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Office of the Superintendent

Senator Richard Lugar
306 Senate Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 17, 2009

Dear Senator Lugar,

The Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) has developed a strategic plan which includes a core focus to boost student achievement by increasing access to early childhood education. Central to the plan is the creation of three Early Childhood Learning Centers at Daniel Wertz Elementary, Culver Elementary and North High School respectively to serve approximately 500 children district-wide, aged three to five.

The EVSC has a free/reduced lunch rate of over 53% for the 2008-2009 school year. Daniel Wertz Elementary has a 60% free/reduced lunch rate, Culver Elementary has a 98% free/reduced lunch rate, and Evans Middle School, slated to move to the current site of North High School in 2011, has a free/reduced lunch rate of 85%.

The sites of the new EVSC Early Childhood Learning Centers will be strategically located on the west side, south side and north side of Evansville. It is the goal that by adding these educational programs in underserved areas school readiness will be increased thereby impacting school achievement and ultimately graduation rates.

We are currently developing a partnership with the Community Action Program of Evansville (CAPE)/Head Start to leverage our resources to reduce the number of children on their waitlists and to provide a rigorous, developmentally-appropriate curriculum. With innovative school models also a part of EVSC Strategic Plan, we aim to be a pioneer for the state of Indiana in public/private partnerships for quality early childhood education programming. We plan to operate state-licensed facilities and participate in Indiana's quality rating system "Paths to Quality" as well.

We are asking, as the Senate plans for fiscal year 2010, that it would consider allocating funding of \$950,000 for the EVSC Early Childhood Learning Centers. This would give us the necessary resources to provide services to hundreds of children who otherwise would have no formal education prior to entering kindergarten. Indiana is one of only eight states nationwide that does not allocate and expend funds for early childhood programming above the federal match for the Child Care Development Block Grant. Please partner with us to close the achievement gap and increase the success of future work forces to advance economic development for Southwest Indiana.

Thank you for your support and commitment to the people of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vince M. Bertram".

Vincent Bertram, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation