

# REPORT TO THE IGA GOVERNING BOARD



Collaboration for  
Early Childhood  
*Strong Start, Bright Future*

 CHAPIN HALL  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## ABSTRACT

The Collaboration for Early Childhood has a contract with the Village of Oak Park, Oak Park Elementary School District 97 and Oak Park River Forest High School District 200 to develop an integrated system of high-quality early childhood programs and services to benefit all children birth to kindergarten age living in Oak Park and River Forest. Data collection and use of data are integral to the Contract for Services to better understand Oak Park's and River Forest's youngest children, monitor service delivery and usage, and measure impact.

The Collaboration presents this report to show the results of activity during the 2021-2022 school year.

*Submitted December 7, 2022.*

# Collaboration for Early Childhood

## Annual Data Report: 2022

Chapter 1. Introduction .....	5
Chapter 2. The Collaboration for Early Childhood: Weaving a Web of Support for 20 Years .....	9
Chapter 3. It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Whole Child: The Collaboration’s Work is a Community Effort	13
Chapter 4. The Early Childhood Landscape This Year .....	17
Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration’s Work in the Four Program Areas .....	21
Chapter 6. Areas of Inquiry.....	31
Chapter 7. Appendices .....	43
Reporting History .....	44
Data Pipeline .....	44
Integrated Database Schema .....	45
<b>Child, Service, and System Outcomes:</b>	
<b>Child Outcome 1:</b> .....	46
Children identified through screening as needing assessment or services receive them.	
<b>Child Outcome 2:</b> .....	49
Percent of children in Oak Park and River Forest Preschool for All (PFA) and Head Start who demonstrate age-appropriate proficiency in each domain of development in accordance with the Illinois Early Learning Standards.	
<b>Child Outcome 3:</b> .....	52
Percent of children entering kindergarten demonstrating age-appropriate proficiency in kindergarten readiness assessment administered by District 97.	
<b>Service Delivery Outcome 1:</b> .....	55
Kindergarten students with Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) assistance have a history of participation in a PFA/HS/NAEYC accredited program, or a program meeting the Illinois Quality Rating.	
<b>Service Delivery Outcome 2:</b> .....	60
Teen parents and families receiving up through All Kids Level 1 health insurance for their child under age 3 receive referral to intensive parent education program.	
<b>Service Delivery Outcome 3:</b> .....	61
Percent of referred parents who choose to participate in the intensive parent education program.	

**Service Delivery Outcome 4:** ..... [64](#)

Percent of kindergarten and first grade students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) who have documentation of receiving services in early childhood (if they lived in Oak Park or River Forest during their early childhood years).

**System Level Outcome 1:** ..... [69](#)

Estimate the Collaboration’s connection with all families in Oak Park and River Forest with children under five via direct and indirect measures.

**System Level Outcome 2:** ..... [70](#)

Percent of teachers and directors in Oak Park early childhood programs who have above minimum state educational requirements for their role.

**System Level Outcome 3:** ..... [73](#)

Percent of teachers and child care providers reporting more than the state-mandated 15 documented hours of continuing professional education each year.

**System Level Outcome 4:** ..... [76](#)

Percent of preschools, child care centers, and home are engaged in the Illinois Quality Rating System (ExceleRate) and improve their scores each year.







*“The Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education will foster high quality early care and educational experiences and support to families so that all children will have the opportunity to develop their full potential, and feel loved and valued in our caring, diverse community.”*

– The Collaboration’s Original Mission Statement, 2002

## Chapter 1. Introduction

December 7, 2022

Dear Members of the Tri-Board,

We are proud to present our report to the Tri-Board as part of our Contract for Early Childhood Services. In October, we presented this information to the IGA representatives and now, in this version, you will find data on two additional outcomes relating to teacher qualifications (System Level Outcomes 2 and 3).

While this document gives you a detailed look back on our 2021-22 program year, we are well on our way into 2023. We have brought on new staff this fall and we are deep in the work of strategic planning, conducting focus groups with our community partners and stakeholders, and working with the Board of Directors and Collaboration Council to think deeply about who we are and who we want to be through our mission, vision, core values, and pillars of work.

We have also embarked on an innovative new partnership with Wonder Works Children's Museum made possible by a Birth to Five Illinois Implementation Grant that focuses on increasing preschool enrollment in communities across the Western Suburbs. In February, we will host our 20th Early Childhood Symposium, which will be back in person for the first time in two years, and we will continue to do work that stabilizes our early childhood community as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your trust in our work, and for your investment in the bright future of our community.



Laura Crawford  
Interim Executive Director  
Collaboration for Early Childhood



Becki Streit  
Board Chair  
Collaboration for Early Childhood

# Chapter 1. Introduction

October 26, 2022

Dear Partners of the IGA Governing Board:

Each year, when writing this report, I look back over the year that was to regain perspective on where we have been and what we have achieved together. I throw myself into the past year so that we can speak to it today, and plan for tomorrow.

