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STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership 2008-2009 Twelfth Annual Report Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The *Twelfth Annual RECAP Report* continues to reveal significant policy findings that affect our community's young children, their families, and the providers and policymakers who serve them. This report also affirms the importance of longstanding findings; trend and replication data are crucial foundations that are often not fully understood.

Rochester, by many accounts, continues to hold a preeminent place within the national and Western European pre-k systems. Once again this year, with an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R, an internationally-used measure of classroom environment quality) score reflects an average annual rating of 6.1 of more than 100 classrooms, Rochester remains one of the highest ranked independently and reliably documented pre-k system. The national and international averages remain at the 4.3 level. Rochester continues to stand at 1.7 standard deviations above the national and Western European averages.

RECAP Major Findings for 2008-09

RCS D/RECAP Partnership growth:

For the 2008-09 school year, perhaps the most important overall event was the demonstrable growth in the RCS D/RECAP partnership and in particular the combined institutional agility demonstrated by RECAP issuing small but influential policy briefs in areas requested by RCS D. Two defining examples are the report on the effectiveness of Early Kindergarten Summer School, and a detailed item analysis of the developmental and achievement scoring between general education Pre-K pupils and pupils classified with a disability. These and other reports, composed over short periods of time, directly impacted RCS D early childhood policy decisions. The evaluation/policy successes of the year demonstrate the productive, mutually beneficial relationship between RECAP and RCS D.

Students:

- ❖ Based on last year's analyses, pre-k students with disabilities arrive in class at lower developmental levels than general education pupils and learn at a slower rate. (This has been a consistent finding for two cohorts.) This year we examined these two cohorts with their kindergarten performance and found the learning rate of special education pupils now parallels that of general education students, as measured by the COR. A significant gap between special education and general education pupils remains, however.

- ❖ We did observe gender-racial and ethnic gaps in pre-k pupil growth for 2008-09. In most of the 12 years of reporting there had been no detectable racial or ethnic gaps, but there have been instances of gaps, and this is one year in which we did observe this phenomenon. Hispanic boys showed a lower growth rate in academic performance as measured by the COR when compared to other gender-ethnic groups.
- ❖ In examining the social-emotional adjustment and risk factors of pre-k pupils, in 2008-09 we observed both (1) somewhat more pupils arriving with multiple social-emotional risk factors, but (2) proportionally more pupils making gains and moving out of the risk pool. This may be due to teacher sensitivity, focused professional development or random fluctuations of behavior. The 2009-10 data will be important to test these hypotheses.
- ❖ The RECAP analysis of “Early Kindergarten Summer School” revealed definite growth for girls who participated; the data revealed no detectable growth in boys. In response to these results, planning, an introduction of a curriculum and more professional development were implemented this past year in preparation for the 2009 summer program. These results also merit further exploration and replication.
- ❖ Over 94% of incoming pre-k pupils grew *at or above their expected developmental levels*. This replicates findings observed from previous years. Many children show high rates of growth, especially in the academic areas.

Classrooms:

- ❖ RECAP classrooms in 2008-09 continue to hold the gains made 2007-08, with a mean rating of 6.1 on the ECERS-R, on the one-to-seven scale. This contrasts to averages of 4.3 found in other national studies. RECAP classrooms continue to demonstrate exceptionally strong classroom quality.
- ❖ These exceptionally strong ECERS-R scores in the 6.0 range have been observed in Rochester since 2001 – eight years. Since 2001 there have been a handful of studies reporting some programs reaching or exceeding 6.0, but there have been no rigorous, independent evaluations that we can find where a consistent ECERS-R rating 6.0 or higher *for a whole system* as has been reported by RECAP in Rochester.
- ❖ RECAP continues to recognize teachers with extremely-high classroom quality, where a select group of 21 teachers has earned for five consecutive years a score of 6.50 or higher. Classrooms in this category are truly superior.
- ❖ Over the course of 2008-09, RECAP completed the planning and training for the upcoming piloting in 2009-10 of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). A stratified random sample of 30 classes will be chosen with voluntary participation. Results will be utilized for possible full-scale implementation. While the ECERS-R has effectively served as a “floor” for overall classroom environment, the CLASS holds complementary promise in the area of curricula and instruction. Furthermore, it serves a broader grade range, from pre-k through grade 3.

Parents and Families:

- ❖ This was the third consecutive year that RECAP administered the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ), developed by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and validated by RECAP. For three consecutive years, parents reported greatest involvement in the home environment, with identical reporting rates for the past two years. The least involvement was in the classroom, although for 2008-09 there was a modest and encouraging increase in this participation. Parents reported moderate involvement with parent-teacher communications, with a modest decrease from 2007-08 to 2008-09. Overall Pre-K family involvement can be termed moderate, with few changes in the past three years.

- ❖ The Parent Satisfaction Questionnaire was administered, with results published in fall 2009 in the RECAP Annual Statistical Supplement. Approximately 94% of our parents assigned a grade “A,” “A-,” “B+” or B to RECAP programs. Approximately 62% to 67% assign an “A.”