



**Thrive in Five**

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**In This Issue**

*Thrive in Five* and Boston's School Readiness Roadmap

What's Next for *Thrive in Five*

Early Childhood in the News

**Quick Links**

[Our Website](#)  
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The name *Thrive in Five* reflects our commitment to ensuring that all children flourish in the

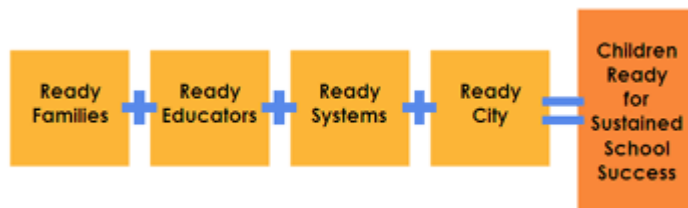
**Welcome to the first newsletter from *Thrive in Five: Boston's Promise to Its Children***

***Thrive in Five* and Boston's School Readiness Roadmap**

*Thrilling Announcement at the Boston Children's Museum*

Wednesday, March 12th, Mayor Thomas M. Menino and United Way President Michael Durkin announced *Thrive in Five*, a new public-private partnership to prevent the achievement gap in our next generation of students by promoting school readiness and ensuring the healthy development of Boston's youngest citizens. *Thrive in Five* is a 10-year effort that for the first time aligns families, educators, health care and human service providers, the private sector, and City departments – working in collaboration with state agencies – to ensure that all Boston's children will be ready for school entry and sustained school success.

Joined by over 250 parents and Boston leaders for the announcement at the Boston Children's Museum, the Mayor and Mr. Durkin highlighted the simple yet profound equation that underscores Boston's School Readiness Roadmap:



"We have an ethical obligation – informed by science and economics – to focus on our children's earliest years and provide them and their parents with the tools they need to achieve," Mayor Menino said. "My administration is already aligning the work of City departments to implement this plan, and I am pleased to announce \$3.25 million in commitments from public and private funders to

first five years of life and beyond.

It also reflects the importance of all five dimensions of a children's growth - language development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, and physical and motor development.

The five goals of *Thrive in Five* are both simple and urgent:

1. Parents will be able to obtain the accurate, culturally appropriate information they seek on child development, parenting, and school readiness, as well as community resources that help to strengthen families.
2. Boston will become the city with the highest quality early education and care system for all young children - infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergartners - in all settings: family child care, private/community-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, and school-based early education.
3. Health care, early intervention and other systems that serve young children will succeed in earlier detection and more effective responses to barriers to child development and school readiness, including earlier detection of family and environmental

support *Thrive in Five*."

The City of Boston has committed \$750,000 to *Thrive in Five*, and United Way has pledged an additional \$1.3 million. Three lead partners in the effort - Children's Hospital Boston; Partners HealthCare and its founding hospitals, Brigham and Women's and Mass. General Hospital; and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation - have committed another \$1.2 million over the next three years.



*Thrive in Five* is not a new initiative, but a new citywide approach, a collaborative plan to ensure universal school readiness, building on the many superb initiatives, organizations and agencies that serve Boston's children and families.

"This is a community effort. Families, government, health care, nonprofits, the business sector - we all win when a child is ready to succeed in school and life," said Michael K. Durkin, President and CEO of United Way. "To sustain the kind of long-lasting change that *Thrive in Five* lays out requires that we work together. Because together, we can accomplish more than any single organization - public or private - can alone."

Dr. Jack Shonkoff, of Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, highlighted the importance of early childhood investment, "When communities support the health and development of young children, everyone benefits."

The Center has compiled extensive research that reveals the scientific, economic and moral imperative of focusing on the early years, finding that:

- Children's earliest experiences shape brain architecture - the foundation of neural circuits upon which learning, behavior and health depend, creating a resilient or fragile foundation for future learning and growth;
- Quality early childhood interventions produce significant economic benefits - a \$14-\$17 return for every dollar invested - including savings from reduced special

conditions that can create “toxic stress” in young children.

4. The many sectors in Boston will work together to ensure children’s school readiness becomes and remains a top priority.

5. *Thrive in Five* will track and report on its success in ensuring universal school readiness.

*Thrive in Five* draws on Boston’s considerable strengths, including:

- A wide array of early education and care programs;
- Extensive community services for children and families, including an outstanding health system of hospitals and community health centers, many effective neighborhood-based and faith-based organizations and coalitions, and a United Way that is extraordinarily engaged;
- Nationally recognized collaborations to support children and families;
- Extensive City services for families with young children (libraries, community centers, housing developments, schools, and public health programs, pre-natal and beyond);
- A diverse population of parents who are deeply devoted to their children;

education and remedial education, welfare, and criminal justice costs, as well as increased tax revenue produced in the workforce; and

- Basic early childhood skills are a necessary foundation for life long learning.

*Thrive in Five* is the result of Boston’s Birth to Five School Readiness Planning Initiative, a year-long process led by the City of Boston and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. Over the past year, the 65-member School Readiness Action Planning Team (“the APT”), co-chaired by Children’s Hospital Chief Operating Officer Sandra Fenwick and Wheelock College President Jackie Jenkins-Scott, met regularly to develop the powerful goals and strategies that make up *Thrive in Five*’s School Readiness Roadmap. The APT’s work was informed by a diverse group of 35 parents, grandparents and guardians from all Boston neighborhoods, called “the Parents APT.” Together they engaged an additional 300 Boston leaders and residents and funders through focus groups and meetings.

The Executive Summary of Boston’s School Readiness Roadmap and more information about *Thrive in Five* is available on our updated website: [www.Thrivein5Boston.org](http://www.Thrivein5Boston.org).

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### What's Next for *Thrive in Five*

Each of the five parts of Boston’s School Readiness Equation (Ready Families, Ready Educators, Ready Systems, Ready City, and Children Ready for Sustained School Success) will have implementation teams convening throughout 2008. Watch the *Thrive in Five* website for opportunities to join these citywide teams.

To manage the entire effort, in addition to a newly forming leadership board, a small staff will be housed at United Way. Positions will be posted on the website by early May.

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### Early Childhood in the News

The announcement of *Thrive in Five* garnered significant media attention, including a Boston Globe editorial (“Progress in the First Five Years,” March 12, 2008) and same-day article (“Menino to Unveil Preschool Program”), as well as stories on

and

- Public and private sector leaders who are making children's school readiness a top priority.

WBUR and WBZ.

A few weeks later, the Boston Globe's education reporter Tracy Jan focused on one of the issues highlighted by *Thrive in Five*, the vocabulary gap, with a front page story about ReadBoston's Early Words campaign ("With Babies, Words for Wisdom," April 2, 2008). The article highlighted activities going on in Charlestown and other Boston neighborhoods to help low-income parents support their children's vocabulary development.

Smart from the Start - a new initiative to pilot many of the goals of *Thrive in Five* led by the Family Nurturing Center and a number of City partners - drew the attention of Boston Herald columnist Peter Gelzinis ("Baby! Bold Plan Might Work," April 4, 2008). Gelzinis covered the launch of Smart from the Start's pre-natal programming to engage families before the birth of a child, connecting them early on to one another and to vital neighborhood services and educational activities.

Check out [www.Thrivein5Boston.org](http://www.Thrivein5Boston.org) for links to the articles mentioned above.

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