

A World of Opportunity

INSPIRATIONS FROM ABROAD FOR EARLY LEARNING AT HOME



LONDON, ENGLAND &
HELSINKI, FINLAND



ABOUT THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INSTITUTE

The Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) builds long-term economic security for working families in Washington State by forging realistic and robust public policies that ensure the benefits of prosperity are broadly shared with all those who contribute to it.

EOI is an action tank – we research issues and develop solutions, then move policy forward through coalition-building, media outreach, and public dialogue. State and national legislators, local elected officials, and community leaders throughout the United States rely on EOI for analyses and policy development that turns knowledge into action.

EOI currently focuses on developing pragmatic policy solutions in retirement security, public revenue and spending, family leave insurance, and early childhood education. Learn more at www.eoionline.org.

ABOUT THE WORLD FORUM FOUNDATION

The World Forum Foundation promotes an on-going global exchange of ideas on the delivery of quality services for young children in diverse settings.

This mission is accomplished through the organizing of the bi-annual World Forum on Early Care and Education which brings together up to 800 early childhood leaders from as many as 80 nations to share ideas on a wide range of issues affecting children and families. These meetings have been held in Hawaii, Singapore, Greece, New Zealand, Mexico, Canada, and Malaysia.

In the alternate years, the World Forum Foundation organizes smaller, regional Working Forums focusing on specific issues identified at World Forums as being of high importance. These forums range in topic from peace building through early learning, nature education, male involvement in early childhood, immigration's impact on young children, global leaders for young children, and HIV/AIDS and young children. Learn more at www.WorldForumFoundation.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hannah Lidman is the Economic Opportunity Institute's policy associate for early learning and K-12 education. She holds a master's degree in public administration from Seattle University and a bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University.

John R. Burbank, the executive director of EOI, also contributed to this report.

Contents

A Voyage for Insight	2
International Findings and Inspiration	2
Experts at Home and Abroad	3
Early Learning Study Tour Participants	4
Early Learning Study Tour Presenters and Hosts	6
England and Finland at a Glance	8
Conclusion I: A Focus on the Child Supports Long-Term Success	10
Conclusion II: Business Embraces Present and Future Benefits of Early Learning	12
Conclusion III: Real Parental Choice creates the Best Care Options for Children and Families	13
Conclusion IV: Connections Between Care Options Enhance Early Learning	14
Conclusion V: Universal Early Learning Programs Give All Children an Equal Start	16
Conclusion VI: A Professional Workforce Lays the Foundation for Excellent Care and Education	17
Conclusion VII: Universal Programs Bolster Economic Development and Quality of Life	18
A Broader Message	19
Continuing the Journey	19

A Voyage for Insight

Traveling to new places, both foreign and familiar, provides an escape from the day-to-day routine of our work. It allows us to broaden our horizons through new sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. Travel can help us retrace our roots through immersion in ancient cultures and traditions or allow us to see where we are going in witnessing emerging societies.

Travel can also provide us with a glimpse into the day-to-day realities of the people who live, work, and raise families in the places we visit and study.

This lens not only helps define more clearly who we are through contrast, but may also provide ideas for how to become what we aspire to be.

When traveling with this perspective in mind, policymakers and community leaders can delve even further into the lives of the people encountered and explore the systems, policies, and philosophies supporting community and culture.

International Findings and Inspiration

This report shares both the practical findings of the study tour and the transformational nature of the experience. The report begins with the nature and make-up of the study trip followed by a short introduction to early learning in England and Finland. The main body focuses on broad themes that sparked inspiration and motivation among the study group.

England showed us an exciting model of care and family support in their Sure Start Centres that can be replicated and modified to work in Washington. Finland introduced us to an extraordinary and comprehensive value-driven system that places the child and the well-being and education of children at the forefront of public consciousness and public investment.

The study tour group came away impressed most by the following features of these two systems:

- Finnish child-first values and policies;
- Business community promotion of early learning;
- Real parental choice in Finland;
- Universal programs for children of any income level;
- Links between care options resulting in integrated systems;
- Professionalism of early childhood education workforces; and
- Broad support for universal publicly-financed programs among Finns.

Experts at Home and Abroad

In response to the growing attention paid to early learning across the United States, and Washington State in particular, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) and the World Forum Foundation (WFF) to investigate best practices in early learning from other countries and share them with local policy and opinion leaders. In September and October of 2007, EOI and WFF led a study mission on comparative early learning policy to London, England and Helsinki, Finland.

