

**Report on the Development of a
National Ready Schools Action Group**

March 2006



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION
FROM VISION TO INNOVATIVE IMPACT

Prepared for
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Project purpose

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has been conducting a project that is leading to the development of a National Ready Schools Action Group. The group's member organizations will help mobilize leadership and organizational support for promising efforts to accelerate and expand progress in creating ready schools. Their focus will be on SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) sites (see Appendix A) and other local and state efforts that have the capacity to create ready schools on a large scale.

Led by a team of Kellogg Foundation staff and consultants (DCA, Inc.), the first phase of work involved articulating the characteristics of a ready school and capturing how this relates to national organizations with a strong interest in ensuring children's school readiness. The team conducted in-depth conversations with leaders of organizations in multiple sectors – both public and private – whose constituencies are essential to the development of ready schools on a significant scale. For those with a strong interest in the issue, we further explored if and how they would like to participate in a collaborative effort to create and sustain ready schools.

A number of national organizations have expressed interest in becoming members of the proposed Ready Schools Action Group. During the first quarter of 2006, we will determine specific opportunities on which the group can focus its assistance for greatest impact.

This effort is guided by a number of principles:

1. The creation of ready schools is not a cause unto itself; it is an essential strategy in the cause of achieving children's school readiness and success. The child, not the strategy, is at the center of the cause.
2. Progress will depend on participation from multiple sectors. The cause would be well served by creating an "expanded community" of individuals and organizations with the perspective, motivation, and capacities to make a sustained contribution toward achieving children's school readiness.
3. Our aim should be to create *a national "architecture" to support collaborative local action in creating ready schools.*
4. We are not seeking traditional school reform (e.g., limiting our focus to changes within schools). Rather, we are seeking to surround schools with the support they need to excel at early childhood education; connect with children and parents before they enter kindergarten; and become part of a coherent early childhood education system that encompasses the wider array of organizations that assist the development of young children.
5. Partners in this effort will be effective and sustain their involvement only if their contribution allows them to advance their own interests/objectives (along with shared objectives) and do what they do best.

6. A national ready schools effort creates a better environment for the SPARK work to take place. The eight SPARK sites may provide opportunities for national organizations to engage their members in creating ready schools success stories that inspire broader efforts.
7. Organizations should see this partnership as an opportunity to advance their own work, and thus, be willing to make a meaningful contribution using their existing resources.

What is a “ready school”?

A child’s readiness to succeed in school depends heavily on the help he or she receives from others. Parents perform the most critical role, while a variety of community organizations – such as child care providers, pre-kindergarten programs, libraries, and pediatric clinics – play important supporting roles. Perhaps the most important supporting institution is the child’s elementary school, for it is here that he or she will actually make the transition into the realm of formal academic learning, and succeed or fall short in the critical early years. A “ready school” is one that actively, consistently, works to anticipate and assist that transition.

A ready school has a number of defining characteristics:

First, it **makes the child its focus**, beginning in the earliest years. It recognizes that every child has unique strengths and needs, and it responds to each. It is concerned with assisting children of all circumstances and backgrounds, including those with disabilities or language challenges.

A second ready school characteristic is its **deep connection to parents and the community organizations** that shape the child’s early growth. It actively engages them in assessing the child’s progress and needs, and in putting in place whatever supports he or she requires to thrive in school. It works deliberately, developing and executing transition plans that are tailored to the child. In short, it is willing to take the lead in ensuring that there is a strong school readiness support system for each child it serves or will be serving.

A third essential characteristic of a ready school is its **openness**. Its buildings and grounds are inviting and responsive to children and their parents, and available on a schedule that makes them as accessible as possible beyond the traditional school day for programs relating to their interests. Its facilities are also open to styles of learning most suited to young children.

A fourth characteristic is an **emphasis on quality**. Teachers and administrators are trained in early childhood education. The school kindergarten and grade one classes are accredited. And the curriculum, instructional methods, and programs are based on practices that have proven effective.

Another ready school characteristic is its **pursuit of a specific goal**: the success of every child in all dimensions of his or her school experience. Toward this end, it sets high standards for children and those who serve them, regularly assesses children’s progress, and uses data to guide decision making.

