



WHY EARLY WORKS?

A growing body of research on early childhood has shown that children begin learning before they are born. Social disparities can contribute to children being behind when they start kindergarten. This gap has a long reach, affecting graduation rates, future earnings and health outcomes. The good news is there are proven methods to help course correct so that all children have a path to success in school and life. But these interventions must begin well before kindergarten and be sustained. While many districts and communities are embracing the need to address this gap, the path to implementation is not always clear.

WHAT IS EARLY WORKS?

The Children's Institute's vision is for all children to arrive at kindergarten prepared and on track to succeed in third grade. We focus on these outcomes because they are key predictors for high school graduation and lifelong success. For children to succeed and for schools and communities to narrow the achievement gap, there must be greater access to high-quality early learning experiences and greater alignment between the early years and the early grades.

To achieve this vision, we launched Early Works, an initiative that brings parents, schools and communities together to meet the needs of children from birth to age 8 to identify best practices that can be translated into policy at local, regional, state, and federal levels.

Early Works has two demonstration sites, one at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Southeast Portland and the other at Yoncalla Elementary School in Douglas County. These sites serve as learning laboratories for school districts, policy-makers, and communities statewide working to meaningfully connect early learning with the primary grades. The Children's Institute will evaluate, document and share lessons learned.

We're focused on three priority areas essential for the healthy development and school success of children birth through 3rd grade.

EARLY EDUCATION:
implementing high-quality learning programs and supports from birth

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:
supporting parents and communities to be engaged in their children's learning

HEALTH:
promoting healthy children by connecting health with schools

EARL BOYLES ELEMENTARY

The David Douglas School District, Mt. Hood Community College Head Start, and the Children's Institute launched Early Works in 2010 at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Southeast Portland.

PROGRESS: WINTER 2015-16

• **Preschool:** The Richard C. Alexander Early Learning Wing serves some 3-year-olds and all 4-year-olds in the Earl Boyles catchment (90 children). We worked with the preschool partners, including the David Douglas School District, Mt. Hood Community College Head Start, and the Multnomah Early Childhood Program, to develop the high-quality preschool, and continue to support quality improvements.

• **Neighborhood center:** After completing a community health assessment in 2014, partners, providers, and parents came together to analyze the results. The group developed an operations plan to guide services at the neighborhood center and has hired a Family Resource Navigator to connect families in the area with needed services.

• **Parent Leadership:** Parents United/Padres Unidos, the parent leadership group, is fully facilitated, managed and promoted by parent leaders. The group also reviews and takes action on Early Works evaluation data and numerous parents are now advocates for early learning, giving speeches and providing testimony across the state.

School Profile

- 36% of students meet third-grade math benchmarks
- 39% of students meet third-grade English language arts benchmarks
- 81% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.
- 17 languages spoken

YONCALLA ELEMENTARY

Together with the Yoncalla School District, the Roseburg-based Ford Family Foundation and the Children's Institute launched a rural Early Works site at Yoncalla Elementary School in Douglas County in 2012.

PROGRESS: WINTER 2015-16

• **A cultural shift:** Early Works has taken root in Yoncalla. Families feel more welcome than ever at the school, and teachers now understand the importance and value of engaging and empowering families early and often.

• **Family engagement:** The Family Room hosted play groups of increased quality and frequency during 2015. The local Family Relief Nursery now facilitates a parent education series each year, and the Yoncalla public library hosts story time for young families. In the summer, Yoncalla hosted its first Early Kindergarten Transitions program to help kindergartners and their families prepare for school.

• **Diving into health:** We are getting ready to conduct a community health assessment in Yoncalla and the larger north Douglas County region. The results will inform future programming and foster continuing regional collaboration.

School Profile

- 37% of students meet third-grade math benchmarks
- 42% of students meet third-grade English language arts benchmarks
- 86% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

School profile data: Smarter Balanced Assessments 2014-15; ODE Oregon Report Card 2014-15