



United Way
of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley

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Mayor Menino and United Way Announce \$1.5M School Readiness Grant from W.K. Kellogg Foundation

*Funder Applauds Mayor and United Way for Effective "Thrive in 5" Plan to Prevent the
Achievement Gap in Boston's Next Generation of Students*

BOSTON -- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded Thrive in 5 a \$1.5 million grant over two years to support implementation of Boston's School Readiness Roadmap. Thrive in 5 is a public-private partnership launched by Mayor Menino and United Way, a citywide framework to prevent the achievement gap in the next generation of students by promoting school readiness and ensuring the healthy development of all Boston children. Boston is home to 39,000 infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Kellogg is the first national funder to invest in Thrive in 5. The new funding will support two broad goals:

1. Building neighborhood capacity to support parents and to support school readiness for all children, with a special focus on those most at risk.
2. Ensuring continuous quality improvement for Boston's early childhood programming.

Welcoming this new investment, Mayor Thomas M. Menino noted, "All of our children deserve the opportunity to thrive, starting at birth. Unfortunately many of our children arrive at school already facing gaps – in vocabulary, exposure to books, health care access, and experiences interacting with peers and adults. I look forward to working with the Kellogg Foundation to make sure every child enters school prepared, that parents enter as full partners in their children's education, and that we build on that base for sustained success."

"The Thrive in 5 plan illustrates Boston's understanding that we must support children in the context of their families, and families in the context of their communities," said Gregory Taylor, Vice President for Programs at the Kellogg Foundation. "We are thrilled to make this investment in Boston's public-private leadership model – Mayor Menino working with United Way. Their ability to bring the entire city to the table, with an early childhood plan that is both ambitious and feasible, can be a model for the nation."

The Kellogg Foundation investment will fund:

- **Launching "Community School Readiness Wiring,"** a key component of the Thrive in 5 Roadmap, which builds on and weaves together neighborhood-based partnerships and initiatives. Neighborhoods will determine the best approach to surrounding parents of young children with information and linking them to supports for child development, parenting and school readiness, through sources they already know and trust, everywhere they go in their community – the laundromat, grocery store, barber shop, workplace, playground, health center, and more.

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- **Identifying and engaging “family, friend and neighbor” child care providers.** These home-based providers – often disconnected from support and educational opportunities – care for many Boston children, particularly infants and toddlers from low-income families, families of color, immigrant families, and families who do not speak English.
- **Support for improved transitions for children** – from home or pre-school into kindergarten and from one early care setting to another.
- **Improving the ability to capture data,** track child outcomes, and link information across services, settings and systems.

“In this challenging fiscal climate, our work to support and engage stressed families is even more important,” said Michael Durkin, President of United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, a sponsor and lead funder for Thrive in 5. “We know it costs less and is more effective to prevent problems, or catch problems early on, than to try to correct them later. Kellogg’s commitment is the right thing for our children and our city and will bring a tremendous return on investment.”

“This new funding will allow us to begin to implement some of the key components of the Thrive in 5 roadmap, building community capacity to support parenting and child development; improving systems and policies that impact families; and ensuring effective services and supports for children and families,” said Thrive in 5 Executive Director John Lippitt, PhD. “We are thrilled to welcome Kellogg as a partner because of the foundation’s experience and expertise in meeting the needs of children and families facing multiple risks.”

Thrive in 5 Boston is a ten-year plan. Last month, Liz Walker and Randal Rucker, co-chairs of the Thrive in 5 Leadership Council, issued the one-year report on “Boston’s Progress toward Universal School Readiness.” In the past year, Boston has:

- Increased the number of early care and education professionals who are accredited, the nationally recognized measure of quality;
- Launched an early childhood public awareness campaign called “Talk Read Play,” through Countdown to Kindergarten and ReadBoston;
- Improved screenings at pediatric visits for children’s behavioral health problems and, through a United Way initiative, developed a plan to improve screening for maternal depression;
- Provided play-to-learn groups in public schools for 350 parents and their children ages 1-3; and
- Worked with families of 300 children living in subsidized housing, enrolling them in a comprehensive set of services for family stabilization and school readiness, through the Smart from the Start initiative.

Local Thrive in 5 sponsors to date include: City of Boston, United Way, Barr Foundation, Eos Foundation, Boston Medical Center, Children’s Hospital Boston, Partners HealthCare, and the Boston Public Schools’ Community Partnerships for Children.

The Thrive in 5 mission states, “*By age 5, every child in Boston will be ready to succeed in school, an essential foundation for success in life. The readiness gap currently evident at school entry will be prevented.*” For more information, visit www.Thrivein5Boston.org.

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