

# Excel By 5 November 2012 Newsletter

**Excel By 5  
November 2012  
Newsletter**



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## Welcome from the Excel By 5 Board President

When the idea of certified early childhood communities was first discussed some ten years ago, I doubt that many imagined we would be where we are today. Having 25+ communities with a focus on the well-being of their youngest citizens is an amazing accomplishment! Excel By 5 truly represents "community" at its very best.

The stage has been so well set for us to be at this point. None of this would have happened had it not been for the vision of Steve and Debby Renfroe and the

support of Chevron. I am so honored and happy to begin my term as president of the Excel By 5, Inc. Board of Directors and can only smile when I think of the wonderful things that are and will be happening for young children in Mississippi today and in the future.

I'm so proud of the enthusiasm and hard work that is going on in each community and even prouder to know that these efforts will continue and will lead to a bright future for our state. Isn't it wonderful to be part of

a community effort that is working?

Thank you to each community coalition that is proving every day that they will not stop until all of their children enter school healthy, happy and ready to succeed.

**"EXCEL BY 5  
TRULY  
REPRESENTS  
'COMMUNITY' AT  
ITS VERY BEST."**

*-Nadine Coleman,  
Excel By 5 Board*

## 2012 Excel By 5 Community Collaboration Summit

The 2012 Community Collaboration Summit was held October 3rd at the Old Capitol Inn in Jackson, MS. All Candidate and Certified communities gathered together to welcome the new Excel By 5 Board President, listen to infor-

mative speakers, learn tips at break-out sessions, and most importantly, learn from each other. Each community had the opportunity to share some of the wonderful things going on in their respective areas for young children and

their families. Information shared at the Summit, both through community updates and through break-out sessions can be found throughout the following pages.

## Letter from Former Board President, Steve Renfroe

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The idea of Excel By 5 originated during an early childhood planning conference sponsored by Chevron in 2001. Chevron then funded the development of Excel By 5 certification standards and went on to fund the Excel By 5 pilot, which was announced in 2004. Due to the positive results of the pilot, and what was essentially unsolicited interest of other Mississippi communities, Excel By 5 expanded to nine communities by early 2010. Today, the number stands at over 25 with Grenada and Lee counties being the most recent additions.

It would be hard to overstate how exciting it has been for me being involved in developing and expanding Excel By 5. I strongly believe early childhood development requires broad-based solutions that consider the complexity of systemic and cultural issues. This means there is no one solution that will bring the kind of needed change and improvement.

At the same time, I believe the best solutions can only be driven at the community level. Certainly there should be coordinated support from others, including support from the state and national levels, but our biggest and best hope is for communities to accept responsibility for leading the way forward.

We need more than one-size-

fits-all solutions. Local leadership that is persistent, innovative and passionate about producing customized, sustainable solutions will win the day for little children and their families.

And this is exactly what's happening across Mississippi in communities that have accepted the Excel By 5 challenge. Collectively, these communities--your communities--are building significant new service capacity and it's being done for the most part with existing resources. This is truly exciting!

Nadine Coleman is our new Excel By 5 Board of Directors president and I couldn't be more pleased to hand off these responsibilities to Nadine. She is one of the most respected early childhood leaders in Mississippi. Nadine led Petal to be the very first certified Excel By 5 community and she provides us all with an excellent example of what it means to be an effective community leader. Nadine is the right person at the right time to lead Excel By 5 and I wish her well.

I've learned a lot about early childhood development from leaders I've gotten to know along the way--people I now call friend. Certainly, Nadine is at the top of this list, along with Marsha Barbour, Johnny Franklin, Jason Dean, Cathy Grace, Lynn Darling, Louise

Davis, Jill Dent, and others too many to list. Our Excel By 5 directors, first Annjo Lemons and now Bob Clay, have made Excel By 5 a reality through their expert facilitation skills. We all owe Annjo, Bob and the entire staff a debt of gratitude. Other experts have volunteered their time. Charlie Penick, Hans Pettit and Donna Ritchey have been more than gracious in providing expert legal, financial, and public relations advice, guidance and support. As fellow Excel By 5 board officers, Marcie Skelton and Chevron's Amy Brandenstein have always made sure we were on track and successful. They are the best.

My interest in early childhood was sparked by my wife Debby who is a retired kindergarten teacher. Debby knows more and cares more about little children than anyone I know, and she is an example of why none of us should underestimate our influence.

It's been a real honor for me to see Excel By 5 communities become passionate about early childhood development. I will continue to serve on the Excel By 5 Board of Directors--what an outstanding group of folks--and do all I can to help. I'm excited about our future and very much look forward to seeing what community-led breakthroughs are yet to come. Let's don't stop until we change the world!

-Steve Renfroe

## Lafayette County: Childcare Director Meeting

Submitted by Linda Glaze, Early Care and Education Focus Group Liaison

We have a strong group of committed members on our Excel By 5 Early Childhood and Education Committee here in Lafayette County! We meet once a month and spend an hour or more reviewing our progress in completing our goals and brainstorming ways to help our directors to feel supported, and encouraged.

Recently, we decided that if we could host a luncheon meeting, offering a combination of good food, a friendly atmosphere and a unique opportunity to hear from representatives of statewide early childhood initiatives, we might accomplish several things. First, we hoped that they would enjoy gathering with others with common interests to just have fun. Secondly, we hoped that after hearing about the opportunities available to them, they might learn more about how these projects might

be of benefit. Lastly, we hoped they would feel a part of something “**big**”! We wanted them to feel that quality is something **many** people are talking about. We hoped they would feel a sense of **professionalism**.

Most of our center directors, and representatives from three public elementary schools and private schools along with the Head Start Director all gathered to hear from a panel of speakers. The panel included Dr. Angela Rutherford discussing early literacy; Gabrielle Phillips with a refresher on Excel By 5 and the statewide goals for certification; Cheryl Swoopes from QRIS explaining the Star Rating Project and how they could benefit; Jan Mays, representing MSCCR&R informing about the online CDA class and how

they get signed up; Ann Marie Ross also with MSCCR&R sharing training opportunities and our new resource center and Teresa Campbell from MS Department of Health talking about going beyond licensing standards and the need for looking at development and red flags for referral.

We'll continue to look at ways to encourage our directors. It is always a challenge trying to achieve our percentages for completing our goals, but one that we hope to accomplish this year.

## Corinth/Alcorn County: Health Fair

Submitted by Susan O'Connell, Certification Manager



The Corinth/Alcorn County Excel By 5 coalition utilized the Alcorn County fair as a neutral venue to reach all age children and families of different socio-economics. Using this venue allowed us to reach children and families that we may have otherwise not been able to reach, if it had been associated with a back to school event. Our committee focuses on community outreach. We felt that everyone goes to the fair, despite race, economic level or social status.



## Hernando: Town Hall Meeting

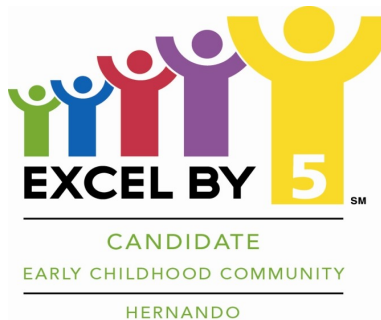
Submitted by Shelly Johnstone, Co-certification Manager

Hernando held its first Town Hall meeting on October 4, 2012 at the Hernando City Hall. Participants came up with lots of great ways the community can be involved in strengthening families and children, from recruiting a YMCA to Hernando, to music programs for toddlers as well as food art ("kids in the kitchen"), a children's museum, carpool groups for Memphis educational activities, and parent training in CPR.

One suggestion was to recruit a pediatrician to Hernando. Although there are a number of primary care physicians, there are no practicing full-time pediatricians. The group

also thought a Grandparent as Parent support group would be very helpful to the community as well as assistance for those children who have special needs.

It was also a great opportunity to secure volunteers for future activities, too. Quite a few of the Town Hall participants are anxious to get involved in Excel By 5!



*Victoria Penny, co-certification manager, goes over the ways in which the Excel By 5 program can help prepare children and their families for school and life. Looking on is Bob Clay, state Excel By 5 Director and Chris Brunetti, Hernando Excel By 5 Chairman.*

## Pascagoula: Super Saturday

Submitted by Dr. Connie Jo Williams, Certification Manager

The Pascagoula Excel By 5 Coalition held a Kindergarten Readiness event in conjunction with our "Mad Scientist" day on Super Saturday, September 15, 2012. We had a great turnout. The event was hosted by Amy Brandenstein, chairperson of the Early Care and Education focus group, and Erika Reynolds, teacher at the Applied Technology Center. We took the growth chart and divided it by age groups. We had stations for folding clothes, sorting by shapes, feely boxes, lacing

cards, and an assortment of activities. Mrs. Reynolds teaches a class for students interested in becoming a teacher.

Thanks to the Pascagoula Excel By 5 Coalition for an excellent job of getting children "ready for kindergarten"!





## Gulfport: Kids Enjoy “Viewin’ the Cruise”

Submitted by Cynthia Minton Walker, Certification Manager

On October 7<sup>th</sup> from 10 am until 2 pm, the Gulfport Excel By 5 coalition kicked off its first family event by providing a new element to the Cruisin’ the Coast’s kick-off called “Viewin’ the Cruise.” Though traditionally an adult-oriented event checking out cars of days gone by, “Viewin’ the Cruise” was accepted when our Excel By 5 Family and Community committees offered to host a children’s area to encourage families to learn while they looked.

At the “Viewin’,” children could add to a mural that reflected the theme of the day by drawing, making a car stamp with paint, adding street signs to the roadway from a collection of foam sign stickers, pasting magazine photos of their favorite car, or simply running the wheels of a toy car through the paint to make an impression.



From the mural, families could move to a bean bag area where children attempted to ring the hole in the tire, using bean bags that were different colors, complete with dots that

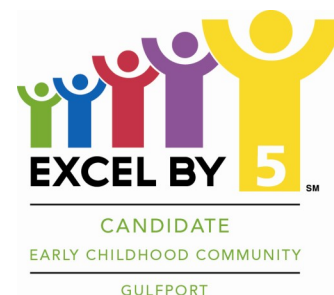
represented the number on them. Offered next on the list was the tire obstacle course. Families were able to go through a course that was created with blow-up “tire” rings to encourage balance and agility, much like football players might go through.



With energy tapped, families were encouraged to participate in an activity to guess how many toy cars might be in a jar. They were able to put together a car puzzle or simply play with toy cars and a garage that came complete with its own long ramp for racing cars. When a child had completed all of the activities, they were able to create a “car monster” using a foam art project they took home. Crossing the “Finish Line” of activities earned them an Excel By 5 bracelet with a helium balloon-- color of their choice-- attached.

As parents watched over the activities, they were invited to fill out a parent survey or take a copy of the monthly calendar designed for parents to become a “school partner.” The calendar asked parents to engage their child in one learning activity every day, such as “Look for A’s and B’s today.” On the back were also literacy tips for parents to incorporate into their daily interactions with their child.

Members of the coalition were also able to talk with waiting adults to explain what Excel By 5 means and offered them one last activity to add to their “Viewin’.” A scavenger hunt that asked families to look for specific things as they cruised was designed by the Gulfport coalition. Its goal was to lead parents through a discussion with their children about the cars as they wandered by asking things like how many tires are on a car; how many are on one side? The questions included areas of focus in the early learning curriculum. The day was a great success for the Gulfport coalition and families of Gulfport. We are already talking about how to expand the activities we offer next year at “Viewin’ the Cruise.”



## Oktibbeha County: Excelebration

Submitted by Ellen Goodman, Certification Manager

Residents of Oktibbeha County came together to celebrate achieving the Certified Child Friendly Status on Saturday, September 29th. Families enjoyed playing together, dancing together, and Celebration Cupcakes!

Bob Clay and Gabrielle Phillips from the Excel By 5 State Office were on hand to present the new Certified Community Banners and framed certificates to the Oktibbeha County Excel By 5 Coalition and various agencies that have been a part of the certification process.



Also joining in the excitement were the Starkville High School Cheerleaders who lead the crowd in some EXCELEbration Cheers for Oktibbeha County. Entertainment was provided by Kayla Gilmore, KMG Creations "Dream Team", and JC Long.



Community members have had the opportunity in recent weeks to complete questionnaires to assist the coalition in planning events. Those responses will be used to plan 2013 events and activities.

On October 10<sup>th</sup> the Excel By 5 office met with the local coalition to conduct the Strategic Planning for Oktibbeha County. This assisted the

coalition in seeing what gains have been met since the formation of the coalition in 2010 and what goals need to be formulated for the future.

The coalition is now planning events and activities for 2013. We are certain that 2013 will be a positive one for all families in Oktibbeha County as we seek to have all of our young children Excel By 5!

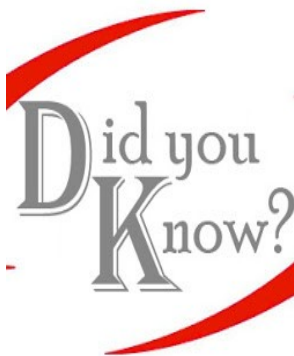


## Investments in Early Childhood

"Investments in early childhood are vital to the success of our nation's youth. Extensive research has shown that early childhood programs significantly increase a child's chances of avoiding the prison pipeline. Furthermore, these programs have well-documented economic and societal value. Studies have shown that investments in quality early education can produce a rate of return to society significantly higher than returns to most stock market investments or traditional economic development projects."

**-Children's Defense Fund**

<http://www.childrensdefense.org>



## Biloxi: Staff Training and *Art on Wheels*

Submitted by Susan Hunt, Certification Manager

Biloxi Excel By 5, Biloxi Public Schools, and The City of Biloxi first offered training for Biloxi's Educational Partners in 2010. The training is offered to Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers, Head Start, and Childcare Center staff. Training information is sent to school principals and/or program directors regarding the dates, times, hours, and topics. Names of prospective participants are then submitted to and confirmed by Susan Hunt, Certification Manager.

Training is held at the Biloxi Family Resource Center; meals are provided by Biloxi Excel By 5 and Biloxi Public Schools. The instructors volunteer their time to provide the training.



Nancy Turk, owner and Director of Creative Learning notes, "The training opportunities available for local childcare

centers through Biloxi Excel By 5 is so valuable." Also, Turk said, "This is the second year for the *Art on Wheels Program*. The children enjoy the themed activities and projects offered every other month." Nancy Turk serves as the Early Care and Education Chairperson on the Biloxi Excel By 5 Coalition.

Training topics have included, *Multisensory Approach to Teaching the Reading Competency Objectives for 3 and 4 year old Children; Exploring Literature Through the Arts, Books to Read, Songs to Sing, Art to Go Parts I and II; Fundamentals of Science Using Literature and Art to Teach Science; Ending Power Struggles Once and For All; The Good Choices Mirror, Bullying; Read! Move! Learn!; and Common Core Standards.*

Kathy Burns (Lynn Meadows Discovery Center), Martha Tripp and Debbie Girouard (Project Read), Dr. Janice Wilson (Biloxi Public Schools), and Kim Gowdy (Mississippi State University Extension Services) served as instructors.

Robin Carey, Director of Child-Care Program, Cedar Lake Christian Academy, notes

"Biloxi Excel By 5 has provided the best training we have received for early childhood education. This kind of training is motivating and inspirational for preschool teachers who experience joy, fulfillment and yes, a little stress each day. Way to go, Biloxi Excel By 5!"

Biloxi Excel By 5 began offering *Art on Wheels* to our educational partners in 2011. *Art on Wheels* is taught by Lisa Wold, a part-time staff member at the Biloxi Family Resource Center. Lisa prepares themed lessons for childcare center partners that consist of reading a story and then having children create an art activity/project. Biloxi Excel By 5 provides all the materials and supplies for the art activity or project. *Art on Wheels* is available to our childcare center partners on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of alternate months.



"You're improving our future, one child at a time."

-Patti Fleming



## Biloxi: First Safety Fair

Submitted by Susan Hunt, Certification Manager

Biloxi Excel By 5, Biloxi Public Schools, City of Biloxi, and Biloxi Regional Medical Center sponsored their first Safety Fair on Saturday, October 6, at the Town Green.

Children birth to five years of age had the opportunity to participate in a number of free activities. Ring toss games, football throw, bean bag games, face painting, a visit with Crash Dummies and crime dog McGruff were available to those attending the event.

The children had the opportunity to learn about School Bus Safety, Police Safety, Water Safety, Pool Safety, Fire Safety, School Safety, Home Safety, Emergency Medical Services and Halloween Safety. The children and parents received information in each area.

Tricycle Safety and Helmet Safety, coordinated by Jim Foster with the Heritage Trails Partnership, was particularly informative to parents. Children were fitted for helmets and had the opportunity to ride tricycles through a designed course.



### Organizations participating in the first Safety Fair:

- AMR Emergency Medical Services
- Biloxi Public Schools School Resource Officers
- Biloxi Public Schools Transportation Department
- Biloxi Regional Medical Center Chartwells
- City of Biloxi Fire Department
- City of Biloxi Natatorium
- City of Biloxi Police Department
- Department of Marine Resources Marine Patrol
- Heritage Trails Partnership
- Keesler Air Force Base Child Development Center
- Mississippi State University Extension Services

**A special thanks to all  
of the Biloxi  
Excel By 5  
Partners &  
Volunteers**

Volunteers for the event included Biloxi Excel By 5 Coalition members, Biloxi High School Football Team, Beau Rivage Resort and Casino Diversity Champions, City of Biloxi Parks and Recreation Department, and IP Casino Resort and SPA.





## Petal: Impact and Support of Excel By 5 Coalition

Submitted by Julie Fondren, Steering Committee Chair

Petal's Excel By 5 coalition began 2012 with three primary goals:

- to achieve recertification,
- to deepen the impact of our work, and
- to broaden the base of support for early childhood.

### Impact of Work

During the past year, childcare, Head Start, kindergarten and Resource and Referral staff participated in three days of trainings designed to enhance their understanding of the Early Learning Standards. This represents a prime example of commitment to deepening the impact of the work by those who teach preschool children in our community.

Petal Excel By 5's partnership with local childcare centers continues to deepen. Our goal is to have 100% of our childcare workers receiving 20+ hours of professional development. In 2012, 65% of workers at licensed centers obtained 20 or more hours of professional development compared to 53% in 2011. Two centers have 100% of their staff meeting this goal. Offering compensation to centers for each worker meeting this goal via this "childcare reimbursement plan" has been a successful way to support and encourage our centers to work toward a more qualified staff. Not only is the partnership with local childcare centers

strengthened, but the quality of education for young children in the community is being increased.



In order to provide more opportunities for parents to learn about the importance of a child's early years, Petal's coalition, in conjunction with Petal Excel By 5 sponsors, recently installed a second Born Learning Trail at a city park. Hundreds of children will have the opportunity for experiential learning through this addition. The coalition's goal is to expand that project to one other city park as well as to install Born Learning themed 'stations' in local grocery stores.

In the spring of 2012, the second round of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), an assessment of the readiness of entering Kindergarteners, was completed. Identified strengths and vulnerabilities were shared at a Community Conversation in the fall and the results are being used to inform the coalition's work. As a direct result of the EDI assessment, Conscious Discipline, a framework addressing social/emotional health, is being introduced to parents, childcare and primary school teachers.



## Petal: Impact and Support of Excel By 5 Coalition.. Continued

Submitted by Julie Fondren, Steering Committee Chair

### Broadened Support



In April 2012, 1,500 children from South Mississippi were moving and grooving to the sounds of Don Monopoli from The Learning Station at Petal's Children's Concert. This Petal Education Foundation annual event raised \$9,000 to support Petal Excel By 5 and offers a unique learning opportunity for Petal children.

For the 5<sup>th</sup> year, the city of Petal contributed a portion of the city's tax revenue for early childhood work in the community. Mayor Hal Marx presented the Petal Excel By 5 coalition with a check for \$25,000 in April 2012. This appropriation is used to fund a School Readiness Coordinator who facilitates the linkage between pre-school centers and the Primary School.

The Petal coalition has recently developed a process for local businesses, groups and individuals to become Petal Excel By 5 partners. Information is being distributed through the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to engage additional community partners.

The Petal community looks forward to the city's Excel By 5 recertification and spring "Excelebration". Under the leadership of a committed coalition, great strides are being made to ensure that all Petal kids really do Excel By 5.

### A special thanks to the 2012 Petal Excel By 5 Community Partners

City of Petal

United Way of Southeast MS

Wal-Mart Foundation

Adam Watkins Ventures, Inc.

Forrest General Hospital

Hattiesburg Clinic, P.A.

Hattiesburg Oral Surgery

Magnolia State Bank

Optimist Club of Petal

Rotary Club of Petal

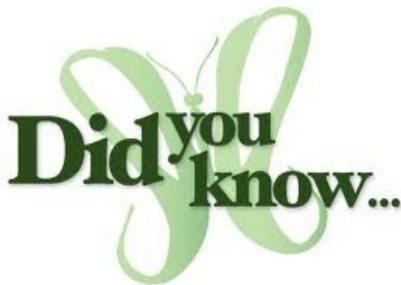
Petal Education Foundation

Petal School District

### Long-Term Benefits of Early Childhood Education

"A well-known study, the HighScope Perry Preschool Study, found that individuals who were enrolled in a quality preschool program ultimately earned up to \$2,000 more per month than those who were not. Young people who were in preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school, to own homes, and have longer marriages."

-National Education Association  
<http://www.nea.org/home/18163.htm>



## New Albany/Union County: Coalition Events

Submitted by Lecia Stubblefield, Co-Certification Manager

Wow! Excitement is in the air in New Albany and Union County. We are so close to being a certified community, we can feel it! We are about 99% complete with our final review scheduled for November 28. We are counting the days and can hardly wait. We have been extremely busy this fall serving our children and their parents. The Health Focus group sponsored the Children's Corner at the annual Back to School Health Fair held at Baptist Memorial Hospital – Union County on August 11.



The Family Resource Guide has been developed and printed. About 900 resource guides have been distributed at area events and to all children enrolled in local childcare centers and PreK classes. We have ordered our second printing. The Coalition also sponsored a booth at the Kids Fest area during our annual Tallahatchie Riverfest on September 22. Children were allowed to play games that focused on color recognition and improved motor skills. Children were given small books and their parents received a Family Resource Guide and information about Excel By 5. We also held a workshop at the Early Childhood Education Booth at the Baby Fair on October 15.

More than 100 expectant mothers received newborn packets compliments of the New Albany/Union County Excel By 5 Coalition. The focus groups and steering committee have met several times over the past three months in preparation for all of these events and to meet all of the



requirements for certification.

We are pleased to announce that our Family Resource Center will be open on Mondays and Thursdays beginning November 12. A Ribbon Cutting & Grand Opening, along with a parent workshop was held on November 12 from 5:00-6:30 p.m.

It is an exciting time in New Albany and Union County. Wish us luck as we try to reach our goal of becoming certified in 18 months. Assuming we accomplish this, it will be the record!

### ExcelBy5.com is under Construction

The Excel By 5 website is currently undergoing a website refresh. The new site will make navigation and updating much easier and more convenient. The goal for the new and improved ExcelBy5.com to go live is by the end of January 2013.

The website provides the community with information of coalition members and upcoming events.





## 2012 Community Collaboration Summit

The 2012 Excel By 5 Community Collaboration Summit was a huge success. Members from all Excel By 5 communities attended the Summit in Jackson to learn tips and share experiences.



At the Summit, the new Excel By 5 Board President, Nadine Coleman, was announced and each Excel By 5 community was recognized by the board.

Major General Roger Shields of Mission Readiness spoke to the group about early childhood and how it relates to national security. He told the group that 75% of those nationwide that apply for military services are denied. That percentage is 80% for Mississippians who are turned away from the military due to education or health issues.



Meggan Gray from WLOX in Biloxi also addressed the group about how to use media as an outlet for early childhood information.



Eight break-out session options were given at the Summit. The sessions gave useful information on how to effectively meet Excel By 5 requirements.



Excel By 5 community members look forward to the event every year so they can learn from each other how to better the lives of young children and their families.



**The Summit was great! It's always good to see so many people involved in providing opportunities for our young children.**

**-Cheryl Wheeler,  
Lee County Excel  
By 5 Coalition**



## Indianola: Indianola Promise Community Attends Excel By 5 Summit

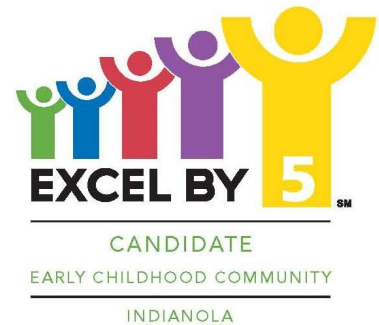
Submitted by Deborah Moore, Certification Manager

The Indianola Promise Community had the opportunity to attend the Excel By 5 Summit in Jackson, MS, in October. It was exciting to be there with 25+ other communities across Mississippi. We were able to obtain a better understanding of how communities pull their resources together to ensure all children will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to be successful.

The Indianola Excel By 5 Coalition was a new addition to the summit. The Indianola Coalition was recognized by Bob Clay, Executive Director for Excel By 5, as a community on the move with our Mayor of Indianola (Steve Rosenthal),

as the lead person of the coalition. Mayor Rosenthal is very excited that Indianola is an Excel By 5 candidate community. He is quoted as saying, "scientific studies have clearly shown that quality Pre-K education programs make a positive difference in the future 'quality of life' for children who are fortunate to have such a program. We are putting our children at a disadvantage in this competitive world by not giving them the best foundation to learn- starting at birth. You would not wait until your child is in first grade to teach them to walk or talk so why would you wait until the first grade to teach them how to learn? Excel By 5 will help us give our children the kind of

foundation that they need".



## Summit: Breakout Session: Including Everybody and Everything

Submitted by Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

**Presenters: Rhea Bishop, Dr. Lynn Darling, and Debbie Montgomery**



"We are bringing all the work at the *State Level* together to make *Stone Soup*. The Stone is the State Level and the Soup is the agency and community support."- Rhea Bishop

This Session consisted of several agencies presenting brief program descriptions. The Agency/Programs included:

- MS Low Income Initiative
- Head Start
- R&R
- Center for Education Innovation
- Allies in Quality Care
- MS Learning Lab- Transition & Alignment
- SPARK
- MS ECI- Quality Stars
- SECAC
- MS Building Blocks

Rhea asserted that they are working hard at the State level

to improve early learning and care systems across the state. Through coordination and collaboration programs have been able to provide more resources and services to aid those working directly with parents and children.

"Although funding for early education and care is a challenge, we continue to do what the old folks say, *make a dollar out of 15 cents.*"

- Rhea Bishop

## Summit: Breakout Sessions: EDI (Not E-I-E-I-O)

Submitted by Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

### Presenter: Dan Kibodeaux



#### What is the EDI?

The Early Development Instrument measures how children are developing and is also useful in predicting health, education and social outcomes. EDI data are a component of the Transforming Early Childhood Community Systems (TECCS) which is a guide used to help children get ready for school success. EDI measures five domains of early childhood development: physical health/social competence/emotional maturity/language and cognitive skills/communication skills and general knowledge.

#### How are EDI results Reported?

EDI reports the percentage of children considered "Ready" (scores at or above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile in any of the domains) or "Developmentally Vulnerable." (scores below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in any of the domains)

#### How EDI results are Used?

The results are used to compare the strengths and weaknesses in children's development and readiness within the domains. Results also are used to understand the whole child in relationship with environmental factors that may influence how a child develops. The results are typically tracked over a time to see if changes occur as a result to intervention and advocacy efforts.

The results are also used to show funders how and where

they can support Early Childhood Development.

#### Where has EDI been used?

##### **Kindergarten Classrooms:**

Year 1: 2010- Petal

Year 2: 2011- Hattiesburg

Year 3: 2012- Lamar County

Year 4: 2012- Petal

#### EDI Partners:

WWK Kellogg

United Way of Southeast Mississippi

UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities

Excel By 5 Coalitions in Hattiesburg, Petal, Lafayette County & Oxford

**"UNDERSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT EDI..... IT'S LIKE PLAYING PIN THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY."**

**- DAN KIBODEAUX**

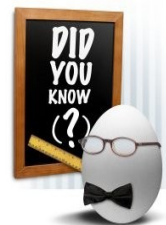
Everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.

-Robert Louis Stevenson

### Speak Parentese, Not Baby Talk

"See a baby and you'll probably start talking in a high-pitched tone and stretching out your vowels. "Whoose a pretty baybeee?" Experts call this musical way of talking "parentese" and report there's a true value to it. Parentese helps parents and caregivers connect to their babies and helps babies develop language skills."

**PBS Parents, [PBS.org](http://PBS.org)**





# Summit: Breakout Sessions: Leaders First

Submitted by Patti Fleming, Sites Coordinator

## Presenters: Judge Mike McPhail and Senator Brice Wiggins

During this session, Senator Wiggins stated that the House of Representatives had a meeting recently to discuss the rising cost of incarceration, and that prison population projections were based on students' 3<sup>rd</sup> grade school performance. He made the point that "Education is the key to our future."

Judge McPhail shared that his views on early care and education were shaped by growing up with a disabled sister and by his experiences as a juvenile court judge. His involvement in the "Zero to Three" program has helped him to learn more about early childhood. According to the judge, there are four areas of leadership:

1. Community Leaders- coalitions must identify and involve key leaders.
2. Partnerships- coalitions must create and sustain business partnerships.
3. Childhood Issues- coalitions must educate businesses on childhood issues.
4. Community Relationships- coalitions should recruit from resources that are currently available to them while seeking diversity in the areas of gender, race, occupation, culture, and

economic status.

Coalition leaders must be able to leverage other people, meaning they should have "connections".

Senator Wiggins commented that the business community must have "buy-in". Coalitions must tell them why Excel By 5 is important and how an educated workforce will benefit business. Coalitions should engage educators and parents. Educators understand why birth to five is such an important time, but other groups may need to be enlightened. He suggested that coalitions "cast their nets broadly" to include membership from the following groups:

- Community Leaders
- Businesses
- Judges
- Parents
- Educators

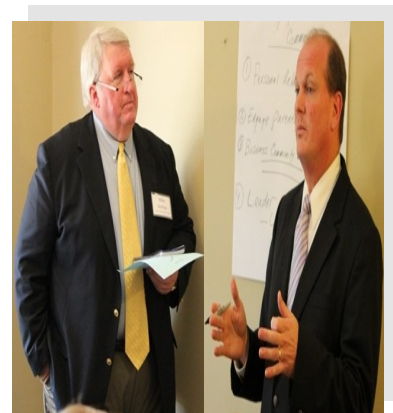
Judge McPhail emphasized that businesses are "show-me folks" who need to be educated. They want to see outcomes. The Judge cited the Heckman Equation as proof that we should invest in a child's early years. Judge McPhail also offered his own equation:

*K+A=B which means "knowledge plus attitude"*

*equals behavior."*

Senator Wiggins suggested that coalitions ask businesses to Google Conscious Discipline as their site is rich with brain development research. He also suggested that new coalitions should engage businesses first because educators will automatically be on board with Excel By 5. The Senator offered the advice of finding a conversational "sweet spot" with business leaders, a common area of opinion where communication can begin. Conversations should be had with both the non-committal and the overtly vocal business leaders.

As time ran out, Judge McPhail cautioned that coalitions should not allow the Certification Manager to overwhelm the organization. **Give everyone ownership.** Give all community members a



$$K+A=B$$
**Knowledge plus Attitude equals Behavior**

## Summit: Breakout Sessions: Crazy Good Resource Centers

Submitted by Patti Fleming, Sites Coordinator

### Presenters: Ellen Goodman and Susan Hunt

Ellen Goodman from the Ok-tibbeha County coalition and the MS State Research and Referral Network discussed the services that are currently available to all Excel By 5 coalitions:

- Contact hours for childcare providers and families on various topics
- Technical assistance for childcare centers on evaluations and offering quality care
- Publications on choosing quality care
- Online CDA credential and additional professional development
- MS Director Credential
- National Director Credential
- Financial Management Technical Assistance
- In-home providers referral process
- 14 resource checkout centers statewide
- Mobile R&R unit that can be scheduled to come to your area if you're more than 50 miles away from an MSCCR&R site.
- Information for your records on in-home providers through Nurturing Homes

Susan Hunt gave a virtual tour of the Biloxi Parent Resource Center. The slideshow presentation included photos of the center during its renovation phase and as it now appears. Susan distributed the Parent Center handbook that parents are given on their first visit to the center. Since the center is on school property, certain procedures must be defined such as fire, tornado, etc. The guide also contains information on times of operation as well as names and locations of area schools and childcare centers.

Susan specified the importance of making the parents aware of expectations to ensure a pleasant visit. The storage shelves and containers for all materials, toys and supplies are labeled to provide for easy clean-up by the parents. Organization is key as the center is also used for childcare provider workshops, parent workshops, parent/toddler classes, and a "Play 2 Learn" group. Restrooms are child-friendly and contain diaper changing facilities. The Biloxi Parent center has age-appropriate areas that help provide for the proper distribution of resources as well as an uninhibited playing and learning atmosphere for the children. There is a special room devoted to parents who have children in more than one age category.

The Biloxi Parent Center has been supplied with donated materials. Susan encourages coalitions to accept all donations, and to seek out supplies and furniture that schools, childcare centers and individuals may be discarding.



**“Keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things.”**

**-Walt Disney**



## Summit: Breakout Sessions: Getting the Word out

Submitted by Gabrielle Phillips, Sites Coordinator

### Presenter: Steve Renfroe

During his break-out session at the 2012 Summit, Steve Renfroe gave the group useful tips for coalitions on getting the word out about Excel By 5 and on effective meeting skills.



### Tips on Getting the Word out:

**Tip #1:** Look at the interviewer, not the camera, when doing an on-camera interview.

**Tip #2:** Put together a concise, straight forward letter to get media at events.

**Tip #3:** Be up front and concise when preparing a print document. All of the important information should be at the beginning of the story.

**Tip #4:** Write stories that are easy to understand- bigger words are not better.

**Tip #5:** Find out who the media assignment editor is and send the story directly to that person. Next, follow up with a phone call to see if the editor

received it and to make a verbal case for this person to run the story.

**Tip #6:** Know exactly what you want to be accomplished once the story is published. ie increased attendance at events.

**Tip #7:** Write stories to make an impact on a target rather than a mass market.

**Tip #8:** Send thank you letters to reinforce appreciated actions.

**Tip #9:** Create a communication plan. The Steering Committee should determine key audiences and tailor messages for each audience. The most important key audience is the coalition. (Contact your Sites Coordinator for a sample communication plan.)

**Tip #10:** Decide on a key message for each audience. Find out what is important to the particular audience and show them how Excel By 5 can fit in with their needs.

**Tip #11:** Use a key spokesperson so that there is a clear and consistent message for the coalition.

**Tip #12:** Find a sympathetic way to approach audiences. Methods should be small and personal. Do not ask for money the first meeting, but rather build a relationship.

**Tip #13:** Compile a comprehensive email list.

### Tips on Meeting Skills:

**Tip #1:** Send out the agenda prior to the meeting so that the members will know what to expect and how long each item will be discussed.

**Tip #2:** Conduct meetings in one hour or less.

**Tip #3:** Record attendance and acts of motion in the meeting minutes.

**Tip #4:** Send meeting minutes to the members within one week after the meeting. This will help to increase attendance because the minute's proof of attendance holds the member more accountable.

**Tip #5:** Play center field when directing a vote. The leader should vote last so that other members do not assume the decision has already been made.





## Summit: Breakout Sessions: Prescription for Health Fairs

Submitted by Bob Clay, Executive Director

### Presenter: Emily Burke

Emily Burke from Biloxi Regional presented a session on organizing a successful children's health fair that involves providers and agencies to evaluate the whole child.

Emily provided information on the linkages between health and academics citing that health related factors lead to poor school performance and lower overall educational attainment. Academic success and health factor from 0-5 can also be linked to adult health outcomes.

Schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish lifelong healthy behaviors. Research also has shown that school health programs can reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people and have a positive effect on academic performance.

In order to conduct successful health fairs for children 0-5 preliminary planning is key.

What, when, where and why is the foundation for a successful health fair. In order to have a successful health fair, 90% of your efforts should be in the planning phases. The remaining 10% is the actual execution of the event.

Resources you might consider include, local hospitals, pedia-

tricians, optometrists, dentists, Lions Club, Health department, fire and police departments and other specific organizations focusing on health issues in your community.

Successfully promoting your event can be done through local media, childcare providers, flyers, emails and through the resources you have recruited to work your health fair.

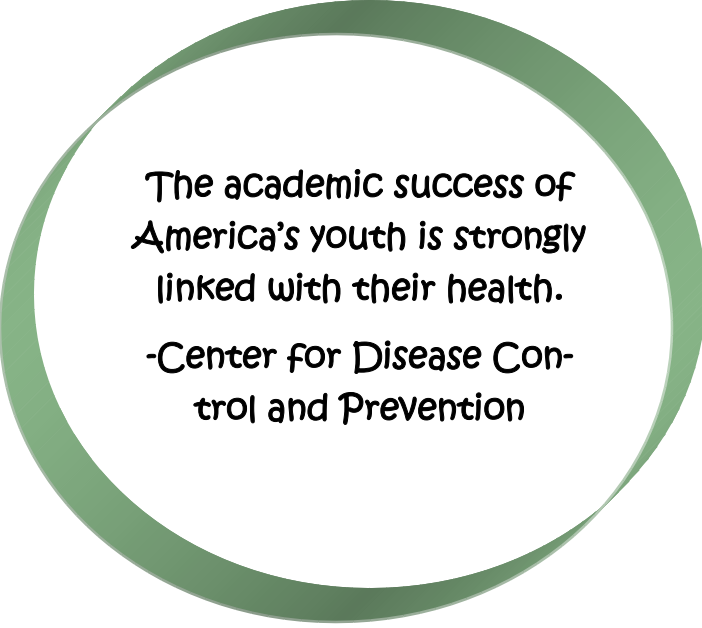
For children 0-5 it really boils down to the basics; height, weight, dental, vision, immunizations, speech, hearing, overall general health and safety awareness. While there are many organizations and resources available to provide these assessments, some communities have enlisted local pediatricians to be the last stop before a child exits the health fair. This provides a single focal point to review all the areas evaluated and to make recommendations for follow-up evaluations.

*Other tips to ensure a successful health fair include:*

1. Know your target audience – Ensure you are addressing the health issues for children ages 0-5.
2. Quality over quantity – It is about quality.

As you have these events over the years the participation will increase assuming you have a quality event.

3. Keep it fun – Many children are hesitant to “work well with others” if they see people in white coats and scrubs. So make it a fun event with lots of activities beyond the health care components.



**The academic success of  
America's youth is strongly  
linked with their health.  
-Center for Disease Control and Prevention**

## Summit: Breakout Sessions: Centering on Childcare

Submitted by Gabrielle Phillips, Sites Coordinator

### Presenters: Amy Brandenstein and Kelly Gunn



During the Centering on Childcare break out session at the 2012 Summit, Amy and Kelly discussed how to develop partnerships and how to engage childcare providers. The first step in developing partnerships is to get the local school district(s) on board with the Excel By 5 coalition. Each coalition should develop a sense of trust with the childcare centers. One way to do this is to let them know of new things happening in the community before they are in the media. This way, the childcare centers will feel more comfortable with the school district.

It is important to communicate to the childcare centers that the coalition wants to be their *partner*. By getting feedback from the childcare centers, the coalition is likely to have more convenient meetings for the centers with attendance likely to increase. By trying to meet the needs of the childcare centers, the coalition can establish rapport with them. *There is always room for progress with relationships with childcare centers.*

If possible, provide contact hours at meetings with childcare center staff. Offer trainings based on individual community needs. Ask childcare centers what the number one thing is that they want more information. If the workshop offers useful information, they will more likely return for another workshop.

It is always a good idea to provide the childcare centers and teachers incentives. Host a teacher/child care center appreciation week.

Amy and Kelly offered childcare center incentive suggestions:

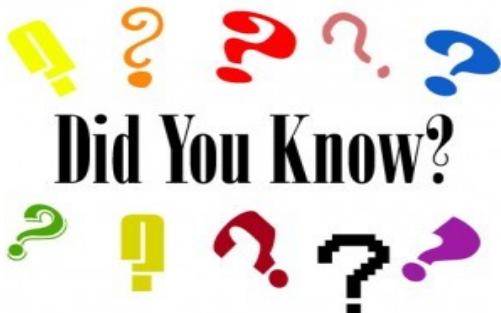
- Send a thank you cake from a local bakery
- Send Christmas cards from the coalition
- Send flower arrangements
- Deliver cookies
- Offer financial incentives to directors for each teacher that meets Excel By 5 requirements
- Plan Field Trips. Ex. Community Day at the local resource center
- Offer CDA scholarships
- Visit the childcare centers twice a month

### Routines and Rituals

“For most children in childcare programs having a routine they can count on provides reassurance and a feeling of safety. For children who may have unpredictable lives outside of child care it is helpful to have a stable routine and classroom environment.”

-CONNECTability

[Connectability.ca](http://Connectability.ca)



## Excel By 5 Community Conference Call

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Excel By 5 will host its second-quarterly Community-wide conference call on **Monday, December 10th from 9:30am to 10:30am**. The topic of the conference call will be available community resource with

Ellen Goodman as our guest speaker. All Certification Managers are encouraged to participate. Call in information will be sent to all Certification Managers in the near future.

