

Early Education for All

A Strategic Political Campaign for High-Quality Early Education in Massachusetts



F C D C A S E S T U D Y

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EEA Timeline:

- Early 1998:** Margaret Blood meets with the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation’s president, Greg-Jobin Leeds, and his questions lead her to develop a statewide voter poll and interview key opinion leaders to find out where child care is on the political agenda.
- Mid 1998:** Margaret Blood forms Advisory Committee to oversee the voter polls. From the fall of 1998 until the spring of 1999, two statewide voter polls are conducted, and after beginning in June 1998, the opinion leader interviews are completed by July 1999.
- March 2000:** Early Education for All (EEA) receives grant money from its first non-Massachusetts-based funder.
- July 2000:** Margaret Blood hires EEA’s first staff person, Amy Kershaw, who begins working as the campaign’s research and policy director part time. By October, she is a full-time employee of EEA.
- Summer 2000:** Margaret Blood releases her report “Our Youngest Children: Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education,” and begins to build the foundations of a strategic constituent- driven campaign to create legislation and a diverse advocacy network to support universal access to high-quality early childhood education for the state’s 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds.
- October 3, 2000:** First meeting of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee, then comprised of 25 members.
- October 24, 2000:** EEA meets at the Massachusetts Statehouse with key state leaders in child care and early childhood education to determine what legislative issues should be addressed and if they will support moving this campaign forward.
- December 11, 2000:** The first of 32 EEA regional forums is held in Boston so that EEA can get input from frontline provider and educators about how legislation can effectively improve children’s early learning opportunities. During the next two months, 13 other such forums occur in other regions throughout the state.
- December 18, 2000:** The EEA Costing-Out Working Group meets for the first time, and continues meeting until the late summer of 2001.
- March 2001:** Margaret Blood and Amy Kershaw begin a series of conference calls with several national early childhood education and child care experts to assess what is working well in other states and why, as a guide for their process of drafting the EEA legislation.
- Spring 2001:** With the help of the Stride Rite Foundation and the Law Firm of Goulston & Storrs, the EEA Campaign secures staff office space in Boston.
- July 2001:** Strategies for Children, Inc., the umbrella non-profit organization Margaret Blood created to oversee the EEA campaign and work on other strategic initiatives for children, is granted its non-profit 501(c)(3) status.

- August 2001:** Christine Lopes, EEA’s field director, is hired.
- September 2001:** Second set of regional forums begins.
- October 2, 2001:** Due to the terrorist events of September 11th, EEA Advisory Committee members decide to postpone until late 2002 the filing of the EEA bill that was originally scheduled to be filed in November 2001.
- October 23, 2001:** EEA staff and consultants meet to decide on a new work and campaign timetable to meet the new legislation filing deadline.
- November 2001:** Sheila Engdahl is hired as office administrator.
- February 2, 2002:** EEA staff and volunteers appear at 66 political caucuses – early in the state’s election season – to inform caucus participants about early childhood education issues and the EEA’s issue-oriented campaign.
- March 2002:** Outreach efforts are underway to win endorsements for the EEA’s guiding principles and campaign goals from a variety of influential organizations and associations.
- March 26, 2002:** First meeting of EEA’s Legislative Development Working Group takes place. In time, this group will become known as the EEA Policy Committee and will be responsible for drafting legislation to be submitted to the legislature in early December 2002.
- June 15, 2002:** A Candidates’ Forum on Early Care and Education is held at Faneuil Hall in Boston, co-sponsored by EEA. By now, all the Democratic candidates for governor have sent written endorsements of EEA’s goals and guiding principles. The Republican candidate has not.
- Summer 2002:** Staff and volunteers boast awareness of EEA and inform delegates about the early childhood education campaign at the Republican and Democratic state conventions.
- July 2002:** Carolyn Lyons is hired as chief operating officer and director of marketing, and Amy O’Leary is hired as early childhood field director.
- July/August 2002:** “Delivering an Effective Message” advocacy training by EEA staff takes place throughout the state to train providers and educators how to successfully communicate with legislators.
- September 2002:** The EEA Policy Committee’s draft of the legislation goes out for comment to public officials as well as frontline advocates. It is also posted on Strategies for Children, Inc.’s Web site, where feedback can easily be given to EEA staff and, in turn, relayed to policy committee members.
- September/October 2002:** A third round of eight regional meetings are held for further refinement of the bill.
- October/November 2002:** EEA Policy Committee meets several times to absorb and respond to feedback given on the legislation and to amend the bill’s language to reflect the concerns raised prior to its filing at the statehouse.

- October 23, 2002:** A Legislative Kick-Off Event is held at the statehouse to draw attention to the upcoming filing of the EEA bill. The event highlights key aspects of the bill and the involvement and support of EEA advisory and policy committee members, legislators, supporters and funders, and it also attracts a lot of attention from statewide press.
- December 4, 2002:** The EEA bill, “An Act Establishing Early Education for All (H.1828/S.239), is filed at the Massachusetts Statehouse.
- December 2002:** Jondavid Chesloff is hired as legislative/issues director.
- Spring, 2003:** By now 50 EEA “field captains,” (many of whom are child care providers or early childhood educators) organized by legislative district, have signed on to EEA’s campaign. Also, nearly 4,500 people are listed in the campaign’s database as having had personal contact with the campaign as a result of more than 206 meetings and speaking engagements.
- April 7, 2003:** EEA co-sponsors with the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children an event at the statehouse to celebrate the “Week of the Young Child.” Preparation for this event includes an outreach to EEA supporters and invitations are sent to legislators to attend the event.
- Spring/Summer 2003:** Meetings are underway with a pro bono creative team at Hill Holiday, a leading Boston advertising firm, to develop a paid media EEA campaign to appear on TV and in print as a lead-up to the bill’s legislative hearing in the fall.
- October 8, 2003:** An “Early Education and the Future of Massachusetts Economy” policy forum is held in Boston, co-sponsored by Strategies for Children and its EEA campaign. At this event, EEA’s paid media campaign is launched.
- October 21, 2003:** A legislative committee hearing is held on the EEA bill.
- January 7, 2004:** In his annual address Speaker of the House Tom Finneran declares his support for making early childhood education one of state government’s top three priorities in the upcoming legislative session. A week later, a Boston Globe editorial describes the EEA bill as sketching “a compelling vision,” and urges Massachusetts to “jump in.”
- April 26, 2004:** Superior Court Judge Margot Botsford releases a 358-page report of her findings in an educational adequacy lawsuit in which she includes in her recommendations that the state assume “the cost of a public school preschool program for three- and four-year old children that would be offered free of charge at least to those who are unable to pay.”
- April 29, 2004:** By a unanimous vote, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passes an amendment as part of its FY2005 budget that lays the foundation for a universal program of voluntary, high-quality early childhood education and care for all preschool children in the state. Speaker Finneran characterizes the House vote as “a commitment to a cause, and a commitment to a structure and an organization that will advance that cause.”

- May 21, 2004:** The Senate completes debate on its FY2005 budget with a unanimous affirmation of its own early education and care proposal that is complimentary to the plan passed by the House. Both bills call for creation of a new, consolidated and elevated Board of Early Education and Care and Department of Early Education and Care, which is what EEA's initiative called for. The Senate and House budgets head to a conference committee, and from there a final state budget will be sent to Governor Romney for his signature.
- July 23, 2004:** After the legislature rejects Governor Romney's amendment to this legislation—which would have placed the board and new department within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services – the governor signs the bill enacting what the EEA Campaign proposed and the legislature had passed.
- July 2005:** By then, a Board of Education and Care will be in place to administer the state's early education and care system; oversee a universal preschool program; develop school readiness evaluations and program evaluations; and oversee workforce development. A Commissioner of Early Education and Care will have been appointed by the board, and a new Department of Early Education and Care will exist.

Valuable Lessons:

An Act Establishing Early Education for All

- Develop a political strategy to campaign for an “idea” by basing the campaign on extensive research which includes polling of voters and a series of interviews with key opinion leaders.
- Keep legislators and other policymakers informed of the campaign’s goals and progress.
- Develop a statewide network of constituent supporters who will work to engage legislators as their attention and action are needed.

A New Idea Gathers Momentum

- Seek a common ground of interests and have those reflected in a framework and a set of guiding assumptions that will act as the campaign’s foundation and then evolve into the legislation’s guiding principles.
- Engage a variety of key stakeholders in developing the initial framework for the legislation.
- Bring organizations and key individuals together to learn from each other about the common ground they share on this issue and from which they can launch a unified campaign.

Constructing EEA’s Organizational Infrastructure

- It is important to keep the campaign “child focused” and frame issues involving public investment in children in pragmatic ways that help to make them politically viable.
- Work to bring about a paradigm shift in public views about learning and the role of education during children’s early years so that care of children is seen as encompassing a child’s learning.
- To lead such an effort requires that a person have political skills, fundraising ability, well-earned respect from the various stakeholders who belong to the coalition, and a willingness to take on management duties, at least in the beginning.
- In engaging top leaders from various sectors of the community as “advisors” to and “unlikely messengers” for the campaign, meetings must be well-organized, focused, issue- and information-driven, with opportunities for reflection and vision, and without wasted time.

The EEA Campaign Begins

- It is essential to engage frontline early education and care providers in the process of determining what issues the legislation should deal with and what the solutions might be.
- Listening to concerns of frontline experts, responding to them and keeping them informed is critical to building a grass-roots advocacy network to support passage of the bill.
- Mesh efforts to create grass-roots advocacy support with the ways in which “unlikely messengers” can be most useful to the campaign.

How Much Will ‘It’ Cost?

- Don’t try to figure out the cost of a new program until a coalition of stakeholders arrives at a consensus about what the program is going to look like and how it is going to function.
- Don’t have those who regulate early education and care programs sitting at the table with those whom they oversee and fund when trying to devise a fresh and creative approach to these issues.
- Do keep state agency officials apprised of what is going on in the campaign and with the proposed legislation. And seek their counsel as the campaign progresses.

Moving Beyond September 11, 2001

- Maintain an on-going relationship with grass-roots supporters, seeking their guidance at key junctures.
- When events force the altering of the campaign’s schedule, have the flexibility to adjust and use the time to create new opportunities for action and growth.
- Determine how best to capitalize on moments of political change.

Taking Stock and Moving Forward

- When the campaign leader absorbs too many internal operational responsibilities, then his/her effectiveness will likely begin to suffer.
- Determine how best within the organizational structure to handle the various management issues involved with funders.
- The campaign should not engage in old politics but seek out a new common ground that can be linked with a new political strategy.
- It is essential to create a “new table” for key leaders to sit at while developing legislation.

The Political Season Begins

- Seek out political opportunities to engage candidates in discussion and endorsement of the campaign’s political objectives.
- Engage and train a network of campaign supporters – involving those who have not been active before in the political process – and provide broad visibility to the issues at the earliest stage possible in election year politics.
- Develop an outside-the-state-house groundswell of support to draw attention to the issue before legislation reaches the statehouse.

Connecting with New Allies

- It is important strategically to bring into visible advocacy positions well-respected individuals – “unlikely allies” – who come from sectors of the community not normally associated at the statehouse with children’s issues.
- Communication about the campaign’s goals and strategy should be done, when possible, by people who are familiar to and respected by the audience with whom they are speaking. For example, business leaders should talk with other business leaders about early childhood education.
- Data that demonstrate verifiable results – not only anecdotal evidence – need to be used when arguing for the investment of public dollars.

The Policy Committee Sits at a New Table

- A committee of experts from the early education and care, K-12 and public policy communities need to be brought to a common table to work through the details of the legislation.
- For the coalition to stay united, representatives from various sectors must be willing to act not out of short-term self-interest but be willing to accept approaches that work in children’s long-term best interest.
- While concerns of frontline workers must be kept foremost in mind as legislation is drafted, what emerges must be a politically viable bill on which consensus from the coalition’s member organizations and supporters can be reached.

Testing Their Togetherness

- Working as a coalition, it is important that all parties feel as though they and their issues are treated fairly.
- Lines of communication between advisory and policy committee members and EEA staff must be kept open and accessible. When concerns develop, they must be addressed promptly and resolved to the satisfaction of all of the coalition’s members.
- It is important for those who are leading the advocacy effort to be willing to acknowledge mistakes and demonstrate a willingness to learn from problematic situations and institute changes.
- Understand and address the challenge of presenting a case for change to policymakers while remaining sensitive to the value of the on-going work of the early education and care community.

Fine Tuning the Legislation

- In developing a new paradigm of early childhood education and care issues, policy discussions – such as those about governance issues – will unearth tensions among those involved in child care and those in early education settings. Focus on finding common ground.
- Sort out and discuss what the functions of this new policy ought to be written into the legislation and which should be well-communicated in directives to legislators.
- Present a clear long-term vision, but also include low/no cost planning provisions that legislators can use to construct the infrastructure for a universal system to be built on the work of existing programs.
- Use research to inform decision-making, including experiences and ideas from other states, as well as finding effective local “models” in your state and proposing their expansion to statewide use.

Moving EEA’s Message In and Out

- Work to take legislative policies that are complex and transform them into accurate, clear and simpler messages for legislators, advocates, and the public. Provide advocates with information they can use to respond to frequently asked questions.
- Develop legislation using well-informed assessments of the political climate, and then set realistic expectations in supporters’ minds at each stage of the legislative process.
- Find ways to draw public and media attention to the legislation and increase awareness of the issues through such mechanisms as a paid media campaign.
- Always look for ways to allow legislative leaders, legislators and other public officials to “own” the initiative.

Keeping Early Childhood Education Center Stage

- During lulls in visible campaign activity, look for opportunities to keep supporters involved in events and advocacy efforts and update them on what might be less-visible signs of progress.
- Look for opportunities at the statehouse – such as participation on various task forces and appearances at staff and legislators’ briefings – to increase awareness and visibility of the bill and the issues.
- Continue working to expand and strengthen the constituent- based advocacy efforts by aggressively reaching out to various communities, and rely on guidance of supporters to identify key groups to contact.

Making the Case for High-Quality Early Childhood Education

- Engage key policymakers – including legislative leaders and other opinion leaders – in public events about the issues of early childhood education.
- To underscore important reasons why legislators should embrace a new program or approach, create ways to bring public awareness to these reasons by organizing a significant event to educate legislators and others about their validity.
- Have members of the campaign advisory committee serve as valued resources for legislators, such as having business leaders privately meet with legislative leaders to discuss possible ways of financing the campaign’s goals.

Early Childhood Education: Securing a Firm Foundation

- When confronted with rough spots during the bill’s journey through the legislature, seek guidance from those who worked together to produce the initial EEA bill – in the case of EEA, its policy committee members – in deciding how to strategically move the bill through the legislative process.
- When opportunity presents itself – as it did through a pending legal case about funding of Massachusetts K-12 public schools – determine if it makes strategic sense to become involved in a legal challenge. By joining in this legal action and filing an amicus brief for the plaintiffs, EEA positioned universal early childhood education to be regarded by the court as one of its recommended remedies.
- Keep good lines of communication open with lawmakers and state officials, and invite dialogue during times of key decision-making.
- Use the campaign’s database – created through community outreach – and various communication tools to keep supporters informed about ways they can be involved in what is happening at the statehouse. Be sure to thank them for their efforts in demonstrating support at times when it is needed. Include them in moments of celebration.

An Act Establishing Early Education for All

What began with a question – “How long would it take to get universal child care in Massachusetts?”—asked in 1998 of Margaret Blood, a political strategist for children, evolved over several years into a unique Early Education for All (EEA) Campaign to secure a commitment by the state legislature and governor to provide universal access to high-quality early childhood education and full school-day public school kindergarten for the state’s 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children.

Now, in December of 2002, EEA is submitting to legislators its proposed bill – “An Act Establishing Early Education for All.” Its 4,807 words represent the culmination of two years of vigorous community outreach and coalition building by the EEA Campaign, as well as many months of focused conversation and negotiation among the bill’s various stakeholders. The drafting of the EEA legislation took place in a well-structured process, facilitated by EEA’s research and policy staff. Decisions reached by the dedicated group of early education and care leaders who comprised EEA’s Policy Committee were both informed by and vetted by the broad community of stakeholders throughout the state.

On this second day of December, EEA’s 17-page bill resides in the rows of child-related bills on the horseshoe-shaped table in room 350 of the Massachusetts Statehouse. Before each new legislative term begins, the Legislative Children’s Caucus hosts a bill signing day. Today 60 bills, embracing issues ranging from child welfare to education and hunger to health care, are set out to await signatures of state senators and representatives who come here to sign their names on the bills they decide to co-sponsor.

The EEA bill already has secured the support of a powerful legislative leader in each chamber who has signed on to be its lead sponsor. In the House of Representatives, Peter Larkin, chairman of the Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, is its lead sponsor. [In the upcoming legislative session, Larkin will be named the assistant vice-chairman of the influential House Committee on Ways and Means.] In the Senate, Fred Berry, the longest serving member of the Senate is the bill’s lead sponsor. [As the bill works its way through this chamber, Berry will assume the role of majority leader.]

An Act Establishing Early Education for All (H.1828/S.239) is a bill that every legislator has likely heard something about. The Early Education for All Campaign – comprised of EEA’s small staff and several thousand well-organized supporters including an influential and politically savvy advisory committee – worked hard to keep legislators aware of its guiding principles, framework and long-term vision. At each stage of the campaign, well-coordinated efforts have been made to reinforce the message of EEA’s long-term goal of advancing the state from where it is today in its education and care of young children to where the bill’s proponents envision early childhood education being 10 years from now.

After the statewide elections in November of 2002, EEA sent a congratulatory letter to each of the elected and reelected legislators; 200 letters in all were sent to 40 senators and 160 representatives. Each was signed by EEA Campaign Director Margaret Blood and the two business leaders who serve as the co-chairs of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee, Paul O’Brien, president of The O’Brien Group, Inc. and former chairman of the New England Telephone Company, and Mara Aspinall, president of Genzyme Genetics. In the letters an invitation was issued to legislators to sign on as co-sponsors of the EEA bill and they were given politically viable reasons for doing so.

As this bill-signing day drew closer, other tactics in EEA’s legislators’ wooing strategy kicked in. From throughout the state, phone calls and e-mails came from constituents to ask their legislators to become co-sponsors. Creating such a powerful statewide network of supporters was part of the campaign’s initial strategic plan. The campaign’s grass-roots strength emerged as a result of 32 EEA-organized regional forums and 60 public meetings that were held statewide during two years that EEA sought input from frontline education and care workers and parents in shaping the goals and articulating the policies contained in the legislation. Often as

Margaret speaks about the EEA Campaign she reminds listeners that “powerless children need powerful friends.” With EEA staff providing advocacy training and guidance, soon early education and care providers, business, civic, health, religious, and labor leaders began to use their influence as a coalition of advocates to work on behalf of the campaign.

At one o’clock on this December afternoon the doors of room 350 are opened to invite legislators in. Seated along the room’s perimeter, close enough to hear some of what’s being said as legislators circle the table, are Amy Kershaw, EEA’s Research and Policy Director, and Christine Lopes, EEA’s Field Director. During the morning, EEA had left reminder postcards about this bill at each legislator’s office. As the representatives and senators come into the room, Christine glimpses EEA’s distinctive logo of two children looking at a globe in the postcards some of them are carrying. She watches as a few stop to speak with the caucus’s director, Maureen Ferris, and inquire where to find the EEA bill. Christine overhears one senator saying to Ferris: “I’m signing onto this bill because constituents called me to say they’re involved in this campaign.”

Hearing such sentiments convinces Christine that the campaign’s “outside-the-building strategy” is working. Since she joined the EEA Campaign 16 months earlier, her job has been to make certain a diverse, yet united chorus of voices from outside the statehouse are heard within it.

Hearing such sentiments convinces Christine that the campaign’s “outside-the-building strategy” is working. Since she joined the EEA Campaign 16 months earlier, her job has been to make certain a diverse, yet united chorus of voices from outside the statehouse are heard within it. What she does to make this happen differs little in its approach from what she did on political campaigns when the goal was to elect a public official. This time, however, her candidate is an idea and to “elect” this idea means that she works with her EEA colleagues to adapt effective strategies of political campaigns to this endeavor.

To this end, Christine has been recruiting a network of “legislative captains,” including an EEA backer in each of the state’s legislative districts. These captains – with assistance from EEA – make sure that supportive constituent calls and correspondence reach each legislator at key moments like this one. When she overheard what this senator said to Ferris, she knows EEA’s legislative captain – in this case, a child care director from a town called Uxbridge – deserves (and will receive) praise for a job well done.

At 4:00, the bill-signing session ends. When the bill is filed two days later, 55 percent of members of the state legislature are listed as sponsors, including 61 percent of Democrats and 24 percent of Republicans. In each chamber, a majority of members are sponsoring the EEA bill, providing it with a propitious launch into a legislative journey that will likely be long and difficult, and at times even discouraging for its supporters.

But in the hopeful afterglow of the bill’s impressive start, Christine says of this day that “it was exciting to see that our campaign strategies are working.”

A New Idea Gathers Momentum

It seems only fitting for legislators to sign on as sponsors to EEA’s bill in Room 350 of the Massachusetts Statehouse, for it was in this room two years earlier that the equivalent of EEA’s baby shower took place.

On the morning of October 24, 2000, Margaret Blood and those working with her on the nascent Early Education for All Campaign – a strategic, coalition-building effort to win state government support for young children’s universal access to high-quality early childhood education – convene a two-hour meeting that is critical to this campaign’s healthy launch. Invited to it are key early childhood education and care practitioners and advocates from throughout the state. Prior to this gathering, it wasn’t clear that the idea of constructing a statewide grass-roots campaign to advance this issue politically would find a unified and receptive home among the varied education and care constituencies. In the past, these two communities had not always been able to present a unified message when it came time to push legislative requests.

Margaret arrives at the Massachusetts Statehouse feeling exhausted after a restless sleep. She’s done extensive planning for this meeting, including the execution of two statewide voter polls, expansive interviews with key opinion-leader, and many lengthy discussions about these issues with many of the people invited to this meeting. She also brings to this meeting many years of experience in political work on various children’s issues and extensive current research on early childhood education. Nonetheless, as Margaret tried to sleep, worries kept her awake as she considered the possible factors that

might prevent people from agreeing to support (and become involved in) this campaign.

Can these early childhood education and care leaders reach agreement on a common set of guidelines and a legislative framework to use as a road map for this journey? Many of them are fierce advocates for their own early childhood education and care programs. With public dollars already scarce in funding young children’s initiatives, advocates often find themselves

– not by intent, but by circumstance – battling those who will be sitting next to them at this EEA meeting. To operate their programs, these leaders depend on particular state agencies and funding streams. But if the EEA vision of universal access to high-quality programs is realized, there is not one person attending this meeting who would not need, in some way, to adapt to an altered landscape. The only thing certain about embarking on a

path toward change is its uncertainty, and that can be unsettling.

For the EEA Campaign to succeed, each of the organizations and groups represented by this meeting’s participants will need to subsume some of its own political agenda into the broader goals and strategies of this effort. They must be willing to act as members of a coalition whose unity will be its strength. While everyone in this room can agree with the need to do a better job of readying children for school, arguments often ensue when the focus turns to deciding who should do this – families, child care providers, private preschools, public preschool programs, Head Start – and what, if any, role government should play in oversight of these efforts, and how the cost of doing this will be paid.

For the EEA Campaign to succeed, each of the organizations and groups represented by this meeting’s participants will need to subsume some of its own political agenda into the broader goals and strategies of this effort.

Once when Margaret mentioned her plan of creating such a unified campaign to one of the state’s powerful legislators, he was incredulous. “You are not going to try to get those people to work together,” he remarked. “It will never happen.”

And when she mentioned this plan at a meeting, an academic, contemplating the prospect of merging these usually disparate entities, asked Margaret, “What do they have in common?”

“At a minimum, they have children,” Margaret replied.

To underscore how essential it is to find ways for adults to put aside their differences and unite to help children, Margaret often shares these stories.

How and Why to Create the EEA Campaign

On this Tuesday morning, Margaret asks her guests to step away from their customary statehouse stances and become engaged in a new strategic political campaign to gain universal access to high-quality early childhood education for all 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in Massachusetts. She has with her a four-pronged plan to share her vision of how together they might be able to accomplish what must seem to some an all but impossible task. It is certainly not something that’s been attempted before in this state.

The four key strategies include:

- Engage influential new allies for children to work in partnership with early childhood education and care advocates. Leaders from the business, labor, health, elementary and higher education and religious communities – whose clout often is not tapped as public policy advocates for preschool-aged children will play important roles in the EEA Campaign. They will be called upon to advise the campaign staff and to act as advocates for passage of the campaign’s legislation. Margaret calls these new allies “unlikely messengers,” and her experiences with children’s legislation has demonstrated the value of their involvement.

- Create and build statewide constituent support for a public policy initiative that ensures that 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds have access to high-quality early childhood education programs. Grass-roots support will be garnered by continuous outreach to early childhood advocates and parents throughout the state through regional forums, development of local leadership and the training of advocates, and the establishment of various means of reliable communication, including a database, newsletter and Web site.
- Strengthen support for legislative action by developing a statewide media campaign to educate the public about the benefits of high-quality early childhood education. In her second statewide voter poll, Margaret learned that as voters become aware of what scientific research shows are benefits for children of early childhood education, they are more willing to support the investment of public dollars in early childhood education for 3-, 4- and 5-year olds. This willingness among voters to invest more public dollars was not found when the issue was defined as child care.
- The campaign will also advocate for research and evaluation so that it can be demonstrated to Massachusetts’ taxpayers how dollars put into high-quality early childhood education affect long-term measurable outcomes in children. And, in turn, there will be efforts made to determine what role this new educational asset plays in a state’s economic growth.

The Conversation Begins

By 10:00 about 50 state leaders representing the early education and care community are seated and sharing introductions. During the preceding six months, each participant has spoken with a member of EEA’s four-person consultant research team, which is made up of policy experts from local childcare organizations and directed by EEA Research and Policy Director Amy Kershaw, who arrived at EEA with political experience and a public policy background in early childhood issues. These conversations unearthed a wide range of ideas about

the who, what, where, when, why and hows of achieving EEA’s goal of universal access. By combining these suggestions with their own research, Margaret, Amy and the EEA consultant team, as well as key advisors involved in designing and evaluating the voter polls, sketched a preliminary legislative framework for the meeting.

Soon this framework will be unveiled, and it will be learned whether there is agreement among the participants to move ahead. Those at this meeting will be asked to pass along cautionary advice if they see in this initial framework structural or political impediments to the campaign’s viability.

Margaret explains how the framework was created, as she shares what she’s learned from the two statewide voter polls and opinion-leader interviews she’s conducted. Gathering this vital information has been Margaret’s focus since her late-1998 discussion with the Cambridge (MA)-based Schott Foundation then-President, Greg Jobin-Leeds. It was in this meeting that Jobin-Leeds asked her, “Since you got universal health care for children in one year, how long would it take to get universal child care in Massachusetts?”

Margaret responded by reminding Jobin-Leeds that achieving universal access to health insurance for Massachusetts’ children had been a seven-year, incrementally-won political struggle, one in which she’d been part of a broad and diverse coalition. A valuable lesson taken from that experience was the need to form new and broader advocacy coalitions for children’s issues that include business leaders whom legislators don’t normally regard as being children’s allies. [For more on the engagement of business leaders in public policy advocacy for children see “Business Leaders as Legislative Advocates for Children,” by Margaret Blood and Melissa Ludtke, February 2000. This paper can be found on the Foundation for Child Development Web site,

www.fcd-us.org or on the Strategies For Children Web site, www.strategiesforchildren.org]

To achieve universal child care, Margaret told Jobin-Leeds, “a bold strategy, informed by research” would be required. Among the questions Margaret would want answered before launching such a campaign were these:

- How much child care is needed?
- How much will it cost?
- Who cares about child care, and who is in a position to do something about it?
- Who has the political clout to get this done?
- Who cares about child care in the business community?
- Who cares about child care in the labor community?
- Where are the media on these issues?
- What about the Catholic Church? (An important consideration in Massachusetts where about 70 percent of state legislators are Catholic.)
- Where are the political cognoscente in Massachusetts on child care?

A valuable lesson taken from that experience was the need to form new and broader advocacy coalitions for children’s issues that include business leaders whom legislators don’t normally regard as being children’s allies.

By polling 400 voters (rather than doing a public opinion poll) and linking those results to ideas that emerged in 48 one-on-one interviews with opinion leaders from business, media, organized labor, education, child care and religion, Margaret believed it would be possible to discern what goals were desirable and obtainable and then devise a political strategy to obtain them. Seven organizations (six foundations and one child care agency) agreed to fund her preparatory work; her findings were published in “Our Youngest Children: Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education.” [This report is available at

www.fcd-us.org and www.strategiesforchildren.org.] Ruth Bowman, who was then Schott’s child care program officer, said of Margaret’s decision to systematically learn about child care as a statewide political issue, that “her approach taught us the importance of funding strategic research as a base for action.”

Joining the Campaign

At this morning’s meeting, Bowman’s observation will be tested. Will the polling results and ideas generated by them be enough to convince these individuals to act politically as a coalition for change?

Margaret describes her polls’ findings and where those findings have led her thinking. Among the key opinion leaders, Margaret discovered little enthusiasm for supporting a significant public investment in child care. Business leaders, in particular, delivered a clear message: “If you want to involve us in child care,” they said, “show us a link to education.” The message she heard from them was echoed in the voters’ polls. While child care ranked near the bottom of voters’ concerns, education consistently was at the top.

After studying the first poll’s findings, Margaret’s pollster, a person who often conducts polls for political candidates, told her: “If you want to make headway on this issue, you need to show that investments in child care can improve public education.”