Ready schools require **principals** who share this vision and have the skills to manage its realization. However, broader, lasting progress depends on the support of **superintendents** and **school boards** that perceive children's school readiness to be integral to the success of their districts and recognize the importance of ready schools.

Progress also depends on the development of a new "front end" school readiness support system whose partners may include human service providers, civic leaders, and local leaders with a deep understanding of the children and families who most need help. Therefore, a final essential characteristic of a ready school is that it **functions as part of a school system and community that views universal school readiness as a top priority.**

In March 2005, we shared this description with SPARK leaders, who agreed with its assertions and helped place it in a broader context by articulating their vision of SPARK's cause:

Every child will...

- *experience a continuum of success – before school, upon entering school, and through the early school years – in acquiring and using learning skills.*
- *be supported by adults and institutions who understand what a child needs at each stage of development, are equipped for their roles, and communicate with one another.*
- *be at the center of a system that values the child as an individual and is determined to provide the foundation for lifelong success.*
- *grow eager to learn, confident in his/her skills, and be at home in learning environments.*

Every child's parents will be...

- *more knowledgeable about their child's learning, social and physical development and how to nurture it.*
- *prepared to be proactive in advocating for their child with the professionals and institutions that serve him/her.*
- *welcomed as partner in education.*

Every community will have...

- *early childhood education as a high priority.*
- *child- and family-serving professionals and institutions who share the common goal of ensuring children's early learning success and work together to achieve it.*
- *an early childhood education system that is well-integrated, is strong at all levels, and offers teachers a deep sense of purpose and satisfaction.*

Exploring the landscape of interest

Throughout 2005 we reached out to a variety of national leaders who are concerned about school readiness to learn what they are trying to achieve, if and how the concept of ready schools relates to their work, what they feel would be most effective in accelerating the creation of ready schools on a large scale, and whether they would be interested in connecting with Kellogg Foundation's work in this arena.

We focused on national organizations with members at the state and local levels who could play important roles in advancing ready schools. Contacts included the following institutions and individuals:

Early Childhood Education and Care Providers

National Head Start Association: Sarah Greene, Diane Whitehead
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association: Manda Lopez
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies: Linda Smith
National Association for the Education of Young Children: Mark Ginsberg

State and Local Education Policy Makers and Influencers

National Governors Association: Dane Linn, Ana Lovejoy
National Association of Counties: Gary Gortenburg
National League of Cities: Cliff Johnson
U.S. Conference of Mayors: Fritz Edelstein
National Conference of State Legislatures: Jack Tweedie
National School Boards Association: Anne Bryant, Elizabeth Partoyan
American Association of School Administrators: Paul Houston, Sharon Adams-Taylor
National Association of Elementary School Principals: Vincent Ferrandino, Deborah Reeve
National Education Association: Stephanie Fanjul, Shyrelle Eubanks
American Federation of Teachers: Darion Griffin
Council of Chief State School Officers: Jana Martella, Susan Taylor
Council of Chief State School Officers: Elizabeth Burmaster
(Also Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)
National Association of State Title I Administrators: Richard Long
National Association of State Boards of Education: Marianna Haynes
Education Commission of the States: Kristie Kauertz
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists: Lindy Buch
(Also Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Svs, State of Michigan)
National Association of State Child Care Administrators: Suzanne Senett
(Also Bureau of Early Childhood, State of New York)

Organizations Dedicated to Serving Parents and Families

National Urban League: Marc Morial, Velma Cobb
United Way of America: Brian Gallagher, Bill Garrett
National Council of La Raza: Charles Kamasaki, Miriam Calderon
Family Support America: Virginia Mason
Parent Institute for Quality Education: David Valladolid
National PTA: Warlene Gary
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now: Steve Kest
United Neighborhood Centers of America: Sam Watkins
Fight Crime Invest in Kids: Sanford (Sandy) Newman
Docs for Tots: George Askew
Annie E. Casey Foundation: Ralph Smith
Families and Schools Together: Lynn McDonald
Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence: Bob Sexton
Community Action Partnership: Derrick Len Span
Families and Work Institute: Ellen Galinsky

Business Organizations

Business Roundtable: Susan Traiman
U.S. Chamber of Commerce: Karen Elzey
Corporate Voices for Working Families: Donna Klein
One Economy: Rey Ramsey
Committee for Economic Development: Donna Desrochers
The PNC Foundation: Mia Hallett-Bernard

Thought Leaders and Issue Experts

All Kellogg SPARK project directors
University of Virginia: Bob Pianta
Columbia University Teachers College: Sharon Lynn Kagan
Council of Great City Schools: Michael Casserly
School of the 21st Century, Yale University: Matia Finn-Stevenson
Foundation for Child Development: Ruby Takanishi, Fasaha Traylor
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation: Sybil Hampton
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation: Marijata C. Daniel-Echols,
National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Catherine Walsh
Public Agenda: Ruth Wooden
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation: Julie Kohler
Early Childhood Initiative Foundation: David Lawrence
A. L. Mailman Foundation: Luba Lynch
Pew Charitable Trusts: Susan Urahn
Institute for Education Leadership: Elizabeth Hale
Public Education Network: Wendy Puriefoy
University of Florida: Donald Pemberton

Families and Work Institute: Ellen Galinsky
BUILD Initiative: Barbara Gebhard
Long Beach Unified School District: Chris Steinhauser
Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools (Long Island): Les Omotani
Maryland Committee for Children: Stephen Rohde
Maryland State Department of Education: Rolf Grafwallner

Our conversations yielded the following themes:

Leaders and organizations in every consulted sector have interest in ready schools.

- Those with significant interest offered a rationale for why it would be in their self-interest to explore joining with others who are working to advance this issue. They explained how the issue does, or could, relate to their core missions and objectives.

They view ready schools as an important *component* of achieving children’s school readiness.

- Leaders do not view creating ready schools as a cause unto itself, but rather, see it as a key component of the cause of ensuring the educational success of young children.
- They find the vision articulated by SPARK leaders to be compelling.
- They agree with a ready school definition that includes strong community connection.
- They recognize that external support (support of individuals and institutions outside of schools themselves) is essential to create ready schools at full scale.
- They see a clear “why now” – a moment of opportunity to do things differently to achieve progress in transforming the educational experience of young children. Overwhelmingly, leaders with whom we spoke agreed that more work needed to be done to strengthen the role of schools in order to advance the school readiness movement, and they welcomed Kellogg Foundation’s leadership in this regard.

There is clear interest in a structure that will foster involvement and collaboration of key players.

- Leaders believe the primary focus must be on local and state-level action.
- They see opportunities for strategic connections among national players. For example, organizations that are generating knowledge and tools welcome the idea of working with other partners to direct them to key constituencies in the effort to achieve ready schools.
- They see the need – and opportunity – for a more unified voice, especially on what “success” will be.
- They believe long-term, sustained involvement is required to achieve success.

Major organizations representing every sector are willing to participate. They offer many resources:

- Information on effective policies and practices
- Knowledge of, and influence among, and access to key groups at local and state levels
- Community engagement capacity
- Communications and advocacy capacity
- Sources of funding
- Training expertise
- Ability to leverage peer-influence and interaction
- Capacity to connect strategically with other organizations representing key constituencies

Organizations interested in involvement have expertise in a variety of arenas that offer significant impact in advancing the development of ready schools, such as:

- Defining and aligning standards for teaching and learning, 0-grade three.
- Involving parents as teachers, decision makers and advocates.
- Strengthening early childhood education via professional development – teacher, principal, child care provider.
- Assessing children’s learning progress and school readiness.
- Influencing funding streams.
- Creating education policy at the state and local levels.
- Setting or influencing state and local educational agendas.

These capacities relate to key SPARK challenges expressed by project directors, including the need to engage private sector leaders – particularly business leaders – as advocates; the need to work with parents on a much larger scale and a more sustained basis; the desire to have greater knowledge of best practices and state-of-the-art thinking; and the need to advance beyond programmatic efforts to broader-scale change. (See Appendix B: Diagram of Ready Schools Partnership Representation and Capacities.)