This IGA Report is a specific snapshot in time of the early childhood landscape during this extraordinary 2021-22 program year. What you will see is a community that has prioritized actions and investments that improve the lives of children as it continues to recover. I am proud to have been at the helm of this unique and innovative organization that is powered by the community as a whole.

In addition to the data we report out to you in these pages, you will also find an overview of the early childhood landscape this past year. You will find a 20-year timeline of how the Collaboration has grown and expanded to promote our children's healthy development through empowering and supporting all those that care for young children: parents & caregivers, early childhood educators, and health professionals. And you will see an 'Areas of Inquiry' chapter that explores deeper questions about our work and our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to someone you are already familiar with: Laura Crawford. Laura is our Interim Executive Director here at the Collaboration for Early Childhood, and she leads with a thoughtful, steady hand. Laura is no stranger to the Collaboration for Early Childhood. She became connected to the agency in 2013 as a member of the Measurement and Evaluation Committee. From there, she has worked – and excelled – in nearly every part of the organization: operations, data management, web development and communications, and most recently as Associate Executive Director. The Collaboration for Early Childhood is in the midst of an exciting era of growth, change, and opportunity. There is so much on the horizon for this extraordinary agency, and I leave it in strong and capable hands, backed by the support from our community.

Thank you for reading, for questioning, and most importantly, for your service to our community.



John Borrero  
Outgoing Executive Director  
The Collaboration for Early Childhood







## Chapter 2: The Collaboration for Early Childhood: Weaving a Web of Support for 20 Years



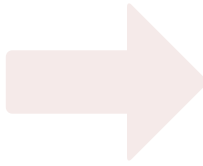
*“Back then, the overwhelmingly popular assumption was that serious learning started on entry into kindergarten. But school officials and families confronted a different reality: they knew that an opportunity gap begins in the first few years of a child’s life, and stubbornly threatens to extend through to their elementary, middle and high school years.”*

– Eric Gershenson,  
Founding Member of the Collaboration for Early Childhood

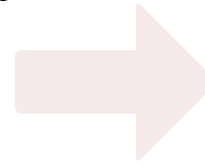
2022 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Collaboration for Early Childhood. We became a 501(c)3 on November 27, 2002. During this anniversary year, we convened stakeholders and founders to identify twenty key moments that define our journey as a collective impact agency here in Oak Park. Along the path, you’ll see themes emerge that have shaped our work from the start: creating connections, lifting up community voice and expertise, and centering young children in our conversations. Here is our two-decade-long history distilled into twenty milestones.

# Chapter 2: The Collaboration for Early Childhood: Weaving a Web of Support for 20 Years

1. **2001.** A small group meets for a conversation about ways to make early childhood care & education more coordinated across our community. Later that morning the group learns that a plane had hit the Twin Towers in New York. It was September 11, 2001.

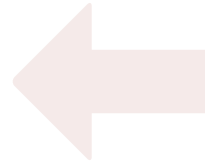


2. **2002.** The group convenes a community-wide meeting of all public and private organizations whose work affected the lives of our youngest children. More than 40 people attend and they develop an initial mission statement.



3. **2002.** The Collaboration holds an event for educators called “Kindergarten Dialogues” that will later become the Early Childhood Symposium and begins the work of providing professional development for early childhood educators.

9. **2012.** *Watch and Help Me Grow*, a booklet of 0-5 developmental milestones, is published with funds from a grant for the Rotary Club of Oak Park-River Forest.

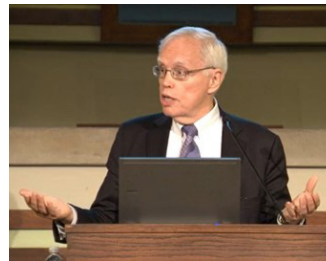


8. **2008.** The Collaboration begins providing vision and hearing screenings to Oak Park and River Forest early childhood center-based programs.



*Tiffany Kelly conducts a hearing screening.*

10. **2012.** The Collaboration hosts Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman at Unity Temple in Oak Park for a lecture on the economic impact of early childhood care & education.

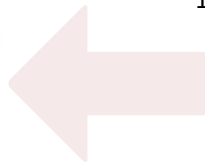
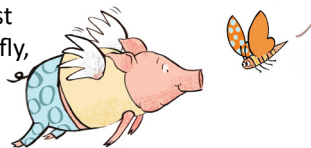


*James Heckman at Unity Temple*

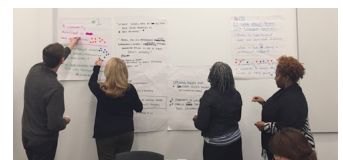


11. **2013.** The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between District 200, District 97, and the Village of Oak Park is signed to fund early childhood systems work in the Oak Park and River Forest communities.

17. **2018.** Cece, the little pig with wings, and her best friend, Hope the butterfly, join the Collaboration team.

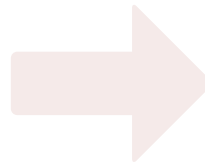
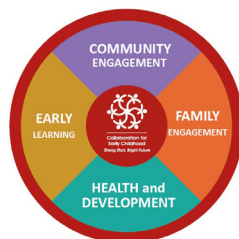


16. **2017.** Working with community stakeholders and partners, the Collaboration revises its mission and vision statement



*Staff and Board members provide input during a mission statement exercise*

18. **2019.** The Collaboration engages in community visioning and develops its current Program Services Model.