To test this advice, Margaret commissioned a second voter poll to explore what people knew about young children’s learning and their readiness for school, and hear their responses to various approaches toward early childhood education. After the pollster told voters about brain researchers’ findings about extensive learning during children’s early years, voters were asked whether knowing this made a difference in their interest in or willingness to support public investment in early childhood education. To some extent, it did. These polls also unearthed a large majority of voters who say they feel strongly that the responsibility for the care of very young children rests with families. However, when children

are 3-, 4- and 5-years old, voters are more inclined to support public investment in educational programs that improve children’s school readiness.

The core message of the polls and interviews, Margaret assures her guests, is unequivocal and worth acting upon. The window of opportunity to make political progress on issues of early childhood education and care opens more widely for 3-, 4- and 5-year old children. But this window stays open only when what takes place is demonstrably able to be linked with an improvement in children’s educational prospects. Whatever EEA proposes must help all children become more prepared to enter the primary grades and to do better once they are there.

Margaret assures those gathered here this morning that political success for children will come only by following the voters’ guidance. She also lets them know that this campaign will be a political one in the sense that “our candidate is children, and our goal is their access to high-quality early childhood education.”

Introducing the Campaign’s Building Blocks

It is now Amy Kershaw’s turn to present the draft framework and guiding assumptions from which EEA wants to begin developing a legislative initiative. “We want this effort to be informed and framed by your experiences and ideas, as well as by their political viability,” Amy tells the assembled guests, as she refers them to the framework handout and to a list of guiding principles on the easel in the front of the room.

Proposed Framework for Policy/Legislative Initiative

1. Eligibility
2. Settings for Service Delivery
3. Services, Hours and Program Options
4. Building Capacity
 - Staffing (e.g., training, compensation, etc.)
 - Facilities
5. State and Local Governance/Administration

6. Accountability

- Quality assurance (e.g., program standards, accreditation, curriculum frameworks, curriculum and/or child outcome measures)
- Research, evaluation and data collection

7. Implementation

- Options/strategies for phasing-in

8. Financing

Guiding Assumptions

- Serve 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds
- Voluntary, maximizing parental choice
- Build on Community Partnerships Program
- Mixed system: private, public, for profit, non-profit
- Full-day, full-year/part-time option
- Phased-in over many years
- Involve research for education
- Licensed care

Clearly, this framework and assumptions represent just a starting point for what EEA hopes will be a fruitful and wide-ranging give-and-take process of conversation and negotiation. In fact, over time, these two documents – the framework and the guiding assumptions – evolve and their content is merged to become the campaign’s guiding principles which serve as the firm foundation upon which EEA’s legislation is written.

Any number of questions could be asked this morning about difficult issues that populate every line of this framework and guiding assumptions. To determine how any of these issues will be resolved within proposed legislation is beyond the intent and scope of this initial gathering. Instead Amy seeks feedback by asking, “Did we get the framework right?”

Ideas, comments and questions surface, and Amy records the key points in bold, brightly colored markers on the easel paper.

This approach of starting with a proposed framework and a list of guiding assumptions, then relying on guidance from stakeholders is the process EEA intends to follow when it sets up regional forums across the state to talk with those who provide early education and care. In fact, no EEA community forum or meeting will be held without someone on the EEA staff – usually Amy – saying the following words: “We are here to hear from you. We are here to be the translators and interpreters of what you tell us about your experiences with and thoughts about these issues.”

Along the way there will be those, including some here today, who believe that Margaret already has a bill in mind to accomplish this objective. As the EEA Campaign gains in its visibility, Margaret will be asked in jesting, yet probing ways, “Why don’t you just pull the bill out of your desk drawer and show it to us?” But the fact remains that no bill will exist until “experts” who work in the early education and care communities share their concerns about how state policy now works and provide input and ideas for changes they believe can bring about positive changes for children. The campaign’s objective is to harness this information and ideas so the bill reflects the daily experiences of those who now provide early education and care and offers workable solutions for the problems that they identify. This will happen when the campaign staff goes out to hear from frontline workers as the first step in developing the legislation. This approach will also serve as the campaign’s initial step in building a statewide constituency for these changes, and this will become critical to the campaign’s success when the time arrives for political action on behalf of the bill’s passage. Only after these frontline comments and ideas have been collected and considered will a campaign policy committee – comprised of the state’s early education and care leaders – meet regularly to take what’s been learned from the field and work to craft a politically viable bill that reflects these views and experiences and sets forth policy directions for improvement.

At this morning's meeting several concerns and cautions are voiced. With increased emphasis on standardized testing of students, one person suggests that if accountability measures are to be created for early childhood education programs they should include – if not emphasize – social and emotional measures as well as the academic. Another person wonders how this effort at improving the learning opportunities for 3-, 4- and 5-year olds can be connected to what happens in the out-of-home care of infants and toddlers. A child care advocate alerts EEA that a lot about education of preschoolers is disconnected from legislative oversight because almost two-thirds of the state's children who are in preschool programs attend private ones. "These preschools are very happy to be separated from the state," this child care administrator says. "Many of them will see this effort as big government coming in and telling them what to do." Added to this is the difficulty of convincing middle- and upper-income parents – key voters whose children are likely to attend many of these private preschools – of the need for increasing public expenditures in this area. Given this situation, EEA is urged to work to bring private-sector educators into this coalition while the bill is being written as a way of avoiding their opposition to it later on.

Noon approaches, the scheduled time for this meeting to end. Amid concerns raised, there has also been great enthusiasm expressed for moving ahead with this campaign. In summing up what she's heard, Margaret observes that improving the abilities of those who care for and educate young children – helping them to acquire the teaching skills and resources they need – must be a central objective of this effort. However, she cautions that "we can't go to legislators and sell this as a full employment wage bill for child care providers. We need to frame it as investing in those who educate our young children."

In summing up what she's heard, Margaret observes that improving the abilities of those who care for and educate young children – helping them to acquire the teaching skills and resources they need – must be a central objective of this effort.

Getting the Green Light

When the meeting ends, individuals seek Margaret out to offer words of encouragement or to pass along in confidence thoughts they didn't make during the meeting. It is Margaret's gift – or as she will find as the campaign expands, perhaps her curse – to be regarded as one of only a few children's advocates who has the broad vision and ability to find political strength and common ground in places others might not think to look. One child care advocate who has worked with Margaret on other legislative initiatives refers to her as a "strategic gemstone." Because of her leadership skills – and the desire so many have to move the early childhood education issue from a wish list to a reality – this person says that when Margaret stepped forward to lead this effort "it was essential that we be part of this process."

Leadership is critical for a campaign of this scope, intensity and duration. Driving such a bold and massive effort forward would not be possible for someone who hadn't already won the respect of members of the various constituencies whose involvement and support is essential to making this happen.

In her previous work on behalf of children's issues, Margaret has demonstrated to an ever-widening audience her ability to bring disparate parties to a common table and unify them around an idea and plan whose goals are deemed worthy enough to push self-interest down and unify behind a common cause.

Margaret is relieved that what kept her awake last night hasn't happened this morning. But as EEA's campaign gets a green light to proceed, Margaret takes on the difficult and multiple tasks of constructing this new coalition. In time, she will also be the one who is looked to as the person to mediate its inevitable internal struggles. And she must do this while she manages and grows the infrastructure behind this cutting-edge public policy work, including overseeing

her EEA staff, developing Strategies for Children, Inc., the non-profit organization she is creating to house the EEA Campaign, and seeking financial support necessary for this expensive multi-year effort. Given Margaret's rising visibility as a political strategist for children's issues both in this state and nationally, she will also be called on to speak and advise people interested in working politically on behalf of children.

Through all of this, Margaret's skills will be tested in new ways. In what will turn out to be a longer effort than the anticipated two years to file an EEA bill at the Massachusetts Statehouse, there will be moments when, feeling overwhelmed by all she must corral and all she is responsible for managing, Margaret will question if the extraordinary amount of time and energy she will need to devote to this campaign is worth it.



Constructing EEA's Organizational Infrastructure

Emanating from the middle of the EEA Campaign's organizational chart – from the central box containing Margaret Blood's name – are a lot of lines. These lines connect with other lines that end in boxes containing job titles. In the fall of 2000, only a few titles are attached to names, and many of those names belong to consultants. In a few months, names that are there today will be gone and, in time, be replaced with others, some of whom will join the campaign as full-time staff. In only two staff boxes will the name and title remain the same during the EEA Campaign – Margaret, the campaign's director, and Amy Kershaw, who oversee its research and policy work. Another constant on the chart is the person whose name lies above Margaret's. That name belongs to Paul O'Brien, a prominent Boston business leader who will serve as co-chair of the EEA Campaign and chair the board of Strategies for Children, Inc.

This snapshot of EEA in its early days offers a good glimpse at the organizational tasks involved in transforming an idea – securing universal access to high-quality early childhood education – into a successful political movement. To do this requires that a small, effective organization of energetic and versatile workers must be constructed and funds raised to compensate them and cover the expenses of running a visible campaign capable of convincing key constituencies throughout the state to join the effort. Building and maintaining such an infrastructure is hard and demanding work.

As EEA sets out on this campaign, no reliable road map exists to guide its work. In its creation, operation and experiences, the EEA Campaign will be creating a map that others engaged in children's public policy might be able to use in their states.

One new location on EEA's map involves the creation of a "neutral" non-profit organization, separate from but very much related to the work of the EEA campaign. Margaret realized early on that EEA's

success would depend to a large extent on its ability to manage of a variety of constituency groups and funders with differing agendas. Once it is set up, Strategies for Children, Inc. becomes an essential tool in overseeing the daily work of the campaign and serves a key role in developing long-term visions of how best to support this kind of public policy work in Massachusetts, in other states, and on the national level.

To create Strategies for Children, Inc., Margaret relies on the mentorship and support of Arnold Hiatt, Chairman of the Stride Rite Foundation and former CEO and Chairman of Stride Rite Corporation. Hiatt helps her to secure office space for the campaign at the Law Offices of Goulston and Storrs, where his own foundation offices are located, which is in a building that is convenient to the statehouse and to the city's downtown offices. The rent is set at a rate affordable for a non-profit organization. He also helps in guiding Margaret to legal assistance in establishing Strategies for Children, Inc. (SFC) from the law firm of Haitt and Hoke. By July of 2001, SFC receives its 501(c)(3) status and becomes the "official" home of the Early Education for All Campaign.

Building EEA's Campaign Advisory Committee

To succeed in this effort, Margaret knows that young children and the issue of high-quality early childhood education must have working for them what every successful political candidate needs – a dedicated staff and devoted cadre of volunteers, as well as a circle of trusted advisors whose counsel and willingness to use their influence within the political arena can be relied upon. Bringing these elements together and keeping them unified will require the wise and strategic use of a broad range of political and managerial skills by the campaign's leadership.

Three weeks before the important October gathering of key experts at the statehouse (See Chapter 2 of

this report), Margaret convened the first meeting of the EEA Campaign’s newly formed 25-member Campaign Advisory Committee. This gathering took place around a large conference room table at Goulston & Storrs. Serving on this committee – which expands to meet needs as the campaign progresses – are people whom Margaret regards as the campaign’s “trusted advisors.” They are leaders who represent important constituency groups with statewide influence. For example, the Catholic Church’s legislative lobbyist (a large percentage of state legislators are Catholic) is at this initial meeting, and as the campaign progresses, he will be joined by leaders of other faiths. Health care leaders, such as the president of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, will serve on the committee, as will business leaders representing such powerful groups as the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts High Technology Council and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, as well as top officials from organized labor, such as the treasurer of the Massachusetts AFL/CIO.

Many also served on an advisory committee that Margaret put together to offer guidance for the initial polling work that led to the formation of this campaign, so they arrive at this meeting familiar with the campaign’s roots and objectives. At the table, too, are key individuals from the early education and care communities. It is from this mosaic of talent and perspectives that a powerful political coalition will emerge to work on behalf of children. Each of these individuals will offer helpful guidance during the campaign’s decision-making times and bring the political heft of their own influence and that of their affiliated organizations when EEA’s legislation reaches the statehouse.

Each person who serves as a member of EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee will be looked to for guidance on particular facets of the campaign. Many of those with expertise in early education and care will become directly involved in writing the EEA bill as they serve on the campaign’s policy committee. Along with the advisory committee, these “policy experts” will sign off on the final bill before it goes

to the legislature, then work as powerful advocates – and in many cases as unlikely messengers – to win its passage at the statehouse and with the governor. Even before the bill is filed, many committee members will meet, speak and write to policymakers and attend events at the statehouse and elsewhere to bring visibility to this issue. Each will garner important organizational endorsements for the EEA Campaign in support of its bill. Margaret will also ask some to help identify financial and in-kind resources for the campaign.

Three or four times each year, EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee meets to assess the campaign’s progress and learn about the political climate surrounding this issue. Because committee members come from different regions of the state, where they meet changes. Most of the committee’s gatherings will be held at places where examples of high-quality early education and care can be observed. At the start of each meeting participants learn about what is involved in providing high-quality early education and care as they interact with teachers and children and are reminded of the objective they share in being part of the EEA Campaign. After all, their commitment to improving children’s early learning experiences is what unifies them in this effort.

Seated at the head of the table at this first meeting of the advisory committee is EEA Campaign Chair, Paul O’Brien, the former chairman of New England Telephone, who is now president of the Boston-based telecommunications consulting firm, The O’Brien Group, Inc. He and Margaret worked together on the Success By 6 legislative campaign of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay from 1995-1997 which she directed. In that effort, business leaders, including Paul O’Brien, became prominent advocates with policymakers for passage of three child-focused bills. Under Margaret’s direction, these business leaders, acting in coalition with leaders from other sectors of the community, played a key role in winning passage of the bill that put in place the final building blocks to make possible universal access to health insurance for the state’s children.

After witnessing the positive impact of his involvement as a business leader advocating for children’s public policy changes, Paul accepted Margaret’s invitation to be a co-chair of the EEA Campaign and also to chair the board of Strategies for Children, Inc. During the next few months, Margaret and Paul agree that he will work to find a business leader, preferably from the high-technology or biotechnology sector of the economy, to serve with him as EEA’s co-chair. Relying on his extensive network of business contacts, he succeeds. By the time the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee convenes in May 2001, Mara Aspinall, the president Genzyme Genetics, a large Boston-based biotechnology company, and parent of school-age children, is alongside Paul at the head of the table.

Mara is drawn to the EEA Campaign by her desire to use the visibility her professional standing gives her to improve children’s early education and care. From making strategic business decisions at Genzyme, she knows that strong connections exist between a state’s climate for attracting business and its ability to educate its children, including its younger ones. As the campaign progresses, Mara marries two aspects of her life – her business experience combines with her knowledge as a parent about the benefits of high-quality early childhood education – and assumes an increasingly visible role in the state as she speaks and writes about the need for public investment in early childhood education. Along with Paul, she plays a significant “inside the building” role at the statehouse, as they meet (at times accompanied by other advisory committee members) with key legislators and members of the governor’s administration to discuss aspects of the bill. Legislators seek their advice, in particular,

about approaches to financing the program, and they testify on behalf of the EEA legislation.

The Value of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee

Paul opens the initial meeting of EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee with a clear and concise message. “Our focus is on pragmatism,” he declares. Pragmatism means the EEA Campaign must set

obtainable goals, then come up with a politically viable bill. Going to the legislature with what everyone at this table might agree are good ideas accompanied by requests for more public dollars – without doing so in a strategic and thoughtful way – won’t work. Nor will it work to substitute the words “early childhood education” for what is now funded as “child care.” Instead, one of the EEA Campaign’s most important tasks will be to work strategically to bring about a paradigm shift in the public’s and in legislators’ thinking about the value and the benefits of high-quality early education and care. “We need the public to understand these early years are not about warehousing kids,” is how he puts it.

The idea was not to push the responsibility of teaching on to the parents, but to identify the strengths and challenges of each child by building a holistic perspective of his or her learning. The Family Partnership Agreement plans, parents’ guides, and early learning tool kits helped facilitate such relationships by giving parents and teachers a common language and structure in which to learn from each other.

At a different advisory committee meeting Paul once again emphasizes the core elements of the campaign, describing it as “child-centric, pragmatic, executable.” Choosing words deliberately, he leaves no doubt in the minds of those who hear them that policymakers will be receiving from this campaign a different message than they are accustomed to hearing when it comes to the education and care of young children. Keenly aware that perceptions matter, words people associated with EEA use and strategies the campaign employs must be mindful of both what young children need and how requests for action appear to voters

and policymakers. “We can’t afford to have this look like a ‘more pay for child care workers act,’” Paul says, even though he knows that for this to succeed for the children, the competency and wages for those who will educate them must rise.

For advisory committee meetings, EEA staff prepare the agenda in consultation with the campaign’s co-chairs. Time set aside for each agenda item is, for the most part, observed strictly; meetings begin and end on time in respect for the time busy people volunteer to this effort. Information relevant to EEA is shared, including updates on federal and state budgets, with much of that news about cutbacks in early education and care programs, as well as reports about what is happening with early childhood education initiatives and programs in other states. Updates are given about EEA Campaign strategy and upcoming events, and guidance from committee members is avidly sought.

Beginning with its second gathering in January 2001, each advisory committee meeting contains a presentation about a policy aspect of the EEA initiative. These presentations serve to educate members of the committee who are not experts in early education and care. They focus on such topics as workforce development strategies, emphasizing approaches to improving the skills of the early childhood education workforce in Massachusetts, and also on the distinct challenges in getting full-day public school kindergarten to exist in every Massachusetts school district. At each meeting, plenty of opportunity is provided to review aspects of the bill as it takes shape, and at an advisory committee meeting held soon after the EEA bill is filed, its chief sponsors, Senator Fred Berry and Representative Peter Larkin, offer valuable guidance about how best to push parts of the legislation forward during difficult economic times.

Keenly aware that perceptions matter, words people associated with EEA use and strategies the campaign employs must be mindful of both what young children need and how requests for action appear to voters and policymakers.

The initial policy presentation focuses advisory committee members’ attention on recent findings about the scientific underpinnings of children’s early learning. For almost an hour, Dr. Jack Shonkoff, dean of the Heller School at Brandeis University, speaks and responds to questions about how these findings can be used effectively to inform public policy efforts such as theirs. His talk is based on an investigation he chaired at the National Academy of Sciences and the book that resulted from it, “From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.” Only a few committee members know a lot about these aspects of child

development, so his presentation works to acquaints them with ways in which this current research can inform their campaign.

Comments and questions illuminate the benefit of hearing this kind of information. Paul asks the first question, indicating his eagerness to corral facts to help him make a strong case to policymakers for public investment in early childhood

education. “Is there evidence of a sustained cognitive difference in children because of intervening early?” he asks. “I need that information in my quiver.”

“It’s an issue of timing, duration and intensity, so the answer isn’t clear,” Shonkoff replies. “In some instances, there is strong evidence, such as with hearing and vision. In some areas, we have no evidence about starting early. Where evidence is strongest is when kids are most vulnerable. That’s when early intervention delivers the biggest bang... but science says that if high-quality services are targeted, we do get a big pay-off. The most vulnerable kids are our best investment.”

With high-profile education reform measures stressing student improvement in academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools, Paul acknowledges that “the easier the cognitive argument is to make, the easier it will be to advocate [for this].”

Hearing Paul speak about academic achievement, a committee member who works in early education and care joins the conversation. She wants Paul and others who aren't in this field to focus, too, on what Shonkoff said about early learning experiences being as much about young children's emotional and social development as they are about cognitive growth. "We need to find ways to incorporate and elevate this kind of information and its implications when we talk about early childhood education," she says. Another educator then observes that when those who work in these fields bring this kind of evidence to legislators, "we don't have the same credibility in saying this as scientists or business leaders." This is why she is delighted that the business leaders at the table are hearing this information and thinking about ways they can deliver it to legislators.

To some, it might seem odd that legislators ascribe more credibility to information like this when business leaders, or others from outside the field, deliver it. But in a study that Margaret directed for the State Legislative Leaders Foundation during the early 1990s this pattern was confirmed. [See www.sllf.org/pdf/childrensreport.pdf] According to this study, legislative leaders, who are often still predominantly men, tend to regard those who care for and educate young children as advocating in their self-interest, such as wanting to improve their compensation, rather than speaking in the interest of children when they arrive at the statehouse to talk about public policy changes needed to improve the quality of children's early learning opportunities. On the other hand, business leaders are regarded by legislators as being informed advocates acting without self-interest on this issue.

A few months later at a community forum with early education and care providers, EEA Research and Policy Director Amy Kershaw shares this advisory committee exchange with her audience. She uses it to illustrate the value of building this diverse coalition of campaign supporters. She also tells them about a recent discussion Paul had with a legislative leader after the advisory committee meeting. "I heard him [Paul] say to this legislator that children knowing letters and numbers is important but early childhood education is also about the children's social and emotional development." Amy's smile, as she tells this story, testifies to her delight in hearing Paul say this.

When child advocates work in coalition with "unlikely messengers," they learn from each other, and as they do, their collaborative effort becomes a powerful force for children. As this happens, tensions that might otherwise corrode these relationships tend to dissipate. But they don't disappear completely. As the EEA Campaign advances, tensions surface. However, it is among those in the early education and care communities, whose daily lives and concerns reside closest to the politics and reality of these issues, where most of these tensions reside.

The EEA Campaign’s Community Outreach Begins

By December 11, 2000, when the Early Education for All Campaign holds the first of its regional forums in Boston to seek guidance from the frontline experts who work in early education and care programs in developing an EEA bill, early childhood education seems an issue whose time might have finally arrived, even though public dollars to support the vision aren’t yet there.

Significant scientific findings on brain development linking children’s early learning to the stimuli they receive from their environments are being absorbed by the public at the same time that educational accountability and improved student performance in school are dominating political efforts at school reform. As a result, policymakers are becoming more comfortable with framing what happens during children’s early years as being about improving their future success with learning. And the words “early childhood education” are being used more frequently to describe what ought to be taking place in children’s lives in the years before they enter first grade.

In at least 40 states, public policy activity of varying degrees is occurring with early childhood education. However, only three states – Georgia, New Jersey and Oklahoma – provide universal access to pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year olds. In these states and a few others in which serious levels of public investment have been made in early childhood education, a governor, legislative leader or an order by the court has been the primary force in making this happen. Still, in too few states are governors or legislative leaders willing to extend their political capital to bring this issue at the top of the public policy agenda and engage in difficult battles about committing necessary public dollars. In part, this is because improving the quality of early education and care has not yet become an issue for which inattention and inaction by policymakers translates into a loss of votes at election time.

Some states have demonstrated leadership in early childhood education.

- In Georgia a voter-approved state lottery, backed by then-Governor Zell Miller, generated funds to support a universal program to provide high-quality early childhood education programs for the state’s 4-year olds. Based on parental choice, nearly 70 percent of the eligible children attend.
- In Oklahoma, the legislature established a universal pre-kindergarten program and paid for it by making early childhood education a part of the state’s K-12 funding. Sixty-five percent of this state’s 4-year olds participate in this public school system, in which teachers must have a B.A. degree, be certified in early childhood education and receive the same compensation as other public school teachers.
- In New York, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver was the political force behind the creation of a pre-kindergarten initiative with the goal of bringing early childhood educational programs into every region of the state. A subsequent lack of legislative funding means that Silver’s vision has been considerably scaled back.
- In New Jersey, the state highest court mandated public funding for high-quality early childhood education in the state’s poorer school districts as part of its resolution of a public school funding case.
- In November 2002, 58.6 percent of voters in Florida gave their support to a constitutional amendment to ensure free “high quality” pre-kindergarten education for all of the state’s 4-year olds by 2005.

In Massachusetts, the EEA Campaign is about creating a statewide political environment in which the issue of universal access to high-quality early childhood education will be pushed to the top of the legislature’s and governor’s agenda by a broad and

influential advocacy coalition. This will be done by developing grass-roots political strength among constituency groups throughout the state and combining that support with the strategic use of “unlikely messengers,” who are civic and business leaders not normally expected to be frontline advocates for children’s legislation. The content of the legislation and the energy to advocate for its passage will rise from the ground up, while at the same time key policymakers and opinion leaders will be kept informed and involved. Backing the campaign’s objectives will be the distribution of solid scientific, educational and economic evidence of the value and benefits of high-quality early childhood education.

In no other state has this kind of strategic approach been used to secure universal access to high-quality early childhood education. Florida’s 2002 ballot referendum, approved by voters just before the EEA legislation is filed, provides an interesting contrast, displaying the differences and potential drawbacks of its approach to pushing this issue as a ballot referendum. When citizens tell legislators and the governor to act on this issue by voting for it as a constitutional amendment, then the kind of unified and powerful coalition of grass-roots advocates and unlikely messengers working to make certain government officials fully implement what was voted for is not in place when the inevitable political battles occur.

Witness what happened in Florida. By the spring of 2004, as EEA’s bill starts to move through its legislative process with a broad statewide coalition supporting it, Florida’s lawmakers are trying to respond to the pre-kindergarten voter-approved constitutional amendment. In the view of many of the amendment’s supporters, approaches proposed by the legislature fail to provide the mechanisms necessary to achieve the high-quality, voluntary

program that voters said they want. Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas, one of the leader’s of the campaign to pass the amendment, says that if the House version passes, the 4-year-olds’ education will be “watered down to basically just a baby-sitting program.” At one point, Penelas asks Governor Jeb Bush to consider calling a special legislative session to improve the bill. Calls for the governor to veto what is increasing regarded as “seriously flawed” legislation are heard from editorial writers at many of the state’s leading newspapers. The state Board of

Education stops short of advising a veto, but it unanimously approves a motion saying that the legislation falls short of meeting the expectations voters had when they voted to establish a high-quality education program for 4-year olds.

In early July, Governor Bush issues a veto saying that the pre-kindergarten bill “didn’t accomplish the conditions we set out at the beginning.” For him to sign an early education measure, he said, it would need to assure a high-quality education, have meaningful

standards and provide a career path for those who would be working with children, and he left open the possibility of calling a special session, if he was convinced this kind of bill could emerge.

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The Roots of the EEA Strategy

Margaret Blood strategically builds the EEA Campaign with an explicit constituency-building and coalition-building legislative strategy. This approach emerged out of her 15 years of participating in and carefully observing the politics surrounding children’s issues in Massachusetts. Early in her career, Margaret co-founded the Legislative Children’s Caucus at the Massachusetts Statehouse. From her vantage point as director, she observed how legislators responded to particular language and advocacy techniques and listened as advocates of various bills spoke on behalf

of legislation. She also came to know many in the state who advocated for children’s issues. After leaving that job, she directed a study in which legislative leaders from 50 states described their interactions with child advocates and others during the legislative process.

Findings from this legislative leaders’ study were clear: When powerful and unexpected messengers speak on behalf of children’s issues, these public policy matters receive more attention from the media and with policymakers, and ultimately often find more success with legislators. From this point on, business leaders – and influential opinion leaders from other sectors of the community – would play central roles in any statehouse efforts Margaret became involved with to win passage of children’s issues.

Margaret went on to direct the successful primary election bid of a Boston mayoral candidate. In doing so, she experienced the dynamics of a political campaign. (In all, she has been involved in three political campaigns.) Before commissioning the voter polls used to determine the scope and strategy of the EEA Campaign, she also directed several legislative initiatives for the Boston-based United Way’s Success By 6 program. In these efforts, she convinced some of Boston’s top business leaders to play prominent advocacy roles at the statehouse in support of three successful child-focused bills.

As the EEA Campaign gets underway, Margaret’s weaves out of these experiences and strategies – and the findings of the voter polls – a new approach to securing high-quality early education and care for the state’s children. By combining the advocacy power of business leaders, for example, with the early education and care communities know-how and experience, and finding agreement on a shared set of principles and goals, the long-term strategy to guide EEA’s legislative effort emerges. At its core

this is a campaign whose candidate is an idea; it is the idea that children at an early age need and deserve access to high-quality learning environments and that by providing these, the state’s educational and economic health will improve.

Hearing From Those on the Frontlines

Along with its 100 one-on-one interviews with experts, the EEA Campaign’s outreach involves moving away from the corridors of power to learn about what works and what doesn’t from those who provide early education and care services and from parents.

In doing so, EEA will work to bring these individuals, their experiences and advocacy skills directly into the campaign’s legislative process – from helping to write the bill to participating directly in a variety of advocacy efforts in its support.

The core issue about which EEA will seek advice from frontline workers concerns what can be done to improve learning environments for young children.

Related questions in need of answers include: What works well about how the state supports the delivery of child care and early education services? What doesn’t work well? How can things be changed through legislation to help teachers and providers in their daily work? How can the state’s oversight and funding mechanisms be improved to help them better run their programs and teach children? How can the overall quality of early childhood teaching and care be improved?

The experiences, opinions and ideas of early childhood educators and caregivers will serve as the building blocks for constructing EEA’s legislative proposal. Through the campaign’s on-going, interactive process of conversation and community feedback, these “experts” will also gain shared ownership of this bill. So when political muscle needs to be applied for its passage, these frontline workers will be among its staunchest advocates.

When powerful and unexpected messengers speak on behalf of children’s issues, these public policy matters receive more attention from the media and with policymakers, and ultimately often find more success with legislators.

Now, on this cold winter night in December, about 70 caregivers and educators assemble in a room at Northeastern University in Boston to hear about the Early Education for All campaign. During the next two months, the “EEA Express” – Margaret Blood and Amy Kershaw – travel by car throughout the state to similar regional forums, delivering their message, then listening carefully to the concerns and guidance of the roughly 500 people who attend these 14 gatherings. In each region of the state, EEA relies on its growing network of early education and care contacts to get word out to those who can add their expertise to the creation of this bill. And invitations are sent, too, to those who represent the Department of Education (DOE) and the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS), the two primary state agencies which oversee early education and care in this state.

