



The Early Edition

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Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to the winter issue of The Early Edition!

As 2011 comes to an end and we prepare to begin 2012, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the past year and also to let you know about an exciting initiative that our center has planned for the year ahead.

Since the opening of the Early Stages Center in 2009, we have dramatically increased the number of children we serve—by more than 1,000 per year.

As many of you are aware, a federal judge ruled in November that hundreds of children requiring special education services were not sufficiently identified and treated. This was certainly true prior to October 2009, but the ruling did

not include the tremendous progress that Early Stages has achieved through December of this year. I am proud of the Early Stages team and our efforts, which have substantially changed the landscape of preschool special education in just two years. We have increased the percentage of children ages 3-5 identified as needing special education services from 2.7 percent when we opened to 7.4 percent, placing the District 15th among US states.

None of this success could have happened without the support of our community partners. We are in the process of launching a new Child Care Screening Initiative to empower more than 40 childcare centers located throughout all

eight wards to screen their children for developmental delays. Partnering with these centers will allow us to reach an even greater number of children and help us ensure they have strong start to school. You can read more about this initiative on page 3 of this newsletter.

The staff at Early Stages remains committed to identifying and serving young children across the District, and we look forward to working with you next year to achieve even greater progress. Thank you for your support as we continue to grow, and I wish you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season.

Heather Elliott
Executive Director, Early Stages

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Early Stages Center at Minnesota Avenue Grand Opening

This past November, Early Stages hosted the grand opening of a new center located in Northeast DC that will provide greater access to thousands of families in Wards 7 and 8 seeking to evaluate and identify young children in need of special education services. The event was attended by Mayor Vincent C. Gray, Council Chairman Kwame Brown, and DCPS Chancellor Kaya Henderson, all of whom expressed the importance of early intervention.

“The demand for early childhood diagnostic services continues to increase across the district with about 40 percent of referrals coming from Wards 7 and

8. The new Early Stages Center, located next to the Minnesota Avenue Metro station, will provide greater access to families in a section of the city where demand is greatest and enable DCPS to serve an additional 800 children a year,” says Mayor Vincent C. Gray.

The Ward 7 center, along with the Early Stages Center at Walker-Jones Education Campus in Ward 6, will provide individualized high-quality evaluations and services that will allow every child in the District to have a strong start to school by identifying developmental delays at a young age.



Calendar of Events

3rd Annual Charter School Expo

When:

Saturday, January 7, 2012
12pm-4pm

Where:

Walter E. Washington
Convention Center
801 Mount Vernon Place NW
Washington, DC 20001

What:

Learn more about the charter school community. Early Stages can help you make sure you know who to talk to if you have concerns about your child's development.

NBC4 Health & Fitness Expo 2012

When:

Saturday, January 14, 2012
Sunday, January 15, 2012
9am-5pm both days

Where:

Walter E. Washington
Convention Center
801 Mount Vernon Place NW
Washington, DC 20001

What:

Come experience hundreds of exhibits, demonstrations and giveaways. Early Stages will be at **Booth #1128** to offer free developmental screenings for three to five-year-olds.

Summer Camp Fair

When:

Saturday, January 28, 2012
1pm-3:30 pm

Where:

Sidwell Friends School
3825 Wisconsin Ave., NW
Washington, DC

What:

It may still be cold outside, but it's time to start thinking about summer activities for your child! This event will provide information about summer camps and programs available in the DC area.

It is almost that time!

For the DCPS Preschool and Pre-K Lottery



Each year, DC Public Schools is proud to offer nearly 6,000 seats for three and four-year-old children across 86 schools. Though students are not required to attend preschool or pre-kindergarten by law, DCPS places a strong value on early childhood education. The DCPS Preschool and Pre-K Lottery application period for the 2012-2013 school year will be held from **January 30 until February 27**.

Here are some fast facts about how the lottery application process works:

- Applicants may each apply to up to six school programs, selecting any combination of in-boundary and/or out-of-boundary schools.
- Preschool applicants must turn three years old by September 30, 2012. Pre-k applicants must turn four years old by September 30, 2012.
- The lottery application must be completed online; no paper applications will be accepted.
- Results will be posted online on March 2 and mailed home by March 9.

If you are interested in learning more about how to enroll your child in a DCPS preschool or pre-k class, please check **dcps.dc.gov** one week prior to the opening of the lottery for specific opening and closing times. You can also call **(202) 478-5738** for more information.

Child Development Center Screening Initiative

Early Stages is excited to announce a screening initiative that is currently being launched in 40 child development centers across the District, using a screening tool called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Child Find Field Coordinators are providing professional development to these centers in early intervention, developmental milestones, and the use of the ASQ. We have also partnered with DC Department

of Health's Project LAUNCH grant which will allow us to provide an ASQ kit to each of these child development centers. This initiative will help empower child care professionals to annually screen their own children.

Also, in collaboration with DCPS' Private and Religious Office, ASQ kits are available to centers and private schools that are not currently part of the

screening initiative. In order to receive a kit, free of charge, training sessions will be provided quarterly.