EOI utilized strong relationships with the state's early learning community to bring together a broad group of active and committed individuals who are dedicated to providing Washington's children with the best possible start in life.

The participants' backgrounds cover an extensive range of regional, ethnic, political, and vocational arenas. The study group included members of the media; public school leadership; federal, state, and nonprofit childcare program directors; Republican and Democratic state legislators; business community representatives; philanthropic leaders, and members of the nonprofit community.



Helsinki at night.

Early Learning Study Tour Participants

John Bancroft

Executive Director of Head Start and the White Center Early Learning Initiative at the Puget Sound Educational Service District

Tony Benton

Director of Community Affairs for Clear Channel Seattle and Board Member of Thrive by Five

Kim Cook

President of Service Employees International Union Local 925

Dr. Bette Hyde

Superintendent of the Bremerton School District

Rep. Ruth Kagi

State Representative (D) for the 32nd District in Shoreline

Sen. Claudia Kauffman

State Senator (D) for the 47th District in Kent

Cecilia Mahre

Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for the Yakima School District

Angelia Maxie

Executive Director of Tiny Tots Child Development Center

Terry Meersman

Executive Director of the Talaris Research Institute

Shyla Miller

Lead Early Learning Community Investor in Global Corporate Citizenship for The Boeing Company

David Okimoto

Vice President of Community Services at United Way of King County

Rep. Eric Pettigrew

State Representative (D) for the 37th District in Seattle

Rep. Skip Priest

State Representative (R) for the 30th District in Federal Way

Dave Ross

Radio Talk Show Host for KIRO Radio

Valisa Smith

Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Dawn Trudeau

Social Venture Partners and the Business Partnership for Early Learning

Rep. Maureen Walsh

State Representative (R) for the 16th District in Walla Walla & Pasco

STAFF

John Burbank

Executive Director of the Economic Opportunity Institute

Roger Neugebauer

Founder of the World Forum Foundation

Hannah Lidman

Policy Associate for the Economic Opportunity Institute

Shasta Weiss

Operations Director of the World Forum Foundation



Study tour group outside the Houses of Parliament in London

Front Row, from left – Kim Cook, Bette Hyde, Angelia Maxie, Rep. Ruth Kagi, David Okimoto, Shyla Miller, Dawn Trudeau, Sen. Claudia Kauffman, John Bancroft, Cecilia Mahre, Rep. Maureen Walsh. Back Row, from left – Tony Benton, Terry Meersman, Shasta Weiss, Valisa Smith, Rep. Eric Pettigrew, Rep. Skip Priest, Roger Neugebauer, John Burbank. Not Shown: Dave Ross & Hannah Lidman.

Early Learning Study Tour Presenters and Hosts

WFF, with assistance from EOI, used their extensive international experience in reaching out to contacts and allies to create a dynamic, multi-layered study tour program. The program addressed early learning from a variety of angles in each country and included meetings with high-ranking policymakers, national program administrators, respected researchers and advocates, prominent business leaders, and site visits to middle- and low-income centers featuring conversations with teachers, staff, parents, administrators, and children.



Teacher and child at Willow Children's Centre

London, England

Site Visits

- Bright Horizons Centre at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Willow Children's Centre (Sure Start)

Advocates and Researchers

- Alison Garnham – Day Care Trust
- Edward Melhuish – University of London
- Susan Hay – Susan Hay Consultants
- Sarah Klaus – Open Society Foundation
- Michelle Neuman – Open Society Foundation
- Youssef Hajjar – Arab Resource Collective
- Peter Moss – Thomas Coram Research Institute

Government Officials

- Graham Archer – Department of Children, Schools, and Families
- Karen Buck, Labour MP

Business and Union Leaders

- David Post – Bright Horizons Family Solutions
- Erica Riley – HSBC
- Paul West – HSBC
- Mark Heyes – Deutsche Bank
- Pat Campbell – Public and Commercial Services Union

Teachers and Administrators

- Linda Oury – Bright Horizons
- Ian Stocks – Bright Horizons
- Anne Sheldon – Bright Horizons
- Michelle Phillips – Bright Horizons
- Paul Church – Willow Children’s Centre
- Karen Pearson – Willow Children’s Centre
- Suzanne Williams – Willow Children’s Centre