At the same time, EEA keeps its eyes focused on legislators who eventually will be asked to vote on whatever emerges from this process. In letters signed by Margaret and EEA co-chair Paul O’Brien, an invitation is sent to state senators and representatives in each of the areas the EEA Express visits. The letter updates them about the campaign’s progress. If a legislator can’t attend the upcoming EEA event, staff members are encouraged to attend. When a draft of the legislation is ready, EEA promises a return trip to each region of the state to receive feedback from those whose guidance informed it and to be joined by others who want to be involved. On that subsequent visit, EEA will ask, “Did we get it right?” and if the answer is no, they’ll urge frontline experts to suggest viable changes.

In this meeting room at Northeastern University, participants sit in long crescent-shaped rows as Margaret describes the campaign’s origin, its purpose and progress. Some in this room have heard of the campaign, but very few know much about how it will involve and affect them and the work they do. “The goal,” she says, “is to put young children at the top of the Massachusetts political agenda.” Margaret explains the strategy EEA will use to do this, and then Amy Kershaw presents the framework for

EEA’s development of its legislation. Amy invites audience members to ask questions, raise concerns and offer guidance. “We are the translators and interpreters of your experiences,” Amy says, using a phrase she repeats at every forum.

Initial questions revolve around what it is expected to cost to implement this idea. “We don’t know yet,” Amy responds. She lets them know, however, that “we don’t want to do our cost estimates at current wages.” Other questioners are concerned about the kind of oversight there would be from various state agencies. At each regional forum near unanimous frustration is voiced at how state agencies currently handle the funding and oversight of education and care programs. Since no decisions have been made about the role local (community-based) councils might play or how state agencies’ funding and oversight would be affected, Amy asks for input rather than offering them answers.

Questions often elicit a question in return from Amy. “How well does the current system work for you?” Amy asks a woman who wants to know about state agencies’ role in this new approach. “What could we do to make it work better for children?” Amy asks, when another woman complains about how the current system hinders her work. From these concerns raised and ideas given, EEA learns much of value for its work in creating a meaningful bill.

EEA’s inclusive process is amply demonstrated in this two-hour session. The campaign’s lack of quick answers or ready-made decisions seems comforting to those in this room. Concerns EEA staff hear not surprisingly revolve around core issues of wages and working conditions. When a person stands up and declares loudly that the quality of early education and care cannot be improved –or even maintained – without increasing wages and improving the working conditions of those who do this work, applause erupts. In her concluding remarks Margaret underscores the point that wages for early childhood educators will not increase unless and until they are connected to improved training and education of the teachers, something EEA intends to address.

At EEA's next regional forum in Springfield, a predominantly working-class city in Western Massachusetts, one of the few men to participate in these forum events echoes this concern about how difficult it will be to create high-quality learning environments for children while wages for teachers remain so low. "You can't just say to us 'show us the quality.' We can't produce this quality unless we are provided with the dollars.... Quality is not just accreditation. It's professional development. It's time away from teaching. And it's good wages," he says.

In fact, by the time the EEA Express arrives in Springfield, what Amy learned from those at the Boston forum about the centrality of workforce issues had convinced her to create a new separate category on the EEA's framework. On the handout that Amy passes out, "Workforce/Staffing" now appears as a category along with eight other bedrock issues.

Within a few months, as this series of regional forums wind down, Amy adds another category to the legislative framework: Long-term Research and Evaluation. Its addition is based also on what she and Margaret hear from those on the frontlines. Amy changes the wording of her earlier addition, too, so it now reads "Teacher Training/ Compensation." And instead of "accountability," the word she used on an earlier version, the new listing is "Accountability/ Program Standards," a change made again in response to regional forum discussions about the need to set out in the EEA bill ways to achieve and assure the program's high quality.

This continuum of change – emanating from these frontline conversations – reflects why this approach to building the legislation from the ground up is so wise and critical. As issues surface in discussions with early educators and care providers, the EEA process responds concerns, leaving no doubt they will be addressed in the legislation.

As Margaret and Amy travel throughout Massachusetts speaking with parents, providers and teachers, it becomes abundantly clear that if high-quality early learning opportunities are going to be accessible for the state's young children, then workforce development is a central issue that must be addressed. If EEA's bill fails to provide meaningful mechanisms to improve the teaching skills of those who educate and care for young children or, once that is achieved, fails to find ways to improve compensation and working conditions, then its efforts to provide high-quality early childhood education will not succeed for children.

This endeavor is daunting. Success has eluded any in this state who have tried in the past, in less encompassing ways, to make similar improvements. Margaret and Amy realize this even more as they learn more about daily realities and concerns of those delivering these services. To achieve the campaign's goals, they also are aware that the legislation EEA submits to lawmakers must contain long-term solutions that are pragmatic, measurable, and politically viable. As Margaret tells participants at one of the regional forums, "I realize we probably won't create an ideal proposal that will meet every need," she says. "But we will try to do a proposal that reaches consensus."

How Much Will ‘It’ Cost?

While regional forums take place throughout the state, EEA convenes a working group comprised of child care providers, early childhood educators and advocates, officials from the Department of Education and Office of Child Care Services and, with an eye on budgetary issues, a representative of the Tax Equity Alliance for Massachusetts. The task of this working group is to provide guidance for the campaign in determining what it will cost in additional state expenditures to achieve the level of quality and access to early childhood education that is the campaign’s goal.

On Monday, December 18, 2000, about a dozen members of this working group gather for the first time in a conference room at the Law Offices of Goulston & Storrs. Joining them at this morning meeting is Stacie Golin, study director at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR), a non-profit, nonpartisan research institute based in Washington, D.C. that focuses on public policies involving women and families. In 1999, IWPR was awarded a MacArthur Foundation grant to provide research and technical assistance for state child care advocates. Now IWPR is working on developing costing-out models to assist states and independent advocacy efforts such as the EEA Campaign.

IWPR heard of EEA’s effort to secure universal access to high-quality early childhood education and contacted the campaign about collaborating on building a “costing-out” model based on EEA’s framework and guiding assumptions. Once a costing-out model is developed, EEA will be able to estimate the probable cost in public dollars of augmenting its current state funding streams (federal dollars also fund parts of these programs) to provide access to high-quality education programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds in Massachusetts.

At today’s initial meeting, with Amy Kershaw acting as the group’s facilitator, members of the working group agree on its mandate:

- To offer advice about the campaign’s assumptions as a way of assisting with research on creating a costing-out model
- To inform questions that will help to create the costing-out model’s design
- To help identify the most appropriate data that EEA can use to determine the number of children in need, their current eligibility status, and cost of improving the quality of services currently being offered
- To periodically review and advise on the costing-out design

Seeking Common Ground

As the group’s discussions begin, a clash of perspectives is apparent. Offering one view are those from the child care community who, not surprisingly given their mission, believe that a new early childhood education program should offer a full-day, full-year experience that working parents and their children depend on. However, those who bring to the table a preschool background understandably envision a pre-kindergarten program as one that adheres more closely to a school-day, school-year schedule.

These differing orientations suggest variance in the approach members of this working group would like to see emerge from this process. Nevertheless, each participant agrees, in principle, with EEA’s framework and guiding assumptions and they are all expected to bring their experiences and insights to the table as they search together for common ground. In fact, the disparate views represented at this table reflect the divergence of opinion that exists outside of this room, and so they serve as good reminders of what the campaign will hear in the months ahead.

At this stage, political considerations are not being stressed. But EEA staff make clear to working group members that for legislation to have a chance of success, it must focus on what is the best course for the state to take to help its young children learn and not focus on what might help their parents to work. “Legislators have told us – don’t come up here and repackage child care and call it ‘early childhood education,’” Amy tells them, before asking, “So how do we do this if we are proposing 8 to 10 hours every day for the full year?”

By this meeting’s end, agreement is reached on one point: After reviewing information Amy shows them national and state models on which EEA might build, the participants agree the campaign should develop “our own model.” When details about the program are created, its cost can be determined.

Three months later, in March of 2001, this costing-out working group meets again. By now Margaret and Amy realize that the rapid time frame IWPR initially set aside to work on EEA’s costing-out model isn’t going to fit their schedule. As Amy explains to the working-group members “it’s not good for us to have the cost of ‘it’ before we know exactly what ‘it’ is.” Nor is it in EEA’s interest to have word of a possible cost estimate known publicly before legislation has been created or before the campaign’s advocacy network is in place. A new costing-out timetable is worked out: IWPR will construct a generic costing-out model which it can use to assist in states’ efforts and later adapt for use with whatever EEA program decisions emerge.

With this decision made, Amy shifts the focus of this working group’s effort to a more in-depth exploration of some core issues raised by frontline workers. Agreement is reached quickly on one point: state dollars necessary to assure high quality in early childhood education must be firmly embedded in EEA’s legislation and not regarded by legislators as a separate item. “If dollars needed to get us to quality are treated as something separate from the bill, then they will remain politically vulnerable,” observes a child care expert. The proposed expenditure of public dollars must be linked to EEA’s long-term vision.

In subsequent meetings key demographic information about children in early education and care programs is exchanged. New data are also introduced, including important information from a just-completed DOE study about the relationship between the cost and quality of Massachusetts center-based preschool classrooms. [In future studies, DOE will examine the cost and quality of family child care, public preschool programs and infant toddler programs. Massachusetts is the first state to measure the quality of its various early education and care programs, though national evaluators have done such studies in other states.] Having this analysis gives EEA the ability to gauge more accurately how well these programs are serving the state’s children and how much additional money will be needed to get them to this higher level of quality.

Given that a bit more than \$500 million of state and federal funds are spent each year in Massachusetts to fund early education and care, DOE decided to gather this data to help it answer four questions:

1. What is the quality of early education and care in Massachusetts, compared with other states?
2. What are the costs of early education and care services?
3. What is the relationship between quality and costs? Does it cost more to provide higher-quality care?
4. What is the relationship between the family income of children served and the quality of care provided by early education and care programs?

A member of this EEA working group who works for DOE and has been involved in preparing this report provides a detailed description of the study’s findings to the group. Its most salient finding: A mediocre level of quality is roughly the norm in the state’s center-based preschool classrooms.

Since universal access to high-quality early childhood education is EEA’s stated goal, discussion ensues about how to reach this goal given where the level of quality is today. As conversation ensues, Margaret, relying on her statehouse experience, tells those

seated at this table that “the word ‘quality’ means nothing to them [legislators] up there.” To work under an assumption that the phrase “improve quality” will be an effective political rallying cry, she reminds them, would be an unwise strategy. “Quality” might hold a definable meaning to early education and care leaders, but this meaning is impossible to convey to legislators.

“We need to figure out the right political argument to get us to this higher cost [to quality,]” Amy suggests. “If you low-ball on the cost, then you are buying low-quality care,” agrees the DOE presenter. The report’s estimate for attaining higher-quality learning opportunities does not take into account the additional – and absolutely essential – cost of developing a statewide education and training system for those providing early education and care.

Such a statewide system does not exist, which means that workforce development for early childhood educators in Massachusetts is, at best, a patchwork of possibilities. In a few locations, career ladders linked with educational programs enable early childhood educators to attain greater proficiency and higher level degrees. In most areas of the state, such options for educational advancement aren’t available. From frontline workers and from those at this table, there is recognition that for EEA’s goals to be reached a solid education and training system must be put in place.

Glimpsing the Complications of Cost

At this group’s mid-June meeting, IWPR’s Stacie Golin rejoins them. Working with EEA staff, she has plugged preliminary numbers into her costing-out model and can show comparative projected costs. Of course, the cost depends on what program assumptions are used. For example, should the cost be calculated so that it will pay for a part-day, part-year program? Or for a full-day, full-year program? Will some of the cost be absorbed by families? If so,

how much? By all families or only some? Which ones and how much? How will such an ambitious program be phased in?

Stacie begins by presenting what “the Cadillac version” of early childhood education would look like and cost “if there were no political realities.” She then moves on to other scenarios that take into account the state’s tough fiscal realities and, with their more limited assumptions, seem more likely to gain political traction. Her presentation helps to focus minds on difficult decisions that lie ahead.

Apparent, too, in her presentation is the difficulty of capturing the full-day public school kindergarten issues in this costing-out model. Funding for public kindergarten originates from different state dollars than those that subsidize children in pre-K education

and care settings. Yet in nearly half of Massachusetts towns and cities five-year olds are able to attend only a half-day (or 2½ hour) public school kindergarten program, in large part due to inadequate state funding. One of EEA’s legislative goals is to enable communities to have full school-day public classrooms.

In their July meeting, the mood around the table is ebullient. Margaret shares news that Strategies for Children, Inc., the organization she founded that oversees the EEA Campaign and other strategic initiatives for children, has obtained its non-profit 501(c)(3) status. This means EEA has an official home address – a place for its philanthropic funding that supports its work to reside. The first EEA newsletter, sharing news from the campaign with its database of more than 700 statewide supporters, will go out soon and include in its mailing those who attended the 14 regional forums. The campaign’s database expands as its outreach grows and by the time the legislation is filed, supporters number in the thousands. Strategiesforchildren.org and earlyeducationforall.org have been developed as informational Web sites and will soon be up and running. On them, the EEA Campaign will share

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timely news about the campaign and, in time, the EEA bill will be posted.

On other fronts, there is more good news. Margaret is receiving a lot of invitations from supporters of early childhood education in other states to speak about EEA's campaign. And word is surfacing of interest by several national foundations in funding the work of those involved with early childhood education issues. "I feel encouraged by our work here and the growth of these issues nationally," Margaret reports. Such encouragement got a boost recently when American Federation of Teachers President Sandra Feldman called for a national commitment to be made to creating universal high-quality, non-compulsory preschool education, with the suggestion of using Head Start as its foundation. There was surprise among some that her proposal was well received by union members who might have been expected to be concerned about Feldman's lack of insistence that all early childhood education programs be operated through the public schools.

An EEA Campaign Advisory Committee member who attended Feldman's speech shares with colleagues the pleasure she felt when she heard this union leader embrace a mixed system model for early childhood education programs instead of insisting on a lead role for public schools. A guiding assumption of EEA is its commitment to achieve universal access by building on the state's current mixed system of early education and care.

Adherence to this idea of a high-quality mixed system is a primary reason why EEA has been able to assemble a statewide coalition that brings teacher union leaders, early childhood educators and child care leaders to the table to work on this together. "For too long we've failed children by being turf-conscious," this educator reminds those at the table. "Now we are saying we can't do this anymore. I have

a lot to do with kids who are in K-12 classrooms. And I know we will have serious consequences if we don't turn this educational situation around. We can't be so turf obsessed that we don't get what needs to get done for children."

Hearing her comments, Margaret reminds the working group members that people in other states often ask her how EEA can persuade teacher union leaders and child care leaders to sit together and try to reach agreement on mutual goals. The question arises because of how rare these alliances are. "As Paul O'Brien keeps saying, 'Our biggest challenge is to put children first,'" Margaret reiterates, "And we intend to do this."

A Legislative Outline Starts to Emerge

Amy brings to this July meeting the first draft outline of EEA legislation, and asks the working group members to focus on its elements. Just as EEA's initial framework and guiding assumptions were a direct result of the outreach efforts EEA staff made, so, too, is this outline. Informing it are the work of this costing-out group,

findings from the voter polls and opinion leader interviews and ideas and concerns the frontline workers raised during the recent regional forums and one-on-one interviews with early education and care leaders. Input comes, too, from on-going meetings with early education and care groups and associations, and feedback from audience members at Margaret's various presentations.

"Let's see if we're getting them right," Amy says, as she hands out the draft outline. It includes the following headings and information:

1. Early Education for All Program: Grants to communities to plan, prepare for and implement voluntary early childhood education for every three-, four- and five-year-old. The program

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would include new early childhood program standards, guidelines for following curriculum frameworks, and goals for credentialing at least one teacher in each classroom, which are based on program standards recently drafted by DOE.

2. Full-day kindergarten: fully fund the current DOE full-day kindergarten/quality grants program.
3. Workforce Development: establishing a comprehensive system for Excellence in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation for providers serving children from 0-12. The initiative would include assessing the current system, developing a career ladder that connects teacher salaries to increases in educational attainment, developing articulation agreements among colleges and universities, and making resources available for scholarships, mentoring, data collection, and evaluation.
4. Financing: identify new funding sources and coordinating current funding.
5. Research and Evaluation: measuring the impact of the bill on both the state of the early childhood workforces and on children's school readiness.

Amy's objective in bringing this draft to members of this working group is to have them act as an early warning system. "We need to try to bring to the advisory committee guidance indicating areas of agreement within the field," Amy tells them. "We don't want to bring them proposals when there is discord in the community. At this point in the process, we aren't ready to think about the political feasibility. We're just trying to reach consensus among ourselves."

When a potentially divisive or not well-enough talked through issue surfaces (and stays unresolved), Amy puts it in what she calls "the parking lot," a place where topics in need of more research, thought and discussion reside as the consensus-building process moves ahead. Today, concerns are expressed about the ability to arrive at a consensus about state and local governance issues. Amy duly notes this. Return to this governance discussion will happen

when more information about options can be provided and longer time for reflection and discussion is set aside. There also appears to be confusion about what a statewide workforce development system for early childhood education might look like and where in state government its oversight can or should be housed. Being made aware of the priority of such concerns at this stage in the process is critical.

Inviting National Experts into the Conversation

In preparing this draft outline, Margaret and Amy also rely for guidance on a select group of national policy experts. While the campaign staff continue to gather information and guidance about what's happening in Massachusetts, EEA calls on these experts to learn about what is working well (and not so well) in other states where attempts are underway to support high-quality early learning opportunities and why one approach might be working better than another.

From March until September in 2001, Margaret and Amy have five lengthy conference calls with four early education and care experts – Helen Blank, then with the Children's Defense Fund, Joan Lombardi, with The Children's Project, Anne Mitchell, with Early Childhood Policy Research, and Rachel Schumacher, at the Center for Law and Social Policy – whose day-to-day work and research keeps them abreast of these issues on the federal level and in many states. At Margaret and Amy's invitation, these experts offer advice and ask hard questions about various directions in which EEA is thinking about heading.

EEA begins this series of telephone discussions by explaining that its approach is likely to be one of improving the quality of and expanding the access to the state's existing mixed-system patchwork of early education and care programs. Within this patchwork, much of the education and care for children this age is now paid for privately by parents; parents now fund more than 60 percent of the early childhood education costs – costs which, at nearly \$8,000 annually per child, are among the highest in the nation. Financial assistance for child care for poor

and low-income families (including those who are transitioning from welfare) comes primarily from federal sources but is overseen by OCCS, whereas subsidies for 3- and 4-year-old children from low- to moderate-income working families to attend the state-funded Community Partnership for Children early childhood education program are overseen by DOE.

These experts agree that building upon what exists is the right way to go. And they agree that higher standards for programs must be brought into the mix. Solid social science research to back up the call for improved quality and universal access must be rounded up, they say, to present a convincing case to policymakers that new state dollars should be spent. And these experts suggest that programs that meet these stronger requirements be “branded” by EEA so parents and voters know what high quality in early childhood education looks like and where it can be found. Also, agreement is firm that a statewide system of training to improve the skills of this workforce needs to be in place for this effort to succeed.

These experts agree that building upon what exists is the right way to go. And they agree that higher standards for programs must be brought into the mix.

As these monthly conference calls take place, EEA’s draft legislative outline is taking shape. To prepare the outside experts for these phone conversations, Margaret and Amy send updated information to update them on what they are learning. Conversations then touch on a range of issues, such as ways to establish what the program standards should be; what the cost to various families might be; possible ways to set up grant programs to create and maintain excellence; what workforce training approaches might look like; and how this new program might be governed.

Though these discussions seem circuitous at times, advice and guidance these national experts provide help Amy and Margaret to better inform work they are doing with their own local experts.

The Costing-Out Group Disbands

On August 23, 2001, the costing-out working group has its final meeting, after Margaret and Amy decide to disband it. Less than a week after this group’s final meeting, Margaret has separate meetings with the directors of OCCS and DOE, meetings she requested to let each know more about the direction EEA is headed with its legislative initiative and to ask them for feedback. Each expresses gratitude for the opportunity to offer their views on what EEA is doing, but each also uses the visit to put forward ideas about the direction in which they’d like to see the campaign and its proposed legislation move.

These one-on-one meetings clarify for Margaret and Amy why this working group, as it was formulated with the state agencies involved, was not the best vehicle for drafting the EEA legislation. The meetings also buttress the perspective held by EEA Campaign co-chairs Paul O’Brien and Mara Aspinall, who believe the campaign’s “outside strategy” – with its unique positioning as a political force engaging a grass-roots constituency and constructing a new powerful coalition of supporters for early childhood education – will be compromised if those overseeing the current system sit at the EEA table while the campaign tries to come up with new approaches to providing universal access to high-quality learning environments for the state’s young children.

For EEA to progress, representatives from the state’s oversight and funding agencies can’t be part of the nexus of the campaign’s discussions, though they can and should be kept informed. If they are at the table, then the necessary direct and creative dialogue about possible changes to the status quo is stifled. It is not realistic to expect people to feel they can speak freely about what’s wrong with the current system while those who regulate, fund and operate the system they now work in are listening.

Another key lesson EEA learns during this costing-out experience is the impossibility of giving an estimated cost to a program whose elements have yet to be agreed on. Until the decisions are made about how the new program will be constructed – and the details of each of its building blocks are agreed to, no working group could do what this one was originally brought together to do – to determine the projected cost of this program. Too much work remains undone in answering tough basic questions. Once answers do come, this working group, as it was composed, will not be the right vehicle. Another one will need to be found.

What this working group did succeed in doing is producing a draft legislative outline. At its final meeting, Amy shows members the revised outline – based, in part, on their feedback – and tells them it is now being distributed among key supporters. Since their July meeting, a major revision has been made. Workforce development has been moved to become the outline’s lead item. Its top placement signifies the campaign’s recognition of its core importance in attaining high-quality early childhood education. This working group made this point repeatedly and their voices echoed what was heard loudly and often at regional forums. “What we heard most about at the forums is the need to develop and retain a skilled workforce,” Margaret says, explaining the reason for this change.

In presentations Margaret is making about this campaign and its legislative goals, the workforce piece is central. “It is appalling that this is lacking in a state like ours with such incredible higher education resources,” she writes to the president of a foundation that is funding EEA’s efforts. “This is one piece of the big puzzle around which I am optimistic about being able to make progress.”

In this new version of the draft outline, the prominent idea is the creation of a workforce board to oversee the creation of a statewide system to improve the education, training and compensation of the early childhood education workforce. For now, it is called the Board for Excellence in Early Childhood & Extended Day Teacher Preparation, in recognition of advice they’d heard in the field about how it does not make sense to establish a statewide system only geared to training only those who work with 3-, 4-, and 5-year old children. This proposed board’s tasks would include analyzing the current training and education system, developing career ladders and salary guidelines, securing articulation agreements, and exploring state certification and career counseling.

Guidance from the regional forums also made clear to EEA that higher quality won’t be realized through legislative changes in the state’s current subsidized rate structure for early education and care. This advice persuades EEA to include an Early Education For All grant program in its legislation. This grant is designed to help those who provide early education and care to achieve the high-quality program standards that EEA’s bill will require. And EEA will, as its national experts suggested, develop a new brand – called the Massachusetts Early Education for All Program – and use this brand to identify those programs which meet the higher standards.

Moving Beyond September 11, 2001

On Monday evening, September 10, 2001, the EEA Express starts its journey back to regions of the state where Margaret and Amy heard comments and harvested ideas to help shape what has now evolved into a draft outline of the legislation. The EEA Campaign wants to hear from frontline workers about how the proposed outline of the legislation works for them and the children they serve. Using this input, EEA will work to refine the bill's language as it continues to fill in its critical details.

The time remaining before EEA's intended filing of legislation at the statehouse remains tight, but manageable. The plan calls for the bill to be written by mid-October, then be brought to the advisory committee for its approval. By then, the campaign's work to find lead sponsors for the bill in the state senate and in the house will be well underway. And an event to celebrate EEA's filing of the bill is being organized for a date in late October. Legislative committee hearings on the bill are expected to happen in the spring of 2002.

These return visits – which number 13 and include several trips to Central and Western Massachusetts – are enormously time consuming for the EEA staff during what is a very busy time. But as Margaret had sketched out the campaign's strategy, she realized that hosting recurrent regional forums was essential to the long-term success of the campaign. In fact, some who attended earlier forums are now highly valued campaign volunteers, and through their participation in the campaign share a sense of ownership for the legislation.

Setting out on this new round of forums fulfills the important promise the campaign made when they heard from many of these people during the previous series of forums. EEA told these frontline experts they'd be back to check with them on the content of the proposed legislation as it was being developed. Having this opportunity for personal interaction

also reinvigorates the EEA staff. It is one thing to communicate with those in the field through newsletters and the campaign's Web pages. But having personal contact – listening and engaging in dialogue about these issues and enlisting people's support – offers a welcomed respite for the staff as EEA enters its final push during what has been a grueling year-long schedule. And these gatherings give Margaret and Amy the chance to say a personal thank you to all those who are helping them from afar.

With the help of local contacts, EEA staff – including the campaign's recently hired field director, Christine Lopes – worked very hard to schedule this new round of regional forums. Usually about 30 people attend each forum event, but in Lawrence, an industrial city where many of the early education and care providers are Latino (and Margaret provides her own Spanish translation for her talk), more than 60 people turn out to listen, ask questions and share experiences and insights.

For these forums, Amy Kershaw prepares a double-sided green hand-out. On one side is EEA's "Proposed Framework for Policy/Legislative Initiative," and on the other is its current "Outline for Legislative Proposal." On a yellow hand-out she also includes information that she prepared for members of EEA's Campaign Advisory Committee to describe the themes, issues and strategic advice that EEA heard during its original round of regional forums. Accompanying these pages is another one describing how EEA intends to achieve its goals for universal, high-quality early childhood education. These papers will be handed to the forum participants. In the next 10 days, EEA's plans to attend eight regional forums throughout the state. In subsequent weeks, five others are scheduled.

The next morning, on September 11th – the only day this week when EEA does not have a regional forum scheduled – two airplanes depart Boston's

Logan Airport and less than an hour later crash into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Another plane hits the Pentagon, and the crew and passengers in a fourth plane die when their plane goes down in a Pennsylvania field.

In the wake of these tragic events, the question arises about whether the campaign should postpone its schedule of upcoming regional forums. Community leaders who organized the gatherings let EEA staff know that they want to proceed. After consulting with the advisory committee co-chairs, Margaret decides to press ahead. Delaying these forums would likely mean months of rescheduling, which would be all but impossible to do in time to get this essential feedback before the bill is due to be filed.

The forums take place and are well attended, though the mood is understandably subdued. However, at only the first five of these forums is Amy able to be there and respond to the many questions participants have about various policy decisions, which is the aspect of EEA's campaign that she knows best. On September 16th, three weeks before she was due to give birth, Amy becomes a first-time mother.

For a small organization like EEA, this earlier than scheduled absence creates a difficult void to fill. Amy's recently hired research assistant isn't ready to step in because she doesn't yet have the knowledge needed to share with questioners the rationale behind various policy decisions and why specific language might have been chosen. Amy's connection to the development of this legislation makes it virtually impossible for anyone – except Margaret – to fill her role in the campaign. At remaining forum events, Margaret responds to questions about the legislation and policy, as well as speaking about the campaign's strategic approach and vision.

But Margaret has her own vital and time-consuming jobs to do as the campaign rolls forward during this

exceptionally busy time, so taking on many of Amy's tasks is difficult. It will be three months until Amy returns to EEA, though she will remain in contact with the campaign. When she returns, Amy will balance the demands of the campaign with her new life as a mother, working on a reduced schedule.

Despite EEA's initial effort to adhere to the campaign's original timetable, it becomes apparent that the events of September 11th are altering the political landscape. Attention at the statehouse – and throughout the country – is shifting to issues of homeland security and to the impact the events and their aftermath are having on the state's economy.

Already slowed from its rapid growth during the 1990s, the Massachusetts' economy is showing worrisome signs of distress.

Despite EEA's initial effort to adhere to the campaign's original timetable, it becomes apparent that the events of September 11th are altering the political landscape.

Adjusting to a New Timetable

By early October, when EEA's Campaign Advisory Committee meets at Lowell's Community Teamwork Incorporated's Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, an exemplary early education and care program, it is evident to those around this table that the campaign's timing, like everything else, has been inalterably affected by these events. Paul O'Brien convenes the meeting with these words, "I'm going to give you the punch line first. With the tragic events of September and the state budget, we have decided to file our legislation in 2002."

Paul goes on: "There's a lot of positive momentum for early childhood education and it's a shame we can't capitalize on it right now. But in the cool light of day, when we look at state budget reductions and the slow economy in the state, it doesn't seem prudent to try to push this initiative now. Now is the time for us to get our ducks in order."

There is no discussion. There doesn't need to be. There is agreement about the logic of this decision. Barely pausing, Paul directs advisory committee

members to start to tackle the new work of “getting our ducks in order” by referring them to some tasks originally planned for this meeting. Members review the draft framework for the proposed bill, assess its guiding principles (which evolved out of the campaign’s guiding assumptions) and decide if these are ones they and organizations they represent can embrace.

“We’re establishing core principles upon which the bill will be based,” Paul reminds them. “Once we do this, we will not violate any principles that have been agreed to. But we do want you to give ourselves the flexibility we need to move this legislation through the political labyrinth.”

Discussion among advisory committee members resembles what is being heard at the regional forums. At both venues, conversations circle back inevitably to a discussion of workforce issues – how to get providers and teachers to a higher level of competency; how to handle compensation issues once competencies do improve; and how to sustain careers in early childhood education. A member of the early education and care community reminds the business and civic leaders of the widening chasm between the higher wages being paid to public school teachers in grade K-12 and the much lower wages being paid to non-public school early childhood educators. This, the speaker reminds them, has an extremely negative effect on building and sustaining a well-trained workforce to educate and care for the state’s younger children.

“There must be attention to compensation for those who are early childhood educators,” this person says. Heads nod in agreement. But figuring out how to do this, while being able to succeed politically, as Paul observes, is a difficulty that exists at the core of this effort. “I couldn’t agree with you more,” Paul says, while urging those who are in the early education and care community to adopt a less head-on approach

in talking about this problem. “There is a chicken-and-egg aspect to this,” he says. “If we don’t raise the status of early childhood education, none of what we want to see happen will happen. It is important to do educational propaganda, if you will, otherwise, people won’t value what it is early education teachers do. There is no question who should educate children – teachers, but there are a lot of questions about who should provide care.”

Political questions dominate this morning’s conversation. Next year, 2002, is an election year, and in Massachusetts the governor and all the members of the state legislature will be on the ballot. With the EEA bill’s filing date now postponed, several members of this advisory committee suggest that the political season will offer an excellent opportunity to educate voters about these issues. They talk about possible ways to involve the more than 1,500 supporters now in EEA’s database in strategic political activities aimed at laying the groundwork for the bill’s rescheduled arrival at the

statehouse late in the fall. Such an effort will be organized by EEA’s Field Director Christine Lopes, who has been working to develop just such a strategic plan. When opportunities present themselves during this election year – primary caucuses, conventions, primary races and the general election campaigns – EEA will look for ways to get its message into the political conversation and its issue onto the political agenda.

“We have delayed filing, but we are not delaying our effort,” Mara Aspinall, co-chair of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee, says as this meeting is about to conclude. “We are not taking the next six months off. I know I want more research to be done to tell me why we need to do this so I can better communicate this to people I meet. I need the kind of research that tells us why early childhood education works and why it is a good investment. This research

It is important to do educational propaganda, if you will, otherwise, people won’t value what it is early education teachers do. There is no question who should educate children – teachers, but there are a lot of questions about who should provide care.

is powerful for business leaders. And all of us still need to get out into our communities and meet with our legislators.”

Given the extra year that EEA has just added to its schedule, there could be reason to think that EEA staff will be able to reduce its speedier pace to a steady walk. But that isn't at all what happens. The next year will be an incredibly busy and productive time for EEA. Major policy decisions about the legislation need to be made and strategic political activities planned and executed to take advantage of the election season. And attention needs to be paid to fortifying EEA's own internal organization and its capacity to do this work. Also worth a hard look is what it will take to keep this unique coalition of

supporters engaged with these issues and working toward a common goal. Now there will be more time to build an even broader coalition to support the bill, so that effort must be thought through and acted upon. Outreach to grass-roots supporters needs to continue, too, so enthusiasm generated by the regional forums – and the increasing recruitment of volunteers for the campaign – does not evaporate.

To accomplish all of this, EEA will need to grow in staff and in its budget. This growth means for Margaret that she will need to find better ways to manage her heavy workload while she tries to keep ahead of the campaign's increasing momentum.



Taking Stock and Moving Forward

On the day the decision is made to postpone filing the EEA bill until the fall of 2002, Margaret Blood inherits an enormous amount of work. Added to her current overload of responsibilities is the need to refocus the efforts of her tiny, often overextended staff and to figure out work plans to take best advantage of a revised timetable. At a minimum, she will need to hire more staff – since the tasks ahead have, by this decision, expanded not only in their degree of difficulty but in the length of time to accomplish them. This will require that Margaret raise more money so EEA can pay salaries and expenses required for the longer campaign than she had anticipated.

During the recent push to meet the campaign’s bill original filing in November 2001, the bulging workload rested mostly on Margaret’s shoulders. It was a burden she endured and found ways to manage during what she saw as a relatively short time. She believed that the frantic pace she’d been moving at for nearly a year – working usually seven days each week, long into many evenings – would subside, at least long enough to let her catch her breath before political wrangling about the bill would begin at the statehouse.

Now, with Amy Kershaw on her three-month maternity leave, Margaret manages EEA’s day-to-day operations while taking on some of Amy’s policy work and also still doing the visionary work of recasting the campaign’s long-range plans. Combining these roles – when necessary – is something that a lot of competent and effective leaders of similar advocacy efforts find they need to do.

Margaret is the only person at EEA doing the time-consuming work of researching and contacting foundations to secure funding. (She receives some help from a part-time consultant.) She also compiles reports and responds to requests for information and/or presentations from those already funding

EEA. She is the EEA person who speaks at many meetings and conferences on behalf of the campaign. [By December of 2002, when the bill is filed, Margaret will have spoken to more than 60 groups in Massachusetts about the campaign, not including the regional forums.] She works directly with EEA’s media and financial consultants and confers with EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee co-chairs and members and Strategies for Children, Inc’s board of directors. She meets, too, with policymakers and experts in the field about the bill’s possible content and the campaign’s strategy. Given her leadership role, Margaret is also the person everyone turns to when inevitable brushfires break out.

Sustaining this pace, as more and more responsibilities fall on her, is not possible. Nor should it be. Strategies for Children, Inc. and its EEA Campaign – these two small but interwoven organizations, with Margaret at the helm of each – need to be managed more effectively (and by someone other than Margaret) so Margaret can devote her energy and time to her essential role in the campaign’s – as its visible and inspirational leader. Her ability to speak persuasively in English and Spanish about the campaign’s goals and strategy makes her persuasive public outreach invaluable. With the passion of her words and the tug of her ideas, she is able convince people – even those who at first might be reluctant to join – to play vital, active roles in the campaign as they buy into its “put the children first” political strategy.

When he served as executive chairman of Bright Horizons Family Solutions, the nation’s leading provider of work-site, high-quality child care and early education headquartered in Massachusetts, Roger Brown, at first, tried to avoid taking Margaret’s phone calls. As he explained at a public conference about early childhood education, he thought he knew what this effort was about and, as he told

audience members, “I didn’t want to get involved in another failed effort.” But after finally agreeing to meet with Margaret, he listened as she told him how this new approach differed in substance and strategy. He was persuaded and agreed to serve on EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee and became one of the campaign’s most ardent champions, serving as a close and trusted advisor to EEA and as a member of EEA’s advisory and policy committees.

Margaret’s ability to seek common ground among historically competitive forces garners her enormous respect in Massachusetts and beyond. But this recognition – coupled with her vast and varied experiences and abilities – also means she’s often the person to whom many involved with this issue turn to act as mediator/negotiator when disagreements arise within the coalition. At those times, Margaret relies on guidance and assistance from Paul O’Brien, Mara Aspinall and the members of the Strategies for Children, Inc. board as she looks for ways to build and keep this coalition of divergent forces headed in the same direction. It is her strategic assessments and political acumen that drive EEA’s vision.

Reflecting on the Present, Preparing for the Future

On October 23, 2001, Margaret and EEA staff and the campaign’s media consultants head to Amy Kershaw’s house in Boston for an day-long “staff retreat.” Its purpose is to decide how to most effectively use the time created by the postponed filing of the bill. A facilitator has been hired to guide them in reaching the readjustments needed with this new timetable and in reevaluating the strategies affecting the campaign, the work load and circumstances of its staff members and consultants.

These are difficult but essential conversations for EEA staff and consultants to have. With the strain of the campaign’s hectic schedule, this kind of focused

time to talk with one another about better ways to weave together what should be complimentary activities of the campaign has not been found, until now. It is essential to turn a spotlight inward. Though the campaign’s goals have not changed, responsibilities must be sorted out and agreed to, and because of the interwoven nature of the work, staff members must be able to provide information, guidance and constructive criticism to each other.

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In the agenda of today’s meeting, the EEA Campaign is described as being in the midst of its Phase II stage, a year which goes from July 1, 2001 until June 30, 2002. Another sheet of paper shows a list of tasks. Each task has someone’s name listed next to it, and under each heading appears the components of the job. Checkmarks indicate the task is complete; those with empty boxes await action. There are plenty of those, and a quick glance at the chart illustrates how thinly spread are Margaret’s energy and talents.

- Develop “Strategies for Children” Infrastructure – Initial Lead: Margaret Blood
- Develop “Early Education for All Campaign” – Lead: Margaret Blood
- Develop and support Early Education for All Campaign Advisory Committee – Lead: Margaret Blood
- Design and Manage Early Education for All Research and Policy – Lead: Amy Kershaw
- Develop and Implement Early Education for All Field Plan – Initial Leads: Margaret Blood/ Amy Kershaw; Lead: Christine Lopes
- Develop and Implement Early Education for All Media Plan – Lead: Margaret Blood
- Secure resources to achieve goals of Strategies for Children and Early Education for All Campaign – Lead: Margaret Blood and COO (not yet hired.)

The meeting has barely started when Margaret speaks directly to a core issue. “I struggle with doing both the internal and external work of this campaign,” she tells her colleagues. “I can’t do it anymore. I can’t manage and lead at the same time.” She also lets the others know that “I can’t afford to hire anyone who can only do one function.” EEA’s salaries are, by necessity, low relative to the high level of competence and dedication she expects – and needs – the campaign staff and consultants to possess. In this regard, EEA is not unlike other high-intensity non-profit organizations. Margaret shares, too, with many who lead such advocacy efforts a trait her EEA colleagues know all too well about her – “I am accustomed to working all the time.” She explains to them now why this worries her. The problem is not so much her personal toll but rather how hard it can be for her to resist holding similar expectations for those who work with her. And it can be hard for her to not become upset when these expectations are not met.

Addressing the facilitator, Margaret expresses her frustration. “I don’t want to burn them out,” she says of her colleagues. “But I can’t do it on my own anymore, either.”

The facilitator responds by speaking first to the others. “Right now, things are coming to Margaret before they should,” she says. “That needs to change. EEA is understaffed and that needs to change.”

For quite a while EEA – and Margaret – have not had an administrative assistant. The organization has searched for one but has not been able to find a person with the right combination of skills. (Soon Sheila Engdahl will be hired and her competent assistance relieves Margaret of many burdensome and worrisome daily tasks.) Nor does Strategies for Children, Inc. (or the EEA Campaign) have a Chief Operating Officer to take on the work Margaret does each day as its executive manager – managing

staff, operations, and the budget, as well as fundraising development and management. Margaret does not want to continue doing this. (By the summer of 2002, Margaret secures the funding she needs and hires Carolyn Lyons in the dual role of COO and Director of Marketing. After a few months working as a consultant, Carolyn, who has an MBA degree and 10 years of management and marketing work for worldwide media companies, says of the campaign, “I don’t know how during the first year they accomplished what they did with so few people. What they did is a miracle.”)

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As this discussion continues, EEA colleagues offer ideas to try to remedy this situation. One suggestion calls for the creation of an EEA speakers’ bureau made up of campaign supporters trained to speak about the campaign at conferences and other occasions. This might alleviate some time pressures Margaret faces. But as Margaret says, “The hardest thing (about that suggestion) is what are we asking them to do? And how do we organize it? How do we staff

it?” Left unsaid is the fact that there is no one better at describing EEA’s purpose, strategy and goals and winning converts to its cause than Margaret. No one else can convey her passion for this effort and knowledge of how each stage of this campaign fits into the next.

Other ideas are tossed out. With nearly each one Margaret is keenly aware of the work-time trade-offs that would exist if additional hours involved in arranging and overseeing new tasks are factored in. Rarely does a proposed remedy outweigh the downside of the internal work that Margaret envisions would be needed. With each staff hire, the equation is not dissimilar. Though competent staff members relieve Margaret of some tasks, a larger staff means more oversight responsibilities – in her role as the founder, leader and manager of the campaign – and

certainly more fundraising to support the enlarged staff.

By the time the EEA legislation is filed in December 2002, Margaret will have raised more than \$1.5 million, primarily in foundation grants, to support the campaign's work. For fiscal year 2003, projected expenses for Strategies for Children, Inc. (with most of it for EEA) are about \$2 million. Approximately half of this amount is intended to pay for production and airtime costs associated with the "paid media" campaign. The rest of the dollars are needed for fixed and variable costs associated with campaign activities and overhead, including the compensation of eight full-time staff. One key position that will remain as a consultant is press relations, and tasks such as legal, information technology and accounting will be handled, when necessary, by consultants as well.

It is all too clear that Margaret must continue to look for more dollars if the goals of this now lengthier campaign are going to be reached. Once funds are secured, careful internal oversight to report how they're being spent will be required, and annual and semi-annual reports will need to be filed. And as word of the campaign spreads, EEA is inundated with requests to attend and present at meetings so that other philanthropic and advocacy organizations can learn from its experiences. Margaret is faced, too, with the challenge of educating foundations which have, in the past, been involved with support of programs on what public policy work involves and the importance of long-term commitment and support as she attempts to move them from one-year grants toward multi-year ones.

In working on all of this, Margaret seeks guidance from the board members of Strategies for Children, Inc. – Arnold Hiatt, president of The Stride Rite Foundation (and the former CEO of Stride Rite), Paul O'Brien, and Reverend Jossie Owens, a leader in Boston's faith community. Beyond its utility to the campaign, Strategies for Children provides Margaret with concerned and trusted board members upon whom she is able to rely for practical and visionary advice and assistance at critical junctures in the campaign.

During this EEA staff retreat, it also becomes apparent that while the regional forums are invaluable in helping identify issues to be addressed, suggest legislative directions, and in finding areas of consensus on basic principles and a draft outline on the legislation, the campaign needs to find a way to fine-tune broad policy suggestions into a detailed piece of legislation. In time, layers of political and media strategy will also need to be added to the mix in order to framing the issues in ways likely to provide a positive reception at the statehouse.

To accomplish this, EEA needs to create a vehicle for discussion and negotiation that involves people who have direct experience in the education and care of young children and also are well versed in the art of statehouse politics with children's issues. These individuals must be willing to listen and respond to concerns raised by those who are not part of this on-going deliberative process but who have come to expect that the issues and concerns they raise will be addressed by this EEA bill. While a less-inclusive method of getting EEA's legislation written would have been necessary to meet the campaign's original filing deadline, this is no longer true. Ample time now exists for thoughtful reflection and collaborative negotiation on difficult and critical issues.

Creating a New Table to Draft EEA's Legislation

Time and strategy are now in synch with EEA's intent – to develop the legislation in a process that is as inclusive and transparent as possible for its various stakeholders. To make critical decisions, such as determining program standards, and to wade into such prickly territory as state and local governance and teacher credentialing, and to decide on ways to phase-in the EEA program without fully engaging the state's leading experts would certainly leave the campaign open to criticism. Yet if key representatives from various sectors of the education and care communities can be brought to one table – to what Margaret calls "the new table" – to work together on these difficult issues, then the process is more likely to lead to a bill that has the unified advocacy few policymakers expect to find with this historically divisive issue.

EEA’s approach is to steer strategically around old divisions while nurturing new plots of common ground. Recently a state administrator involved with these issues suggested to Margaret that EEA convene a meeting involving those in state agencies whose oversight extends to education and care of young children. Because Margaret is well aware of historic tensions that exist between these state agencies, she declined, believing this was neither a productive nor, as an “outside” advocacy organization, a proper role for EEA to play. It is essential that EEA do whatever it can to remain above the fray of the old politics, and Margaret intends for the EEA campaign to do this by bringing fresh thinking to the discussion of these issues.

During this retreat it is suggested that EEA convene a policy committee comprised of advisory committee members (or other top people from these represented organizations) who bring to this table expertise in early education and care public policy and politics. Sitting around this table will be members of EEA’s outside-of-

government coalition, and discussions and negotiations will, over time, lead the way towards a new vision of how to expand access to high-quality early childhood education. Even though establishing a new committee will require a lot of the additional staff work to support its on-going work, the benefit this can bring to EEA clearly outweighs the burden of extra work, which will primarily fall to Amy Kershaw. (And this time, no one from either state agency will sit at this EEA policy table).

There is agreement at this retreat that this idea will be acted upon, and soon.

Creating this new policy committee will accomplish several important things for EEA. Engaging respected experts in hammering out the tough details of the legislation will, in Margaret’s words, “take EEA staff out of the firing line.” This group’s guidance will also be invaluable in alerting EEA to potential

“sticking points,” including wording or ideas that might result in an unintended fracturing of the coalition. Success at the statehouse will be more likely if key representative can air their disagreements around this table and find ways to resolve them in the privacy of this room rather than doing so in front of legislators, as too often happens. As time goes by, members of this policy committee will be asked to help to think through aspects of legislative political strategy and also evaluate changes in the political landscape during the election year and beyond. This opportunity to focus on developing

legislation also offers advisory committee members – or their representatives serving on the policy committee – ways to remain directly engaged in what has become a lengthier campaign.

To be included at the table are top-level officials with such groups as the Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies, the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children, the Massachusetts Head Start Association, the

state’s YMCAs, the Massachusetts Resource and Referral Agencies, as well as experts from the for-profit sector and the public schools. Representation is sought from the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and the Massachusetts Superintendents Association, as well as union leaders with the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers and the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Those affiliated with Community Partnerships for Children (the state-funded entity overseeing educational services for young children), Parents United for Child Care, and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education – which had been a key player in earlier legislative struggles for K-12 education reform, are sought, as well as someone involved with family child care, those working with faith-based programs, and the United Auto Workers, which organizes child care workers.

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With each of these constituencies, EEA Campaign staff determines which are already represented by seats on the campaign advisory committee and which need to be recruited. In some instances, the recruitment process requires EEA staff to make presentations to statewide associations to describe the goals and strategies of campaign and give members the chance to select a representative to serve on one or both of these EEA committees. Whenever possible, EEA staff works to have the committees' membership reflect the state's ethnic, racial and geographic diversity.

Three weeks after this day-long retreat, EEA staff meets again in a small conference room at their offices. Each staff member has mapped a new work plan and timetable designed to take the campaign to December 2002. Some of the defined tasks include:

- Developing research information to support arguments for why investment in early childhood education is essential and why public dollars should be involved. As Margaret reminds staff, “At the most recent campaign advisory committee meeting, answers about why this is essential was the biggest need expressed, especially by members of the business community.”
- Determining the most effective political strategy for EEA during the election season and beyond
- Thinking about the political viability of various approaches proposed in the bill
- Working on producing easily accessible information about the campaign, such as a brochure, a range of fact sheets, a campaign update publication, and possibly bumper stickers and other promotional materials
- Raising the money necessary to expand Strategies for Children/EEA's staff and activities
- Creating an EEA Policy Committee to help prepare the legislation for filing in December 2002

Apparent in these conversations and evident in these new work plans are ways in which the campaign tasks consistently crisscross and support one another.

Take, for example, the task of making the case for why public investment in universal access to high-quality early childhood education is essential. Margaret needs to speak about (and hand out materials that easily communicate) convincing evidence to engage the powerful allies she needs to recruit as unlikely messengers for the campaign. Among these will be business leaders who will want to see data such as return on investment and accountability measures to evaluate how dollars will be spent. And in her role as research and policy director, Amy will need to find such persuasive evidence and put what she finds into clear and concise language for use in campaign materials that can be targeted toward particular audiences. (To assist Amy with this work, EEA has created the position of research associate, which will be filled by at various times by Heather Barondess and Lindsay Warner.) At the same time, the campaign's field director, Christine Lopes, will need to integrate this research and the campaign's messages into her work in organizing grass-roots support, while focusing, too, on political dynamics.

By the end of 2001, any disappointment at not being able to stay on course with the bill's original filing date has been replaced by excitement at what this extra time now offers the campaign. Foremost in everyone's mind is the election season ahead and how EEA will work to use the energy of this new political season to bring word of early childhood education to the attention of voters and candidates. One of the campaign's primary goals for 2002 – aside from submitting its legislation at year's end – is to present a strong, evidence-driven case for why early childhood education should be on the radar screen of every candidate and policymaker in Massachusetts.

The Political Season Begins

As the election year gets going in Massachusetts, early childhood education is an idea the Democratic candidates for governor are eager to talk about. The emergent Republican gubernatorial candidate, Mitt Romney, doesn't share this same enthusiasm, though he does include some aspects of full-day kindergarten issues in his campaign platform. For him, a ballot initiative that if passed would end bilingual education has stronger political appeal and will save public dollars. And because the next governor will have the task of working within difficult fiscal constraints (with the state's economic health predicted to get worse before it gets better), none of the candidates – Democrat or Republican – is championing any costly new program. What this means is that in 2002 early childhood education – though embraced, in principle, by the Democratic candidates – is not going to become a centerpiece issue for any candidate in Massachusetts.

Even so, it is clear to EEA's team, as the staff and its advisors shape their campaign's election year strategy, that if the next governor – when seeking office – endorses EEA's guiding principles, then the likelihood of early childhood education emerging as a priority (and being supported by the predominantly Democratic legislature) will increase when better economic times arrive. Thus, EEA's election year strategy is designed to find ways to make this issue part of the candidates' usual debates about education policy and the state's economic well-being. If this can happen, then in the next legislative session it seems possible that at least one of EEA's critical building blocks – perhaps its workforce development initiatives for early childhood educators – might be able to be acted upon.

In a commission report sent to Acting Governor Jane Swift in November 2001, emphasis had been given to the need for workforce development programs for early childhood educators to be put into place statewide. As an appointed member of the

Governor's Commission on School Readiness – which issued this report, Margaret Blood co-chaired its Workforce Development Committee. In that role she aligned the goals and strategies of the EEA Campaign's legislative initiative with the recommendations the commission sent to the governor. At the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee meeting in January 2002, Paul O'Brien underscores the long-term political value of a consistent focus and visibility for such issues.

“All of this is important,” Paul reminds his EEA colleagues, referring to the commission report and Margaret's committee work. “It's important in raising the profile of these issues.”

Meanwhile, on the federal level (where close to 70 percent of Massachusetts' child care funding originates), the state's senior senator, Edward Kennedy, delivers his customary mid-January National Press Club speech. In it, Kennedy calls early childhood education “the next great frontier of our commitment to reform.” During the next few months, his staff will work feverishly – and consult with EEA staff – to draft a bill proposing that federal financial assistance be designated to support state efforts like the one the EEA bill seems likely to put forward. Margaret Blood and EEA Campaign co-chair Mara Aspinall meet with Senator Kennedy to discuss this issue. The state's junior senator, John Kerry, endorses the EEA Campaign, and then later, when he decides to run for president, in his first New Hampshire stop he talks about early childhood education issues. By the first week in February, the Committee for Economic Development, a national business-backed research and public policy organization, releases a report echoing Senator Kennedy's call for federal support for states' preschool efforts.

Back in Massachusetts, as the new legislative session begins Speaker of the House Tom Finneran, who

holds enormous political power in the state and oversees a big Democratic majority in the House, delivers his annual speech to lawmakers. He warns of an enormous budget shortfall – “more difficult than any budget we have confronted in the past 10 years,” he tells them – and talks about the need for large budget cuts ahead. Yet even in sharing this bad economic news, Finneran opens his remarks with words about his visit to a kindergarten classroom recently transformed from a half-day to a full school-day experience because of additional funding the legislature authorized. “They [the teachers] know as educators that early childhood education is where breakthroughs occur,” he reminds his House colleagues. “They know that you pushed this program forward over the past few years. They are profoundly grateful to us.”

Later that spring, when the legislature’s budget has been agreed to, drastic cuts are avoided in many of the state’s early education and care programs. EEA drafts a letter of thanks to Speaker Finneran and individual legislators and sends a copy to advisory committee members so they can let their legislators know how much they appreciate that they are “making investments in early education and care a priority in this difficult budget year.” This is the kind of keep-in-touch gesture that EEA maximizes to keep early education and care issues fresh in legislators’ minds, even though its bill is not ready for their consideration.

EEA Moves Its Candidate Into the Political Spotlight

In these early months of 2002, the state’s political spotlight burns brightest on the race for governor. The winter party caucuses – organized gatherings at which community members select delegates to represent them at each party’s nominating convention – are about to take place. And EEA has its “candidate” to put forth – universal access to high-quality early childhood education. And by using the political

process wisely, it intends to make this issue very visible at this opening act of the political season.

One-page handouts with the headline “A Campaign Every Candidate Can Support,” and a lapel stick-on with the EEA logo are created. These will be passed out at the caucus events as a way to draw attention to this issue among the political activists who will attend. Creating such visibility at this early stage in the political process is an excellent way to let candidates know the high value this issue holds in voters’ minds.

EEA pays particular attention to the Democratic caucuses on Saturday, Feb. 2. There is a spirited

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primary race underway and each candidate has signaled interest in talking about early childhood education. EEA wants each candidate to endorse its campaign in writing, and even before the caucus day, two Democratic candidates send endorsement letters to EEA. Informational meetings about the EEA effort are planned with the others. (Despite strategic overtures made to him, the Republican party nominee, Mitt Romney is the only candidate

who does not meet with EEA. His campaign aides meet with Mara, Margaret and Amy Kershaw, but no endorsement is forthcoming.)

Using its database, EEA recruits 40 volunteers to represent the EEA Campaign at caucus events throughout the state. These people – many of whom work in early education and care – will greet people as they arrive at the caucus, hand out EEA Campaign literature and speak with them about the campaign’s goals. EEA targets specific locations, such as caucus places where key members of the state legislature will be in attendance. “Because of our limited resources, we need to be creative with our targeting,” explains EEA Field Director Christine Lopes. “They [the legislators] won’t know that we haven’t covered the entire state.” Perception, as she and Margaret know, plays a large role in politics.

In a conference call with these volunteers, Margaret explains the significance of what they will be doing. She refers to this outreach as “EEA’s first political field test,” and observes that no one else in the country has brought this visibility to early childhood education at this level of politics. But because many who attend caucuses are key opinion leaders and “political cognoscente” – people upon whom candidates rely for advice and fundraising – it is important to take advantage of opportunities like these to get this issue onto their agendas. “We’re sending a message that we recognize this is a political issue and that we need to use the political process to get it done,” Margaret says. “Our goal is to have every one of the delegates at the conventions wearing our lapel sticker. This will be the one sticker they can all wear.”

For many of the EEA volunteers, this will be their first political event, so during this preparatory conference call Christine provides detailed instructions about how a caucus works so everyone will know what to expect. She reviews the campaign’s “talking points” and the handouts they received.

Margaret, who is part of this conference call, is clearly excited that so many early education and care providers are participating in the political process in this way. This kind of hands-on political involvement does seem to be increasing grass-roots awareness of how change might be possible to obtain, and this is one of the benefits that Margaret had hoped the regional forum outreach would offer the campaign. “By having those who are not normally part of the political process involved on this level, EEA helps to bring them into the political process,” she observes. “At the same time, our outreach is also hopefully transforming political veterans into advocates for children.”

By mid-March, Shannon O’Brien (who will emerge as the Democrat’s nominee for governor) is talking at her campaign stops about many of EEA’s ideas.

For example, she says that as governor she’d work to improve coordination among state’s sources of funding for early education and care, a topic EEA has heard much about in its regional forums. She also says that as governor she would put more state dollars into educating and compensating those who teach younger children. By June’s Democratic convention, each of that party’s candidates has endorsed EEA’s goals in a letter sent to the campaign. Conversely, when EEA co-sponsors (with 62 other education and care organizations) a candidates’ forum about early childhood education and school-age issues at Boston’s historic Faneuil Hall during this

same month, the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, declines an invitation to attend. Nor does he send a letter of endorsement to EEA.

Before each party’s state convention, EEA sends a letter describing the benefits of early childhood education and the campaign’s goals to delegates and state committee members and to every candidate seeking statewide office. At the Republican convention – where Mitt Romney’s

nomination is made official, EEA has a table next to an organization supporting gun ownership. “She gave me a gun owner’s packet and I gave her an EEA packet,” Christine Lopes says. And at the Democratic convention, where there is a lively contest to become the party’s candidate, 15 EEA volunteers take turns staffing the information booth. “Delegates told us this was the only literature given to them at the convention that was not about a candidate,” Christine reports.

Training a New Advocacy Network

Building on this strategy of broad-based political engagement, EEA launches a series of advocacy training sessions. Called “Delivering an Effective Message: Early Education is Essential,” two-hour sessions are held in several regions of the state for

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early care and education providers. One goal is to build a broader statewide team of advocates for EEA, some of whom who might decide to serve as “EEA captains” who will be the campaign’s constituent contact for individual legislators.

In July 2002, the “Delivering an Effective Message” arrives in Fairhaven, a community in the southeastern part of the state. Amy Kershaw and Christine Lopes are accompanied by the newest member of the EEA staff, Amy O’Leary. This is Amy O’Leary’s fourth week as EEA’s Early Childhood Field Director. In this role, she will work to identify, engage with and build a statewide constituency in the early childhood communities to provide sustained support for reaching and maintaining the campaign’s goals. To do this, she’ll apply skills she’s honed as a preschool teacher and program director and use the many connections she’s established during work with child care advocacy organizations. She will also work closely with Christine to coordinate and execute the campaign’s outreach strategy.

Part pep-talk, part skill building, Amy Kershaw lets the 25 child care providers and early childhood teachers know the enormous value of their participation in the campaign. EEA, she explains, is conducting “an outside campaign.” This is not the way early childhood education has been fought for in other states, she tells them, where political pressure for the issue has usually come from a legislative leader or governor or because of an order by a court. Instead, EEA is relying on an active, diverse coalition of stakeholders to be a key force in moving this issue through the legislature. Creating this unified coalition will create what Amy calls an “outside groundswell” for universal access to high-quality early childhood education. “Some of our national colleagues think we are crazy for thinking we can do it this way,” Amy says. “So let’s try to prove them wrong.”

