



“The payoff for early childhood development is in our future. My hope is that 20 years from now people will look back at what we do today and see that we took decisive steps to assure that all Tulsa children have bright futures as successful adults.”

 **BILL LAFORTUNE**
Mayor, City of Tulsa



The Tulsa County Partnership for Early Childhood Success is a collaboration of civic organizations, educational institutions, and business groups that are collectively working to make early childhood development an integral part of Tulsa's quality of life.

Members of the partnership include: Members of the Metropolitan Human Services Commission (the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Tulsa Area United Way, Tulsa City-County Health Department, Tulsa County, Tulsa Public Schools), Community Action Project of Tulsa County (Head Start), Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, Metropolitan Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, Tulsa City-County Library, Tulsa Technology Center, and Union Public Schools, and many other groups and individuals.



STEPS

Toward Early Childhood Development
IN TULSA, OK



1997-2001

BOLD STEPS

in the right direction

Although we were well aware of the research behind early childhood development, we didn't officially organize until 1997 when we first heard that "I Am Your Child," a documentary on early brain development, would be airing on television.

A small number of community leaders joined at that time as a work group to promote local viewership of the program and announce the formation of public forums that would be held at libraries to further understand the role early childhood development plays in preparing children for a lifetime of success.

Since that first step, the work group evolved into a committee of business and community leaders to assist in expanding early childhood development efforts throughout our community.

SOME MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

- * Hosted a community "summit" of local business and civic leaders, doctors, educators and legislators to review research and discuss activities to foster change
- * Helped create the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education to provide analysis and leadership for the issue statewide
- * Developed an assessment tool called the Early Childhood Skills Inventory to determine the school readiness of children prior to Kindergarten; this "instrument" is currently in use in nearly every Tulsa County school district
- * Founded the Tulsa Alliance for Families to help families meet basic needs and encourage family members to provide early learning experiences for their youngest children
- * Assisted the Parenting Education Network at area hospitals with "Parent Day" projects that distribute informational materials to parents of newborns
- * Worked with legislators to secure increased funding for model early childhood programs like Children First, a nurse home visitation program to improve infant care

- * Supported Parents As Teachers providing parents with support and information to help children develop cognitive skills during their earliest years
- * Emphasized the importance of quality child care through the Child Care Resource Center with leadership from the Tulsa Area United Way "Success By 6" initiative
- * Witnessed the positive impact of Head Start, First Start, and Early Head Start programs on thousands of Tulsa children; these programs are coordinated by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County and founded on a national model community collaborative approach
- * Improved opportunities for early literacy through programs at the Tulsa City-County Library and the "Read Now" outreach
- * Promoted state funding for 4-year old programs provided by local school districts that impact over half of Tulsa County 4-year olds
- * Supported legislations that established the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness

And, through the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa's Public Policy and Marketing committees: supported efforts to promote additional legislative actions and further educate the community-at-large about the important impact that early childhood development could have on Tulsa's future.



2002-2003

STRIDING

towards a bright future

In fall 2002, with enthusiastic leadership from Tulsa's new mayor, Bill LaFortune, the Tulsa Community Conference on Early Childhood Development was convened. The conference reviewed Tulsa's recent early childhood development achievements and called upon all sectors of our community to embrace the concept as a mainstay issue for the health and well-being of Tulsa. Numerous reports and video presentations were showcased that explored milestones, challenges, and long-term plans for improvement.

As a result of the conference, the community partners formed an alliance to promote early childhood development countywide. Chaired by Mayor LaFortune, the Tulsa County Partnership for Early Childhood Success was created in order to promote improved early childhood development in Tulsa.

Community leaders, drafted as "Champions for Change" from the business, educational, and public sectors, began to work together to provide consistent leadership for the issue. A public engagement campaign called "JumpStart" was crafted to create a new awareness for early childhood development among a variety of targeted publics.

The first JumpStart campaign event, "On the road with Oklahoma's

First Lady," enlisted the state's First Lady, Kim Henry, on a school bus tour of landmark early childhood development sites in Tulsa.

Shortly after the First Lady's visit, Georgetown University's Center for Research on Children in the United States (CROCUS) presented research findings that validated the impact of pre-Kindergarten programs have on young children beginning in the Tulsa Public School District. The research tested the socio-emotional development, cognitive skills, motor skills, and language skills of 2,276 five-year-olds beginning kindergarten and 1,284 four-year-olds beginning pre-K. The study noted greatly improved school readiness for children that had attended a voluntary district sponsored 4-year old program.

The City of Tulsa also has joined the National League of Cities' Early Childhood Network to discover what other cities, mayors, and city councils are doing to encourage policies and practices furthering early childhood development in each of their communities.

Because of his work promoting early childhood success in Tulsa, Mayor LaFortune was selected to host a workshop on the topic at the National League of Cities Congress in December 2003.

2004 & BEYOND

STEPPING UP

our efforts

In the first quarter of 2004, members of the Tulsa County Partnership for Early Childhood Success will unveil a long-term, multi-year plan of action to spread the good news about early childhood development throughout all levels of our community.

A speaker's bureau using "Champions for Change" members will be incorporated as a part of the JumpStart public awareness initiative. A "JumpStart Partners" award will salute individuals, companies, and organizations for their commitment to furthering

early childhood development. Other JumpStart events and media exposure will serve to keep the spotlight on early childhood development activities in Tulsa.

And, during 2004, Mayor LaFortune will be a visible and active member of our "Champions for Change." Throughout the year, the Mayor has committed to participate in the Leaders Read program as a reader to young children in child care centers, Head Start sites, schools, and libraries. He also will help engage other area elected and civic leaders.