



FOUNDATION *for*
CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Early Education for All:

Six Strategies to Build a Movement for Universal Early Education

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A1

The “Early Education for All Campaign” (EEA), launched in 2000, made publicly funded early education for Massachusetts’ three-, four-, and five-year-olds a top public policy priority. The campaign is part of a larger movement across the United States to create a coordinated, high-quality early education experience for all children from pre-kindergarten through third grade. Though some of the challenges involved in passing “An Act Establishing Early Education for All” are state-specific, the six strategies employed in Massachusetts by Strategies for Children (SFC), the umbrella nonprofit organization created to oversee the EEA campaign, can inform other state efforts to establish universal high-quality early education.



Early Education for All: Six Strategies to Build a Movement for Universal Early Education

The Strategies: Passing Early Education for All in Massachusetts

One

Create and develop an independent, non-partisan organization to run the campaign.

- **Launch the Campaign from an “Independent,” Non-Partisan Organization:** Organizers realized that the campaign’s legitimacy and ultimate success required creation of a new organization viewed as impartial by stakeholders and a non-partisan fundraising arm. Strategies for Children, Inc. formally incorporated in July 2001, provided the operating infrastructure for EEA. SFC’s staff has increased to eight and is funded by 13 local, regional, and national philanthropies.
- **Develop the Capabilities and Reputation of the Organization:** SFC is respected by all sides of the political debate in Massachusetts. SFC represents all those interested in publicly funded early education regardless of party affiliation. It represented a broad range of stakeholders and helped negotiate disagreements within the coalition.



Two

Use research to “make the case.”

- **Provide Timely Information to Decision-Makers:** The SFC/EEA Campaign summarized research for policymakers, the media, and other influential groups in easy-to-use formats such as fact sheets and policy briefs.
- **Highlight “Best Practices:”** The SFC/EEA Campaign put together and disseminated the “best practices” from other states to capitalize on and learn from the work being done to promote early education across the country.
- **Collaborate with Researchers and Institutions:** The SFC/EEA Campaign put those producing the latest research in direct contact with those charged with putting the research findings into practice.





Three

Include diverse allies at top levels of the effort — both the “likelies” (those with a direct interest in or involvement with children’s issues or education) and the influential “unlikelies” (those from sectors of the community not directly connected with children’s issues).

- **Solicit Participation from Diverse Constituencies on an Advisory Committee:** The SFC/EEA Campaign created and developed what became a 43-member Campaign Advisory Committee (CAC), pulling together those already working on early education with those from businesses, religious organizations, labor unions and other groups who normally are not tapped to contribute to discussions on early education and children. The EEA Campaign was the only group bringing these constituencies together.
- **Delegate the Advocacy to Representatives of Organizations Supporting the Campaign:** In addition to their advisory role, the CAC members advocated directly on behalf of “Early Education for All.” They generated press, provided testimony, mobilized constituencies, and secured 38 organizational endorsements of the legislation.
- **Form a Policy Committee to Resolve the Toughest Legislative Decisions:** In the Spring of 2002, the SFC/EEA Campaign’s Advisory Committee convened a subcommittee to focus exclusively on policy. This team developed and refined the EEA legislation as it moved through the legislative and budget processes. SFC/EEA engaged experts in early education and care policies and politics to alert the staff to potential points of disagreement that might fracture the existing coalition, including child care providers and educators. This group was also charged with assessing the political climate and policy changes that would affect legislative potential, and with negotiating political obstacles before bringing them to public attention.

- **Outreach to “Unlikelies:”** The SFC/EEA Campaign succeeded in raising the visibility of early education as an economic development strategy. In October 2003, SFC organized a policy forum for over 250 business and other opinion leaders to demonstrate the economic viability of high-quality early education. The next week, Mass High Tech Journal, an influential trade publication, endorsed the Campaign. Four influential statewide business groups have also endorsed it: the Massachusetts High Tech Council, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, and the Associated Industries of Massachusetts. SFC also sought and won the support of religious organizations and unions.





Four

Mobilize a Grassroots Constituency.

- **Create Opportunities for Public Involvement and Input:** To inform the development of and advocacy for “An Act Establishing Early Education for All,” an exhaustive two-and-a-half year community input effort involved 4000 early educators, parents, and others through 100 personal interviews, 32 regional forums, and 60 presentations and trainings.
- **Build a Team of Community-Based Advocates:** The SFC/EEA Campaign organized a field team of nearly 100 “Legislative Liaisons” who became the “face” and “voice” of the Campaign in state legislative districts across the state. SFC identified these volunteers through the regional forums, presentations, and trainings. These leaders coordinated local media outreach and grassroots lobbying efforts.
- **Engage Citizen Volunteers:** The SFC/EEA Campaign established a network of over 500 volunteers to promote Early Education for All. The volunteers served as the troops for the legislative liaisons.
- **Stay Visible within the Field:** The SFC/EEA Campaign organized on-going meetings and regional forums across the state, building its network of contacts and advocates from those in attendance. These direct contact efforts in the field also helped to make EEA a locally known campaign.



Five

Outreach through Messaging and the Media.

- **Develop and Assess Effective Messages:** An October 2003 non-partisan statewide poll, commissioned by SFC, found that 73% of Massachusetts’ voters support “early education for all.” Polling, in addition to focus groups and targeted messaging, informed the campaign from the beginning.
- **Implement an Earned Media Strategy:** The SFC/EEA Campaign and the legislation were featured in 270 daily and weekly newspapers, reaching over 22.2 million readers statewide in less than two years. The work of the organization and campaign has received 20 favorable editorial endorsements, and been the subject of 36 opinion and editorial pieces in The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald alone. To achieve this success, staff and allies took their message directly to those they wanted to get on board — presenting at business meetings, submitting summary briefs, press releases, and easy-to-digest facts to business and labor publications, providing talking points to potential stakeholders, and spending face-to-face time in conversations with journalists and other influential communicators.
- **Use Paid Media, if Possible:** As a 501(c)3 organization, SFC had a limited amount of money to direct toward “lobbying” activities. Because a public awareness media campaign was always one of SFC’s central strategies, the organization’s board did authorize SFC to spend a substantial amount of funding for paid media. Those internal funds, in conjunction with the pro-bono assistance of renowned advertising agency Hill Holiday, led to the development of a four-week statewide paid television and print advertising campaign, just as EEA was preparing for legislative hearings in October, 2003.



The Results

Six

Translate Public Support into Legislation and Policy.

- **Get Bi-Partisan Support for Legislation:** “An Act Establishing Early Education for All” (H.1838/S.239) was filed December 4, 2002 with bi-partisan legislative and organizational support. 111 legislators or 55% of the Legislature co-sponsored the bill.
- **Bring Key Figures on Board:** In January 2004, in his “Address to the Citizens of the Commonwealth,” House Speaker Thomas Finneran’s embrace of early education as one of his top five priorities led the front page news in the Boston Globe the following day. Echoed in his address were key points made by the many letters sent by EEA staff and supporters to legislators, in EEA’s forums, in various editorials and opinion pieces, and in the fact sheets showing what Finneran called “compelling research.” And, shortly after he became President of the Massachusetts Senate, Senator Robert Travaglini gave the Campaign his support as well. Support for early education by these influential political leaders was the result of ongoing efforts of the EEA Campaign staff.
- **Consider a Legal Strategy:** EEA struggled to define the appropriate role it should play in *Hancock v. Driscoll*, Massachusetts’ pending educational adequacy lawsuit. The Board of Strategies for Children, Inc. ultimately decided it was important for SFC to weigh in and, with the pro-bono assistance of the prestigious law firm of Goulston and Storrs, SFC filed two *Amicus Curiae* (“friend of the court”) briefs. The briefs offered support for providing quality preschool programs for all children as part of the state’s educational commitment.

The Massachusetts State Legislature recently passed, and Governor Romney signed, a law creating a new Board and consolidated Department of Early Education and Care, to administer the state’s early education and care system, laying the groundwork for universal access to voluntary, high-quality programs for preschool-aged children in the Commonwealth. The new Board and Department will design and oversee a universal preschool program, develop a kindergarten readiness assessment system and program evaluation, and oversee improvements in the education and compensation of the early education and care workforce.

This groundbreaking commitment to Massachusetts’ young children and families demonstrates how innovative, strategic campaigns have the ability to create consensus and win significant legislative victories. “Early Education for All” moved from a wishful statement of rosy-eyed optimists to real programs for real children in a very high stakes real world. The naysayers of yesterday became the authors of today’s success story.

This paper highlights key findings from FCD Working Paper 5, *Early Education for All: A Strategic Political Campaign for High-Quality Early Education in Massachusetts* by Melissa Ludtke. The full report is available on the FCD website at <http://www.fcd-us.org/uploadDocs/WP5EarlyEducationforAll.pdf>.

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