It’s true that in no other state has a universal program of high-quality early childhood education emerged out of a strategic, constituent-driven political campaign. If EEA succeeds, its methods and approaches – as well as its challenges and opportunities – will

provide a potential roadmap for those in other states to follow.

After the skill-building session takes place, Amy O’Leary picks up the thread of Amy Kershaw’s rallying call, connecting her on-the-ground experience to that of her audience. She thanks them profusely for taking the time – after a long, hard day of work with young children – to come to this meeting during the dinner hour to learn how to become more active participants in this campaign.

Making this kind of direct and personal connection – whether it is Amy O’Leary with early education and care providers or EEA Campaign co-chair Mara Aspinall talking with business leaders – is a core approach that is largely responsible for the success of EEA’s “outside the statehouse” strategy. Amy O’Leary’s enthusiasm is contagious, and with her cheerleading style – passionate, joyful and energizing – she compliments Amy Kershaw’s more deliberate and factual demeanor. “You are the eyes and ears of this campaign,” Amy O’Leary tells them, “Your actions, big and small, are going to be what moves this campaign forward.”

By the meeting’s conclusion, many are entering their names into EEA’s expanding database. Several suggest ways they can be politically active on behalf of EEA in their communities and possibly at the statehouse. As result of these meetings, the regional forums and word of mouth, by the Spring of 2003, 50 EEA field captains, organized by legislative district, are part of the EEA Campaign. These “captains” will help the campaign broaden its reach inside the statehouse by connecting constituents to their representatives at the statehouse. EEA will also depend on this network of field captains for guidance and assistance in organizing the fall round of regional forums, when nearly 300 providers, teachers and parents will gather again with EEA staff throughout the state. By then, nearly 4,500 people will have had personal contact with EEA as the result of more than 200 meetings and speaking engagements EEA staff members have attended since the campaign began.

Connecting With New Allies

It is 10:15 on a Friday morning in March, 2002, and Mara Aspinall, EEA Campaign co-chair and president of Genzyme Genetics, sits on the floor outside of a hotel conference room. She works with Amy Kershaw, who is leaning over her laptop computer wedged between them. On the screen is a graph which they are looking at to see if it illustrates well how dollars invested in early childhood education garner savings in future years. As Amy's fingers move across the keys, Mara explains how business people – like ones she is about to talk with – absorb this kind of information. As they work to improve this visual display, Amy tells Mara about another graph she's working on that contrasts the rate of brain development (most rapid during children's early years) with the amount of public expenditure in education (lowest during children's early years).

Once the changes Mara wanted made are done, Christine Lopes rushes the disk to the computer from which Mara's Power Point presentation will be shown to the business people who are meeting inside the conference room. Mara will present a seven-point, evidence-based argument, designed with this audience in mind – 50 board members of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (A.I.M.), the state's largest and one of its most influential employer groups. Paul O'Brien joins Mara in this EEA presentation. Together they will explain what EEA hopes to accomplish and the strategies it is using to achieve its goals.

Richard Lord, the president of A.I.M. and a member of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee, invited Mara and Paul here this morning. This invaluable opportunity enables the campaign to speak directly with influential business leaders about a topic that rarely appears on their time-pressed agendas. Some of the business leaders might recognize the name Early Education for All because of an article Paul and Mara recently co-authored for A.I.M.'s own

publication. But few will know much about these issues.

Rick Lord is a good example the kind of person whom Margaret asks to serve on the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee. Not only does Margaret depend on his counsel in this campaign effort, but Lord was a member of her campaign advisory committee during the initial polling and A.I.M. provided pro bono support to EEA when it printed copies of the report Margaret wrote about findings from statewide voter polls and opinion leader interviews. A.I.M.'s commitment – through Lord's on-going and direct involvement – to EEA's goals and principles is connected with the leadership role his organization played in the early 1990s when the state legislature passed its landmark K-12 education reform bill. Issues that Lord brings to legislators often get attention, in part, because A.I.M. represents the well-considered perspective of industrial leaders from across the state. In fact, legislators often depend on A.I.M. to be a reliable barometer of policy direction when thinking about the state's economic development.

More and more business leaders, like Lord, are embracing early childhood education as a top policy issue as they become convinced of its strong connection to improving learning as children move into elementary school. By having A.I.M. and other leading business groups in the state seated at EEA's table, the campaign gains stature among policymakers and helps carry its message to other corporate leaders.

To convince business people to become involved with this issue, EEA relies on business leaders on its campaign advisory committee to talk with professional colleagues about the issue in terms of economic development. Advisory committee members also create opportunities for EEA staff to make its case directly to business people at conferences and meetings.

During the campaign, its business leaders will help to set up meetings with several Boston-based Fortune 100 companies including Fidelity and Raytheon and to arrange for presentations with regional Chambers of Commerce and at its statewide gathering.

EEA also increases its outreach to the business community by having Paul and Mara team up to write about the campaign and its issues for various business publications. For example, in the spring of 2003, during celebrations of the “Week of the Young Child,” an article, “Early Education Spells Good Economic Strategy,” written by Paul and Mara is published in the Boston Business Journal. Its core message is one EEA wants members of the business community to focus on in ways similar to what brought about their active involvement with elementary and secondary education reform a decade earlier.

Foundation-building for the education reform movement started during the state’s weak economic times in the late 1980s. When improved economic times arrived in the 1990s, education issues were poised to move high on the political agenda because a broad and diverse coalition of support for action had already seeded the ground. Business support was crucial to education reform measures being enacted, and in return for more state dollars for schools, accountability for improved academic achievement was ushered in.

Mara and Paul argue in their writing and presentations that while fiscal times are again difficult it is time to plan for how to make wise investments in early childhood education when the economy turns around again. Often they refer to early childhood education as “the unfinished element of education reform.”

In an extension of EEA’s outreach strategy, other business leaders on EEA’s Campaign Advisory Committee – John H. Davis, former chairman of American Saw and Manufacturing Company in

Springfield, and John O’Brien, legislative liaison with the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce – also write op-ed columns about these issues that are published in their hometown newspapers. These emphasize – from a business perspective – the need for and value of investing in early childhood education.

Delivering the EEA Message

Occasions such as A.I.M.’s invitation to address its board members are ones that Margaret envisioned when she assembled the campaign’s campaign advisory committee. At this point in the campaign, 10 business leaders serve on the advisory committee.

In 2003, several more business leaders, including representatives from companies such as EMC, Staples, and from the Massachusetts High Technology Council and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council will be added to the campaign advisory committee, and business will comprise about one-quarter of the advisory committee’s representation. This large presence of business leaders acting as campaign advisors and ambassadors has been a central strategy of the campaign since its

inception. Margaret recognized the importance of engaging business leaders as strategic allies in efforts to implement legislative changes in children’s policy, so the advisory committee she assembles reflects how she wants the EEA Campaign’s coalition to develop.

The real advantage EEA brings into this morning’s meeting with A.I.M. is that business leaders get to hear the case made for investing in early childhood education by fellow business leaders whom many of them know and respect. As Mara concludes her presentation, she describes what she’s shown them as making “a compelling case that this is the right thing to do.” Vigorous applause signals appreciation.

When discussion begins, it is clear that the speakers and board members share a zone of comfort. Their

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easy banter displays collegiality. “This is not just feel good stuff,” Paul says, responding to a question about measuring such a program’s value. “It’s sensible.” Paul urges those who agree with EEA’s goals to think about serving on the campaign advisory committee or finding another way of getting involved in the campaign. “Once you get to know them, the child advocates won’t think of you as fascists. I promise you,” he says with a chuckle that sets his business colleagues at ease. When asked about how much state money will be needed to make this happen, he responds in a frank but evasive way by saying, “Initial funding needs to be small enough to be manageable and large enough to make a difference.” He provides no exact figure, nor is he pressed to do so.

When the meeting adjourns, several board members approach Mara to express surprise about what her presentation said to them. As she tells Amy Kershaw later, “They told me they’d heard about this issue but hadn’t seen the data. Seeing them mattered,” she says. “You could see how they sat up and listened when they were given the data.”

By the spring of 2003, A.I.M.’s board votes to make early childhood education one of its public policy priorities. In its April 2003, in its Public Policy Program Agenda, A.I.M. tells its members of its decision by writing that it “will support efforts of a broad coalition of legislators, educators, community and business groups to develop and implement a long-range plan for universal high quality early childhood education opportunities for all Massachusetts preschoolers.”

A.I.M.’s decision is a welcomed one at the EEA Campaign, and occurs in a way that is similar to how EEA’s expanding list of formal campaign and legislation endorsements are being earned. Often a campaign advisory committee member brings information and a persuasive presentation about EEA Campaign and its goals before the organization’s board. EEA Campaign staff and advisors – often

Margaret, Mara, or Paul – are invited as speakers, as happened at A.I.M.’s board meeting. Later, a vote is then taken to decide whether to formally endorse (or in the case of A.I.M. to publicly express support for) the EEA effort. When an endorsement takes place, an acknowledgement letter is sent to EEA. At times, EEA issues a press release to publicize the endorsement.

Data are ‘the Antidote to Anecdotes.’

The next campaign advisory committee meeting in May 2002 takes place at Bright Horizons, a for-profit early education and care company whose founder, Roger Brown, sits on the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee. On the meeting’s agenda time is set aside so that Mara can show her updated Power Point presentation and receive feedback from the

committee’s members about how her presentation can be sharpened and made more compelling. Its message is similar to what she and Paul shared with A.I.M. board members and subsequently with other business groups. Mara reminds her fellow committee members that this remains “a work in progress,” to be updated as more findings surface or particular arguments gain in appeal.

“They told me they’d heard about this issue but hadn’t seen the data. Seeing them mattered,” she says. “You could see how they sat up and listened when they were given the data.”

Relying on social science and scientific data to make the case, Mara describes the story she has to tell as “the antidote to anecdotes.” “Data,” she assures her colleagues, “will help sell the case in making people regard this not as a ‘want-to-have’ but a ‘need-to-have’ program.”

Mara narrates as she clicks through the 15 slides. The first is the graph Amy Kershaw mentioned to Mara on the morning of A.I.M.’s board meeting. With its intersecting colored lines, the graph illustrates well the contrast between comparatively rapid rate of brain development during children’s early years with the relatively small amount of public expenditures for their education during these years. Mara advances through her slides as she explains how she uses these visuals to present what she hopes

is a convincing argument for how high-quality early childhood education benefits children and averts later public costs in such high-priced educational services as special education and expenditures related to crime and welfare.

One bundle of slides provides an overview of the early education and care services that exist in Massachusetts. Who pays for it? What amount of the cost do families pay? Who cares for and educates children? What is the quality of services provided? What is the work situation of parents of young children? These are some of the questions asked and answers displayed. Attention then switches to the training and compensation of those who teach young children. As the presentation concludes, Mara gives information about the EEA Campaign: What do we seek to accomplish? What are we? Top Five Reasons to Support EEA. She ends by showing the impressive list of organizations and associations who have endorsed the campaign.

Information Mara presents here will also appear in EEA's printed materials – in a series of policy briefs compiled by EEA's research and policy team – and will be available on EEA's Web site. In a two-page policy brief called "Why Investing in Early Education is Essential," the best research on benefits of early childhood education are summarized and challenges policymakers in Massachusetts face are identified. "What is Early Childhood Education?" is a fact sheet created to help people – including legislators – know more about what components are needed to create and maintain high-quality early childhood education programs. As the campaign progresses, other EEA policy briefs will be made available, including two-to-three page papers illuminating research about and possible directions to move in regarding workforce development, governance issues, experiences of universal preschool in other states, and information about what children gain when they attend full-school-day kindergarten.

Just as a strategic, well-executed plan for coalition-building is a cornerstone of the EEA Campaign, the ability to find and then constructively use key pieces of data to build a persuasive case for investment is essential to the campaign's success.

The Policy Committee Sits at a New Table

The first meeting of the newly created EEA Legislative Development Working Group – to be known, over time, as EEA’s Policy Committee – begins on March 26, 2002, and does so in the same way that the other aspects of the campaign have begun, with an intense focus on defining achievable goals and setting a strategic course to reach them.

By early December 2002, an EEA bill – which is yet to be drafted in its detail – needs to be filed at the statehouse so that it can be considered at the start of the next legislative session. To do meet this deadline, Amy Kershaw informs the committee members, their final draft of the EEA bill must be readied by early September. That date is five months away. That draft will go to campaign supporters and state agency leaders with a request for feedback about its content. And during the fall months the bill will also be taken by advisory committee members and other representatives to the members of relevant early education and care associations, as well as to business, religious and civic organizations to seek endorsement for the legislation. The bill will be posted on EEA’s Web site, where increasing amounts of information about the campaign are already available, as are ways for supporters to communicate with EEA staff.

Once responses about the bill’s content and language are received, policy committee members will work to incorporate feedback into the bill. As Amy will remind them, as the committee members begin the process of integrating these suggestions, “We are about honoring feedback.” In fact, at committee meetings in the fall, the committee devotes many hours to carefully reviewing and responding to a lengthy list of comments and concerns that the campaign receives. Even after the bill is filed, this policy committee will continue to meet nearly every month to refine aspects of the legislation, to help in responding to legislators’ queries, and to assist in developing strategic messages for EEA’s supporters

as they advocate for its passage at the statehouse and with voters.

Filling in the Bill’s Details

Before any feedback can be given, the legislation’s guiding principles and framework, the ideas and concerns heard along the campaign trail, need to be examined, then transformed into detailed legislative language. The EEA Campaign Advisory Committee gave its unanimous support to the most recent refinement of the campaign’s principles and goals, and those have also been endorsed by several political candidates and by the boards of several organizations and associations.

Now it is the job of this newly organized policy committee – comprised of advisory committee members or their organizations’ representatives who bring to the table their expertise in early education and care – to answer some tough questions about how best to match up the early education and care community’s needs and political realities with the campaign’s agreed-upon principles and goals. There will be times in this process when members of the committee will dig deep – at times very deep – into the minutia of specific issues and related sub-issues to arrive at solutions that meet these essential criteria.

Amy manages the policy committee’s efforts with help from her small staff, which now includes a full-time associate and part-time consultant. Research is also being conducted on behalf of the campaign by a Harvard University student whom Amy asked to explore how other states have approached the inclusion of family day care as part of its range of high-quality early education and care services. From the beginning, EEA has worked to include family child care in its statewide mix of the early education and care. But because family child care providers confront different circumstances than children’s other learning settings, EEA builds in opportunities

to hear directly from family child care providers about difficulties they face with the current system and how the legislation now being considered would work best for the children they serve. Finally, two other students at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government are researching issues involved with full-school-day public kindergarten and the public policy approaches to this issue being taken in Massachusetts and other states.

Policy committee members agree to attend monthly meetings at EEA’s conference space in Boston. Meetings usually last three to four hours (including lunch, which is provided), but sometimes a meeting can go on for as long as six hours. As the legislation drafting process evolves, people are added to the committee because of expertise they can bring to this table. This committee’s job is to look for ways to create a politically viable bill built on what’s been heard at regional forums as well as in conversations with other experts and policy-makers. This task must be accomplished in a way that maintains consensus among members of EEA’s broad and diverse coalition of supporters.

There are three major goals of the EEA legislation:

1. To ensure that every preschool-aged child has access to high-quality early childhood education, which meets professionally accepted standards, is staffed by highly qualified early educators, and is delivered through the existing mix of public and private programs;
2. To create a statewide system to improve the training, education and compensation of the early education and school-age workforce; and
3. To provide access to high-quality, full-school-day public school kindergarten.

To begin each policy committee meeting, Amy and Margaret – and sometimes others on the EEA staff –

update members on relevant campaign news. Committee members hear about endorsements earned, speeches given, reports in the media about EEA, statehouse politics observed, and current legislative budget twists and turns as they affect early education and care funding. There are updates given, too, about what’s happening with the costing-out model based on more concrete notions of what EEA’s proposed program might look like. They are also kept informed about an upcoming court challenge to the state’s education reform plan in which plaintiffs contend the state has not done enough to reduce inequalities in its effort to improve the state’s elementary and secondary schools. As part of its case, plaintiffs will address the need for and benefits of high-quality early childhood education.

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A similar court challenge in the early 1990s propelled education reform to the top of the Massachusetts legislative agenda and led to its eventual passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993. In other states, such as New Jersey and North Carolina, lawsuits challenging similar inequities among school districts have successfully drawn public funding to the improvement and

expansion of early childhood education. Throughout 2003, Strategies for Children, Inc. will monitor the case closely, and by February 2004 – with the backing of its board – will submit an amicus brief, developed with pro-bono support provided by Goulston and Storrs, to support the contention that high-quality early childhood education should be a part of the remedy.

Working to Reach Consensus

During the initial meeting of the policy committee, Amy lists areas in which the broad agreement has been reached on the campaign’s goals and principles. She also shows the committee members that lots of questions remain about important policy details that still need to be answered. Her to-do list includes

four broad topics, and each contains sub-groups of related issues:

1. Determining EEA standards – this category includes issues such as teacher qualifications and credentialing, curriculum and program standards, how to involve family child care, and monitoring mechanisms.
2. Governance – this one embraces the formation of a work force board to plan for and develop a statewide training system, as well as state, local and regional structures to oversee program design, to determine phase-in options, to repair inconsistencies in child eligibility, and to coordinate and maximize existing services and resources for three- and four-year olds.
3. Full school-day kindergarten (FDK)– this category involves examining how children whose families want them to participate in FDK will be able to do so, and looks at how to ensure successful transitions from preschool or home as a part of a cohesive policy.
4. Evaluation – this category includes an examination of ways to document how the public’s investment in early childhood education “pays off.”

As the policy committee meets each month, unresolved issues surface and are explored. Amy lines the walls of the conference room with large stick-on sheets of white paper. On them, she displays in a rainbow of bright marker colors various options – based on her research about what other states and localities are doing to resolve similar issues. Using these options as starting points, committee members discuss possible directions for Massachusetts. Often discussion only raises more questions. When more information is needed, Amy and her team do the research necessary to bring data back to the committee members at the next meeting. This

cycle often continues for several months before any precise wording emerges for use in the bill.

In deciding on the bill’s direction and language, committee members agree on the need to reach consensus before asking EEA staff to draft specific language which will be brought back for more discussion at the next meeting. And so goes this laborious and deliberative process of bill writing until resolution on every issue can be reached.

This process at this table is not one in which a majority rules. Debate, discussion and negotiation go on until the thumb of each participant points up when a vote is taken. A thumb-up signals the person promises to leave the conference room willing to advocate in full support of what is being decided.

If a thumb points sideways, active support isn’t promised but opposition to this won’t occur outside the room, either. When a thumb turns down, the person is indicating that he or she cannot support this policy position outside of this room and might have to publicly oppose it.

As one member says of this voting system, “Our goal should be no thumbs down on any issue. If that

happens, it will come back to haunt us.” Indeed, agreement is reached that no policy directive is written into the bill until a way is found for anyone with a thumb turned down to point it in a different direction, preferably up. Usually, when someone’s thumb points sideways, attempts are made to bring it to a thumbs-up position, as well.

Getting to a unanimous thumbs up is not easy with many of the issues confronting this committee. Representatives from state agencies that oversee early education and care are not part of this policy committee, as they were in its earlier iteration – the costing-out committee. Serving on this committee are people who each day are involved in issues of providing early childhood education as well as child care, along with some who work in K-12

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education and others who have been involved with education policy issues at the statehouse, including work on the Massachusetts education reform effort in the 1990s. Many serve as directors of associations or organizations and, in those roles, they act as strong-voiced advocates for their constituency's positions at the statehouse. Several also have national affiliations.

It will not always be the case that what is necessary to reach EEA's goals aligns precisely with what seems in the best interest of a policy committee member's own organization or association under the current system. Friction between the natural impulse to protect one's self-interest and the coalition's need to build and strengthen this hybrid entity – with its new approaches and fresh political strategy – will be a recurring theme as the work of this committee moves ahead.

At this table, predictable characters emerge as the strong personalities and temperaments of these leaders jostle to find their comfort zone. As time goes by, these individuals do develop a productive chemistry and respectful dialogue. One member – who has been on the frontlines through many political battles involving child care – assumes the table's role as its inquisitor and historian, frequently nudging colleagues to reconsider small but not insignificant details. This advice is invariably framed in the telling of stories about political skirmishes involving similar issues and of the unforeseen consequences of not

paying enough attention to detail. Another member acts as the table's reflector, playing back to the group the concerns expressed by others and sometimes reframing a particular issue in words that often make the point easier for others to absorb. Several assume the vital role of political realists, helping those who tend toward visionary thinking to check in with what is possible and not just what is desired, given the tough fiscal terrain that awaits this bill at the statehouse. Another member's advice arrives in crisp, concise sentences with its content frequently arousing controversy. Another member is the group's definer, making certain that words being considered will be able to retain their intended meaning through the pull-and-tug of expected statehouse maneuvering. Others shift among a variety of roles, acting at times as conciliators, while at other times offering the guidance of a seasoned political strategist.

During more than a year of meetings – and in between-meetings communication via e-mail or phone calls – a productive dialogue is nurtured among these committee members. At times the group's courteous collegiality is tested by external and internal tensions, but the glue that holds them together is their agreed-upon belief that in being brought to this new table they have a rare and real opportunity to improve— in ways unimaginable if they split apart – the early education and care for the state's young children.

Testing Their Togetherness

As the EEA Policy Committee works through the summer of 2002, they try very hard to resolve what until now have been unresolved issues, all of which must be dealt with in some way before the legislation is filed. Each person at this table is a veteran of political fights at the statehouse. Many of these past statehouse battles involved issues related to the ones they are discussing now. From their willingness to keep coming to this table – and sitting at it for many hours – it is clear the committee members value this rare opportunity to think collaboratively and in fresh ways about these complex issues. In different settings and at other times, each member might respond in a reflexive way to a particular issue, but while working as member of this group, instinctive responses are able to be examined more closely in the context of a new approach.

Sitting at this table seems to empower committee members to move out of their reactive mindsets and stretch the boundaries of what they might envision. Together they hunt for possible routes for attaining what they hope is possible and will be worthy of legislators' support. They believe and trust that EEA, unlike past efforts, will be able to attract and maintain a powerful coalition of support needed to pass the legislation. Because of these beliefs, they regard this commitment as being worthy of the considerable time it requires on top of their already busy schedules.

Is a spirit of collegiality always in evidence? No. This “new table,” with its unorthodox make-up, is an experiment in finding out whether members of the early education and care communities (with representation from both the public and private sectors) can put aside customary tensions and work together to improve the early learning environments for children. With any undertaking like this there will be moments when newly forged bonds will be tested, and as EEA moves ahead, minor spats arise

and are resolved with brief mediation, usually involving Margaret Blood and/or Amy Kershaw. There are also a few moments when the anger at or suspicion about something that happens or is said by another member requires EEA staff to devote time to discussion and negotiation as a way of reconnecting participants to this larger unifying vision.

Tensions Surface

In late January, 2003, a test of the coalition's durability occurs. Tensions surface when an advisory (and policy) committee member's name appears as co-author with campaign co-chair Mara Aspinall in an op-ed article about the EEA Campaign in *The Boston Globe*. Headlined “A sound investment in early education,” one sentence of the op-ed cites a finding from a Massachusetts Department of Education study, indicating that the study found “only one-third of private preschool classrooms provide the rich language environment essential to children's language and cognitive development.”

From the perspective of the business community and policymakers, the op-ed succeeds in raising public awareness of several important issues. Attracting this kind of attention to these issues is one of the campaign's original core strategies and one that must work well if the campaign is to garner broad-based support for increasing public investment. But this media situation also points out to EEA staff the difficulties that can arise when more information appears in the press about how and why the state's current early education and care programs aren't adequate to achieve the goals this campaign has set forth. For EEA, the job of getting this information out to the public and policymakers while remaining sensitive to the early education and care communities is a delicate one.

Many hours of internal staff discussion focus on how to balance the campaign's need for public education

with its awareness of the sensitivities of those delivering education and care. These conversations are indicative of the high level of awareness that envelops the campaign in wake of this situation, as it casts its eye toward the future.

To policy committee members whose associations and organizations have members who provide early education and care in the private sector, opening the newspaper to find an EEA op-ed characterizing their community's work in this way feels like a

betrayal. That Aspinall's co-author is the president of one of the state's public teachers' unions becomes another focus of their complaints, since in the op-ed article only private sector classrooms are characterized as being inadequate. Infuriating them, too, is the fact that EEA did not give its advisory and policy committee members any notice that the op-ed article – with this sentence included – was going to appear.

Not long after the newspaper reaches readers on Wednesday morning, e-mail messages and phone calls reach Margaret and Amy. For several days, lengthy conversations ensue among EEA staff and the aggrieved individuals who are themselves now fielding angry phone calls from members of their organizations who are upset at what they've read. Disturbing to all who are committed to supporting EEA are concerns this incident raises about the campaign's expressed intent to be as transparent as possible and to not favor one form of early education and care over another as they travel jointly toward creating something new.

As this situation escalates, Margaret, who is hearing complaints and working to soothe the situation, stays in touch with the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee co-chairs, discussing the issues and trying to determine the best way to handle what is arguably

a decisive moment in whether and how this coalition can be kept from splintering apart. With an EEA Campaign Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for the next week, Margaret and the campaign's co-chairs decide to talk about the issue there and provide everyone who wants to speak about their concerns the opportunity to do so.

Airing Grievances and Moving On

At the advisory committee meeting, Paul O'Brien opens the discussion of this issue by offering an apology. "In the rush to get it out, we didn't get the content just right," he tells committee members. After one of the aggrieved parties criticizes EEA's process in moving the article into publication without consulting its committee members, Paul acknowledges that "we need to have more eyes" look at copy before it is published.

A while later the advisory committee member whose name had appeared on the op-ed reviews her role in the process and apologizes for any hurt the article's words caused any of them. She concludes by saying,

For too many years, it has been divide and conquer between the public and private sectors. We can't let that happen. We can't do what we have done before in failing our children by fighting among ourselves." By expressing this sentiment, her words remind those at this table why they are here and help to renew the spirit of collegiality.

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As this discussion nears its end, Mara Aspinall's words evoke this same spirit. "We are going to be at this for a long time," she says. "One of our accomplishments is that we've come together to help young children. We need to discuss this and other things as we come to bumps in the road."

This situation is a reminder of long-standing tensions that exist between early education and care and the K-12 communities, as well as among those who work in the private and public sectors with young children. In the past, these tensions – and the inability to bridge them – has doomed efforts to make significant progress on many of these issues. Despite the many hours this difficult situation took to resolve, the ability of those who lead the EEA effort and those who now sit together at the EEA tables to respond to the cross-currents of anger in an inclusive forum and accept apologies reaffirms the strengths of this effort. The ability of the advisory committee co-chairs to assume responsibility and transmit to committee members their willingness to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them is another key ingredient in this restorative process. In this work to reach a point of reconciliation, firmer building blocks have been added to EEA’s foundation.



Fine Tuning the Legislation

At monthly meetings of the EEA Policy Committee, unresolved issues continue to surface and the complexity of conversation about them increases. Though topics from the four issues that Amy Kershaw presented at the committee’s initial meeting (standards, governance, full-day kindergarten and evaluation) still hold center stage, the overlying discussion of each now involves two central questions.

1. What do we want to say in statute?
2. What do we want to keep on the side as directives?

“These will be very different things,” Amy tells the committee members. “If we decide to make the statute broad [in its language], then we should at least know among ourselves what the goals are and what directives we might want to give.”

Beneath this on-going discussion lies the acknowledgement that when EEA’s bill reaches the legislature, decision-making about its components, their details and final wording will rest with key legislators and committee members. These policymakers will add to the mix theirs and their constituents’ experiences and ideas, as well as take into account political considerations. But because the bill’s lead sponsors in the House and Senate – as well as other legislative leaders – know the extent of EEA’s outreach in determining what issues should be included in the bill, about its constituency building efforts, and the deliberative work of its policy committee members, they, their staff, and other legislators are likely to seek out and be receptive to guidance EEA can provide.

Moving from ‘What’ to ‘How’

In the spring of 2002, the policy committee’s focus rests squarely on figuring out the best way to resolve outstanding issues while creating an effective and politically viable whole. Its work in drafting this bill, after all, is an evolving process, moving from determining what needs to be accomplished toward

figuring out how their agreed-upon goals can be realistically addressed.

In deciding, for example, what to write into the bill regarding early childhood teachers’ qualifications, Amy sets the stage for discussion by reminding committee members that “if we don’t make decisions about improving teaching standards as a way to raise the level of early childhood education, our bill is dead on arrival.” Early in the EEA process several legislative leaders cautioned Margaret Blood that simply renaming “child care” as “early childhood education” would not be a winning strategy. Only by raising the quality of the learning opportunities for young children could they expect to receive legislative support. Amy also draws committee members’ attention to research showing causal connections between raising the level of teachers’ education and increasing the quality of what happens in education and care settings for young children.

One of the child care community’s representatives on the policy committee argues for “boldness” as discussion on this topic begins. “Help us get outside the box we are in and change the perception of our field,” is the message presented. This committee member argues that “if we want equitable pay, we need to have higher standards and more education.” (Currently, 25 percent of the state’s child care providers have A.A. degrees; 35 percent have B.A. degrees.) Hearing these comments, another child care expert applauds this desire but raises a cautionary flag: “Head Start is having trouble reaching its goals [in teacher credentialing] since higher education isn’t ready to do this kind of training,” this person reminds his committee colleagues. “Let’s be sure that we can provide the training and support necessary to get providers and teachers the education they need before we expect them to meet unrealistic standards.”

After several sessions of deliberation – involving thorough analyses of research about how other states

are approaching this issue – committee members become comfortable with the EEA bill requiring that within five years of starting to receive EEA funds, each program needs to have a director and at least one teacher/provider with an A.A. degree; within 10 years, a director and one teacher/provider needs to have a B.A. degree. But the members agree it is essential that the bill’s language clearly state that these requirements take effect only when an adequate statewide work force development system has been put in place to educate and train early childhood educators at community colleges, colleges and universities throughout the state. This provision is critical since high quality cannot be achieved unless teachers and providers are able to learn how to provide it. From what EEA heard during its regional forums, those who work early education and care have no objection having these higher standards be part of the legislation as long as opportunities are provided for them to attain them.

One element of this committee’s discussions about standards focuses on determining how taxpayers and legislators will be able to identify and track the progress their investments are making. It is decided that once preschool programs, family child care providers, Head Start and child care centers have the personnel and curriculum that adhere to these higher standards, their high quality will be publicly recognized with the EEA “brand.” Once this brand is placed on a particular program, families and policymakers, as well as business and civic leaders and taxpayers will know this learning environment is one in which its children are receiving the kind of education and care that will spur healthy development and constructive learning.

Shepherding Issues Through the Process

As policy committee members methodically tackle issues, they follow an agreed-upon process in

determining appropriate language to write into the bill. Before each meeting, an issue or set of issues is put on the meeting’s agenda. Each issue is labeled in terms of the committee’s stage of deliberation. For example, on one policy committee agenda (and this is an agenda for an especially lengthy meeting) these items were listed: “Discussion: Early Education for All Governance Options – Round III (State-level, local); Update and Discussion: “Costing Out” EEA; Discussion and Decision: EEA Program Standards – Round IV”; and “Discussion: EEA Evaluation Strategies – Round 1.”

As issues process through these stages, the intricacy of detail increases. To help them sort through options, policy committee members receive EEA staff-prepared informational hand-outs. If agreement still can’t be reached, EEA staff commit to doing additional research, often in response to a specific request from a committee member. At a subsequent meeting, Amy reports back, sharing more examples of how other states or localities approached similar issues. Examples from “models” in Massachusetts often spark ideas about approaches that might be adopted statewide.

Amy displays information in easy-to-compare charts that show possible alternative paths and, when available, she provides committee members with data to show results. When resolution of an issue seems close, Amy drafts wording which is then reviewed by the committee members. Her words present a valuable platform upon which more debate often ensues. Revisions are offered, and when consensus seems possible, the legislative language is voted upon.

In deciding on program standards, for example, the question left unanswered when the EEA Costing-Out Committee was disbanded continues to be the elephant in the room. Branding a program because of its high quality is a worthy end point, members

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agree, but what exactly does the “it” that will be branded look like? What exactly will a program need to provide for children to receive the EEA brand? Or offer to families? How much of the child’s day in this high-quality setting will be paid for in public dollars? And if half of a child’s education and care program is funded to achieve this level of quality, what will the experience during the other half of the day be like for this child? What will it cost to achieve this level of high quality given where many of the state’s early education and care programs are today? And if this public cost is the difference between what is being spent today and what needs to be spent to fund “it,” how will the many essential costs in getting there – such as the need to create statewide higher education capacity to educate those who be the teachers – be calculated? What kind of a phase-in strategy is needed?

In the meantime, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) is continuing to construct the parameters it needs to calculate what EEA’s legislative proposal will cost. At the August 2002 policy committee meeting, IWPR’s Stacie Golin, along with Anne Mitchell, a financial expert with Early Childhood Policy Research, ask for advice and guidance from committee members. IWPR’s costing-out model for EEA is designed in such a way that new money will not supplant current funding (state or federal) but will be used to achieve the campaign’s goal of offering universal high-quality early education and care by building upon the state’s existing mix of public and private programs.

At this point, the cost of “it” is premised on the policy committee’s agreement that public dollars will be used to pay for up to four hours per day of year-round, high-quality educational services. However, because this committee has not yet dealt with specific details of how EEA’s program will be phased in, nor dealt with other critical components related to cost, IWPR’s model needs to retain the flexibility to absorb and process this committee’s decisions once agreement is reached.

What is apparent during Stacie and Anne’s presentation – and in feedback participants give – is

how extremely complicated this entire undertaking is. Determining the cost of this new entity is like trying to put a jigsaw puzzle together when a few pieces from each section are missing. At this committee table, the search for these missing pieces involves work that can be tedious but essential. Only by constantly referring back to the guiding principles and framework, then asking tough questions again and again and visiting and revisiting lots of options, will ways be found to fill in these missing areas.

In a prolonged discussion about program standards, for example, a divide develops between those who work in the private and public sectors. One person involved with child care in the private sector makes it clear that “we’d have a big objection to public schools being included in the bill as recipients of EEA grants since they’re exempt from licensing standards and don’t charge families directly for educational programs.” But if this legislation were to try to make the public schools subject to state licensing standards, a public sector committee member reminds those at the table, this bill would be “dead on arrival politically.”

Amy quickly points out that the committee has already decided to work within existing laws which exempt public schools from child care licensing standards. Margaret also assures committee members that their concerns about equitable treatment are being heard and heeded. As she’s done before, Margaret urges members not to air this debate – or other discussions they have around this table – outside of the room. Inflaming tensions needlessly is something the campaign doesn’t need. “What this discussion has done is bring this issue back to our attention,” Margaret assures them.

Governing the EEA Program

No topic generates as much conversation and consternation among committee members as the all-but-impossible-to-resolve issue of governance. At the heart of this issue resides the fractious relationship between the state’s Department of Education (DOE), which oversees Massachusetts current early childhood education initiative –

Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) – a statewide program the legislature began funding in 1993 to improve the quality of preschool programs for three- and four-year olds from lower-income families, and the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS), which oversees the state’s subsidized child care programs. Many who sit at the EEA policy table depend on one or both of these state agencies for their primary public funding and oversight. What this means is that negotiations among them about how to structure the governing body for this new entity are challenging.

Early on in the governance discussion, what little agreement there is to be found results in a decision to select neither DOE or OCCS to govern the EEA program. To select either state agency, everyone agrees, would not be a productive strategy either at this table or among EEA’s large frontline constituency. Doing so would be needlessly divisive. Some other solution must be found. Even if this committee reaches agreement, and a proposal goes forth in its legislation, everyone at this table suspects that the governance issue – for the reasons they are confronting now – is likely to need to be revisited by them during the legislative struggle over its passage.

As the search for governance possibilities begins, Amy presents the committee members with examples of child-related governance structures from other states. Her chart shows that options range from creating an interagency body, such as a Children’s Cabinet, to designating a new and consolidated department to oversee early childhood education, from creating a secretariat position in the governor’s office to forming a government board. Just by reading the names of the various state bodies, and hearing from Amy how they were formed, committee members are offered glimpses at the difficulties that lie ahead in them

trying to reach agreement on a governance structure that will work for this state, this issue and EEA’s grass-roots constituency. For example, if the creation of a governing board were to be the committee’s choice, would they call it the Board of Early Childhood Education and Care? Or would it be the Board of Early Childhood Education? The naming dilemma, by itself, indicates the degree of difficulty this issue poses.

As Margaret reminds committee members, “Political advice and polling tell us to leave out ‘care’ and call it only education. Our polling shows us that we live in a country in which the care of children is viewed

as a family’s responsibility, so we would have a better case to be made politically about education.” But given the diverse composition of the bill’s stakeholders, the word “care” is likely to accompany “education” in whatever this campaign puts forward. But as Margaret acknowledges, “we are on a campaign to change the perception of what happens with children during these early years as we move toward early childhood education.”

Amy also lets policy committee members know that the EEA

Campaign co-chairs believe a specific recommendation on state governance should not be included in the legislation. “If it’s going to be a deal breaker, then leave it out,” they advised Margaret and Amy. Even knowing this, committee members still decide to keep looking for a governance structure they can agree to recommend. In part, their resolve emerges from awareness that no topic other than workforce development issues was raised more often or received as much criticism from frontline workers as did ways in which the current early education and care programs are being administered by the state. Committee members believe that legislators and the bill’s stakeholders – most of all those who deliver the early education and care – want EEA’s legislation to offer

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solid direction on issues of both state and local governance. As discussion about this extremely delicate political matter ensues, Margaret and Amy again offer cautionary advice – what is being discussed and debated around this table shouldn't leave this room until resolution is reached.

In the governance discussion, the “what” aspects of these issues gain traction more easily than the “how.” But as with other tough issues EEA takes on, its discussions begin by focusing on describing “what” the campaign’s goals are, then inviting details involved in the “how” to either emerge as their negotiating process moves forward or to be left up to the new state entity that eventually will implement the program. With this approach in mind, one committee member observes that with governing bodies “function comes before form.” Embarking from this insight, the group generates a list of what the essential functions of this new governing body ought to be.

Amy writes each suggestion on large sheets of easel paper. After some tasks are grouped, her highlighted list includes the following:

- It sets and monitors regulations
- It oversees the allocation of funds
- It coordinates services

When members reach agreement on its functions, concern about its specific structure begins to diminish. At that point discussion heads in the direction of describing what needs to happen to make these functions work more effectively and efficiently for those who provide education and care to the state’s young children.

These discussions are exhaustive in their scope, but the deliberative process seems to please participants with its depth and its conscientious search for finding consensus. Over time some decisions get made, but with statewide elections, including the governor’s race, several months away, an unsettled feeling of political uncertainty hovers over the table. Despite the committee’s hard work in trying to reach consensus, this unsettled political situation means that no

specific governance proposal is going to be agreed to. So when the draft legislation is put out for public comment in September 2002, no specific recommendation for a state government structure or details of how local councils (which are already involved with the Community Partnership for Children program) should function will be part of the bill.

Instead, when EEA’s legislation is filed, even though the overall program is called “Early Education for All,” (just as the campaign is) the word “care” remains a companion with “education” in the bill’s governance section. The bill proposes the appointment of a nine-member early education and care planning council. Within a year this council shall have developed “a plan for elevating, consolidating, streamlining and coordinating publicly funded early education and care administration and functions.” And EEA – through the deliberations of its policy committee – offers directives for how members of this council should be appointed.

Connecting With Policymakers

In campaigning for governor, Republican candidate Mitt Romney often talked about the need to consolidate state agencies. After he was elected and sworn in in January 2003, he presents his consolidation plans along with proposed budget cuts and funding changes. One of his plans involves moving all funding for early education and care to OCCS. This proposal serves to remind EEA Policy Committee members of the divisions that exist among them, as they now operate under two separate funding systems (DOE and OCCS). Some of the committee members are favorably inclined toward aspects of the governor’s consolidation proposal; others adamantly oppose it. These positions are, not surprisingly, based on how committee members and constituencies they represent are presently funded and monitored.

EEA’s ability to connect with the Romney campaign has always been more challenging than their interactions with the campaigns of his Democratic opponent, Shannon O’Brien (as well as with

Democrats who ran in the party primary election). As a candidate, and now as governor, Romney has not endorsed EEA's goals or its legislation, but he does support at least some aspects of one of its major goals – that of more funding for full-school-day public kindergarten.

After the elections in November 2002, EEA sent letters signed by Margaret Blood, Paul O'Brien and Mara Aspinall to Governor Romney, Lt. Governor Kerry Healey, and to members of his transition team. EEA also began to work with members of the governor's transition team – a bi-partisan group of business and civic leaders – to devise the most effective strategy to incorporate EEA's recommendations into his administration's agenda. Along with the letters, EEA enclosed its campaign fact sheet, its fact sheet about its legislation, and “fast facts,” a primer about early education and care in Massachusetts.

The closing paragraph of each letter included words about EEA's vision and about its willingness to be of help to this administration in reaching these goals for the state's young children. It read: “We hope we can count on your leadership and support to make Massachusetts' young children and their early education a top policy priority. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and members of your transition team to provide scientific research, information on national and state efforts, and our policy recommendations.”

In response to these letters, EEA was invited to submit a policy paper providing an overview of the campaign and its legislation. And though difficult economic times mean that the governor and others were focused on eradicating the state's large budget deficit, EEA staff continued to seek guidance and support from key members of the new administration,

including the governor's legislative director, his top education advisors and both the DOE and OCCS Commissioners. Margaret had also worked closely with Governor Romney's wife, Ann Romney, on the United Way's Success By 6 initiative that she directed. After Ann Romney receives information about the EEA Campaign, she responds immediately and positively.

At the same time, Robert Travaglini, a Democrat from Boston, a father of three young children, and a strong advocate of children's issues, assumes the role as Senate President. During his service as senator, Travaglini served as chairman of the Legislative Children's Caucus. Soon after he takes on the chamber's presidency, EEA Campaign co-chairs Mara Aspinall and Paul O'Brien, as well as Margaret, meet with him to ask his support, which he enthusiastically gives. Since the campaign is pursuing a legislative strategy, these EEA representatives let him know that his support and efforts as an influential and highly-regarded policymaker will be pivotal in achieving success.

Early in 2003, members and staff from the legislature's Joint Committee of Education, Arts and Humanities, inform EEA

staff that until a specific state governance structure is proposed in the legislation to oversee this new early childhood education entity, the bill cannot be moved through the legislature's committee process. For the EEA bill to be acted upon, this new program must be given a “home” somewhere in state government. This request results in the resumption of lengthy discussions by the policy committee members. Unlike their earlier deliberations – in which the committee focused primarily on figuring out the “what” in terms of policy direction – members are now charged with focusing on “how” specific parts of the legislation, such as governance, will actually work.

As the budget process moves ahead, EEA's policy committee members start to gain a sense that their deliberations and proposals are having an impact at the statehouse. The House Ways and Means Committee releases its budget and, to the surprise of EEA and others, it contains a quite similar proposal to the campaign's idea of creating an Early Education and Care Planning Council.

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Those involved with the EEA Campaign are elated by this first legislative victory. And at the statehouse, there is word that consideration of workforce development will be added to this council's mandate. Attention on workforce issues as a building block for achieving this long-term vision echoes the planned developmental course proposed in the EEA bill.

Thinking about the Five-Year-Olds

Then there is full-school-day public kindergarten (FDK), which is a cornerstone of the EEA legislation. In the pre-campaign voter polls, improving educational opportunities for children up to age six was found to be of compelling interest to voters. (As the age of children moved out of infancy and closer to age six, the level of voter support for public funding did, too.) In his campaign, Governor Romney also made full-school-day kindergarten (up to age six, with his focus being on schools serving economically disadvantaged children) one of his signature issues. As governor, Romney talks about this still, though he's not been willing to engage directly in discussions with EEA about an enhanced state role in widening access and improving the quality of the education and care for younger children.

Because state policymakers – and state funding in recent years – are already engaged with FDK issues, EEA considers the effort to provide every child in the state with the opportunity to attend a full school-day kindergarten program – when fewer than half of Massachusetts school districts now provide FDK – a legislative arena in which progress seems possible. There is also broad awareness across the state of the need to improve the transitioning of children from earlier education and care programs (and also from home environments) into kindergarten and on into elementary school.

To thoroughly research these topics – and offer recommendations for policy committee members to consider – EEA works with two Harvard University students – one of whom is studying for a Masters degree in public policy at the Kennedy School of Government, and one who is on track to receive a degree from Harvard Law School and a degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government. These young women work on this for EEA to satisfy part of their graduation requirements.

Among the key findings of their report, summarized in a presentation they make to the advisory committee members in May 2003, are:

- Massachusetts school districts are required to offer half-day kindergarten, but student attendance is not mandatory. (Children are not required to attend school until age six.)
- Forty-eight percent of public school kindergartners in Massachusetts currently attend full-day programs.
- One hundred and thirty-two out of 300 elementary school districts offer FDK.
- Great variance exists among the districts regarding program structures, parent fees (for additional hours of kindergarten), the demand for and availability of spaces.
- Several states (New Mexico and Maryland) have established yearly benchmarks to move all school districts toward providing universal full-school-day public kindergarten.

As Amy Kershaw does with other key components of the EEA Campaign, she hands out a fact sheet she's prepared about full-school-day kindergarten to the advisory committee members. This information helps them more easily discern how children can benefit academically, socially and developmentally from full school-day kindergarten. This handout also shows how access to FDK – particularly for at-risk students – can serve to narrow the customary achievement gap in the early elementary grades between children from poorer and more well-off families.

These FDK issues can be difficult ones for the EEA Policy Committee to handle. One reason is that the policy particulars of full-school-day kindergarten issues don't fit easily into other issue discussions they have involving the education and care of three- and four-year olds. Full-school-day kindergarten primarily involves the process by which the state and local governments budget funds for public schools, whereas issues of early education and care crisscross different state and federal funding streams and regulations. Early childhood education and care also involves the inclusion of many more privately run programs.

Also, when these FDK discussions commence, no kindergarten teacher or elementary school principal is a member of the policy committee, though Margaret has been assisting each Friday morning in a Boston public school kindergarten classroom since the EEA Campaign began. Until the Spring of 2003, only one member of the policy committee – a union leader who taught first grade – has had any direct experience with kindergarten issues. But by the summer, when policy committee members have use of the research generated by the Harvard students, an elementary school principal from the western part of the state, who served as the head of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and wrestles with her district's difficulty in serving all of its five-year olds in full-school-day kindergarten, has joined the campaign's advisory and policy committees. She and committee members are also joined by an early childhood education

coordinator from a school district in Western Massachusetts. The expertise and experience they bring add immeasurably to these discussions.

Similarly, when it becomes clear that many of the still-to-be-resolved family child care issues need an expert's voice at the table, the director of the Massachusetts-based Family Child Care Project is invited to also join the campaign's advisory and policy committees. Until her arrival, few members of this policy committee had her direct experience with particular challenges that might confront family child care providers with passage of this bill. Her input is likewise critical to the decision-making now taking place, as is feedback the EEA Campaign receives from a concurrent series of evening meetings it convenes with a group of family child care leaders and providers.

Hours and hours of deliberation about each of these policy issues – examining them from the broadest of visions to the tiniest of detail – confirm the complexities of this enterprise. After one long session of policy deliberations, one member observes that “it feels like it's getting more complicated, when our goal is to make it simpler.” Hearing this, Margaret says, “Yes, and this worries me about selling this to policy makers.” She is reminding policy committee members that legislators, not unlike voters, respond best when issues can be simply explained. To Margaret's comment, a child care colleague responds, “Just try explaining it to providers.”

Moving EEA’s Message In and Out

Understanding the details of how EEA’s program might one day work is essential for those developing it. But there comes a time when its complexities must be simplified so they can be relayed to the public in media messages and to legislators in the advocacy messages they receive. During one policy committee meeting, in particular, time is set aside to strategize about how to develop these messages. By taking what the committee members know about the bill and transforming this knowledge into accurate, easy-to-deliver messages, EEA will be able to better communicate why this new “brand” of early childhood education is essential and how it can be accomplished. As it gets closer to the time of the bill’s filing, finding ways to convey the campaign’s work in clear, compelling messages becomes a routine part of everyone’s thinking.

Messages about the campaign, its legislation, and its issues will be carried to people and policymakers in a variety of ways. Just before the legislation’s filing and then after, an increasing number of events – some organized by, others co-sponsored by EEA – will be held. At these events, “earned media” (newspapers, radio and TV) will be the campaign’s targeted vehicle to get word out about the issues and goals of the campaign. At the same time, an inside-the-statehouse strategy to bring EEA’s message to policymakers will involve letter writing, e-mail messaging and phone calling by EEA’s trained coalition of frontline early education and care advocates and its powerful unlikely messengers. And they will have some help. By then, Strategies for Children, Inc. will have hired Jondavid Chesloff, a person with lots of experience in statehouse politics, to be EEA’s inside-the-statehouse legislative/issues director.

All of these message-conveying methods are critical to the campaign, and each one gets interwoven with the others as EEA staff coordinates their content and figures out how the messages compliment and build on one another.

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Sending Out Messages Via ‘Earned Media’

In the Fall of 2002, EEA marshals its forces – its broad statewide coalition of supporters and the political pressure that devolves from it – and organizes a “Legislative Kick-off” to be held on October 23, 2002. Choosing where to hold the event is easy – like other EEA events related to its legislation, the location will be the Massachusetts Statehouse. EEA extends invitations to everyone involved with the campaign, to legislators and those who work at relevant state agencies, and to staff at local foundations and philanthropists who support the campaign. This long-awaited occasion is an opportunity to celebrate the campaign’s progress while also reinvigorating people for the hard advocacy effort ahead.

It also provides the bill’s lead sponsors – Senator Fred Berry and Representative Peter Larkin – with a visible public platform from which to demonstrate their “ownership” of the legislation. Finally, it will launch, too, the next more active phase of the campaign’s strategic effort to statewide earn media attention for its issues and goals.

A bit after 10:00 a.m. on the morning of EEA’s statehouse event, photographers on the building’s grand marble staircase are taking pictures of preschoolers in EEA t-shirts who are sitting with advisory committee members and the bill’s lead sponsors. Interactions with the young children serve as a visceral reminder of why the adults are here.

As the event begins, the speakers – carefully selected by EEA staff and the campaign co-chairs for the messages each can convey about the legislation – vividly demonstrate the breadth of the coalition aligned with this campaign. From each speaker’s perspective flows evidence of why EEA’s goals merit support from legislators and the public. Each message is delivered in about three minutes. Advisory committee co-chairs Paul O’Brien and Mara Aspinall lead off the hour-long speaking program by explaining why they, as business leaders, devote time and energy to the campaign and highlight ways that high-quality early childhood education connects with the state’s long-term economic well-being. Mara describes

EEA as “an unprecedented broad-based coalition” and says that its effort is “a critical campaign for our state.” Citing her business experience, she argues, that “the cost of investing is significant, and we can’t shy away from that. But the cost of not doing it is even more.”

Mara’s remarks are followed by those of Massachusetts AFL-CIO Treasurer Kathleen Casavant, who is a member of the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee, as are nearly all of today’s speakers.

“We can never meet the needs of children unless we invest in those who work with children every day,” Casavant says, speaking from her experience as a labor leader. Sean Palfrey, who is president of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, arrives at the microphone with a message about the large role that quality of education plays in young children’s healthy development. Rev. Irmani Smith, a religious leader with Boston’s TenPoint Coalition, speaks about the positive effect access to high-quality early childhood education has on those growing up in difficult urban areas like many of the city’s neighborhoods in which she works.

Kathleen Kelley, a former first-grade teacher and now is president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, embraces the celebratory mood of this day on which EEA’s legislative campaign is being formally launched. She call this “the most exciting day in my 35 years as an educator.”

Christopher Martes, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, addresses academic advantage the EEA program would bring children. His message: it is essential to have young children in high-quality learning environments if improved academic outcomes are going to occur in primary and secondary classrooms. Karen Frederick, president of Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies, bolsters that message and commends EEA for its unique coalition-building approach to achieving this long-sought after goal. Kathleen Kelley, a former first-grade teacher and now is president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, embraces the celebratory

mood of this day on which EEA’s legislative campaign is being formally launched. She call this “the most exciting day in my 35 years as an educator.” This bill, she says, will at last succeed in filling in “the major missing link in education reform.”

After this line-up of EEA’s outside-the-statehouse supporters speak, the podium is given over to the bill’s two lead sponsors. Representative Larkin speaks to the importance of legislators moving ahead with laying the groundwork for early childhood

education so its building blocks will be in place for what needs to happen in the years ahead. Do this now, Larkin advises, so that “EEA will be well positioned to take place in an economic upturn.” This theme has been developed as a core EEA campaign message, so it is good for the bill’s many supporters to hear Larkin stress this point. Senator Berry lets the bill’s assembled stakeholders know that “Peter and I have never supported a bill that hasn’t saved the Commonwealth money.” This, he declares, referring to what EEA is planning to propose in its legislation, “is a workable program.”

By the time Margaret Blood speaks to conclude the event, there is a palpable sense of the realizable

benefits this initiative can offer the state’s young children and, in turn, how it can help the state’s economic development. As always, Margaret begins by thanking those who guide her in this work and also praises the daily work of early education and care providers who are, she says, “the heart and soul of this campaign.” Though glad to be celebrating, Margaret’s words are mindful of the still long and difficult road ahead. But she also sketches for her listeners the vision of early childhood education that keeps her working toward the time “when we are back here celebrating that we have achieved early education for all.”

At a statehouse reception after the event, 28 faculty and students who traveled by bus from Quinsigamond Community College – a school in central Massachusetts where students prepare for work in early education and care – eat and talk excitedly about this vibrant political movement that they’ve now become a part of. Before this event, Kathy Wilkinson – an EEA volunteer who teaches early childhood education at Quinsigamond – demonstrated the value of EEA’s constituency building when she convinced her state senator, Guy Glodis, generally regarded as being among the more conservative legislators to become a co-sponsor of the bill.

For most of the Quinsigamond students this is their first time at the statehouse. What impresses them about this event is the diverse membership in the EEA coalition. One of their teachers notes the lesson she sees her students absorbing. “They are now learning that advocacy is part of what they do,” she says.

Using Different Strategies to Send Messages

In August 2002, Coleman Nee was hired by EEA as a press consultant to direct its media outreach. Since then, he’s devoted a lot of time to figuring out how to draw favorable press attention to EEA’s Legislative Kick-Off. This event is the first time EEA has made a deliberate attempt to use a public event to draw reporters’ attention to its campaign. He is also thinking ahead about ways to keep EEA’s core

messages in the press when and after EEA files its legislation.

With its legislative kick-off, EEA’s “earned media” strategy succeeds wonderfully. On the morning of the event, The Boston Globe’s lead editorial, “Starting Early,” begins with these words:

“Imagine a parade of toddlers crowding the State House to demand better preschool education....It won’t happen. But this morning at the State House, business leaders, unions, educators, and parents will kick off a campaign for universal early childhood education. It’s a wise plea for legislation to create statewide programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds.”

In the City & Region section of that morning’s Globe an article about EEA appears, and it describes the campaign’s evolution and its legislative goals. As a result of this event, EEA receives much positive media coverage, including news stories on some of the state’s major TV and radio stations and articles in newspapers throughout the state. An October 24th story in the Springfield Union-News (a city about 90 miles west of Boston) lets readers hear from about EEA from some of the 40 people who rode on buses from there to show their support for universal high-quality early childhood education.

In the Spring of 2003, another statehouse event becomes the locus for EEA visibility. In early April, during The Week of the Young Child (WOYC) – a week established in 1971 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children to highlight actions that support children’s healthy development and early learning – EEA joins with government officials in an event honoring the occasion. By participating, the EEA Campaign is able to receive more exposure for its bill. To alert supporters about WOYC, this event and ways to garner recognition for the campaign, EEA sends letters to those in its database suggesting three ways to use this event to raise awareness about the legislation from both inside and outside the statehouse. With each letter, EEA encloses an “awareness” lapel ribbon that supporters can wear to increase the campaign’s visibility.

EEA's suggestions include:

1. Wear the teal-colored awareness ribbon in support of early childhood education.
2. Send an e-mail about the Week of the Young Child to colleagues, friends and family. (EEA provides a sample e-mail message for them to use.)
3. Attend a "Kick-off the WOYC" event at the state house on April 7th, in which EEA supporters will be much in evidence.

The EEA bill's lead sponsors also file resolutions to recognize WOYC. At the event on April 7th, Margaret attends with campaign co-chairs Mara Aspinall and Paul O'Brien and hears Lt. Governor Kerry Healey deliver welcomed words of support for early childhood education. DOE Commissioner David Driscoll and OCCS Commissioner Ardith Weiworka are also present; each is a key official whose support for the legislation will be critical to its passage. When the program finishes, EEA provides an opportunity that few policymakers can resist: A photographer has been brought along to take pictures of the lawmakers with preschool children who are also at the event.

This is a good example of EEA's effective "earned media" strategy. These photographs of legislators with the preschoolers are sent their local newspapers along with information about EEA. The brief article and photo caption highlight the legislator's participation in the WOYC event, as well as his/her support for the EEA bill. In each story's final paragraph is a description of EEA and a brief summary of the bill. This is win-win situation for the policymakers and for the EEA Campaign. Legislators receive attention in their hometown newspapers and thereby let constituents know about their engagement with this issue. And EEA's campaign and its bill receive reliably positive attention in local media. This kind of coverage can be hard to get without piggybacking the campaign's message onto vehicles such as these.

Two subsequent statehouse events serve similar purposes and, at each, the campaign's presence is

strongly felt. The campaign is one of 16 organizations to co-sponsor Early Care and Education State House Day, which is attended by more than 350 advocates from across the state, many legislators and a surprise visit from Democratic presidential candidate Dr. Howard Dean. On this day the advocates deliver a clear message to state legislators: preserve current funding for early education and care programs and support EEA's legislation. And at its State House Lobby Day, advocates with the Massachusetts School Age Coalition stress to legislators the importance of the workforce development component of the EEA bill because of on-going communication they've had with the EEA Campaign about issues they share in common.

As the Summer of 2003 approaches, Christine Lopes and Amy Kershaw work to draft letters with targeted messages for constituent-specific audiences. One of the first such mailings involves Dr. Sean Palfrey, president of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and an EEA Campaign Advisory Committee member. He works on this project with a young doctor at Boston's Children's Hospital who volunteers to help. With their guidance, Amy drafts a letter intended to reach "fellow pediatricians" with reasons – from a pediatrician's point of view – why EEA's bill is worthy of their attention and support.

A section of EEA's letter to pediatricians reads:

"In the 1970s, Dr. Robert Haggerty defined the new morbidity in pediatric practice as relating to behavioral, developmental, and psychosocial problems. The Early Education for All Campaign seeks to address important elements of this new morbidity by ensuring universal access for all those who want it to high-quality early childhood education."

