

Every child in Multnomah County is prepared to succeed in school and life, regardless of race, ethnicity or class.

February 18, 2015

Dear Chair Doherty and Committee,

As the Director of Early Learning Multnomah (ELM), I am writing to express my support of the 3-3 literacy initiative. Early Learning Multnomah is working to eliminate racial and social disparities in communities of color by creating innovative programs and services that support Oregon's youngest children, age 0-6, and their families; aligning existing systems and programs to find efficiencies and integrate programming; and driving coordinated action with a set of common goals to ensure children arrive at kindergarten prepared for school success. The 3-3 literacy initiative builds on and extends the work we are doing, ensuring a continuum of high quality supports from prenatal through third grade that promotes reading proficiency by third grade for *all* children, including ELM's priority population – children living in poverty and all children of color and English language learners.

I would like to provide some specific examples of a few of our efforts that align with the goals of the 3-3 literacy initiative:

The 3-3 literacy initiative supports building strong partnerships between families, community-based providers, and schools to fully support students in their transition from early learning to the K-12 system.

- **Kindergarten Teacher Family Visits:** We are working with the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project to replicate their nationally recognized model of family engagement with school districts and in partnership with community-based providers. In this model, school staff and early learning partners are connected to families through home visits as part of the transition to kindergarten in order to increase communication, trust and support between families and teachers.
- **Community Education Worker:** We are connecting culturally-specific organizations with schools to help families with the support they need to get their children ready for school. An innovative model adapted from the successful Community Health Worker model used locally and internationally to promote health in communities most affected by inequities, Community Education Workers (CEWs) provide families of children ages 0-6 with culturally-specific home visits, parent-child play groups, child development screenings, holistic wraparound services, and parent and community leadership development opportunities. CEWs are working in three schools and surrounding communities this year to serve three priority cultural groups: African-American, Latino, and Native American.

The 3-3 literacy initiative supports implementation of full-day kindergarten programs that are robust, joyful, and focus on literacy.

- In Portland Public Schools, Centennial and Reynolds School Districts, educators from 26 classrooms (6 Head Start, 6 pre-school, 14 kindergarten) are aligning practices through joint and/or aligned professional development trainings focused on Early Childhood Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports (EC PBIS). EC PBIS is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices designed to support social emotional competence and prevent challenging behaviors in young children. EC PBIS has been implemented in child care and Head Start settings while a similar model, School-wide PBIS, has been used in K-12 settings throughout the county. Given the unique challenges and opportunities in kindergarten settings, this strategy provides teachers with developmentally appropriate tools to supplement school-wide PBIS implementation and promote alignment of practices between early learning and kindergarten. Ongoing support is being provided throughout the school year through a combination of in-class observations, consultations, and coaching.

The 3-3 literacy initiative supports partnering with community-based organizations to provide summer and after-school programs for students who are starting further behind or struggling to learn to read, with a particular focus on students of color and students in poverty.

- Schools are partnering with the lead agencies (community-based organizations) of SUN Community Schools to offer Early Kindergarten Transition Programs (EKT) for entering kindergartners and their parents/caregivers. This program is a school-based summer program to increase parental involvement in their child's learning, children's attendance in kindergarten, and children's success in school. It began as a pilot in two schools in Portland Public Schools in 2010 and will expand to 41 schools across six school districts this summer. 73% of children who participated in summer 2014 had no prior preschool experience and 76% of children were of color or from a culturally-specific community. In a survey conducted of EKT parent participants in 2014, 97% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were more confident about what they could do at home to help their child do well in school.

Similar to our efforts above, the 3-3 literacy initiative recognizes that reading proficiently by third grade is one of the single greatest predictors of lifelong success. Through school district partnership with community-based organizations, application of consistent methodology and curriculum, aligned professional development between early learning and K-12, and extended time to learn through summer and after school programs, this initiative provides an important bridge between early learning and K-12 and puts in place key strategies for addressing early learning gaps.

Sincerely,



Molly Day
Early Learning Director
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette