CT Kids! campaign was born and the CT Early Childhood Alliance recently became the first formal partner in the campaign. ■

The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund works collaboratively to improve education for Connecticut's children by supporting school change, informing the public debate on educational issues, and strengthening the involvement of parents and the community in education.

