



Letter from Rip Rapson:

Hope Starts Here: Detroit's Early Childhood Partnership

November 10, 2016

Thursday was a watershed moment for Detroit. More than 100 community representatives – from healthcare institutions to government agencies ... early childhood providers to community organizations ... parents of young children to business leaders – gathered at the Michigan Science Center with The Kresge Foundation and The W.K. Kellogg Foundation to introduce *Hope Starts Here: Detroit's Early Childhood Partnership*.

Hope Starts Here will draw on the experiences, energies, and expertise of these leaders, and many others from across Detroit, to create a blueprint for ensuring that our youngest children receive early development opportunities of the very highest quality. We believe that Detroit can increasingly be defined as a place where children come first – by creating a vision and plan that build on the strengths of existing early childhood and parental services and supports, while stretching our imagination and determination to reach even more elevated possibilities.

Detroit has more than 200 organizations already working on behalf of young children. But as a city, we've never sat at one table to collectively identify and overcome the barriers that children and families face in entering kindergarten ready to learn – developmentally, emotionally, intellectually, and otherwise. That work begins now.

Kresge is thrilled to partner with the Kellogg team, led by my co-chair La June Tabron Montgomery, who is a Detroit native, a mother, and a leader of transcendent decency and ability. Kellogg's commitment to this work is long-standing and exemplary. For decades, it has joined with communities – both nationally and in Detroit – to improve outcomes for children. It is the core of what they do. There is simply no better partner for us.

I want to pause and paint a picture of what we think is possible here.

When I was the president of the McKnight Foundation, we helped Minneapolis and St. Paul start a journey down a similar road. McKnight invited a wide spectrum of stakeholders to explore what needed to be done to make Minneapolis a world-class city. The people at that table decided that we wouldn't reach that objective without elevating the primacy of improving early childhood opportunities and outcomes. We accordingly embarked on a multi-year process to build the kind of community supports necessary to do that. Over the course of the last decade, that effort has resulted in increased investment, expanded access to high-quality care, and deeper alignment of health and social services to better support families.

Detroit and Minneapolis are two different places. But the impulse toward excellence is shared. We can set the same aspirational objectives as Minneapolis did. We can construct a critical path rooted in community wisdom and passion. We can attack the challenges with classic Detroit grit and tenacity.

Over the next few months, *Hope Starts Here* will ask parents, businesses, child education experts, and many others for their best ideas to ensure children are born healthy, are prepared for kindergarten, and are on track for success by third grade and beyond. We'll look at the key issues families face; based on what we've learned from the community in the past, we believe these issues include, among others, the early childhood workforce, whole-child wellbeing, program and service quality, facilities, financing, and the role of philanthropy.

We anticipate that these conversations will yield a comprehensive early childhood development plan – a roadmap from the community for the community. At Kresge, we're well prepared to support that roadmap through *Kresge Early Years for Success: Detroit*, our grant-making and social investing platform for early childhood. We hope that others in the community will join us in using this shared vision to align work and investments across the city

But the *Hope Starts Here* effort is designed to encourage participation throughout the next months – not just to check in at the end of a planning process. Please check out HopeStartsHereDetroit.org and our page on the *Hope Starts Here* Facebook page. We want to hear from everybody in Detroit who cares about creating a brighter future for our city's children. Please let us know how you'd like to be engaged.