This letter is sent out in May 2003 to members of Massachusetts AAP chapter. Its receipt is timed to precede by a few days Margaret's appearance at this AAP's chapter's annual meeting. At that gathering, Margaret describes the campaign's issues and goals and asks for the chapter's endorsement of EEA's legislation. After this talk, this AAP chapter becomes

the 21st organization/association to endorse the EEA bill.

Targeted letters, bearing the signatures of recognizable and respected leaders (who are advisory committee members) are mailed during the summer to members of business organizations, labor unions, religious groups, teacher unions and child care associations. As a complimentary strategy, columns and op-ed articles are written for publications aimed at specific audiences. For example, Paul O'Brien and Mara Aspinall, who wrote an article about EEA earlier for the Associated Industries of Massachusetts' newsletter, now co-author a piece for the Boston Business Journal, using language and arguments that business people respond to showing links between the delivery of high-quality early childhood education and the state's improved economic development.

Developing Its Paid Media Campaign

Even as these “earned media” events occur, Strategies for Children, Inc. and the EEA Campaign must plan to meet an upcoming challenge – raising the money needed to pay for broadcast time and newspaper space to air and print a “paid media” campaign about early childhood education. Because pre-campaign polling found that only one in ten voters uses child care, raising voter and opinion leader support has been a top campaign strategy.

Margaret refers to “paid media” funds as being “the hardest money to raise,” and indeed they are. Often foundations balk at specifically funding media outreach, in part because it can be difficult to measure its effectiveness. Also, as a 501(c)3 organization, Strategies for Children, Inc. has limits on the amount of money it is allowed to spend on “lobbying” activities. This means that while EEA can use these public awareness advertisements to support its efforts to obtain universal high-quality early childhood

education, it cannot use them to urge viewers to call legislators in support of a particular bill.

Undertaking a paid-media campaign is quite expensive when compared with other aspects of its work. But EEA is fortunate when one of the foundations supporting its overall effort agrees to provide a substantial portion of the necessary funding for its paid-media campaign. Meanwhile, the Strategies for Children, Inc.'s board authorizes that half of the cost of EEA's paid media campaign will come out of EEA's general operating funds being provided by 13 local and national foundations. It

After a series of strategy meetings with the media consultants, in which many concepts are presented and discussed, the decision is made to feature a local hero with a connection to high-quality early education.

votes this allocation because a public awareness media campaign has always been identified as one of the campaign's four key strategies. (Other strategies include the development and building of support for the legislation; engagement of influential new allies for children to help develop and promote the legislative proposal; and the use of research and evaluation to demonstrate how investments in young children and their early

education produce measurable results.)

In the Spring of 2003, Margaret and Carolyn Lyons, EEA's chief operating officer and director of marketing, meet with a media consultant familiar with the campaign, and then with a creative team at Hill Holiday, the top-ranked Boston advertising company. After being asked by a Strategies for Children, Inc. board member, Arnold Hiatt, to take on this project, Hill Holiday agreed to donate creative development and media placement services for an EEA public awareness campaign. After a series of strategy meetings with the media consultants, in which many concepts are presented and discussed, the decision is made to feature a local hero with a connection to high-quality early education.

Alan Khazei, a co-founder of a youth public service program called City Year, attended a high-quality preschool, and he is selected from a long list of

proposed candidates who would be identifiable in the Massachusetts’ market. An actor who resembles Khazei as a young child is cast and appears in the ads to show the skills that emerge out of high-quality learning experiences. As the 30-second ad comes to a close, Khazei’s voice is heard as the child’s image gradually changes into Khazei as an adult. The tag line used in this ad, and in all of this campaign’s paid-media ads, is “85% of who you are – your intellect, personality, social skills – is developed by age 5. Let’s invest when it makes the most difference. Early Education for All. It makes a difference to everyone.”

The ad campaign’s messages are created and TV time is purchased with a target audience in mind.

EEA’s primary goal is to reach Massachusetts voters who tend to be older, well-educated and more affluent. After a cost/benefit analysis is done, it is decided this paid media campaign will be broadcast in the state’s two largest media markets – Boston in the east, Springfield in the west – and will be complimented by targeted print ads that will appear in major dailies and in more than 30 weekly newspapers throughout the state.

These ads – TV and print – will appear simultaneously, for three to four weeks, just as the EEA Campaign is preparing for legislative hearings on its bill in October 2003 so as to increase public awareness of the value of high-quality early childhood education.

Bringing Messages Inside the Statehouse

As the paid-media campaign evolves, coordinated efforts continue statewide to broaden the base of support and breadth of EEA’s “outside-the-statehouse” network of advocates. This EEA network – in its delivery of key messages about the issues and the legislation – will help to convince policymakers and the public of the reasons why it is essential to invest state dollars in high-quality early childhood education. And help in broadening this support is provided by

advisory and policy committee members. For example, Nancy deProse, a United Auto Workers’ labor organizer who works in the western part of the state and sits on both EEA committees, meets with many frontline workers to explain its intent and interest them in joining the EEA effort. Other committee members author op-ed articles or send letters to the editor of their local newspapers and include information about EEA’s campaign on their organizations’ Web sites, listservs and newsletters.

Meanwhile, inside the statehouse, EEA’s Jondavid Chesloff makes certain that key legislative staff (and legislators) receive answers and assistance they need in a timely manner. Conversely, he shares what he

learns at the statehouse with EEA staff to alert them to issues that require their attention. In her strategic campaign plan, Margaret had originally budgeted for EEA to hire a part-time lobbyist once the bill was filed. But when Jondavid was available after the November election and he expressed interest in full-time work, EEA brought his experience, knowledge and expertise to work fulltime on

behalf of the legislation, as well as on other Strategies for Children initiatives. He plays a critical role in shaping messages that resonate with policymakers, such as broadening the scope of discussion about early childhood education’s benefits from the academic and social implications for children to the positive affect it can have on the state’s economic future. Jondavid also works with EEA’s field and policy teams on their legislative strategy, while also helping to shape the campaign’s overall media messages.

Given their vast experience at the statehouse, Jondavid and Margaret know that a bill’s passage is more likely when legislators and relevant agency directors feel a sense of “ownership” over it. During meetings Margaret had in the Fall of 2002 with officials at DOE and OCCS and with key legislators,

The solution: Do not propose any costly elements during what would be the program’s first year. Focus instead, this person suggests, on establishing the program’s vital planning components.

EEA’s “external” process was praised for its regional forums, constituency outreach and collaborative decision-making process. But fewer compliments were heard about its “internal” process, in particular its work with members of the executive branch. That aspect of the campaign is strengthened.

At an EEA Campaign Advisory Committee meeting in January 2003, the bill’s lead Senate sponsor, Fred Berry, gave his frank advice about the importance of “shared ownership.” Margaret had invited him and the House lead sponsor, Peter Larkin, to give committee members their guidance about strategic statehouse advocacy. “Get involved with the executive branch. Get them to own this bill, and that will help us,” Berry told them.

By the Spring of 2003, EEA staff is putting together several pages of “frequently asked questions” (FAQ) about the campaign and legislation. These FAQs are assembled, in part, as a response to the budget chaos at the statehouse after Governor Romney indicates his interest in moving DOE’s funding for young children’s programs into OCCS. Among EEA Policy Committee members disagreements surface about the wisdom of such a shift, and this unease reflects similar tensions within the broader early education and care communities. EEA can’t afford to weaken its coalition by being pulled into this dispute. By preparing these FAQs, the campaign is able to clarify, once again, the common ground on which it is constructed.

Many of the FAQs have surfaced in meetings EEA’s field team has been having with those in the early education and care communities. Just as concerns and questions Jondavid hears at the statehouse serve as an early warning system so, too, does what Amy O’Leary and other EEA staff hear in conversations with educators and providers. Once concerns are identified, members of EEA’s policy committee assist in shaping responses. Using their expertise and the detailed work they’ve done in constructing the bill, these committee members help EEA staff frame responses for use by campaign supporters. The FAQs – which are posted on EEA’s Web site and

distributed to supporters statewide – become a useful tool for the campaign’s many messengers.

Defining Success

Another critical part of EEA’s message-making involves setting and communicating appropriate expectations for how the campaign’s success should be measured and talked about at various stages of the campaign. This element is especially important at a time when the state’s fiscal climate is horrendous and EEA’s legislation is about to be launched.

At a policy meeting, a committee member reminds colleagues that “the chance of getting money for any of this during this legislative session is nil.” Still, this person argues, EEA can avoid setting the campaign up for what might be perceived by legislators and the public as an early failure. The solution: Do not propose any costly elements during what would be the program’s first year. Focus instead, this person suggests, on establishing the program’s vital planning components. Setting in place these building blocks isn’t going to cost much but is absolutely essential to transforming this vision into an identifiable program to which legislators establish a long-term commitment.

“There is a chance for our efforts to set up a robust structure to enable a constituency for early childhood education to be heard and felt as a political force in the future. And then through that structure, early childhood education can secure money in future years,” this person says, before concluding that “we can have success as long as we define success correctly.”

This advice – which posits them and others as active agents in defining how success will be measured – is a central part of the message shared with EEA’s grass-roots supporters. Without this strategic thinking – and message making – supporters whose expectations are high might feel discouraged when parts of the legislation are not acted upon quickly.

Keeping Early Childhood Education Center Stage

At the Massachusetts Statehouse, the budget process chugs along through the spring and into the early summer of 2003. While a key element of the EEA's bill – its proposal for establishing an Early Education and Care planning council (referred to now by legislators as an “advisory council”) – is in the mix of deliberations between House and Senate leadership, the entire bill awaits its hearing in the fall, a time advised for it by its sponsors, Senator Fred Berry and Representative Peter Larkin, who want to move past the spring's budget wrangling before drawing attention to the EEA particulars.

Several big challenges exist for EEA staff during the bill's legislative lull.

- Keeping the bill's stakeholders motivated to support it during a time when little visible action on it is taking place.
 - Keeping the EEA Policy Committee members coming to the table to revisit tough unresolved issues and move toward resolving them when the more exciting work of creating the legislation is behind them and each is involved with fighting to hold onto state funding for their programs and services.
 - Finding effective ways to get word out to broader audiences about the campaign and its goals during a time when many in Massachusetts are feeling squeezed by the state's hard economic times.
- Each of these situations presents hurdles for EEA to surmount. But by keeping a focus on the campaign's long-term goals and adhering to its steady and gradual strategic approach, EEA manages to achieve progress both inside and outside of the statehouse.
- After a special election in the Spring of 2003 added an additional co-sponsor, the total number of legislators sponsoring the EEA bill is 111. In all, 55 percent of the legislators have become sponsors;
- in the Senate, 70 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of Republicans; in the House, 57 percent of Democrats and 14 percent of Republicans. Also, each of its lead sponsors assumed a new leadership position after the November 2002 elections. Senator Berry is now Majority Leader, and Representative Larkin is Assistant Vice Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, a key leadership post. Having the bill's lead sponsors in leadership positions will help.
- As part of the 2004 fiscal year budget process, House Speaker Tom Finneran appoints an Education Finance Task Force to develop recommendations for the House Ways and Means Committee. Peter Larkin chairs this task force and he invites Margaret Blood to testify, making EEA the only early childhood group to do so. EEA's recommendations are included in the task force's report, which states that “all early childhood programs are important.” Recommendations that are accepted include maintaining funding levels for early education/literacy programs and kindergarten grants and creation of a workforce development commission. The language regarding the workforce commission comes directly from EEA's bill, with the focus on creating a system for investing in training, education and compensation for those who work with children from birth to age 14 in early education and care and school-age settings.
 - The new Senate President Robert E. Travaglini convenes a series of private policy briefings to prepare the 40-member senate for work on the budget. When EEA staff learn that one of the briefings involves K-12 education, the senate president agrees to expand the briefing to include pre-K education. Mara Aspinall is invited to speak and presents the case for why decisions about state funding of education need to include putting resources into high-quality early childhood education.

- At about the same time that Mara testifies about early childhood education at the Massachusetts Statehouse, Margaret is invited to testify at the statehouse in Sacramento, California in hearings that legislators hold on improving learning opportunities for 3- and 4-year olds. There is great interest in many states about EEA's strategic coalition and constituency-building approach, and Margaret (and other EEA staff) is often invited to speak to policymakers and advocates about the issues, goals, and strategic aspects of the EEA Campaign.

Strengthening Legislative Support

While efforts are underway inside the Massachusetts Statehouse to keep awareness of these issues high, EEA also continues its outside strategy of seeking organizational endorsements for the legislation. When endorsements arrive, they come with the promise of advocacy support at key political moments, including testimony on behalf of the bill and letter writing and phone calls to legislators. Most of these endorsements are secured with the help of advisory and policy committee members, including Julie Tetreault, who in June lets EEA know that the Lawrence Community Partnerships for Children Council endorsed the bill at its formal council meeting. With this endorsement and others from an expanding and diverse assortment of groups – including the Executive Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, the United Auto Workers, the YMCAs of Massachusetts, the AFL-CIO, the Policy Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Catholic Conference and the Executive Board of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers – EEA is on its way to collecting 35 organizational endorsements of its legislation by the time the committee hearing takes place in the Fall.

As 2003 moves ahead, EEA – working to strengthen its strategic underpinnings – invites several new people to join the advisory and policy committees.

After the hearing, more organizations – including three regional associations of the state Association for the Education of Young Children, as well as its statewide board – vote to endorse the bill, thanks to the efforts of advisory and policy committee member Mary Ann Anthony, who is president of this statewide association. Then, with the help of EEA volunteers, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Teacher Education Consortium and the Massachusetts Community College Early Childhood Educators add their names to the list.

As 2003 moves ahead, EEA – working to strengthen its strategic underpinnings – invites several new people to join the advisory and policy committees.

Each is invited to join as a way of bringing particular expertise and perspectives into the broadening conversation about universal early childhood education. After nearly two years of conversation about the campaign with the Massachusetts Elementary Principals Association, its national representative, Jillayne Flanders, who is also a principal at an elementary school in the western part of the state, takes a

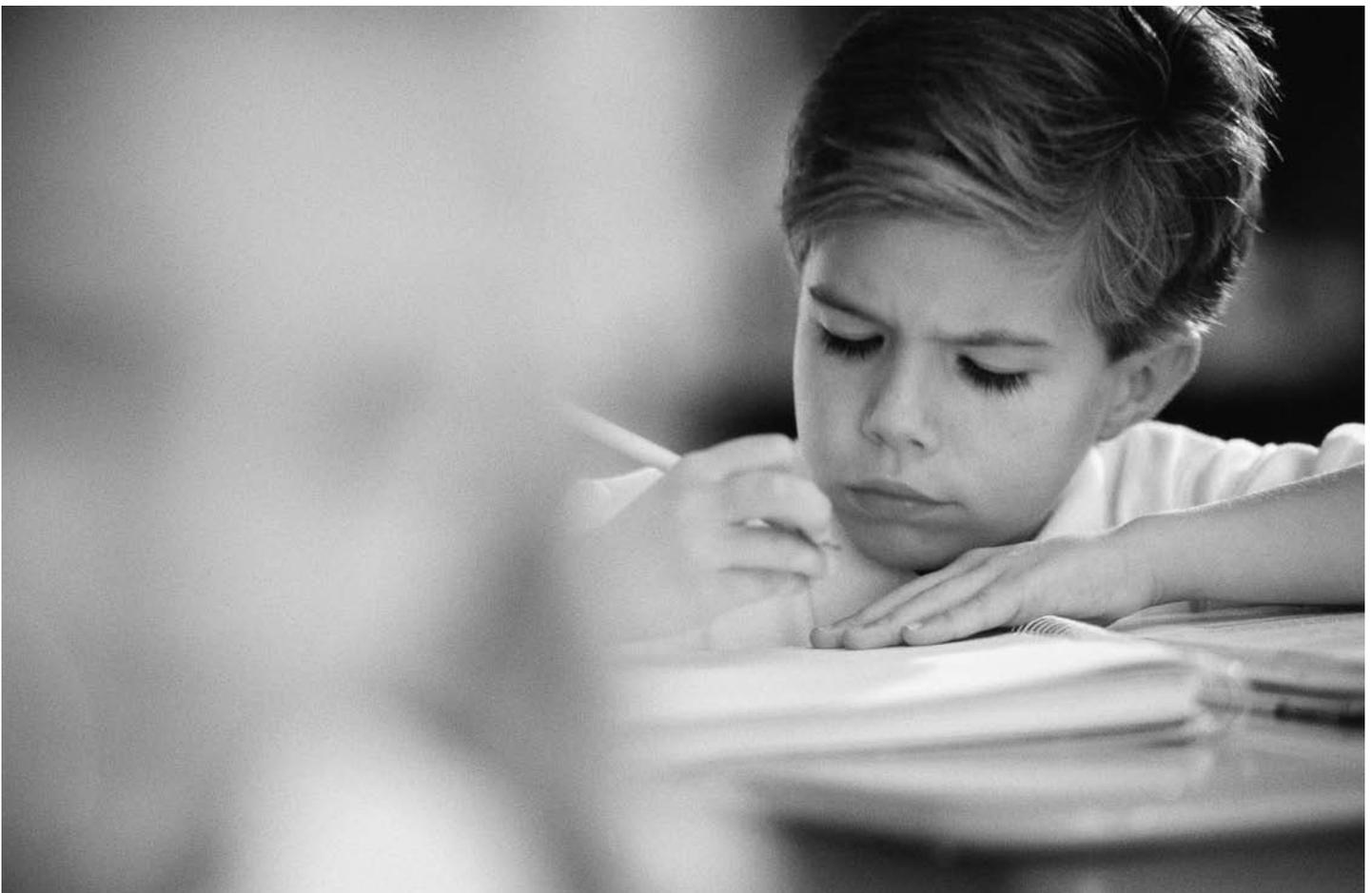
seat at both EEA tables. And after hosting a number of meetings with family child care providers to seek their input on how best to address their concerns in the legislation, EEA invites Kathy Modigliani, a nationally renowned family child care leader, to join both committees.

- Joining the advisory committee are representatives from several of the state's major business sectors – Cora Beth Abel, Director of Education for the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, Cort C. Boulanger, Vice President of the Massachusetts High Technology Council, Ron Sargent, President and CEO of Staples, Inc. Also welcomed is Lou Casagrande, President and CEO of The Children's Museum in Boston, as is Stephen P. Tocco, Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and Carole A. Cowan, President of Middlesex

Community College, a school actively engaged in educating early childhood teachers.

Amy O’Leary, the campaign’s Early Childhood Field Director, and others on the staff continue to meet with early education and care providers in all regions of the state. With organizational assistance from the campaign’s local field captains, during the first eight months of 2003, O’Leary and others from EEA are able to talk about the campaign and the legislation with 495 early education and care providers at 24 regional and statewide conferences. In the Fall, the campaign travels to 10 cities and towns and meets with 250 frontline workers to provide another opportunity to ask questions about the bill’s progress and learn how they can get involved in its advocacy. [By October, when the legislative hearing takes place, EEA field captains, responsible for keeping the campaign directly connected with 68 legislators, have signed on.]

While Amy O’Leary works closely with those on the frontlines of the early education and care communities, EEA Field Director Christine Lopes advances the campaign’s outreach efforts by focusing on local municipalities. EEA staff put together a fact sheet entitled “A Campaign Every Town Can Support,” describing the convergence of common sense, scientific research about young children’s ways of learning, and economic analysis about savings that come from public investment in high-quality early childhood education as a way to gain broader support for EEA’s legislation. (These handouts are similar in content and purpose to ones handed out at the political caucus events during the early winter of 2002 but are aimed at community concerns.) At town meetings, local campaign supporters pass out this fact sheet to educate their neighbors about this issue and the campaign.



Making the Case for High-Quality Early Childhood Education

In May of 2003, a good opportunity arises to put early childhood education on the radar screen of some of the state's top political leaders. EEA takes advantage of the occasion. At a standing-room only event in Boston, "A Decade of Learning: Education Reform in Massachusetts," hosted by a non-partisan think tank, MassINC, Governor Mitt Romney addresses educators and business and civic leaders about the state's continuing challenges in its elementary and secondary schools. He includes in his remarks his usual reference to the need for full-school-day public kindergarten to be available to children who live in districts where standardized tests show poor academic performance.

Eight panel members have been invited to this event to discuss the effectiveness of the state's 10-year-old school reform measures. Included among the invited speakers are EEA Campaign co-chair and Genzyme Genetics President Mara Aspinall. She is the only business leader on this panel. Kathy Kelley, president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers and a member of EEA's advisory and policy committees is there, too, as is the Speaker of the House Tom Finneran, whose support will be essential if the EEA bill is to be favorably voted on.

After Mara speaks about how children's learning doesn't begin when the bell rings for first grade, Speaker Finneran is asked by the moderator what students need so they will be able to attain the higher academic standards now expected of them. His reply is encouraging for the EEA supporters in the audience. "Early childhood education is the way to do it," he says. "This is absolutely, positively the most important frontier that lies ahead.... Early childhood is a breakthrough opportunity for this state and this nation."

As the event is about to end, the moderator turns again to Speaker Finneran to ask what he sees as his "top priority legislative and the major political

challenge." Finneran begins his reply by saying that he has not always supported public funding for early childhood education. However, he declares himself a believer now. "The top priority would be early education, trying to expand it. At the end of the third year of budget problems, there is an ambitious proposal that lies ahead of us," he says, making direct reference to the EEA bill, but not naming it. "The fiscal ambition (of the bill) is not an intimidation as long as we keep our eye on the magnitude of the promise," the Speaker concludes.

When the event is over, Speaker Finneran and Mara Aspinall, who were seated next to each other, walk away from the table. As they do, Mara overhears the Speaker asking the person next to him, "Was I too supportive?"

Hearing this question, Mara says to the Speaker, "No, you weren't. And we'll be up to see you soon."

Mara tells this story at an EEA Campaign Advisory Committee meeting later that month. In doing so she reminds the campaign's advisors of the important and incremental signs of progress that the EEA Campaign is experiencing, this one among them. But she also cautions that the road ahead will have bumps to travel over. "This is still a long battle," she says, "but we are making friends and convincing them this is the right thing to do."

Business and Politics Meet Again

Early in the Fall, Strategies for Children, Inc. organizes its own forum. Its purpose: to link publicly funded high-quality early childhood education with economic development in the minds of policymakers, opinion leaders and the press. Rather than viewing the cost of this potential program only as a difficult statehouse budgetary issue or thinking about early childhood education just in terms of its academic and developmental benefits, EEA intends to use

research to demonstrate how making public investments in such a program contributes to improving a state’s long-term economic growth.

This forum is scheduled to begin at eight o’clock on Wednesday morning, a good time to attract business people to such an event. With coffee and muffins available and the seats of Verizon’s auditorium filling up on this October morning, “Early Childhood Education and the Future of the Massachusetts Economy,” is ready to begin. From a double-sided EEA fact sheet, audience members learn, for example, that Pennsylvania and Louisiana are states that already include early childhood education as a key strategy in their states’ economic development plans.

Preparations for this major event have been underway for months. To achieve the widest and most well-targeted outreach among policymakers and business leaders, Strategies for Children, Inc. partnered with the Center for Education Research and Policy at MassInc, Verizon and four business groups which are represented on the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee – Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Massachusetts High Technology Council, Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education.

To make the argument linking public spending on high-quality early education to the state’s economic growth, Strategies for Children, Inc. invited Arthur Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, to be the event’s keynote speaker. The hope is that Rolnick’s nationally-recognized research will illuminate for this Boston audience – and many others throughout the state who will see, read and hear news coverage of this event – his central finding that “dollars invested in early childhood development yield extraordinary public returns.”

Rolnick concedes that investments in early childhood development remain a hard sell to legislators and cites reasons why. “It’s not concrete, not a new building or new hockey team or new store,” he says.

In his talk Rolnick cites an inflation-adjusted real rate of return from this investment. The rate is 16 percent – a four percent return to individuals and a 12 percent public return. He notes that when private industry discovers an investment that yields a similar rate of return “money would flow in.” Rolnick says this return is probably underestimated by most economic models which do not take into account such things as the impact such funding has on children’s parents or on the children that these children might one day have.

Rolnick concedes that investments in early childhood development remain a hard sell to legislators and cites reasons why. “It’s not concrete, not a new building or new hockey team or new store,” he says.

Nor is early childhood education “as visible” as buildings and teams are. And its return is realized in the long term (both in savings from remedial money not spent and in the state’s economic growth), after most legislators who would have voted to fund its creation will likely have retired from public service.

When Rolnick concludes his talk, his prediction about the hard sell to legislators is born out by

Speaker Tom Finneran’s comments. Mara Aspinall and the Speaker, seated again next to each other, are the panel members asked first to respond to Rolnick’s address. (On Mara’s other side sits Senate President Robert Travaglini.) As a business leader, Mara connects Rolnick’s findings to her experience as president of a major biotechnology firm as she talks about her company’s need to recruit and retain a highly educated workforce. “There is no priority higher than education,” Mara says, as she notes its prime role in recruiting and retaining workers in Massachusetts and also in preparing a capable future workforce. To achieve both, she argues, the state needs “an educational system that starts with children who are 3-, 4- and 5-years old.”

Speaker Finneran is not so quick to embrace the economic equation he's just heard or accept that the argument qualifies as a winning legislative strategy when he must deal with the immense budget pressures the state currently faces. "This discussion does not occur in a vacuum," he reminds panel and audience members, referring to tough fiscal circumstances and looming needs he knows exist in K-12 and higher education, in transportation, in human services, and with the escalating costs in already committed state medical expenditures.

A while later, Senate President Travaglini signals his willingness to consider ways to make high-quality early childhood education happen. "What gets our attention," he says, "is passion, merit, arithmetic and personal character." His remarks suggest the investment argument he's just heard intrigues him. "Anytime I can put out five and get 15 back, it gets my attention," Travaglini says.

But Speaker Finneran refuses to yield this morning from his message about why this issue must be seen as part of the larger budgetary whole. At one point he cautions the EEA bill's supporters that "there is huge risk attached to being overly ambitious." Then, in response to a panel member who said that spending public dollars on early childhood education is a "no-brainer," he says, "It is not a no-brainer. When we say yes to this, we're saying no to something else. No one wants to acknowledge that something has to give. There are limits. The pie does not expand."

As the program is about to conclude, EEA unveils its "paid media" TV spot, created to raise public awareness of these issues. This 30-second spot will be broadcast for the first time this evening, then shown at targeted times during the next several weeks leading up to the bill's statehouse hearing, now scheduled for October 21st. Before the audience disperses, EEA Campaign co-chair Paul O'Brien concludes the event by characterizing the morning's discussion as a "hard-nosed discussion of what it will take" for EEA's vision to become a reality for the state's young children.

The next morning, The Boston Globe headlines its page one City & Region story about the event with the words "Preschool backers say they mean business," and it reports the event's keynote message: Long-term economic returns come from spending on high-quality early childhood education. The story also updates its readers on the progress of the EEA Campaign. A week later the Boston Herald – the city's more conservative paper – publishes an editorial about early childhood education based on this event. It describes the "ever-practical" Speaker Finneran as throwing a "needed splash of cold water" on Early Education for All's ambitious idea. In the editorial's final paragraph these words appear, "A campaign tying early education to the economic success of the state is clever. It will also be ineffectual unless its proponents offer a realistic plan to fund it." This editorial appears the day after the Herald published an op-ed article, co-authored by EEA Campaign Advisory Committee members, Richard Lord, president of Associated Industries of Massachusetts and Alan G. Macdonald, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, which argued why early childhood education should be seen as part of the state's economic development strategy.

A Statehouse Hearing on the EEA Bill

With more than 100 people looking on from seats in the Gardner Auditorium, the largest hearing room in the Massachusetts Statehouse, Representative Marie St. Fleur, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, gavel the hearing on EEA's bill – and on a few dozen other education bills – to its start. It's a bit after 10:00, the scheduled time for public testimony to begin. Though only a few legislators are present to hear testimony – and others will stop by to give testimony and to listen – this occasion represents a vital step forward for this issue-oriented campaign.

It's a step that has been a long time in coming, especially for Margaret Blood. It is now approaching six years since her initial work with this issue began. Now she is seated across from Rep. St. Fleur, ready to lead off testimony in support of "An Act Establishing

Early Education for All,” (H.1838/S.239). With her is Paul O’Brien, the campaign’s co-chair and a Boston business leader, who has been with Margaret throughout this journey, and even before when, as part of United Way of Massachusetts Bay’s Success By 6 campaign, Margaret convinced him that children need help at the statehouse from unlikely messengers and he decided to become one.

But before Margaret and Paul can speak, Rep. St. Fleur does and cuts to the heart of what her inquiries about the EEA legislation will be. “How to pay for it,” St. Fleur says, “and how to create a quality workforce.”

Anticipating these issues would surface, EEA has strategically assembled five panels of EEA supporters to testify. They are grouped and placed in an order so that their testimony progressively builds the strongest case possible for why the legislature (and eventually the governor) should transform this bill into law and allocate state dollars to high-quality early childhood education. EEA staff devoted much time to developing the topics and key points these panel members will address. Three main themes were settled on: How and why high-quality early education benefits children; why it is good for communities; and how it helps business and, in turn, the state’s economy.

After Margaret and Paul’s introductory remarks about campaign and its issues, the panel members will speak in the order set by the EEA Campaign. Along the way, if a legislator or other public official arrives to testify, he or she will be given time to speak. Following these EEA panels, other public comments will be heard.

Members of the EEA panels – and their message – include:

- **Early Childhood Education is Essential for Children:** Included on this panel are parents, along with Ruth Cohn, a Boston public school kindergarten teacher, Sean Palfrey, president of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and Kathleen McCartney, a professor of early childhood education from Harvard’s Graduate

School of Education.