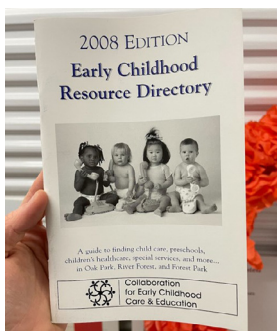


19. **2021.** The Growing Gardeners Program begins, thanks to a grant from the Albrecht-Poss Family Foundation, providing raised beds, plants, tools, and curriculum to programs in and around Oak Park, and receives the Village of Oak Park Green Award.

# Chapter 2: The Collaboration for Early Childhood: Weaving a Web of Support for 20 Years

4. **2002.** On November 27, the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education is registered as a 501(c)3.

7. **2008.** Building on the work of the League of Women Voters of Oak Park and River Forest, the Collaboration begins publication of the Early Childhood Resource Directory, providing an essential local resource to families with young children. The Directory is a comprehensive list of early childhood providers with information on what to look for in a quality program.



12. **2013.** The Collaboration partners with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago for data collection and analysis on the eleven outcomes that the IGA contract requires, and which are reported out annually within the pages of this report.

15. **2016.** The Collaboration develops a strategic framework for family engagement based on a community needs assessment.

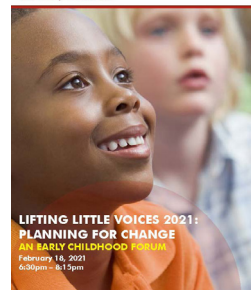


Collaboration staff and partners at one of our many community events.



20. **2021.** The Collaboration hosts its first Lifting Little Voices Community Forum, a biennial event that centers early childhood advocacy efforts.

Collaboration for Early Childhood



5. **2007-2009.** The Collaboration begins its strategic plan, The Partnership for Human Development, under the guidance of Teresa Hawley. Hawley goes on to become the First Assistant Deputy Governor of Education.



6. **2008.** The Collaboration launches the Physicians' Network to promote a stronger connection between the early childhood community and health practitioners. They create the initial Developmental Referral and Services Directory.

13. **2015.** The Collaboration begins contracting with the Easterseals Partnering with Parents Program for Home Visiting services in Oak Park and River Forest.



14. **2016.** Working with publicly funded preschool programs, the Collaboration becomes the main point of contact to help families get connected to a free preschool; conducting prescreening, and coordinating with participating programs to streamline the enrollment process for qualifying families.





## Chapter 3. It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Whole Child: The Collaboration's Work is a Community Effort



*“Our reports really strived to not only show the data, but to also show where the hiccups were.”*

– Carolyn Newberry Schwartz,  
Executive Director of the Collaboration (2009-2018)

*Emily Paster, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, David Weindling, Catherine Hart, Joan White, Carollina Song, and Ann Courter with young friends.*

## Chapter 3. It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Whole Child: The Collaboration's Work is a Community Effort

Since its beginnings in 2002, the Collaboration for Early Childhood has embraced the vision that all children should arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn. It is a large and ambitious vision. We began by looking at how much we could impact.

At the beginning of our work, our goal was that:

- all parents should have information about child development and about services available in the community;
- all children should be provided with developmental screening and follow-up so that developmental delays and disabilities could be detected early and be appropriately addressed;
- parents should have access to intensive parent coaching services so that all families with children birth to three-years-old could have access to support;
- there would be opportunities for all parents to participate in a parent group or network that met them on their level;
- all children in Oak Park who needed preschool could attend preschool (either a part-day or an enriched full-day program), and that these programs would provide the educational experience needed for children to arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed;
- all early childhood teachers and child care providers in Oak Park and River Forest would be engaged in ongoing, meaningful professional development, and;
- early learning programs would take full advantage of state-level resources for quality enhancement.

We did not take these early ideological steps alone. All of the governing bodies in Oak Park helped to create the Collaboration. Through in-kind and direct financial support, they affirmed the vital role that high-quality early learning and care experiences play in ensuring the success of every child. They committed resources to working with early care and education professionals to weave a web of support for all parents of young children and to raise the skill level of early childhood staff and offer a continuum of services to all families with children birth to five.

To understand how the Collaboration functions within Oak Park and River Forest, it's useful to unpack the architecture of the collective impact model. Collective impact can be defined as "diverse organizations coming together to solve a complex social problem." The key elements of collective impact include: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and an organization that



*"All my life I had to defend early childhood. Having people behind me, that kind of energy and commitment, I don't even know if I have a word to describe it. We were all working toward this shared commitment to early childhood. We couldn't help but feel energized."*

– Diana Rosenbrock,  
Long-time Professional Development Coordinator  
at the Collaboration for Early Childhood



## Chapter 3. It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Whole Child: The Collaboration's Work is a Community Effort

helps to mobilize, coordinate, and facilitate to keep the goal in sight and the progress rolling. The Collaboration for Early Childhood serves as the “backbone” organization here in Oak Park and River Forest. We work as connectors, collaborators and bridge-builders. We work to create equitable systems and improve outcomes by coordinating across community partners.