For more information concerning the conference calls, please contact Patti Fleming at:

PFleming@colled.msstate.edu

### Conference Call Topic:

*The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network currently has many services available that will assist Excel By 5 Coalitions in meeting their Community Certification Requirements. The conference call will be an opportunity to look at your community's specific requirements, learn more about those services that are available, and what the process is to apply/or receive MSCCR&R Network services.*

-Ellen Goodman

## Regional Sites Meetings: Save the Date

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Please save the date for the 1st quarter 2013 Excel By 5 Regional Sites meetings. At these meetings, the Certification Manager from each coalition will come together to discuss tips and share experiences. Other coalition members are encouraged to attend, as well.

**Southern Excel By 5 Communities:**  
**Monday, January 28, 2013 in Moss Point, MS.**

**Northern Excel By 5 Communities:**  
**Monday, February 4 in Grenada, MS.**

## Growth Charts

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### Growth Charts are here!

The Excel By 5 office has received a new shipment of growth charts. If your coalition needs some Growth Charts, contact your Sites Coordinator. To view a Growth Chart, visit:

[http://excelby5.com/communities/eb5docs/Excel\\_By\\_5\\_Growth\\_Chart\\_3a.pdf](http://excelby5.com/communities/eb5docs/Excel_By_5_Growth_Chart_3a.pdf).



## Mississippi State Department of Health: Resources

[http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/\\_static/44,0,234.html](http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/_static/44,0,234.html)

The Office of Health Protection's Emergency Planning Division reaches out to the community to help children and adults understand possible emergencies and how to cope with them.

### Andy the Ambulance and Pluggie the Fire Hydrant

Both Andy the Ambulance and Pluggie the Fire Hydrant are voice-animated robots that teach children important life-saving skills.

Children love to dance, talk, and, most of all, listen to what Andy and Pluggie have to say about safety!

Andy the Ambulance and his buddy Pluggie teach safety tips and other vital life-saving techniques.



### Fire Safety House

Mississippi leads the nation in fire related deaths. MDH's Emergency Medical Services has developed a Fire Safety Program to help educate children on fire prevention and to teach them how to get out of a burning house quickly.



The Fire Safety House is a two-story mobile unit that simulates a house, equipped with heated doors, smoke alarms, and a fire escape ladder. Children are taught exit drills, smoke alarm use and maintenance, and the proper way to exit a burning house.



**"I CAN PERSONALLY ATTEST THAT MY PRESCHOOLERS ATTENDED A SESSION WITH 'PLUGGIE' AND THEY WERE COMPLETELY MESMERIZED! "**

**- PATTI FLEMING, EXCEL BY 5 SITES COORDINATOR**

**Arrange a visit:** Andy the Ambulance, Pluggie the Fire Hydrant and the Fire Safety House are ready to visit your town, school, or local event. Contact the State Department of Health's office of Emergency Planning at **601-576-7380**

## Excel By 5 Partners: Childcare Centers



Excel By 5 and its Communities recognize the importance of Childcare Centers in early education. We'd like to thank all of those centers that are participating with Excel By 5 coalitions in helping children be better prepared for kindergarten and the first grade.

Here are this month's featured childcare centers that participate with Excel By 5 coalitions.

### Participating Centers in Lafayette County

\* ABC Learning Center \* Creative Learning Center \* First Baptist Weekday Education \* Hope's Child Care \* Kid's College Day Care \* Learner's Playhouse \* Mary Cathey Head Start \* My Little Ones \* Plein Air Montessori School \* Willie Price University Nursery School

### Participating Centers in Petal

\* Asbury Playschool \* Carterville Christian School \* C.H. Johnson Head Start and Early Head Start \* Mimi's Playhouse \* Oasis Training Center \* Play School Child Care

### Participating Centers in Biloxi

\* ABC Child Care Development Center \* Care-A-Lot Daycare Center \* Cedar Lake Christian Academy Preschool \* Creative Learning Center \* Greengate Christian Academy \* Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence "Incredible Years" \* Just for Kids \* Kinderlearn Child Development Center \* Keesler Child Development Center \* Little Teepee Biloxi High School \* Moore Community House – Early Head Start – Davis Street \* Moore Community House – Early Head

### Participating Centers in McComb

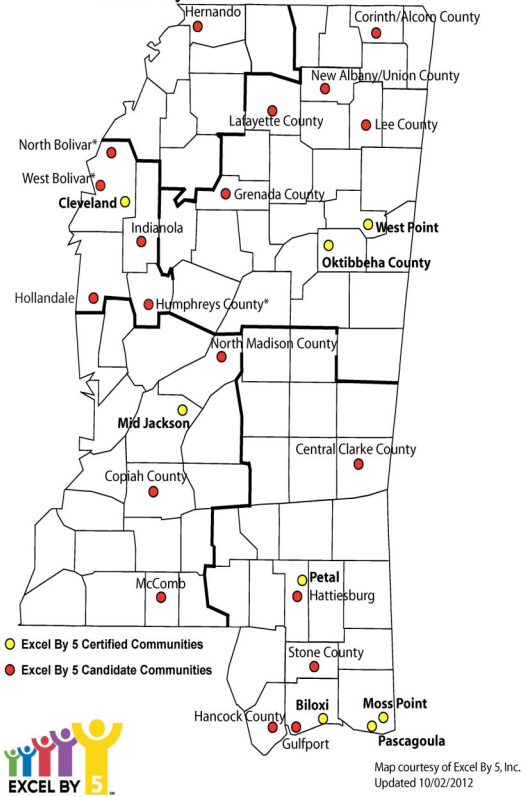
\* Bright Minds Learning Center \* Centenary United Methodist Church Weekday Preschool \* Christian Community Learning Center \* Kennedy School \* McComb Educational Academy \* Mother Goose Christian Childcare Center \* Pleasant Grove East McComb \* SanKofa Academy \* Weekday Early Education Center \* Kennedy Headstart \* Westbrook Headstart \* Tots-n-Toddlers Child Development Center

## Excel By 5, Inc.

Excel By 5, Inc.  
109 Executive Dr. Suite 1  
Madison, MS 39110  
601.707.7726 (Office)  
601.707.7727 (Fax)

Launched in the Fall of 2004, Excel By 5 is an innovative process, that is designed to encourage and assist communities to become actively involved in supporting their young children. The first of its kind, this certification program emphasizes the important roles parents and primary caregivers play in educating children during their most formative years, birth to five.

### Excel By 5 Communities 2012



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