



December 4, 2007 Update

The White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI) is a partnership of community members and public and private organizations working to demonstrate sustainable, integrated and accessible early learning services that are reflective of the diverse cultures, strengths, and needs of White Center families, and serve as a model for other communities in Washington state. WCELI is one of two Demonstration Community Projects, part of Thrive by Five Washington's strategy to meet the goal of every child in Washington state ready for success in school and in life. Puget Sound Educational Service District is the lead agency coordinating efforts in the White Center Thrive by Five Demonstration Community.

Major Milestone for WCELI is Announced!

There is much information to report in this December issue of the WCELI Update. Among the good news is an announcement by Thrive by Five that they will be providing several million dollars for implementation of WCELI services in the first year of implementation. More specific information follows.

November 20, 2007 CAC Meeting Summary

The White Center Early Learning Initiative's Community Advisory Committee (CAC) met November 20 at the White Center Heights Elementary School. More than 45 people attended, including CAC members; interested citizens; and representatives from community organizations, Puget Sound ESD and Thrive by Five.

It was a very full agenda, and a great deal of important information was covered. This Update contains the highlights from this meeting, along with some important new information.

Thrive by Five Statewide Roadmap and WCELI Funding Update

Thrive by Five Washington CEO Graciela Italiano-Thomas, and Brenda Blasingame, Thrive's lead staff on program development, attended the CAC meeting on November 20. They provided the CAC with an update on funding for implementation of WCELI services in the first year, and an overview of how WCELI fits into Thrive by Five's larger statewide goals and strategy.

Dr. Italiano-Thomas shared a preview of Thrive by Five's strategic plan, developed during the past few months. In summary, Thrive by Five's goal is that "all children in Washington are ready for success in school and life." The two demonstration communities, White Center and Yakima, will be critically important to accomplishing statewide efforts by showing that quality early learning services and systems can increase school readiness on a community level. The hope is that when targeted investment in early learning makes a difference in the two demonstration communities, this success will lead to greater public support for statewide investment in early learning for all children in the state.

The new WCELI services and systems will be funded and built over many months and years. Thrive by Five's Brenda Blasingame announced that beginning in 2008, funding will be made available to initiate "critical elements" of these key services that were proposed in the WCELI Business Plan:

- The WCELI early learning "hub" and Educare center, providing birth to five center-based services to children and families
- Home based early learning services (home visiting for families with young children)
- Quality Improvement services and support for licensed child care programs
- Community-wide early learning activities such as play and learn groups and WCELI "liaisons:" key staff trained to provide outreach to families to increase awareness about early learning and WCELI opportunities
- School connections/transition services, including collaboration with Highline Public Schools and community preschools.

Funding levels are not yet finalized, but it was announced that during the first year of WCELI's implementation, Thrive by Five and its funding partners will make substantial investments, in the millions of dollars, toward early learning services in White Center! This is a milestone for WCELI, and the CAC will be involved in planning a celebration for the community very soon.

WCELI Executive Director Search Update

Public Meeting to Meet the Candidates will be Held

Puget Sound Educational Service District Superintendent Monte Bridges updated the CAC at the November 20 meeting on progress in finding and hiring a WCELI executive director. As has been explained in past Updates, a search firm is completing the process of identifying and securing a pool of qualified candidates for this very important position. The job description for the position, which is being advertised nationally, is on the WCELI webpage. Applications are being made directly to the search firm.

The selection process will include input from the community in several ways. The interview team is composed of representatives of the WCELI Community Advisory Committee who volunteered at the Nov 20 CAC meeting, along with representatives of Puget Sound ESD and Thrive by Five. There will also be a public meeting to meet the final candidates. Each of the candidates will make a presentation to the group, after which the audience can provide written input to the interview team on recommended areas for follow-up.

This is how the selection process will unfold:

- The search firm will provide the slate of candidates in December.
- The interview team will interview the candidates as soon as possible.
- The top (final) candidates will meet with the White Center community at a public meeting.
- The interview team will conduct second interviews.
- The final hiring decision will be made by the superintendent of PSESD with input from Thrive by Five and the interview team members.
- The new executive director will be on board as soon as possible in 2008.

The date for the public meeting will be announced as soon as the interview schedule has been established and confirmed. We will send an email with the time and location.

Future of the CAC and CAC Retreat Planning

At the November 20 CAC meeting, David Darling, CAC member and Principal of White Center Heights Elementary School, shared questions and recommendations identified by a number of CAC members at a meeting on November 13. Among the topics were issues regarding clarification of the role, function, composition, and operating procedures of the CAC. Also discussed were ways to improve communication and how to make the involvement of community and parent representatives most meaningful.

Monte Bridges, Puget Sound ESD superintendent, facilitated a discussion of the next steps for the CAC. Dr. Bridges explained that a CAC Retreat will be held when the new executive director is on board, as it will be very important to develop this work together.

Many of the topics discussed will be part of the CAC retreat agenda, when the CAC's role will be developed and clarified to best support and advise the first phase of WCELI implementation.

A Retreat Planning Committee was established with representatives of the CAC who volunteered to attend up to three planning meetings. The Retreat Planning Committee will answer the following questions: What do we hope to accomplish at a CAC planning retreat? What topics should be the focus of the retreat? What outside involvement/facilitation would be helpful in achieving retreat goals? What logistics (location, times, childcare, interpreters, etc.) would contribute to a successful retreat?

At the Retreat, the CAC will determine how it can best add value, and clarify its role and operating procedures. Part of the discussion will also be planning a community celebration of the remarkable path and progress of the White Center Early Learning Initiative.

Greenbridge Early Learning Center Update

Fundraising is underway for the Greenbridge Early Learning Center (GELC). The 30,000 square foot building will be located next to White Center Heights Elementary School, and will also provide permanent space for the Head Start program that had to move when Park Lake began its transformation into Greenbridge. The King County Housing Authority donated the land for the building, and so far, \$5 million in federal funding has already been identified. In the next year an intensive capital campaign will raise the remaining funding needed from private and public sources.

The GELC will provide full day child development and family support services for 32 infants and toddlers, and 102 three- and four-year-old children. It will be an Educare Center, part of a national partnership of the highest quality early learning centers for children birth to five. These centers serve as a catalyst for building public support for early learning opportunities for all children, particularly those who are the most at-risk. The GELC will also serve as a hub to provide training and enhancements to early learning providers in the larger community, as well as support to all White Center families.

Thank you.

Thank you to Thrive by Five and the Gates Foundation for their generous support of the White Center Early Learning Initiative! And thank you to the many organizations and community members who continue to share their time, energy and enthusiasm to improve early learning and create bright futures for children in White Center and, ultimately, throughout the state of Washington.

We are looking forward to this exciting next phase in our continued partnership.

John Bancroft, Executive Director
Puget Sound ESD Educare/Head Start

For questions or general information, please call 425-917-7760, email wceli@psed.org, and/or visit us at www.psed.org by clicking **WCELI** under the Quick Links.