- **Early Childhood Education is Economic Development:** Speaking on this panel are business and labor leaders affiliated with EEA, including Arnold Hiatt, chairman of the Stride Rite Foundation, Mara Aspinall, Kathy Casavant, who is Massachusetts AFL-CIO treasurer, Alan Macdonald, who is Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, Andre Mayer, who is Senior Vice President of Associated Industries of Massachusetts, and Cort Boulanger, Vice President of Massachusetts High Technology Council.
- **Faith Communities and Early Childhood Education:** On this panel are EEA Advisory Committee members (or organization representatives) Reba Gaskin-Danastorg with the TenPoint Coalition, Gerry D’Avolio, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Catholic Conference, and Brad Kramer, Director of Government Affairs for the Jewish Community Relations Council.
- **Early Educators Aligned for Children:** Speaking on EEA’s final panel are Marta Rosa, Executive Director of the Child Care Resource Center, Karen Frederick, President of Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies, Cathy Dwyer, Political Director of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, Barbara Black, Early Childhood Coordinator, Northampton Public Schools, Macky Buck, a Cambridge family child care provider, Gail Klimas, Child Care Director and former teacher, East Boston YMCA, and Jill Flanders, an elementary school principal in South Hadley, MA and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association’s national representative.

These won’t be the only voices legislators will hear from about why passage of this bill matters to them and to children. On its Web site, and distributed by mail from the EEA Campaign, is a “How you can help!” information kit providing detailed information on how supporters can phone, mail and/or e-mail their state legislators at the time of the hearing. Included in this packet is easy-to-follow guidance

about writing a letter; exact wording is not provided so that each letter can convey an individual message. This is accompanied by a list of legislators who sit on the education committee and those who are co-sponsors of the bill. Added to this are suggestions for ways to provide a strong message through a phone call, with variations to a message based on whether the legislator is on the committee, a co-sponsor or neither. The packet concludes with lists of “talking points.” One is focused on early childhood education issues, in general, the other on the EEA Campaign and its bill, along with a set of three frequently asked questions and suggested responses. The questions prepared for supporters to respond to are ones the EEA staff anticipate legislators might ask.

1. Given the current fiscal picture in the state, isn't this the wrong time to introduce legislation?
2. How will the campaign achieve its goal?
3. Who is organizing the campaign?

In brief testimony, Margaret explains that the EEA legislation “reflects the input of more than 2,000 early educators, parents, advocates and other concerned citizens” and “builds on the strengths of our existing early education and care programs, as well as the strengths of the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS) and the state Department of Education.” She credits the campaign’s policy committee’s work, calling it a “unique 20-member committee of committed early education leaders representing a diverse set of perspectives who have devoted hours to developing this policy proposal that puts the best interests of our young children first.”

Margaret also tells Rep. St. Fleur that today, on behalf of the EEA Campaign, she is submitting a proposed redraft of the originally filed legislation. It reflects the policy committee’s efforts since the original bill was filed to respond to comments from the field, fill in language that had been vague and deal with some of the unresolved issues.

This amended bill also reflects changes due to events that have happened since its filing.

The most evident and important change occurs in what had been the bill’s governance section. In the bill filed in December 2002, EEA proposed the formation of an Early Education and Care Planning Council and said that within a year of the bill’s passage this council would develop “a plan for elevating, consolidating, streamlining and coordinating publicly funded early education and care administration and functions.” What emerged during the last

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legislative session – based on this proposal— was the establishment of the Council on Early Education and Care, which contains a similar mandate and is comprised of the commissioners of the DOE, OCCS and the state’s Department of Public Health. Because this part of the original EEA bill is now law, in the amended bill the governance section has been

removed. “We are confident that the newly established Council...will accomplish this essential work that will set the course for Early Education for All to become a reality,” Margaret says.

A series of five public hearings of this three-person Council on Early Education and Care takes place across the state during the next several months. At the first one, scheduled for later this same week in central Massachusetts, Margaret will testify. EEA staff, advisory committee members and volunteers will attend the other four hearings: Many will come forward to speak. Again, EEA sends out letters about the dates and location of the council hearings, encouraging supporters to attend the one taking place in their region. Talking points are enclosed, and several potential speakers seek help from EEA staff in crafting testimony or call to let EEA know they are going to attend. In November, at the council’s Boston hearing, Paul O’Brien speaks, and after his argument is presented, one of the council members acknowledges how necessary members of the business community are to pushing this issue ahead.

On March 2, 2004, the council releases its recommendations in a 15-page report to Governor Romney and the legislature. They are made across six broad areas and include:

- Improvement in state and local coordination and oversight of early education programs and services
- Improved alignment of policies and operations
- Strengthening of parent education and involvement
- Creation of an effective data collection system to inform policy and program planning and development
- Establishment of an appropriate balance between funding for direct services, quality enhancement and administration
- Ensuring the creation of a workforce system to support the education, training, and compensation of workers.

Before Margaret turns this morning’s microphone over to Paul O’Brien, she releases news of a recent statewide voter poll commissioned by EEA “to make sure we were in touch with Massachusetts voters’ opinions on this issue,” she says. After reminding the committee members that the EEA Campaign was created out of a 1999 statewide voter poll, she shares with them results of the recent telephone survey of 500 Massachusetts voters. The poll was done before the campaign’s public awareness messages appeared on TV and in newspapers.

- 73 percent of Massachusetts voters favor Early Education for All – that is they support a publicly-funded high-quality preschool and full day public school kindergarten for all Massachusetts children.
- 88 percent of Massachusetts voters feel that it is the responsibility of government to level the playing field by ensuring that all children have access to quality early childhood education.

Figuring Out How to Pay for EEA

It is Paul’s job to introduce the Early Education for All legislation as a prudent economic development

strategy and to let committee members know the campaign’s cost estimate for its yearly price tag after its anticipated 10-year phase-in is complete. “Finally, right up front I want to address the most obvious question – cost,” he says. “We estimate the cost to provide universal, high-quality, early childhood programs for the 3-, 4- and 5-year olds of Massachusetts will be about \$1 billion per year at the end of ten years.” Paul compares this new education challenge to the one legislators confronted in the early 1990s, when the state’s economy was also facing difficult times but business leaders and educators knew that an education reform plan – which would be costly – had to happen. And when the economy turned around, the additional dollars needed to help schools and students to reach higher standards of achievement were favorably voted.

This is not the first time that this issue of the program’s potential cost has been a topic of conversation between EEA and legislators at the statehouse. Nor will it be the last. Even before the bill was filed – in September of 2002, for example – several business leaders from the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee spent about two hours brainstorming with Representative Peter Larkin about possible sources of new revenue that might be used to pay for the public funding of high-quality early childhood education.

Their frank discussion about how to pay for the program was firmly grounded in political realities. What emerged from that meeting were ideas about articulating a phase-in of the program’s roll-out and having its cost be assumed out of general state funds, rather than by an earmarked tax. This method of payment follows the pattern of the K-12 education reform. And as state revenues rose after the education reform bill’s passage, state funding for K-12 education increased from \$1.3 billion in 1993 to \$3.2 billion in ten years.

When Margaret spoke with Representative Larkin after this meeting, what impressed him and his staff was that “these business leaders had taken time to do this.” To him, this demonstrated their commitment to this issue. Also, having their business expertise to call upon in thinking in new ways about funding

of young children’s education proved to be an impressive combination.

During the next five hours of this legislative hearing, supporters’ testimony is interrupted only by that given by lawmakers and state officials, as well as by the sharply targeted questions promised by Rep. St. Fleur. Before EEA’s third panel takes its seats, Senator David Magnani, who has been a floor leader for various young children’s issues, in his testimony calls the bill “self-evident in its need” and uses his time to say that “Anybody who argues, ‘it’s a nice idea, but we can’t afford it,’ hasn’t read the data. We can’t afford to wait.”

But how to pay for EEA continues to be the primary topic on Rep. St. Fleur’s mind as she absorbs the testimony from the panel of business leaders. Her questions boil down to this: “We’re in the midst of struggling to fund K through 12 right now, so how do we find the resources to do this? There is only so much of the pie that can be shifted. You are the financial experts. Come back with some guidance on this. We will need to shift funds to do this, but we need to show where decreases will come from and why.” She then urges them – and in doing so speaks to the broader business community – to offer the state “an incentive” by demonstrating a willingness to provide some funding for early childhood education from their company coffers. For this idea, she finds no takers.

Before the next panel is called, the commissioner of OCCS, Ardith Weiworka, testifies. EEA, she begins, “poses a difficult problem for government,” with budget realities being such that funding the existing education and care services for low-income children is a struggle. But, she goes on to say to the delight of the bill’s supporters, “I do not think a high price tag should take Early Education for All off the table.” She praises the bill as leading the way toward an improvement of the current state system, especially, she says, in its approach to workforce development.

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With the final EEA panel, Rep. St. Fleur relies on the expertise of providers of early childhood education and care to delve deeper into this issue of how to create a better qualified workforce. Requesting them to take higher wages off the table – for the sake of this discussion, St. Fleur asks them what three ingredients are most critical in achieving this. Their response: articulation agreements, making scholarship money available, and setting up career ladders.

In mid-afternoon, individuals testifying both in favor of and against the EEA follow these panels to the microphone. The legislation’s goals are widely applauded, but concerns about particular parts of the bill are raised by some. The most often heard criticisms involve the program’s envisioned structure and proposals involving the formation and use of local (community) councils. Complaints are also voiced about language restricting the statewide composition of EEA programs so that no more than 50 percent of them can be operated by the public sector, a provision designed to ensure a rich mix of public and private choice for families and build on the mix of programs already existing in the state.

As the legislation moves forward, discussion about these issues and others will continue to take place in EEA Policy Committee meetings as the campaign works to maintain its common ground of support – and political heft – among the bill’s many stakeholders.

The Speaker Speaks

Envelops arrive from Speaker Finneran’s office bearing invitations for Margaret Blood, Paul O’Brien and Mara Aspinall to attend his annual “Address to the Citizens of the Commonwealth” and to a luncheon he hosts before it. The Speaker will be putting his ideas about the state’s upcoming legislative session before the public in the week before Governor Romney delivers his customary State of the State address.

On Wednesday, January 8, 2004, with Paul out of town on business, Margaret and Mara attend the Speaker's lunch, then head to the House chamber to hear his remarks. Also in the audience in their professional capacities are EEA Advisory Committee Members Kathy Kelly, Richard Lord, Alan Macdonald, and Gerry D'Avolio, who have been with EEA from its beginning. There, too, is Cort Boulanger, a recent addition to the advisory committee, as well as Christine Lopes and Jondavid Chesloff from the EEA staff.

Leaning on crutches due to a recent hip replacement, Speaker Finneran surprises many in the audience by strongly embracing the goals of the EEA legislation and declaring them to be achievable.

“By the year 2010, we can be well advanced in an early childhood education policy that matches in scope and ambition the effort which we made in 1993 on education reform,” he declares. Borrowing a page from EEA's economic development forum he attended in October, Finneran says, “The dividends we will secure for our children and for our future are enormous.”

The reasons the Speaker gives for wanting to act now on early childhood education echo many put forth by EEA over the years in the campaign's public events, in letters written to legislators and in forums it has sponsored. EEA has consistently framed the issue of early childhood education as being the unfinished element of education reform and has shown how investing in a high-quality system of early childhood education and care reaps dividends for children and for the state.

Perhaps EEA's most consistent contribution has been in its long-standing, conscientious effort to “make the case” for early childhood education in Massachusetts. It has done this by summarizing relevant state and national research and presenting it to legislators and to unlikely messengers and to the public in easy-to-follow fact sheets. Around the time

of Speaker Finneran's speech, EEA releases another in its series of fact sheets, this one entitled “Investing in Early Educators is Essential,” in which it cites current research showing that well-educated and well-compensated teachers are the most vital ingredient in high-quality early education programs that show positive effects on child outcomes. As Speaker Finneran observes in his speech, “compelling research supports these initiatives of ours.”

In using the word “ours,” the Speaker deliberately sends the message that he is assuming ownership of this early childhood education issue, as he links this issue with other early learning issues he has championed in the past. Having legislative leaders assume the bill's ownership has been a central strategy of the EEA Campaign. The Speaker's words, as he makes his commitment to early childhood education, are greeted with the afternoon's largest ovation.

Finneran cautions that progress will, by fiscal necessity, be incremental, but he says that “preparation should move forward. The commitment should be made.”

To his fellow legislators – a majority of whom have affixed their names to the EEA bill as sponsors – he explains that, “The stakes are very high. Your embrace of this proposal will inevitably mean that other areas of our budget will receive somewhat lesser shrift. On behalf of the taxpayers of Massachusetts, we should not shy away from that reality....

“I believe that this choice is the right choice for our future,” the Speaker then says “and I ask you to join me in the effort to advance it.”

When the speech ends, Margaret, Mara and the other EEA leaders and staff members are congratulated by many in the chamber's audience who recognize the demanding work that has gone into making this moment possible. Of course, the legislation hasn't passed, nor has Governor Romney embraced it.

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Still, for the Speaker to put his power behind its passage is a major accomplishment for the campaign. The Page One headline in the next morning's Boston Globe declares: "Speaker Asks Preschool for All in State by 2010."

At 5:49 that afternoon, from Margaret's computer arrives an e-mail message sent to the campaign's advisory committee members. Knowing the immensity of the occasion but cognizant of the still long, tough road ahead to enactment of the entire bill, Margaret and the EEA Campaign co-chairs write in a measured tone – mixing obvious pleasure at today's accomplishment with gratitude for the assistance they've received in getting there – and share with trusted advisors news all of them have waited a long time to hear.

Dear Campaign Advisory Committee Members:

Earlier today, Speaker Finneran delivered his annual "Address to the Citizens of the Commonwealth" in which he outlined his top five goals for the state. We're delighted to report that the Speaker embraced our vision of high-quality early childhood education and full-day kindergarten by 2010. Specifically he stated, "By the year 2010, we can be well advanced in an early childhood education policy that matches in scope and ambition the effort which we made in 1993 on Education Reform."

The Speaker's other priorities included job creation, new housing construction, a "transparent, balanced and timely" state budget, and a public trust for the parkland above the Big Dig.

We are grateful to Speaker Finneran and the House membership for their leadership and commitment and we look forward to working closely with them this year.

Each of you deserves our deepest gratitude and personal thanks for helping to bring this issue to the top of the state's policy agenda. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul O'Brien

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Early Childhood Education: Securing a Firm Foundation

During the winter months of 2004, EEA's bill continues its journey through the legislature. Its first stop was the Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, which held a day-long hearing on the legislation in October 2003. By mid-March, meeting in executive session, this committee gives a favorable report to its redrafted version of the Early Education for All legislation. The committee sends the bill to the House Committee on Ways and Means for further consideration.

Those involved with the EEA Campaign are encouraged by the bill's momentum. But they are concerned, too, when they discover that this committee's redraft altered or ignored some critical elements of EEA's bill. For example, EEA has consistently called for the creation of a new consolidated and elevated administrative structure to oversee the state's early education and care programs and services and indicated this entity should not be housed in either of the existing agencies (DOE or OCCS) but be independent. Yet, in the committee's redraft, the Board of Early Education and Care is housed within the Department of Education. Also, while the EEA legislation calls for a special commission to develop a system to support the education, training and compensation of the early education and care workforce, this critical workforce component is not included.

To decide on a response, the EEA Campaign again turns to its policy committee for guidance. On March 24th, eight days after the redrafted bill is reported out of committee, a special meeting of the EEA Policy Committee is held in Boston. In two hours of discussion, policy committee members reach several important decisions. There is recognition that EEA's vision of creating a "consolidated and elevated" administrative structure to be placed independently outside of the existing departments, will not be realized unless an alternative solution can

be proposed and acted upon at the statehouse. By the end of the meeting, tentative agreement exists on an outline of a suggested alternative. Its elements include:

- Establish an independent Board of Early Education and Care, similar in structure to but distinct from the Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education.
- Call for a Commissioner of Early Education and Care to be appointed by the Board.
- Establish an independent Department of Early Education and Care, under the Board, within which to consolidate existing early education and care programs and funding.
- Assign the job of convening the Workforce Commission and the implementation of this commission's recommendations to the Board.

On April 1st, a special meeting of full EEA Campaign Advisory Committee is convened for follow-up discussion with the members of the Early Education and Care Council, which the legislature formed to hold public hearings and make for recommendations on ways to streamline and improve the state's handling of early education and care. The time is used also to brief the campaign's advisors on the next legislative steps. By the following week, the policy committee reconvenes to look over draft language that EEA prepared of what would be proposed. Six single-spaced pages of "technical" budget/ legislative language is approved unanimously by policy committee members and submitted as a recommendation to House legislative staff as "FY05 Budget Language Creating a Board and Department of Early Education and Care."

Meanwhile, as the Ways and Means Committee prepares to release its FY2005 budget recommendations, a budget task force on early education – one of five

such task forces Speaker Finneran established following his January address – holds two public hearings and invites the EEA Campaign to testify. The findings of this task force inform the work of the Ways and Means Committee, which also invites representatives from the EEA Campaign to submit testimony.

Debate on this proposed House budget is scheduled to begin on April 26th. Before then, many of EEA’s proposals to establish the foundation for a universal system of early childhood education and care appear in a budget Amendment (#1084), sponsored by Speaker Finneran, Representative Marie St. Fleur (chair of the Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities), Representative Peter Larkin (House sponsor of EEA’s original bill), and two other representatives. This amendment, which follows the path EEA suggested, is just two pages in length. However, if this amendment becomes law, a solid foundation will be put into place on which the high-quality, universal system of early education and care envisioned by the EEA Campaign can be built in Massachusetts.

Using its database of names and e-mail communication, the word goes out from EEA to its statewide network of supporters to contact their representatives – by phone, e-mail and/or letter – to register support for passage of this amendment and several others that also have implications for improving early education and care throughout the state.

The Court Speaks

On Monday, April 26th, the day when debate on the budget begins in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Superior Court Judge Margot Botsford releases a 358-page report of her findings in the *Hancock v. Driscoll* educational adequacy lawsuit. It had been her mandate, given by the state’s Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), to hear months of

testimony in this case brought by families from 19 poorer school systems who contend that Massachusetts is not meeting its constitutional duty to provide an adequate public education and to offer the SJC “findings of fact” and recommendations to guide the high court’s final decision on the lawsuit.

This is the case in which Strategies for Children, Inc. filed an amicus brief in February of 2004, presenting evidence about why high-quality early education and care needs to be part of a remedy for the state’s inadequate system of public education. In finding that Massachusetts needs to overhaul its financing of public schools, Judge Botsford offers state officials

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specific recommendations for how to provide every student with a quality education. She then articulates four programmatic areas that she says must be covered as the state determines the actual cost of meeting this obligation. Included among these four areas is “the cost of a public school preschool program for three- and four-year old children that would be offered free of charge at least

to those who are unable to pay.”

Addressing the role of early childhood education, Judge Botsford writes, “I conclude that the only way to give children....a realistic opportunity to acquire the education for which the Massachusetts Constitution provides is to offer them a quality preschool program and thus provision for such a program must be mandated.”

The SJC plans to hear oral arguments in the *Hancock V. Driscoll* case at their October sitting.

The Legislature Replies

Judge Botsford’s decision comes 11 years after another high court ruling found that the state was neglecting its constitutional duty to provide an adequate public education. As a result of that SJC ruling, the legislature responded with far-reaching education reform and over subsequent years

significant increases in funding to the state's public schools.

During its campaign for enactment of early childhood education legislation, EEA has argued that putting in place state support to provide universal access to high-quality early education and care is the logical and necessary next step in education reform. While hard economic times have prevented accelerated movement in taking this step, the hard work of thinking through and planning for how this can be achieved has happened under the leadership of the EEA campaign. With much of the early education and care community unified behind EEA's legislative proposal, influential policymakers familiar with and supportive of its goals, and a court ruling specifying action in this arena as a remedy, a powerful alignment of forces is in place to push this measure toward legislative action.

Three days after Judge Botsford's ruling, and by a unanimous vote, the House of Representatives passes Amendment #1084 as part of its budget debate. Its passage signals the state's commitment to creating a Board of Education and Care and the Department of Early Education and Care, as an independent state agency into which early education and care programs and services will be consolidated, and to appointing a Commissioner of Early Education and Care. These steps are integral parts of EEA's vision.

If the Senate agrees with the House on this budget amendment and the governor signs the bill, then the following events will transpire:

1. The law would go into effect on July 1, 2004.
2. A 40-member Advisory Committee on Early Education and Care will be responsible for developing a plan to give all 3- and 4-year olds access to high-quality early education and care through a mixed system of public and private providers, including the development of workforce training, school readiness assessment and program evaluation. This committee will deliver its report to the legislature by December 2004.
3. The Council on Early Education and Care – comprised of commissioners of DOE, DPH and OCCS – will develop recommendations for streamlining and consolidating all existing early education and care programs and services and identify duplicative services and administrative functions. Its report will also be due in December 2004.
4. The legislature will have from December 2004 until June 2005 to evaluate recommendations from the advisory committee and the council and put in place necessary legislation to begin the transition to the new, independent Department of Early Education and Care.
5. The nine-member Board of Education and Care – whose membership is outlined in the legislation – will become effective in April 2005 and, in serving as the governance structure for this new program, will assume four major responsibilities; to administer the early education and care system; to oversee the universal preschool program; to develop school readiness and program evaluations; and to oversee workforce development.
6. The Board will appoint a Commissioner of Early Education and Care to start by July 1, 2005, the same day that the new, elevated Department of Early Education and Care is officially established. This commissioner will also serve on the Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education.

After the amendment's passage, Speaker Finneran meets with reporters to emphasize the commitment this vote represents. "It's a commitment to a cause, and a commitment to a structure and an organization that will advance that cause," he says. Several people who serve on the EEA Campaign Advisory Committee and/or on the EEA Policy Committee (or hold high level positions in organizations that do) are invited to be at the Speaker's side. Richard R. Rowe, chairman of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Christopher Anderson, president of the Massachusetts High Technology Council, and Andre Mayer, senior vice president of Associated Industries of Massachusetts, are there,

demonstrating support from the state’s business community. In this group, too, are Douglas Baird, president and CEO of Associated Early Care and Education, William Eddy, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies, Sean Palfrey, president of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Marta Rosa, executive director of Child Care Resource Center, Inc., Joan Kagan, President and CEO of Springfield Day Nursery, and Evelyn Tobin, public policy director for the YMCAs of Massachusetts.

Standing near enough to place an EEA sticker on Speaker Finneran’s lapel is Margaret Blood, whose strategic approach, tireless work and leadership is arguably responsible for the House members taking this critical step. Later that afternoon, Paul, Mara and Margaret send an e-mail message to members of the campaign’s advisory committee who were not able to be at the statehouse to witness this vote.

“Today was a significant day for the Early Education for All Campaign and the state’s young children,” the message begins. After summarizing the day’s events, the message goes on to say: “The work of the campaign collectively, and each of you individually, has had a tremendous impact. As Speaker Finneran said on the House floor today, ‘This amendment is a foundation on which to build the education system. I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can and will move forward on this.’” Their message ends with words about the campaign’s next tasks. “We now move on to the Senate,” an acknowledgement that today’s celebration marks an important stepping stone in what will be a long, hard-fought effort to shape a new and enduring reality out of this shared vision.

By early the next week, no words are perhaps so good to read as those used by editorial writers at the Boston Herald. Back in October, this capital city’s conservative newspaper praised Speaker Finneran for throwing a “needed splash of cold water” on

what it called EEA’s ambitious plans, as they were evidenced during its business forum about early childhood education. Now, under the headline “Early and Wise Education,” laudatory comments about passage of this budget amendment appear on the paper’s editorial page.

“The budget amendment adopted in the House to move ahead with an unprecedented expansion of early childhood education is a deliberate effort to get it right,” the paper’s May 3rd editorial begins. While expressing concern about the huge price tag that looms ahead if such a universal program is created, the editorial concludes with these words: “Numerous studies have underscored why early education is so important to a student’s long-term success. Let’s

answer who, what, when and where, too, before the bill collector is knocking on the taxpayers’ door. The Senate and governor should support this ‘go slow’ measure.”

In the middle of May, the Senate Committee on Ways and Means sets forth its budget recommendations. Included among them is an early education

and care proposal that is very complimentary to the plan unanimously passed by the House in April, though it contains some additional supportive recommendations. Standing with the committee’s chairwoman as the announcement is made is Senate Majority Leader Fred Berry, EEA’s lead Senate sponsor, as well as several influential Senate supporters, including education committee chairman Robert Antonioni. On May 21, the Senate completes its budget debate, with its early education and care proposal moving on to conference committee deliberations with the House. This unanimous Senate vote signifies another key step in the movement toward writing into the General Laws “the basis for a system of universally accessible high-quality early childhood education.”

During these Senate deliberations, staff and members of the EEA Campaign worked closely with Senate President Robert Travaglini, and Senators Berry and

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Antonioni, and with others in leadership positions. After the bill's passage, the focus of EEA's efforts moves to making certain its collective voice is heard as the conference committee meets. The EEA Policy Committee meets with the goal of incorporating complimentary House and Senate proposals into one that remains true to the campaign's vision, and forwards its final recommendations – with suggested compromise language – to the budget conference committee. While meeting, the policy committee also works out a strategy to try to build support with key members of the Romney administration.

When the conference committee concludes its work in mid-June, it releases a five-page press release with the headline “Legislature Promises Universal Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education: New Department of Early Education and Care by FY'06.” Included in this document is an easy-to-read chart displaying the elements constituting this new foundation as well as a timeline displaying the actions ahead.

The Governor Acts

In the final week of June, Governor Romney releases his FY05 budget vetoes. While maintaining funding for the new Board of Education and Care and the consolidated Department of Early Education and Care, he made changes in the Board's composition and, most significantly, he placed the Board and the new department within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) instead of retaining its independent status as the House and Senate bills requested (and EEA advocated). He also eliminated a pilot program.

Prior to these vetoes, Margaret Blood met with EOHHS Secretary Ronald Preston and several members of his staff and with the governor's senior policy analyst, Anne Reale, to review the campaign's history and legislative development process and to hear their perspectives on the legislation. After the governor's policy intentions were announced, Reale requested a meeting with the EEA Policy Committee to explain the governor's budget actions. Following her presentation, members of the policy committee

decided to convey to the legislature that the EEA Campaign will not recommend any changes to the legislature's early childhood education budget initiative and “will respectfully urge the legislature to reject the proposed amendments to Section 35 (Board and Department of Early Education and Care) and override the veto of Section 343 (planning grants to communities).”

In early July, The Boston Globe – which in its editorials has been consistently supportive of the Early Education for All Campaign – publishes an editorial entitled “A Department for Children.” In it, the Globe is sharply critical of Governor Romney's “ill-advised amendment to keep the board ‘within’ his health and human services secretariat to create ‘administrative efficiencies’ but outside its supervision and control.” The Globe editorial writers suggest “it would be better to keep the department independent,” and urges the legislators to do so. (The editorial is also critical of EOHHS Secretary Preston's decision to fire long-time OCCS Commissioner Ardith Wieworka, who was very much engaged in these policy issues, especially given her recent service on the Council on Early Education and Care which held public meetings in the fall and delivered recommendations to the legislature and governor.)

By mid-July, the House and Senate reject Governor Romney's amendments and return the legislation's original language to him to sign. (They don't act on his veto of the pilot program.) On July 23rd, the governor signs the bill – accepting the legislature's original language – into law which means a new Board of Education and Care and consolidated Department of Early Education and Care will be formed.

These building blocks now become the EEA program's foundation.

The EEA Campaign Rolls On

While the action at the statehouse demands close attention, other aspects of EEA's work – critical to building and maintaining the campaign's critical “out of the statehouse” network of constituent support –

also must be addressed by EEA's small staff. [Policy Director Amy Kershaw is on her second maternity leave.] For example, the agenda and content for a meeting of EEA's Campaign Advisory Committee require attention. At this gathering in early June at Quinsigamond Community College, a central Massachusetts college with a strong emphasis on early childhood education, the focus is on the "costing out" model and what will be needed for achieving universal high-quality early education and care in Massachusetts. There are also preparations, too, for an editorial board meeting with *The Boston Globe* – the campaign's fourth such visit, and this happens alongside Margaret's own preparation for an invitation-only policy discussion about this topic with House Speaker Finneran and Dr. Kathleen McCartney, an expert on early childhood education who is the new academic dean at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

EEA staff are also busy with planning for Round 5 of regional meetings to be held in October. These statewide meetings with frontline workers and supporters are vital to keeping lines of communication open and serve to invigorate the campaign's critical advocacy work. For example, as the legislation works its way through the House and Senate and onto and off of Governor Romney's desk, several op-ed articles supporting EEA's vision, as well as many letters to the editor, appear in a number of newspapers throughout the state. At times like this, the campaign's time-consuming work in building and maintaining its network of supporters reaps its reward as these people become an extraordinarily valuable asset in moving the campaign's vision forward.

What has served the EEA Campaign so well – and will continue to as the campaign moves ahead – is adherence to its disciplined, inclusive and strategic approach. For the campaign to experience legislative victories, as it has, demonstrates the political power this issue has been able to garner because of the campaign's large and active stakeholder base. And these initial victories provide a boost to everyone involved. But vigilance must be maintained as the process moves forward. Many tasks are ahead, not the least of which will be convincing legislators and the governor to approve the funds necessary to actually achieve universal access and high-quality in early childhood education. It will continue to fall on Margaret Blood, the staff at EEA, the campaign's advisory and policy committee members and volunteers to keep their collective focus firm as they encounter what are certain to be bumpy roads ahead. Equally important, however, is taking moments to celebrate the great distance they have traveled together.



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