To receive more information about this initiative, or to learn more about implementing the ASQ at your center or school, please contact Jeanie Chang at: jeanie.chang@dc.gov or 202-510-1571.

Wintertime Activities!

Mitten Match Game

**Fine Motor Skills, Communication Skills,
Problem Solving Skills**

Materials:

- Construction paper (five to ten different colors)
- Crayon or marker
- Child safe scissors

Directions:

Help your child trace or draw mitten shapes on the construction paper (there should be two mittens of each color to make a pair). Using child safe scissors, cut the mitten shapes out. Hold up the different mittens and ask your child what color they are. Then have your child match up the mitten pairs to practice their problem solving skills.



Cotton Ball Snowman

Fine Motor Skills, Communication Skills

Materials:

- Cotton balls
- White construction paper
- Crayons or markers
- Child safe scissors

Directions:

Cut three circles out of white paper and glue them together to make a snowman. Dip cotton balls into glue and press them to the paper to cover the snowman's body. Use crayons or markers to draw eyes, a nose, a mouth, a hat, mittens and a scarf. Once you finish making the snowman, ask your child to point to the different body parts and articles of clothing.

Tips from the Georgetown Hoya Clinic: How to have a Healthy Holiday Season

As winter approaches, it is important to think about how to prevent and treat the illnesses that children often experience during this season. The most common diseases are caused by one of two organisms: viruses or bacteria. Typically, viruses cause colds, coughs and the flu while bacteria cause strep throat, some pneumonias and some sinus infections.

Most bacteria and viruses are passed from person to person by droplets that leave our mouths and noses. Using a tissue to cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing and then throwing it away can help prevent this spread. Regular hand washing with soap and water is another important measure to keep germs from infecting others. Encourage children to sing the ABC's once to make sure that they are washing for enough time. Keeping sick children away from school or daycare also keeps disease from spreading.

Flu vaccination is another method of preventing illness. The flu is an infection caused by a virus that can result in fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, chills and aches. Some people experience vomiting and diarrhea. Though the flu can become a serious illness in anyone, it is more dangerous for children under 5 and children with long-term health problems like asthma, developmental conditions, diabetes or weakened immune systems. A vaccine is available and recommended for children 6 months and older. For the best protection, it is important that parents, caregivers and children get vaccinated.

Should your child become ill, a healthcare provider can determine the cause and help you to treat it accordingly. Any ill child will benefit from rest and plenty of fluids. Over the counter medications are available to treat symptoms, though cough and cold medicines are not recommended for children under the age of 4. Children over 6 months can be given acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain relief but should not be given aspirin.

Our own immune systems are usually able to fight off viral infections so colds, the flu and runny noses are only sometimes treated with prescribed medications. However, bacterial infections often require treatment with antibiotics. Even if he or she feels better in a few days, it is important that your child finish the entire course of antibiotics given to them to prevent stronger and more dangerous bacteria from growing.

For flu vaccinations and healthcare free of charge, visit the HOYA Clinic on Tuesday or Wednesday nights from 6-7:30. We are located at 1900 Massachusetts Ave SE and can be contacted at 202-468-4816. All of the information in this article was taken from the CDC. To learn more, visit cdc.gov.

Inclusive Schools Week

DC Public Schools celebrated Inclusive Schools Week December 5 through December 9. Students had the opportunity to submit artwork, poems and essays to show what inclusion means to them. Teachers had the opportunity to exchange inclusion tips and practices that work well in their school.

Inclusive Schools Week, sponsored by the Inclusive Schools Network, started in 2001 and is held by school districts around the nation. This annual event recognizes the progress that schools have made in providing a supportive and quality education to a diverse student population. This week also provides a chance for students, parents, educators and community members to come together to discuss what else can be done to ensure that schools can effectively serve all children.



Photo by: Michael DeAngelis

What Is Inclusion?

Inclusion is a way of thinking, a mindset, where teachers and staff take responsibility for all our students – including those with special needs. Schools and families work together to determine how all students can be supported in their pursuit to gain a high quality education in the general education classroom.

Please share your story!

We would love to hear more about your experience with the Early Stages Center. What differences have early intervention services made for your child? Your experience can offer inspiration to other parents and caretakers who are about to embark on their own journeys with Early Stages (100 words or less is fine, more is fine too!) Some entries will be included in our upcoming spring newsletter. You can submit your story to:

emily.powers@dc.gov.

Your story can help inspire other families as they begin their own journeys!

Early Stages is a District of Columbia Public Schools early intervention program that offers free developmental screenings and evaluations for children ages 3 through 5 years old. We are here to serve DC families by helping them identify delays in their children's development and to address those delays with appropriate services. Children referred to the Early Stages Center will receive a full evaluation and treatment and /or services for a diagnosed delay regardless of whether they go to a public school, private school, are home-schooled or have not yet entered the school system. The experts at our family-friendly Center are here to help children begin school ready to learn and succeed.

Strong Beginnings. Bright Futures.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Special Education

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