Creating a National Ready Schools Action Group

In Spring 2005, the Kellogg ready schools team developed the concept of a National Ready Schools Action Group that would be composed of leaders of national organizations whose members have the capacity to advance the development of ready schools at the state and local levels. The role of this entity would be to:

1. Work with their key constituencies to:
 - promote the concept of ready schools;
 - articulate the case for ready schools from the perspective of their members;
 - disseminate information their members need in order to perform their role in creating/sustaining ready schools;
 - create the capacity to consistently promote ready schools and respond to members’ requests for assistance in implementing them; and
 - recognize members who have demonstrated outstanding performance in this arena.

2. Support specific school readiness/ready schools efforts at state and local levels by engaging their members as advocates, guides, resource providers, and vehicles to achieve major strategies such as:
 - Creating alignment among early childhood education and care providers;
 - Helping elementary schools engage parents/caregivers well before children enter school;
 - Providing training to professionals involved in early childhood education (child care providers, pre-k/k/early grade teachers, principals, etc.); and
 - Developing policies at the school district and state levels that support ready school development and sustainability.
3. Identify outstanding examples of ready schools from which others can learn.
4. Through their cumulative work, raise the need for ready schools to a prominent position on the national agenda.

Appendix C describes the types of results we will seek to produce through contributions such as these.

Potential members of the National Ready Schools Action Group wish to focus on helping to achieve tangible progress in states and communities where there is significant will to advance children's school readiness. As discussions continued in Fall 2005, we conceived of developing an "opportunity map" that would include SPARK sites as well as others where National Ready Schools Action Group members could participate in near-term ready school "wins". This idea has proven attractive to potential members and helped ground the National Ready Schools Action Group concept.

As of the development of this report, the following individuals and organizations have indicated their willingness to participate in the National Ready Schools Action Group:

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)

Likely Participant: *Linda Smith*, Executive Director

Envisioned Role:

- Help local CCR&Rs join SPARK coalitions to assist in parent outreach, ECE teacher training, and more in depth transition planning.
- Help members of National Ready Schools Action Group understand NACCRRA's potential to play such roles nationwide.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK localities, states, DC. Located in or serving SPARK communities.

National Head Start Association

Likely Participants: *Sarah Greene*, President; *Diane Whitehead*, Program Development Director

Envisioned Role:

- Help local affiliates join community-wide efforts to create a plan for ready schools development and offer information on what works in transition practices.
- Help provide information and access to parents through Head Start programs and other local organizations and networks.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK states, DC.

National Urban League

Likely Participants: *Marc Morial*, President & CEO; *Velma Cobb*, Vice President, Education and Youth Development Policy, Research and Advocacy

Envisioned Role:

- Help ensure ECE standards are culturally savvy and can be translated to parent action.
- Communicate standards to parents in the form of "what to expect": 1) from their own children 2) from themselves as teachers; 3) from schools; 4) from child and family serving organizations with which they are affiliated.

Relationship to SPARK States: Multiple affiliates in FL, GA, OH, NC, MS, and DC. CEO in Miami, FL serves on state board of education.

Urban Neighborhood Centers of America

Likely Participant: *Sam Watkins, Jr.*, Chairman

Envisioned Role:

- Serve as conduit for engaging and bringing information to parents in neighborhood context.
- Contribute knowledge of approaches for engaging the parents they serve, who are often unable or unwilling to engage with schools.

Relationship to SPARK States: Members and non-member affiliates in all SPARK states, some communities.

United Way of America

Likely Participant: *Bill Garrett*, National Director, Success By 6®

Envisioned Role:

- Enlist and assist United Way members in advocacy for state-wide policies that promote school readiness and ready schools
- Promote importance of ECE

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK states and communities.

U.S. Conference of Mayors

Likely Participant: *Fritz Edelstein*, Senior Advisor for Education; *Crystal Swann*, Assistant Executive Director

Envisioned Role:

- Integrate ready school and school readiness into overall education agenda for USCM.
- Enlist and assist mayors in mobilizing school-community collaboration to ensure school readiness and offer information on "what they can do".