By the mid 2010s, the ability for this mindset to expand beyond our borders had become a part of the Collaboration's narrative. The Collaboration for Early Childhood became the model for the Illinois Early Learning Council, which aims to integrate the state's early childhood systems. Years later, as a former Illinois Senator, President Obama proposed a national early learning council, based on the Illinois prototype. And it began in Oak Park.

Each August, when our children begin their journeys through the school system in Oak Park, the community dedicates significant energy and resources to narrowing the opportunity gap that begins in the first few years of a child's life and stubbornly threatens to extend through to their elementary, middle and high school years, and beyond.







*“As a clinical psychologist specializing in early childhood, I am very aware of the growing gap between research and practice. What is so special about the Collab is that it provides the infrastructure and resources to bridge that gap. The Collab makes it possible to get evidence-based care into the hands of all children, families and providers in Oak Park and River Forest. I think it is a model for how communities can lift up young kids and change the trajectories of children and families.”*

– Allie Wainer, Ph.D  
and member of the Collaboration’s  
Health and Development Committee



## Chapter 4. The Early Childhood Landscape This Year

The Collaboration's work addressed the immediate needs of families, educators, and child care providers that came up as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our new coordinated intake structure has made those connections to support and services faster and more efficient for our community. Home Visiting programs saw their support expand to include mental and moral support for parents and caregivers overwhelmed by the effects of the pandemic in their daily lives and work as parents. They saw more parents go through divorces; partners' irreconcilable differences accelerated by the stress of quarantining.

For many 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds who were home that first year of the pandemic and joined the classroom for the 2021-22 school year, their social emotional skills needed more practice. Things like waiting, the ability to problem solve and be persistent, being comfortable with boundaries, these skills are often learned in an early childhood setting. For educators, they started the school year off with students that needed much more attention and support as they adjusted to a school setting. As the year progressed, and the Omicron variant swept our community, educators and directors had to change tactics regularly, constantly communicating with parents, wondering if each phone call and text from parents could mean another shut-down, another period of quarantining, and another round of disappointing communications to parents. They also had to negotiate staff illness in often already short-staffed programs.



**But our community here in Oak Park is a powerful force for good and thanks to the work outlined in our IGA contract, we have been able to mitigate many of the stressors that our early childhood community experienced last year.**

We coordinated workshops about parenting during a pandemic, and working with children who have experienced trauma for educators. We connected with the Oak Park Health Department and facilitated direct, weekly meetings between early childhood directors and Oak Park Public Health Director, Dr. Chapple-McGruder. We shared information about ways to reduce preschool expulsion through relationship-building and the services of an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant that the Collaboration contracts to visit local programs. Her visits transformed the way many educators think about behavior "issues," shifting the focus from the child to the way the practice can change to accommodate the child.

Last fall, three pediatricians spoke on a panel about what they had been seeing in the families that they served. During that discussion, Dr. Gina Lowell said that we have finally reached a point where instead of asking, "what's wrong with you?" we are asking, "what happened to you?" These changes in mindset can transform how we care for each other and our children as we move further into hope and recovery.







*“Stated simply, life is a continuous “one-way street” — what happens at each stage, including even before conception and during pregnancy, has consequences for what follows. Changing course is possible, but the changes we make later in life must content with foundations that were laid down in the early years.”*

*— Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University*



## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas



*“When my son was three I knew he was different. More rambunctious, more defiant, and frankly more exhausting. He was getting in trouble in day care because he couldn’t sit still. I didn’t know where to turn and I was afraid he would end up hating school because he was constantly being consequence for behavior I felt was beyond his control. I called the Collaboration and within two weeks he was evaluated and placed into [District 97’s] PreKindergarten Partnership. He ultimately received an IEP and spent two wonderful years in Whittier’s early childhood program with some of the best teachers in the district. He is now thriving in kindergarten and loves school.*

