

**Wisconsin's Economic Development Summit:
Building the Case for Investments in Early Education
April 23, 2007
Marriot Madison West**

Roundtable Highlights

On April 23, 2007, Wisconsin held an economic development summit, sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development and the United Way of Wisconsin focused on the building the connection between early childhood and economic development and identifying strategies to build on across the state. Fifteen teams of community leaders from around the state attended to learn about the connection between early childhood and economic development from national experts and to discuss these issues with their teams and statewide colleagues. Following are highlights from team discussions and small group discussions involving participants from across the state.

I. Existing efforts highlighted by communities

- Eau Claire's Early Learning Initiative has hosted Art Rolnick of the Minnesota Federal Reserve Bank at a luncheon for business leaders
- The Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce is considering developing an education subcommittee to focus on early childhood and K-12 education.
- In Racine, SC Johnson, Inc. has created an Economic Development Plan, with an education strategy including components focused on on-site child care and workforce retention. In addition, United Way, S C Johnson, Gateway Technical College and other partners have agreed to plan a public awareness campaign relative to the economic development impact of early childhood development.
- The Inter-Tribal team is considering strategies to reach out to local economic development councils and reaching out to business leaders in their Tribal areas to educate them about the connection between early childhood and economic development.
- The Sauk County Development Corporation has surveyed employers about child care needs, determined there is a collective need, and worked to recruit child care providers to a new center.
- Start Right Wausau is an example of an ongoing early childhood effort supported by the United Way of Marathon County with matching public and private funding streams to support children and families. This was identified as a best practice to build on.
- As a result of Milwaukee's September 2006 Summit, private foundation funds have been earmarked to support a Public Policy Forum study of early childhood in Milwaukee; in addition, several foundations and key leaders are meeting on are meeting to discuss early childhood issues and creative funding ideas.

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II. Additional strategies identified to engage more business leaders

- Provide information to business about how important high quality child care is, e.g., the cost of turnover and productivity for workers dealing with child care issues
- Engage in business- to- business discussions about why this topic merits attention.
- Seek opportunities to add of early childhood as an economic development strategy on the agenda of statewide business organizations, like WMC and local service organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, and other community meetings.
- Ensure that local media and local business magazines are giving attention to this issue.
- Define a more tangible benefit for corporate image to become involved in this issue.
- Host a business roundtable, breakfast meetings, or luncheons
- Make the workforce case, engage employers around the hiring issues, tie in cost-benefit information

III. Next Steps

- Development of action plans by community leadership teams
- Continued state-level planning
- Technical assistance and ongoing support for community efforts
- Ongoing development of the www.wisbiz4kids.com website and tool kit,
- Additional regional and/or statewide Summits
- An Economic Summit for existing and new community leadership teams in Spring 2008