Helsinki, Finland

Site Visits

- Toppelund Childcare Centre, Espoo
- Laakavuori Childcare Centre, Helsinki

Advocates and Researchers

- Mikko Ojala – University of Helsinki
- Tiina Kalliokoski – University of Helsinki
- Erja Rusanen – University of Helsinki
- Eeva-Liisa Kronqvist – National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES)
- Ritva Semi – Trade Union of Education (OA)
- Juhani Hytönen – University of Helsinki

Government Officials

- Juha Rehula, Centre Party MP
- Satu Järvenkallas – City of Helsinki
- Kirsi Alila – Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- Paula Kokkonen – Deputy Mayor of Helsinki
- Tarja Kahiluoto – Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Business Leaders

- Ilkka Lakaniemi – Nokia Siemens Network
- Johanna Saarinen – Microsoft Finland
- Riitta Vänskä – Nokia
- Hannu Penttilä – YTV (Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council)
- Maarit Parkkola – YTV

Teachers and Administrators

- Tero Laine – Laakavuori Childcare Centre
- Anu Ruohomäki – Toppelund Childcare Centre
- Leena Suominen – Tapiola Social and Health Services, Childcare Services

England and Finland at a Glance

When researching which countries provide best practices in early learning and care policy, Europe offers a natural starting point. A number of European nations have been hailed as models in early childhood education, including the *École Maternelles* system in France and the Reggio Emilia programs in Italy. However, for this particular project EOI and WFF sought out countries that offered more than just exceptional programs. We chose two countries that illustrate the range of early care and education systems in Europe, from the relatively new and disconnected to the well-established and systemic.

From these countries, we hoped to draw ideas, both big and small, to transform early learning in Washington State from a patchwork of programs into a seamless system that:

- Features safe and high-quality care;
- Provides affordable choices that fit family needs;
- Values contributions and roles of both parents and early childhood educators; and
- Prepares children to succeed in school, work, and life.

England, Finland, and the United States are all modern post-industrial democratic nations each ranking in the top 10 internationally in terms of global competitiveness. All three countries experienced sweeping social and political change in the years during and immediately following the Second World War. Finland operates on a social democratic model in which the government provides the same level of public service to all citizens regardless of income or circumstance. England offers some universal programs, but the country also relies on market approaches to the provision of many public goods and services, as we do in the United States.



Big Ben, London

The concept of “early learning” in England has only recently risen to prominence, inspiring a flood of programs increasing quality and access. The last decade has seen a large amount of public attention and funding focused on the early years of childhood, including: the creation of hundreds of publicly-funded childcare centers located in the most deprived areas of the country; 12.5 hours a week of free early education for all 3- and 4-year-old children; and paid parental leave during the first year of a child’s life. Though wages and educational attainment of childcare workers remain relatively low, efforts are being made to professionalize and coordinate all sectors of this workforce.

In Finland, early childhood care and education has long been considered a public good that benefits children, families, and the society at large. All Finnish children have the right to inexpensive all-day placement in municipal daycare, with family care providers, or in at-home parental care depending on which option parents believe is the best choice for their child.

The Finnish government values the importance of the parent-child bond by extending paid-family leave benefits to both parents and providing minimum levels of compensation for those parents who choose to care for their child at home for the first few years of life. In addition, the early childhood workforce – like the Finnish primary, secondary, and university-level workforce – is a professional, unionized labor force with high levels of educational attainment and comparable wages.

Principally, this report highlights the successful issues and attitudes the study group believes would be beneficial to replicate in Washington State. However, it does not ignore the fact that England and Finland both encounter barriers in the provision of high-quality early learning for all children – barriers which both nations are actively working to overcome.

Childcare in England, especially in and around London, is very expensive – the cost of full-time care for one infant takes up about 21% of the

national median household income. English family childcare and childcare center workers typically have low levels of educational attainment, job retention, and compensation.

As in the United States, Finland and England struggle with the early education and immersion of recent immigrant children who face linguistic and cultural hurdles. Both nations also experience low educational achievement among immigrant and low-income student populations. As described below, much of what impressed the study group are ways in which these two countries have sought to address the challenges they face.

For more in-depth detail on early learning and its challenges in England and Finland please see EOI's Study Tour Briefing Book, which reviews early learning in these countries across seven different issue areas, including: levels of provision, family supports, funding mechanisms, and the workforce.

Conclusion I:

A FOCUS ON THE CHILD SUPPORTS LONG-TERM SUCCESS



“The Future” by Wäinö Aaltonen

In the assembly chamber of the Parliament of Finland, the wall above the speaker’s dais displays five bronze sculptures, each representing aspects of work and life in Finland. The center statue is entitled “The Future” and depicts a woman and child. The child is cradled

on the woman’s shoulder as she faces into the recess of the alcove, and the child looks forward into the parliamentary chamber.

This figure symbolizes a central aim of Finnish society: to ensure a strong future for children

through public support for their care, education and growth, both within and outside of family life. Whether the legislators debate transportation, trade, or technology, the statue reminds them to ask the same question for every issue: “which is the best option for our children?”

In Finland, there was little talk of testing and accountability, school readiness, or academic curriculum. Rather, teachers and parents with whom we met agreed that positive outcomes are inevitable when learning through play and a protected childhood are pursued as ends in themselves. Discussions with teachers, parents, and childcare center administrators centered on the value of an unencumbered, happy, playful, engaged, socially-integrated, and robust childhood. Children in Finland do not start primary school

Exhibit 1: 2003/2006 PISA Rankings of 15-Year Old Student Performance Among OECD Nations

PROFICIENCY IN MATHEMATICS (2006)	PROFICIENCY IN SCIENCE (2006)	PROFICIENCY IN READING LITERACY (2003)	PROFICIENCY IN PROBLEM SOLVING (2003)
1. Finland	1. Finland	1. Finland	1. South Korea
2. Korea	2. Canada	2. South Korea	1. Finland
3. Netherlands	3. Japan	2. Canada	1. Japan
4. Switzerland	4. New Zealand	4. Australia	4. New Zealand
5. Canada	5. Australia	5. New Zealand	5. Australia
25. United States	21. United States	10. United States	23. United States

Source: Baldi, S., Jin, Y., Skemer, M., Green, P.J., & Herget, D. (2007). *Highlights from PISA 2006*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsub2008/2008016.pdf>. & OECD. (2004). *First results from PISA 2003*. Paris: Author. <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/63/34002454.pdf>

until the age of seven. By age 15 they lead the world in educational performance in all areas (see Exhibit 1).

From the outset of life, Finland supports children and families through universal and extensive family leave benefits. Maternity, paternity, and care leaves place a high value on the importance of the parent-child bond and the role of the parent as the child's first and best teacher.

In Finland, parents have both the financial security and the opportunity to care for and educate their children in the early months and years. They have the guaranteed right to return to work. They can also choose the option of top-notch affordable childcare. These options and supports help parents balance the demands of work and family and thrive both as parents and as workers. The Finnish economy benefits because women have a variety of quality care options and the assurance that their children are in good hands.

The Finnish system empowers parents, and mothers in particular, both at home and at work. For the first three years of a child's life, two-thirds

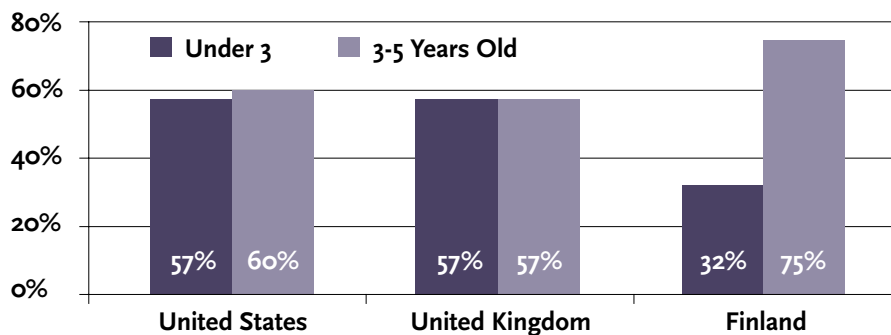


Rep. Maureen Walsh (right) and Anu Ruohomäki, Director of the Toppelund Childcare Center

of Finnish mothers with very young children are able to care for their children at home, compared to just over 40% of American mothers. With children aged three to five, this statistic reverses: 75% of Finnish mothers are in the workforce compared to 60% of American mothers (see Exhibit 2).

Mothers at home, mothers in the workforce: these are either-or choices in American social and ideological battles. In Finland they are compatible options.

Exhibit 2: Employment Rates for Women with Young Children, by Child Age (2002)



Source: OECD. (2006). *Society at a glance: OECD social indicators – 2006 edition*. Paris: Author.

Conclusion II:

BUSINESS EMBRACES PRESENT AND FUTURE BENEFITS OF EARLY LEARNING

In response to questions about the financial impact of early learning programs on the bottom line, Finnish business community representatives nearly shrugged off the issue. They described family leave and taxation as simply costs of doing business. Employee replacement and return after leave does involve some complexity, but results in increased worker retention and higher morale in the long-run.

They also told us they considered their support for early learning an investment in their future workforce. In guaranteeing that children receive excellent care and education during these critical early years, the business community reaps the returns in workers who are ready to meet the challenges of a changing global economy.

In England, business representatives highlighted the success of leveraging public and company-subsidized early learning programs as a way to attract and retain qualified employees. These large companies recognized the importance of making it possible for their employees to balance their work and family life. For example, representatives from the banking company HSBC touted the organization's childcare scheme as a means to better the company as a whole through increased morale, attendance, productivity, and retention.



Study group meeting with Finnish business leaders at YTV in Helsinki

Conclusion III:

REAL PARENTAL CHOICE CREATES THE BEST CARE OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

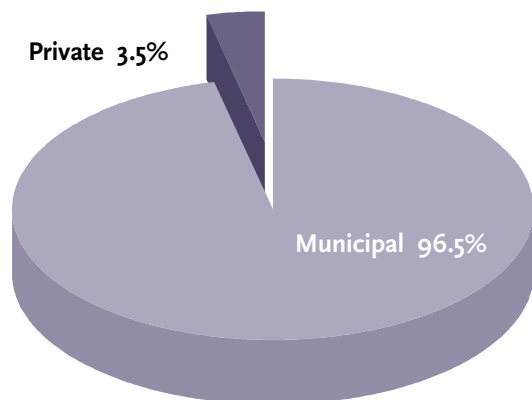
Finland gives parents real choices in the care and education of their children. Because the full spectrum of options is available to all families – not just those who can afford to pay – all Finnish parents can determine the best option for their individual child. The options are realistic and affordable, whether parents choose in-home parental care, family home or group family home care, or care in a center, including extended-day and graveyard shift care.

The variety of options available, excellent level of care, and robust funding of the public childcare system mean parents do not need to place their child in a private care setting. If they do, they receive a stipend from the government to help pay for this care. The vast majority of Finnish children in childcare attend public municipal programs (see Exhibit 3). The few private childcare centers there are cater to particular needs or interests such as a particular religious focus, English language preparation, or the Montessori approach.



Dawn Trudeau (left), Rep. Ruth Kagi (right), and Finnish parent Eija Hiilesniemi at Toppelund Childcare Centre

Exhibit 3: Municipal vs. Private Childcare in Finland



Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. (2006). *Finland's family policy*. Helsinki, Finland: Author.

Conclusion IV:

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CARE OPTIONS ENHANCE EARLY LEARNING

Islington is a solidly low- and middle-income outpost located to the north of the posh London scene. The community's large number of low-income families made the Islington Local Authority eligible to provide resident families with early learning and care services through the national Sure Start Children's Centre program. Under this plan, all families in nationally selected regions are eligible to receive high-quality, subsidized childcare for young children – regardless of family income or circumstance.

Beyond being childcare centers, the Sure Start Centres also provide a “one-stop shop” for a variety of early learning and social services including parenting courses and information, home visitation, prenatal care, infant and child health, special needs programs, parent and child play groups, and housing assistance (See Exhibit 4).

The Willow Children's Centre, one of several Sure Start locations in Islington, provides an exceptional model for Sure Start programs in England as well as for the early learning movement in the United States. The Centre embodies a community spirit that makes center-based child care an extension of the family through programs that strengthen the parent-child bond and improve family circumstances. One of the most unique and compelling aspects of the Willow Centre is their work to integrate different types of childcare services available in the region.

In addition to center-based child care and social services, the Willow Centre also funds, staffs, and provides space for a network of family childcare providers, or ‘childminders’, to come together during the day with the children in their care. This space, the Tufnell Park Childminder Centre,



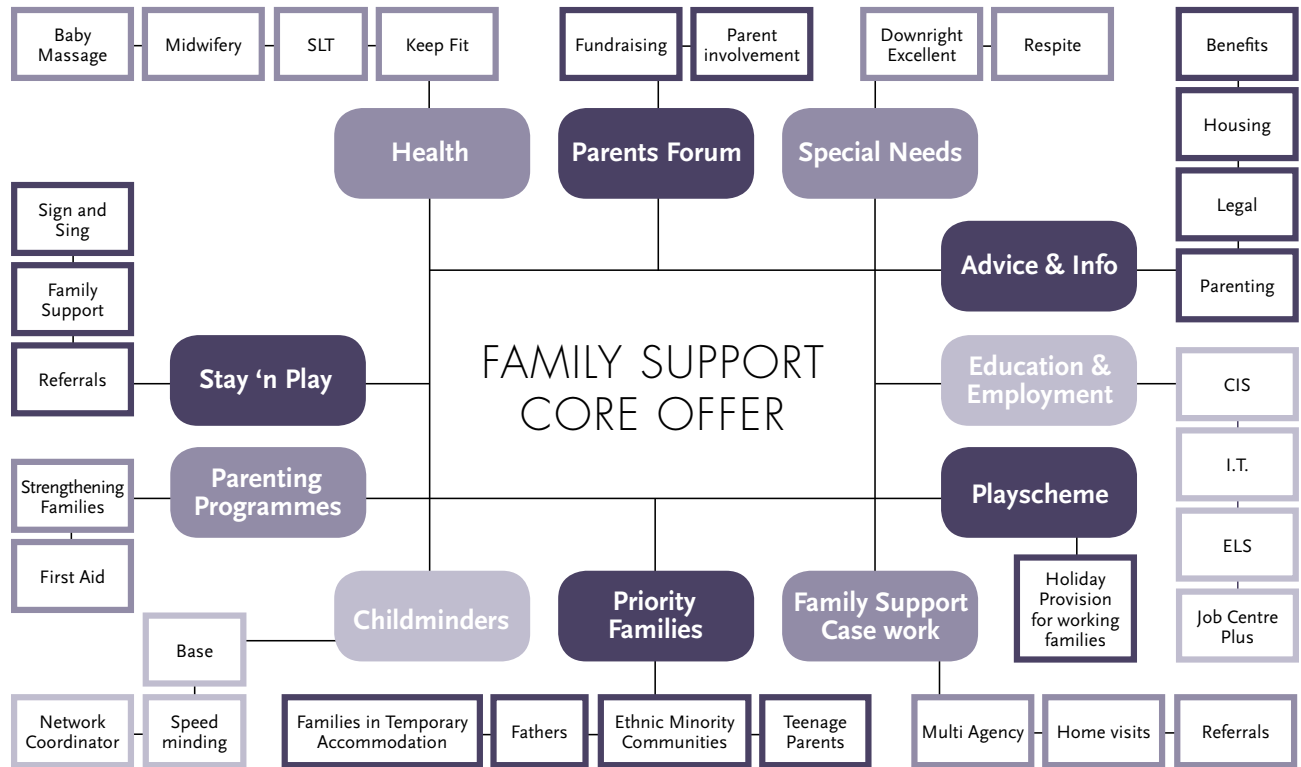
Study group at Willow



Teacher, father, and child at Willow

employs a teacher who engages the children while the childminders work with a full-time mentor on professional development activities. Participating childminders have to meet certain qualifications to join the network; however, those we spoke to said it had enhanced the provision of family care in the area by decreasing isolation, improving standards, and bringing professional validation to the workforce.

Exhibit 4: Willow Children’s Centre Support Diagram



Source: Willow Children's Centre handout materials, reproduced from original handout with permission.

Conclusion V:

UNIVERSAL EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS GIVE ALL CHILDREN AN EQUAL START

All across Finland, government policies and funding make it possible for children from homes of all income levels to receive high-quality early learning and care. The standard of care is the same across all areas – no child is deprived of a place, whether their parents make 30% or 300% of the national median income. When low-income children reside in areas with a majority of middle- and high-income families, the child attends the same high-quality childcare center without fear of being targeted and labeled as a low-income student. All children are treated the same.

The English Sure Start Centres, while created to serve children in the most deprived areas of the country, are open to every family who reside within the defined geographical boundaries – including all children from middle- and high-income families. Higher-income families accessing Sure Start services are asked to contribute more in fees according to their ability, but the care is still extremely inexpensive in comparison to private care options. The program targets regions, rather than individual families, in order to: raise the quality of care for all students; steer clear of stigmatizing children as poor and “at-risk”; and provide equal and affordable access to middle-class families.