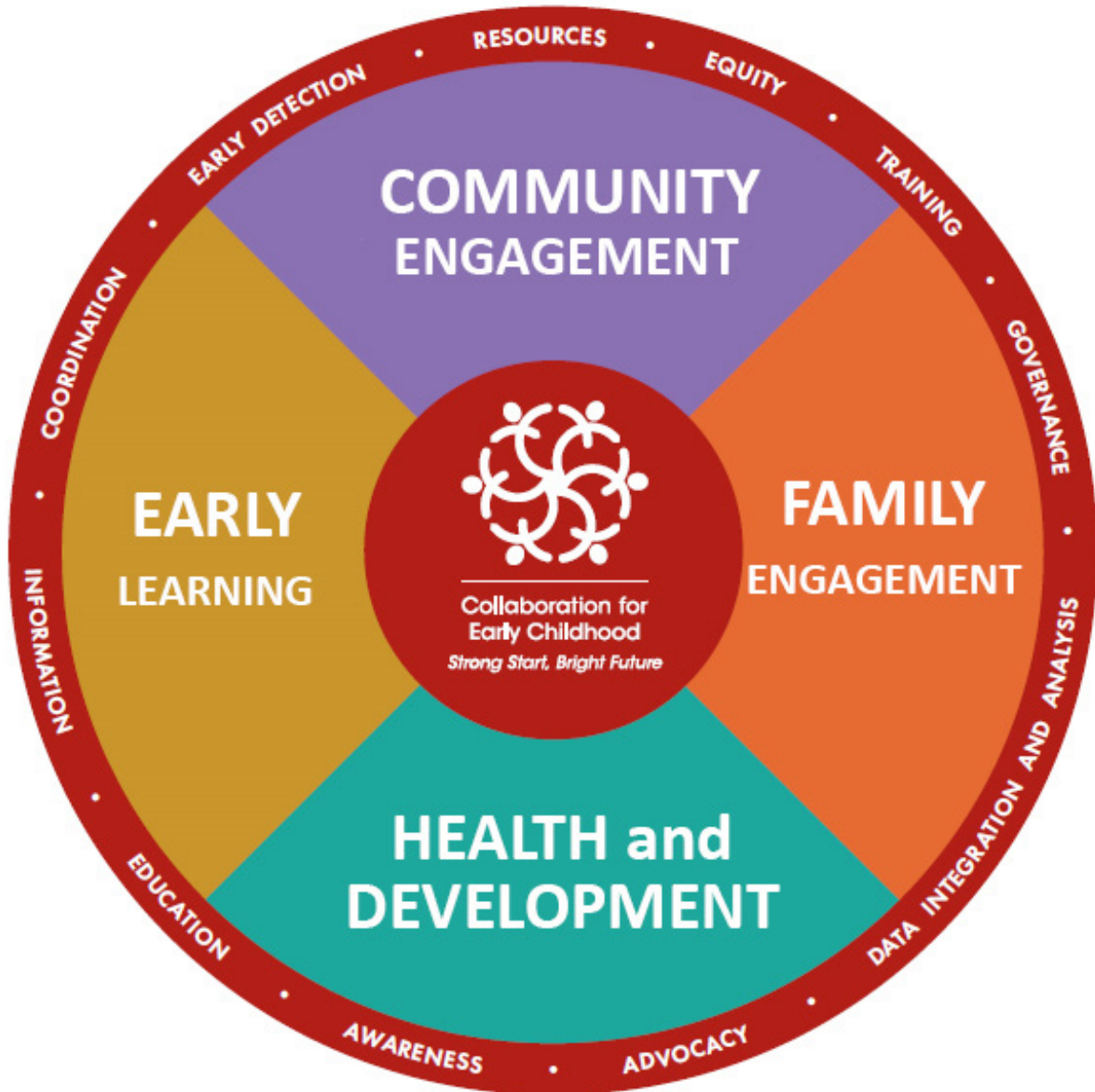
*The data shows that the critical years are 0-5. Without the Collaboration we would have missed the opportunity to intervene during arguably the most important developmental phase of his life. We would be in a much different place- I am forever grateful for them.”*

– Sara Spivy, D200 Board Member



## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

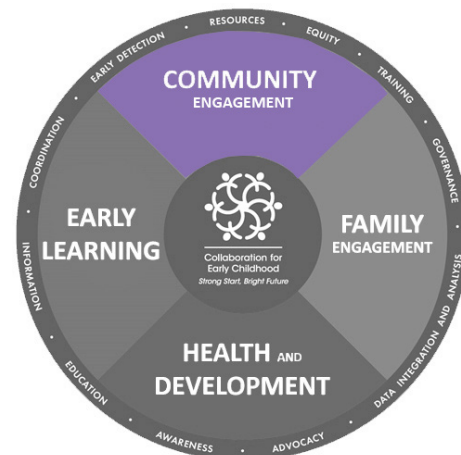
The graphic below depicts the four program service areas that make up the work of the Collaboration to support the whole child in Oak Park and River Forest. Our program service areas are not silos. These four areas overlap and work in concert to support children from many different angles. For example, a new mother who meets one of our community ambassadors in the park may pick up materials about breastfeeding, an infant program in the community, and sign up to receive a Baby Bundle. That one interaction touches on all of our program service areas: Family Engagement, Community Engagement, Health and Development, and Early Learning.



### Community Engagement

Community Engagement refers to the Collaboration's efforts to engage the entire community in the successes of our children, leveraging resources from partners to support children and families on their journey to kindergarten. The Community Engagement work includes:

- Community Resources
- Coordinated Intake
- Public Events
- Communications and Social media



Public Awareness Building In April 2022, we held our 20th Anniversary Birthday Bash celebration. This was not a traditional fundraiser gala. Instead, we intentionally shifted the focus to spotlight our community's early childhood educators, and to commemorate the work of the partners and individuals that built, sustained, and grew early childhood systems work in Oak Park and River Forest over these twenty years. Thanks to the support of our community, our early childhood educators were able to attend the event free of cost. A total of 170 people attended, 51 of whom were educators. We received \$26,000 in sponsorships from community businesses and individuals. This is yet another affirmation that our community overwhelmingly supports our early childhood educators, and continues to prioritize high-quality early learning experiences for our children.