Relationship to SPARK States: Members in SPARK communities, and DC; some state affiliates.

National League of Cities

Likely Participant: *Cliff Johnson*, Executive Director, Institute for Youth and Families

Envisioned Role:

- Offer guidance to elected leaders in selected cities on advancing ready schools.

Relationship to SPARK States: Members in all SPARK communities.

American Association of School Administrators

Likely Participants: *Paul Houston*, Executive Director; *Sharon Adams-Taylor*, Associate Executive Director, Program and Resource Development

Envisioned Role:

- Promote importance of ready schools to local members.
- Help local school superintendents to lead strategic planning and system development to achieve ready schools.
- Assist local school superintendents to become “Superintendents of Learning” and play leading role in mobilizing community support for school readiness.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK localities, states, DC.

National School Board Association

Likely Participants: *Anne Bryant*, Executive Director; *Elizabeth Partoyan*, Director for Research, Training, and Member Services

Envisioned Role:

- Train and guide local boards including superintendents to make ECE and school-community connection an important component of planning and resource allocation.
- Connect affiliates to Chambers of Commerce to build support for the investment this will require and create connection to economic development.
- Create award to recognize student achievement excellence and promote best practices, success stories and their benefits.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK localities, states, DC

National Association of Elementary School Principals

Likely Participants: *Vincent Ferrandino*, Executive Director; *Deborah Reeve*, Deputy Exec. Dir.

Envisioned Role:

- Promote ready schools to members; conduct professional development; provide tools.
- Promote pre-service training on ready schools.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK states, DC.

American Federation of Teachers

Likely Participants: *Darion Griffin*, Associate Director, Educational Issues

Envisioned Role:

- Promote importance of ready schools to local members.
- Advocate for more teacher training at the early childhood education level.
- Provide teacher and parent liaison training through local affiliates.

Relationship to SPARK States: State affiliates in FL, MS, NM, and OH.

National Association of State Title I Directors

Likely Participants: *Richard Long*, Executive Director

Envisioned Role:

- Communicate best practices and information on successful examples to Title I Directors
- Distribute tools to help members evaluate proposals/requests and for professional development.

Relationship to SPARK States: Members in all SPARK states and DC.

Council of Chief State School Officers

Likely Participants: *Jana Martella*, Director, Early Childhood and Family Education;
Susan Taylor, Director, State Support Team Network

Envisioned Role:

- Promote and guide member action on ready schools.
- Provide guidance to state chief school officers on best practices to integrate ready school principals to school improvement planning.

Relationship to SPARK States: Members in all SPARK states and DC.

United States Chamber of Commerce

Likely Participant: *Karen Elzey*, Director of Workforce and Education Programs,
Center for Workforce Preparation (CWP)

Envisioned Role:

- Help identify local Chambers that have developed principles and/or acted on ECE, as well as those with infrastructure for programming on education.
- Promote the benefits of ready schools as they relate to business objectives.
- Train members to serve on school boards to support ECE agenda.

Relationship to SPARK States: Affiliates in all SPARK localities, states, DC.

Other organizations that have expressed interest in participating include:

- Community Action Partnership
- High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
- National Education Association
- National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education
- Foundation for Child Development
- Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- Family Support America
- National Governors Association

Future outreach will be directed to:

1. Organizations whose members are concerned with the physical and emotional challenges that can prevent young children from reaching their true potential, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of School Psychologists, and the School Nutrition Association;
2. Philanthropies that may be interested in the work of the National Ready Schools Action Group and would consider participating, such as the Buffett Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies, the Wallace Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation;
3. Higher education entities such as State Higher Education Executive Officers and National Association of System Heads, both of which have been involved in building statewide P-16 systems that include the preschool years in many instances, as well as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators; and

4. Faith organizations leading advocacy and mobilization efforts at the local and state levels to influence the debate on the educational needs of young children and families, such as the National Council of Churches and the Interfaith Alliance.

DCA will assess and report to SPARK sites and the Foundation on the potential sources of support available to advance SPARK objectives at the site and initiative levels. We will develop detailed analyses of the “landscape” of potential state and local supporters for SPARK initiatives (See Appendix D for Florida SPARK example). We will identify those that have connections to National Ready School Action Group members and offer advice on the individuals and organizations that have the greatest potential to support SPARK objectives. We will update these studies through the end of the SPARK implementation.

Opportunities for further progress

The following opportunities exist:

1. To activate, apply and develop the National Ready Schools Action Group as a resource for state and local efforts to advance the large-scale development of ready schools.
2. To help a select group of SPARK sites achieve major objectives with the assistance of the National Ready Schools Action Group and the constituencies it represents.
3. To help a select group of additional sites achieve major objectives with such assistance.
4. To influence the shape of federal and state policy by engaging the above groups in identifying practices that are highly effective in advancing ready schools and providing advocacy and counsel on their behalf.

During the first quarter of 2006 we will determine where National Ready Schools Action Group assistance will be of greatest value in advancing efforts to create ready schools at state and local levels. This will likely lead to a mid-spring meeting to help Leadership Action Group members and participating sites connect with one another and review the opportunities for major impact and their related action requirements.

Appendix A

Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK)

An Initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

About SPARK

Launched in 2002, SPARK is an initiative to help communities mobilize resources to better prepare children for school and schools for children. Seeking both “ready children” and “ready schools,” SPARK supports five-year plans of grantees in seven states and Washington, DC, to smooth children’s transition to school and align preschool and elementary school settings. Targeting children ages three to six who are vulnerable to poor achievement, SPARK involves partnerships of communities, state agencies, and schools. Together, these partners will provide comprehensive support to youngsters, providing the quality early learning experiences required for later success in school. A major goal for SPARK is to initially design well-coordinated school readiness systems at the community level and subsequently ramp up these efforts into statewide strategies.

State Partners

Florida: Early Childhood Initiative Foundation

This operating foundation focuses on school readiness in Miami-Dade County, using child advocacy, family engagement, and public awareness strategies. As part of SPARK, the foundation is targeting two communities: portions of Allapattah/Model City in Miami and portions of Homestead/Florida City in the southern part of the county.

Georgia: Smart Start Georgia

Smart Start Georgia is the first statewide partnership of government, philanthropic, and corporate leaders established to design and implement a long-term plan to increase school readiness in Georgia. For SPARK, Smart Start Georgia focuses on communities in Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.

Hawaii: Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE)

INPEACE is an educational nonprofit whose mission is to improve the quality of life for Native Hawaiians through community partnerships that provide educational opportunities and promote self-sufficiency. SPARK targets the communities of Keaukaha/Panaewa/Hilo on the island of Hawai'i and the Waianae Coast of O'ahu.

Mississippi: Children's Defense Fund (CDF)

With its mission to "leave no child behind," CDF is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has nine regional office sites. The CDF Southern Regional Office is working with communities and four Mississippi school districts (Cleveland, Hollandale, North Bolivar, and Pearl).

New Mexico: New Mexico Community Foundation (NMCF)

NMCF is a statewide endowment-building and grant-making organization. SPARK efforts are targeting a number of communities around the state, including Albuquerque, Espanola, Farmington, Hobbs, Laguna Pueblo, and Las Cruces.

North Carolina: Smart Start/North Carolina Partnership for Children

Smart Start operates in all 100 counties in the state through community partnerships focused on programs for children ages 0-5. For SPARK, planning involves two local Smart Start partnerships: Down East, which includes Edgecombe and Nash counties; and Region A, made up of seven western counties and a tribal government, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.

Ohio: Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton

The foundation extends the mission and ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine by addressing the needs of the poor and underserved through grants and other supports in the areas of health, education, and social services. Building on the foundation's Quality Child Care Initiative, SPARK efforts focus on Stark County including urban neighborhoods in Canton and the rural areas in the southern part of the county.

Washington, DC: National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)

NBCDI has worked to improve and protect the quality of life for children and their families since 1971. NBCDI addresses early care and education and other issues through its national conference, programs, and publications. SPARK planning efforts involve professional and community leaders from a cross section of public and nonprofit organizations serving children 3-6. The project focuses on communities in the central city and east of the Anacostia River.