Willow Children's Centre



Children at Laakavuori Childcare Centre in East Helsinki

Conclusion VI:

A PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENT CARE AND EDUCATION

In Finland, early childhood educators are thought of as teachers, spoken of as teachers, and treated as teachers. They are required to have post-secondary training like teachers and are represented by a union that represents teachers. The Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ) covers over 95% of all teachers in Finland. It includes childcare teachers, primary and secondary school teachers, vocational instructors, university lecturers, student teachers, and retired members of the field. Administrative and support staff in Finnish childcare centers are represented by unions for public service workers.

Finnish early learning professionals receive compensation close to that of primary school teachers. Further, because certain benefits accrue across the board to all Finnish workers (such as health coverage, generous vacations, well-funded pensions, and government-funded care and education from birth through the university) the wage differentials that do exist between the early learning workforce and the primary school workforce (and workers and professionals in other industries) are significantly mitigated.

Early childhood education and care in Finland is a respected profession with a relatively stable workforce, characterized by low turnover and high morale. Early learning professionals feel their work is valued and appreciated, and it is. Across the board, those we met with thought this to be the natural order of things, especially given that the early learning workforce is responsible for something so valuable: the children of Finland.

One foundation for this professionalism and sense of self-esteem is the participation of the early learning workforce in their unions. These unions bargain for nation-wide compensation agreements, and represent the interest of the workforce in national policy decision-making. They are truly a voice and a source of power for the early learning workforce.



Toppelund preschool teacher Paivi Ikonen with study tour educators: Superintendent Bette Hyde (left), Head Start Director John Bancroft (center left), and Assistant Superintendent Cecilia Mahre (right)

The Willow Sure Start Children's Centre in London also provided a model for early learning professionalism. As a municipal centre, the staff is compensated at the same scale as local elementary school teachers. Indeed, the director of Willow had previously been a primary school vice principal. The staff brings self-esteem and personal pride to their work which results, at least in part, from compensation which honors the importance of their work.



Childcare center directors Angelia Maxie (left) and Anu Ruohomäki

Conclusion VII:

UNIVERSAL PROGRAMS BOLSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Many public services in Finland are not subject to means testing and are available at little or no cost to everyone, regardless of income. Such services include higher and technical education, health care, child care, and paid family leave benefits. In order to pay for these heavily-utilized programs the typical Finn pays higher income and consumption taxes than do most Americans. In return Finns are assured that they will receive many of the basics of economic security which Americans pay for out-of-pocket and struggle to afford.

The Finns we met did complain about their high taxes and expressed the wish to have lower rates of taxation like in the United States. However, almost all referred to the high costs of education and health care in the United States and went on to say how they much preferred their system with the variety and range of services available to all Finnish citizens. Several individuals pointed out that it is the Finnish economic model and the national commitment to providing for all that has allowed

the country to flourish economically and lead the world in student achievement, child health, and competitiveness.

These Finns saw shared public provision as fundamental to meeting their private family needs. Further, they considered their contributions to be integral to the overall well-being of their community and a fundamental part of why Finland is a place where they want to live, work, and raise families.

As described earlier, Finnish support for universal public services was not only expressed by parents and early childhood stakeholders but also by small and large business representatives. Ilkka Lakaniemi, the head of government relations for the Nokia Siemens Network and recent recipient of paid family leave, challenged us to think of a better system than the integrated and universal services Finns receive in return for what they put into the system.

A Broader Message

We knew when we started that high-quality early learning and care are critical to ensuring educational excellence and children's readiness to learn. Twenty five years of research and analysis have shown that children in high-quality early learning and care programs are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and earn more as adults. They are also less likely to commit crime than children who have not had the benefit of high-quality early learning.

However, the lessons learned on the study tour overwhelmingly exemplified an additional fact: When it comes to early learning you get exactly what you pay for. Good compensation secures trained and motivated teachers. Public support allows genuine parental choice. Financing universal programs supports equal opportunity. These and other findings have inspired the study group to continue to work together to catalyze early learning public policy in Washington State.

Continuing the Journey

The findings reviewed above are only the first step in the work of the travelers. The 2007 Study Trip group will continue to meet to discuss and advance the lessons learned on our travels. We want to develop and support policy steps that can incrementally increase the widespread provision of high-quality early learning in Washington State. And we want to promote the positive outcomes for children that will result from such initiatives.



1900 N. Northlake Way, Suite 237
Seattle, WA 98103
206.633.6580