This program year, we launched our volunteer group, which we call "Cece's Crew." There were 39 members of Cece's Crew and we recorded 236 volunteer hours worked in 2021-22. Please note that this does not include time that our committees, which are composed of our community partners, and our board members have contributed to the work of the Collaboration.

"Letters to Santa and Holiday Friends" launched in 2021. This was an initiative designed to connect with our community during the holiday season in a feel-good way and to engage with families. It helped bridge the isolation that many families felt as the pandemic continued to impact our lives. In the letter request form, parents were invited to share things that they were proud of about their child. It was a window into the resilience of our children as observed by their parents and caregivers. The Collaboration for Early Childhood Board and staff received and responded to 64 requests for letters. In addition to letters from Santa and friends, we also welcomed letters to Santa via our big red mailbox that was stationed outside our office at 171 S. Oak Park Avenue during the holiday season. We partnered with local coffee shops to provide letter templates for easy coloring.

We received a message on social media from one parent that said, "Thank you so much for this! My 4-year-old was ecstatic! She slept with her letter!"



**Birthday Bash!**

*The Nineteenth Century Club  
April 30, 2022*

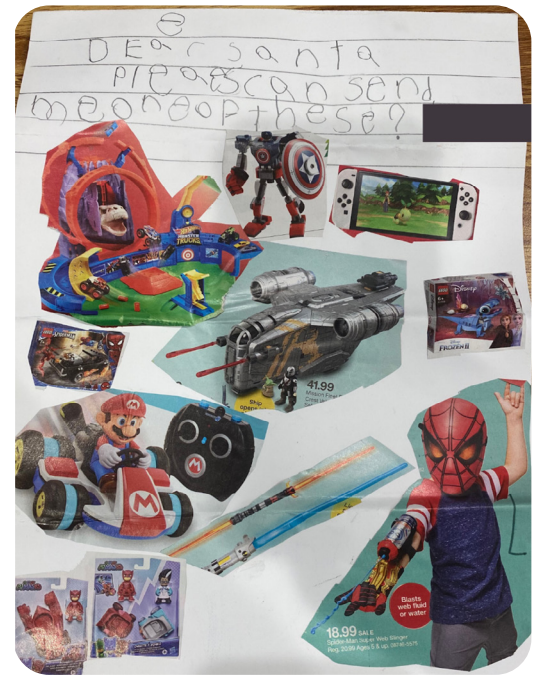
## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

Some examples of the things parents wanted their letters to include were:

***[Antoine] is doing a great job using the potty and sharing with his big sister.  
Proud of her for starting back pre-school this fall.  
He has been doing a great job using his words, learning to share, and cleaning!***

The Collaboration continued their partnership with local marketing agency, D.M. Burton, to share out community resources through our social media channels. On a broader level of community engagement, the Collaboration thought-partners with the extended community through positions held in a variety of networks that are local, statewide, and even national:

- Success of All Youth (SAY) Advisory Group, Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation
- Illinois Early Learning Council, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development
- Racial Equity Task Force, Illinois Action for Children
- Young Child Wellness Council, Rush Hospital
- Core Planning Team, Austin Childcare Provider Network
- Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows Group, Erikson Institute
- Care Constellation 2021-22 Cohort member, IDEO.org



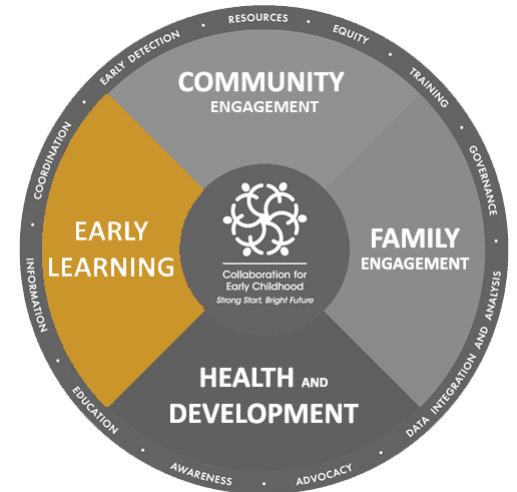
## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

### Early Learning

Early Learning refers to the Collaboration's work to influence the early childhood education experience in areas of teacher quality, classroom experience and teacher training.

