Piloting an “Early Childhood Zone” for the Leopold Elementary School catchment area

**Goal**

Expand home visitation services to families of children 0 through 3 in the Leopold Elementary School catchment area to support the stability of target families and ensure their children are developmentally ready for school.

**Background**

1. **County Executive Parisi, the United Way Board, and the MMSD Board have jointly prioritized early childhood** as the area in which we must begin our approach to eliminating the achievement gap (Conversations initiated May, 2012).
2. **This approach coordinates three successful early childhood models** that teach parents how to nurture their children to achieve age appropriate milestones so they arrive at school ready to learn and live in working families that have the stability and resources necessary to support their path to successful adulthood. It targets families in an elementary school service catchment area to link them with their home school. The pilot will test this approach and determine whether it can impact young families and prepare their children for a successful school experience.
3. **Boosting enrollment in four-year-old kindergarten:** Four-year-old kindergarten has proven to be an effective tool that helps children keep up with their peers, and establishes a strong educational foundation children can carry with them for a lifetime.
4. **Student attendance issues:** This approach includes an emphasis on effective parenting, family stability, educational training and employment. It promotes behavioral values and a family regimen that results in consistent and regular school attendance by their children all providing a springboard for school success including graduation.
5. **Student mobility issues:** High mobility in families with school-age children increases the achievement gap. Children who experience frequent household instability or homelessness have higher rates of truancy and lower academic achievement than their peers who do not encounter these barriers to successful learning.

**Target Population**: Families residing in the Leopold Elementary School catchment area with priority given to underserved families of color.

**Evaluation Tools**: Ages and Stages, 4K and Kindergarten assessments, survey of program participants and stakeholders

**Targeted Outcomes:**

* Families stable in housing, healthy, workforce ready and employed
* Children ready to learn at kindergarten entry
* Families enroll their children in 4K with consistent attendance for the year

**Core Partners**:

Dane County

United Way of Dane County

MMSD

Madison - Dane County Public Health

Group Health Cooperative

Forward Service Corporation

Center for Families

Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin

Dane County Parent Council Inc.

Workforce Development Board

Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin

City of Fitchburg

**Program Strategies and Activities**

1. Expand capacity of home visitation in target area through two different programs, the Dane County Early Childhood Initiative, and Parent-Child Home—serving approximately 27 new families.
2. Match appropriate home visitation program with the early childhood needs of each family.
3. Create a new Play and Learn in area and connect families to this resource.
4. Provide accessible, ongoing home visitation services and develop family expectations for consistent and regular attendance in school.
5. Stabilize families with pre-eviction and housing services to minimize or eliminate household instability and negative family mobility.
6. Link uninsured children to healthcare through Group Health Cooperative.
7. Utilize an Economic Support Specialist to help families access and maintain safety net benefits.
8. Assist parents to access adult education skill building opportunities and employment.
9. Collaborate with the local Joining Forces For Families office across the street from Leopold Elementary School to access other resources as necessary.
10. Connect families to 4K through early parent and family engagement.

**Timeline**

Begins January, 2013

**Financial Commitments**

* **Dane County** - $60,000 (1 FTE for ECI ($40,000 - $45,000) and $15,000 for employment and training)
* **United Way of Dane County** - $60,000 for early childhood (1 FTE for Parent-Child Home Program for a home visitor ($40,000 - $45,000) and $15,000 for employment and training; $30,000 for housing stability

Employment and training investments will leverage another $30,000 in federal dollars.