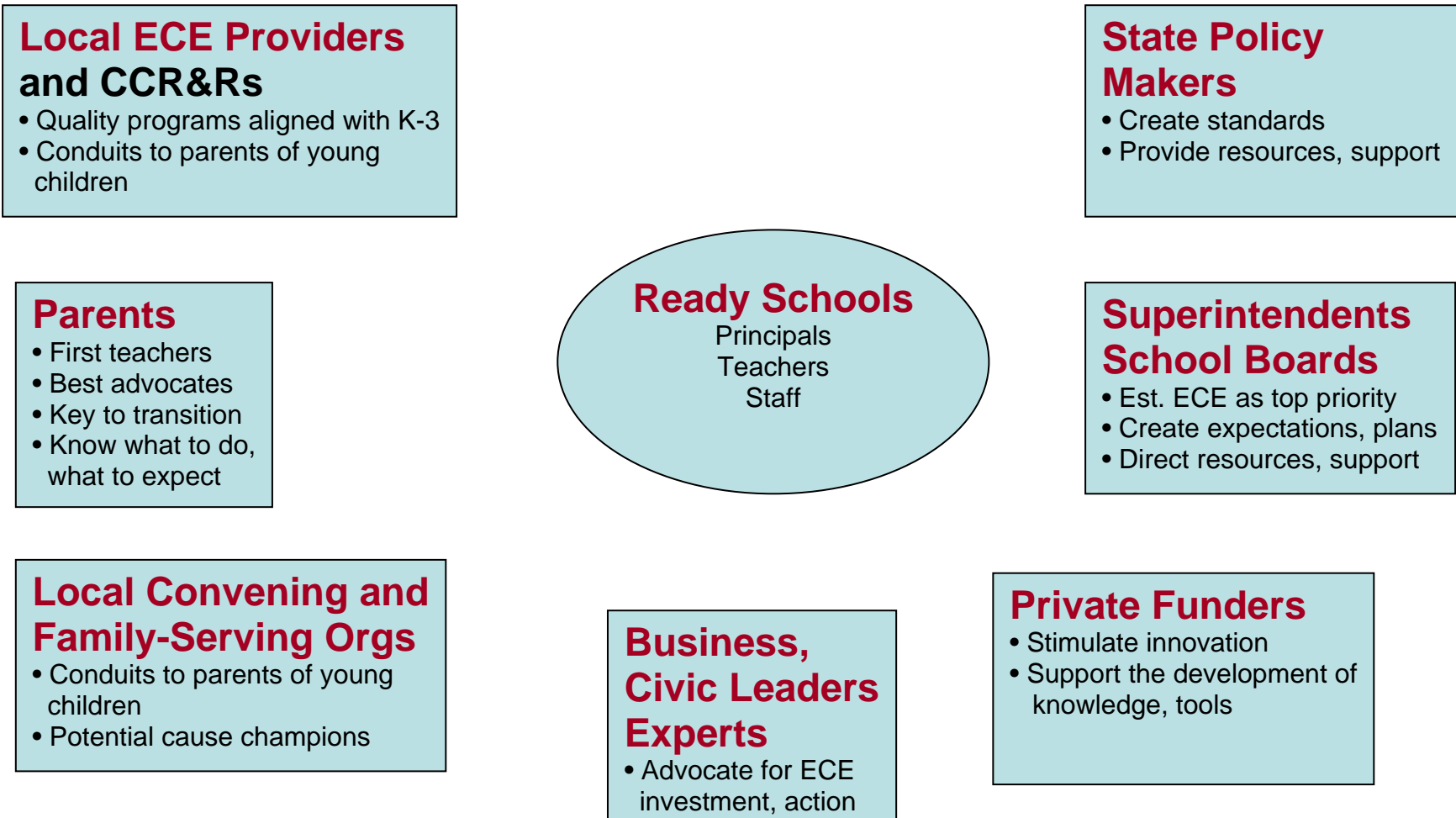
Beyond SPARK

National Ready School Action Group members have expressed interest not only in assisting SPARK sites, but in helping create other examples of success throughout the country. Given this, DCA will assist Kellogg Foundation in identifying and recruiting a group of additional sites to join in advancing a national ready schools agenda. These sites would meet the following criteria:

- have outstanding potential to advance children's school readiness and the development of ready schools on a large scale;
- are interested in having the assistance of the National Ready School Action Group;
- are interested in helping to stimulate the growth of ready schools through their own examples of success as well as their advocacy.

Together with SPARK sites, these sites will form an "opportunity map" for National Ready School Action Group support and expansion of SPARK success.

Appendix B
Diagram of Ready Schools Partnership Representation and Capacities



Appendix C

Intended Results

1. With the assistance of National Ready School Action Group members, create active support for ready schools and SPARK ready school strategies among key constituencies.
 - State education leaders in SPARK states (for example, chief state school officers, state early childhood education directors, state school boards, legislators with education oversight, governors, etc.) will view the creation of ready schools as being central to their education objectives and will be actively supporting statewide adoption of ready school strategies.
 - State and local business groups will be on record as endorsing efforts to achieve school readiness and ready schools, and will offer an economic rationale for doing so.
 - State Title I directors will encourage the use of Title I dollars for the types of ready school strategies demonstrated as being effective by SPARK sites and others.
 - Local school superintendents and school boards will view achieving ready schools as central to their school improvement efforts and will make the scale-up of effective ready school strategies a high priority.
 - Elementary school principals will be armed with information on the importance of ready schools, a clear definition of the characteristics of a ready school, ready school assessment tools, and guidance on what they can do to create a ready school.
 - Local child care networks will assist efforts to improve pre-k teaching, pre-k to kindergarten transitions, and parent skill building.
 - Major family-serving organizations (such as neighborhood centers and community action agencies) will assist SPARK efforts to provide the maximum number of parents with information on how to be their children's best "transition managers" and early education advocates.

2. Focus the educational advocacy of National Ready School Action Group members on creating federal policies that support the development of ready schools. Principal areas of focus will be:
 - making school readiness and ready school development a high priority on the Title I agenda and increasing the amount Title I funds that are used for this purpose;
 - making school readiness and ready school development a high priority within the next generation of No Child Left Behind legislation.

3. Help fuel and sustain a growing movement in support of ready schools.
 - Create the organization and financial support necessary to sustain the National Ready School Action Group well beyond the term of SPARK.
 - Help National Ready School Action Group members find ways to collaborate with one another for greater impact. For example, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, National School Boards Association, National Association of School Administrators and US Chamber of Commerce might create a common agenda to advance children's school readiness and the development of ready schools.
 - Help draw National Ready School Action Group support to non-SPARK sites that offer exceptional promise to create ready schools and that wish to contribute their knowledge and advocacy to an explicit effort to stimulate the widespread adoption of ready school strategies.

Supporting the Florida SPARK Site: A hypothetical example

Miami-Dade Public Schools Superintendent Rudy Crew has challenged SPARK to help ensure that all of Miami-Dade's elementary schools will become ready schools. Achieving that objective may require:

- *Making principals aware of the importance and benefits of ready schools, and giving them the tools and guidance to lead that transition.* DCA would work with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and its state affiliate to develop a program that offers such promotion and support.
- *Connecting with large numbers of parents of young children, to offer skill-building help and engage them in transition planning.* National Ready School Action Group partners such as the National Urban League, Urban Neighborhood Centers of America, and National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies could work with their Miami-Dade counterparts to offer best practices and help design new modes of large-scale parent outreach.
- *Providing Miami-Dade Public Schools with the leadership encouragement and support to make needed changes.* The National School Boards Association could work through its state and local affiliates to underscore the importance of ready schools to overall school system success, and offer the Miami-Dade School Board ideas of how best to support this change.
- *Drawing broader public attention to the cause.* The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities and others could be enlisted to endorse Miami-Dade's effort to be the first major city to create ready schools on a full scale. All members of the National Ready School Action Group could receive regular news of Miami-Dade's progress, and promote it to their membership, drawing nationwide attention to SPARK Florida's example.

Appendix D
Example of “Landscape Assessment” of Potential Ready School Supporters