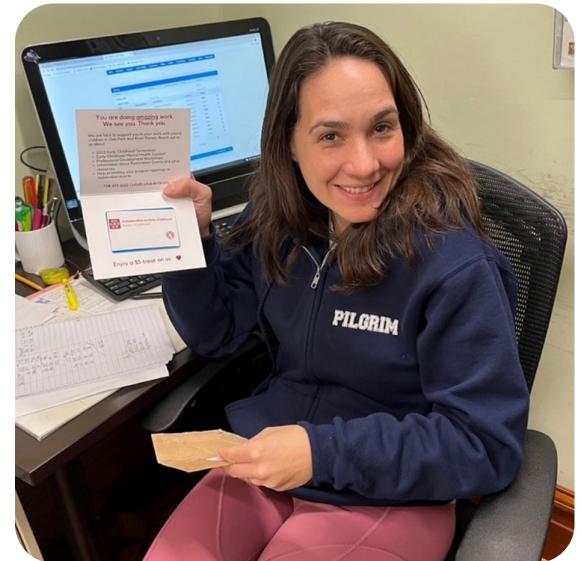
In practice, the Early Learning work includes:

- Educational Leadership
- Classroom Quality
- Transition to Kindergarten
- Professional Development
- Equity and Access to Preschool



COVID-19 was not yet in the rear-view mirror when school started this past fall. Our early learning professionals continued to navigate safety protocols while maintaining warm, nurturing spaces for our children to explore and learn. They also were often the first to welcome young children back into the classroom environment after they had been at home due to the pandemic. Educators had to not only teach their scheduled curriculum, but also focus on building a foundation of social emotional skills, something that a majority of children used to learn in preschool or daycare programs. Directors were challenged, and continue to be challenged, with staff shortages, while working to shield their existing staff from burnout. We highlighted the experience of our early childhood directors in the October 2021 IGA report. The challenges reported there persist. We dig into this further in Chapter 7 of this report.

The Directors' Roundtable is a gathering space for early childhood directors to thought-partner and knowledge-share. This meeting had historically taken place every other month, but directors felt the need to gather more frequently and it has become a vibrant community space. We heard that many directors were hungry for more clarity on how to correctly adhere to the COVID-19 safety guidelines at their early childhood programs. And they had questions. How had the pandemic affected children's speech development with everyone wearing masks all day in the presence of young children? We responded by inviting Speech and Language Pathologist Erica Norman to the Directors' Roundtable to present the current research on this topic, milestones to watch for, as well as tricks and tips to support and promote communication. Another special Roundtable session focused on leveraging existing community resources to mitigate behavioral issues and promote transparent communication between parents and providers to prevent future preschool expulsions. This was presented in tandem with a workshop that was designed for parents on the same topic.





## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration’s Work in the Four Program Areas

We also created a space for Directors to get their COVID-19 questions answered directly in a standing virtual Q&A meeting with Dr. Chapple-McGruder, Director of the Village of Oak Park’s Public Health Department. Building trust and responding to the needs of our community’s early childhood directors is a crucial piece in ensuring that key information and supports are shared out through grassroots networks to the broader early childhood workforce and the families they serve.

In February we distributed 350 gift cards to educators across our community as a small way of saying thank you, that their work matters, and that we see and appreciate them. It was also a way to continue to connect as social distancing and safety protocols continued.

In the fall, we offered a filled-to-capacity professional development workshop called “Working with Children Who Have Experienced Trauma,” facilitated by Laura Duell, MS, MSW, LCSW. Due to the popularity of the session, we offered it again in January. Erin Bracco of Buddha Belly Yoga hosted a 4-part workshop session that focused on mindfulness, yoga, and movement. In the spring, a new and innovative professional learning option was offered to educators: The Early Learning Equity Playlist. Created by the New Teacher Center, the Equity Playlist is an asynchronous learning platform with hands-on classroom strategies and coaching to support teachers on their educational equity journey. This ‘playlist’ is something that the New Teacher Center will be launching nationally, but the Collaboration was invited to pilot the curriculum with early childhood educators in our community this spring.

We hosted our 19th Annual Early Childhood Symposium in February. The theme was “Moving From Surviving to Thriving” and we built off of what we learned last year hosting the event virtually. One key piece of feedback we received in 2021 was that hosting the Symposium online all on one day led to “Zoom Fatigue” for many participants. We responded with a new Symposium design in 2022 that made an effort to conserve our educator’s time and energy by breaking it up into shorter sessions. We also shifted from a conference platform to a combination of hosting information directly via our website and Zoom. Our keynote speaker, Kristine Mraz, focused her remarks on “Joyful Discovery: Building Early Childhood Classrooms that Thrive.” There is no comparison to the camaraderie that early childhood educators gain from being together each year, and that has been a key piece of feedback that we hope to safely deliver on again in future Symposia.

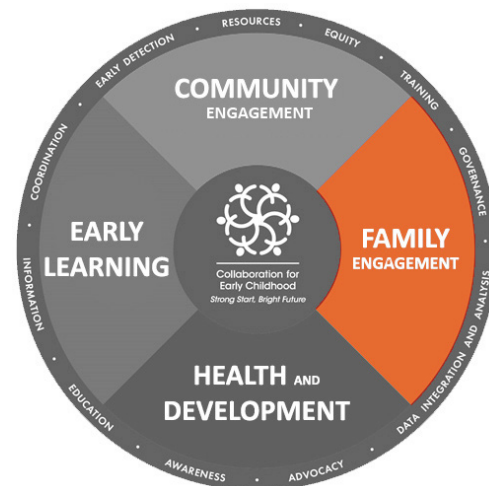
The poster for the 19th Annual Early Childhood Symposium features a red header with the text "19TH ANNUAL EARLY CHILDHOOD SYMPOSIUM". The main title "Moving from Surviving to Thriving" is prominently displayed in the center, with "Surviving" in red and "Thriving" in a large, flowing orange script. To the right, a vertical stack of four colored boxes lists the symposium dates: FEB 12 (8:00-11:15 am), FEB 17 (7:00-8:30 pm), FEB 23 (7:00-8:30 pm), and FEB 26 (8:00-10:00 am). Below the dates, a QR code is provided for registration, with the text "Register online beginning January 7, 2022: collab4kids.org/symposium-2022". At the bottom, the Collaboration for Early Childhood logo is shown, along with the tagline "Strong Start. Bright Future" and the website "www.collab4kids.org". A paragraph of text describes the symposium as an opportunity for educators, caregivers, and parents to gain knowledge and practical skills.

## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

### Family Engagement

Family engagement refers to the work that is done under the auspices of the Collaboration to empower families to be effective leaders in the education of their children. In practice, the Collaboration's Family Engagement work includes:

- Parenting Skills Training
- Parent Leadership Development
- Parenting Resource Program
- Fatherhood Support
- Parent Wellness Support



In collaboration with the Parenting Resource Program community partners, the Collaboration's Family Engagement program area has a robust continuum of virtual and in-person ways for parents to connect, grow, and access resources.

**Monthly Parent Workshops:** Parenting workshops cover “popular topics” like potty training and kindergarten readiness. 20 workshops were offered this year with a total of 152 parents/caregivers attending. These workshops are coordinated in partnership with the Parenting Resource Program.

**The Chicago Parent Program** is a 12-week parent education program focused on enhancing parenting behaviors, such as positive discipline techniques, learning age-appropriate child development skills and promoting positive play and interaction between parents and children. It was identified in 2018 as a strong fit for the Collaboration to offer to parents who were interested in something more comprehensive than a one-off workshop. To-date there are 11 community partners trained as group leaders in the Chicago Parent Program, including 2 new partners trained this program year. This program is offered multiple times a year at different times, including weekends to ensure anyone who would like to can join. A Spanish language version of the Chicago Parent Program is scheduled for early in 2023.

**Fatherhood Support:** The Collaboration's partnership with Welcome to Fatherhood, Inc. (WTF) began last program year with help from a grant from the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation. Since then we've continued to engage with fathers and father figures through bimonthly facilitated discussions led by WTF. These discussions help men gain the skills necessary to better impact themselves and their families. Discussions were on the first and third Thursday of the month beginning October 21, 2021 through May 26, 2022. WTF has grown as an organization and we were happy to connect them with HPS Chicago, the consultant we partner with to coordinate our development and grant work. We look forward to seeing where WTF goes next as an organization.



## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

**Ready4K** is a free, research-based text messaging program that sparks everyday learning moments to parents in our community. Each week, parents receive age-appropriate facts, and easy tips and opportunities to boost their child's learning by building on existing family routines. Messages are offered in multiple languages and go straight to the subscriber's mobile device. There are currently 139 people receiving Ready4K texts..

**Parent Leadership Training.** The first Parent Leadership Training launched in 2017 using the Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) model. In these initial trainings, participants teamed up to become part of a parent action team that conducted peer-to-peer outreach in the community around early learning resources. That is how our Community Ambassadors, as well as the Parent Group, Families First | La Familia Primero, came to be. Now, Parent Leadership Training is facilitated by parents right here in our community, and Families First | La Familia is an active group that hosts family friendly gatherings and workshops geared toward parents and caregivers. They were busy this year. Parent Leadership Training started on March 1, 2022. Training was led by parent leaders and a training participant from 2021 supported training as a mentor. Training is once a week for 6 + weeks. Four mothers completed Parent Leadership Training.

**Families First | La Familia Primero** continued to design and host parent circles or family activities and participate in community events such as: Juneteenth, Día de los Muertos, the Park District's Trunk-or-Treat, and River Forest Tree Trimming. Every month the team puts together a bilingual (English/Spanish) parent newsletter. The team conducted outreach throughout the program year. This program year, they engaged more than 300 parents and caregivers in conversation at over 32 community events. A few Parent Circles that were especially popular this year were:

- Parenting in a Pandemic: Child Development Meets Social Justice Parenting hosted in partnership with DivCo and MPAC (Multi-cultural Parent Advisory Committee of Oak Park)
- Creating a Stable Preschool Experience: Building Relationships to Prevent Preschool Transitions with Kate Zinsser, Associate Professor Psychology UIC
- Be a Prepared Parent: What You Need to Know About Your Child's Special Education Rights hosted with Equip for Equality





### Health and Development

Health and Development refer to the efforts of the Collaboration to view child success as influenced by indicators of good health, and the extent to which a family is supported by the health services community. In practice, that work is:

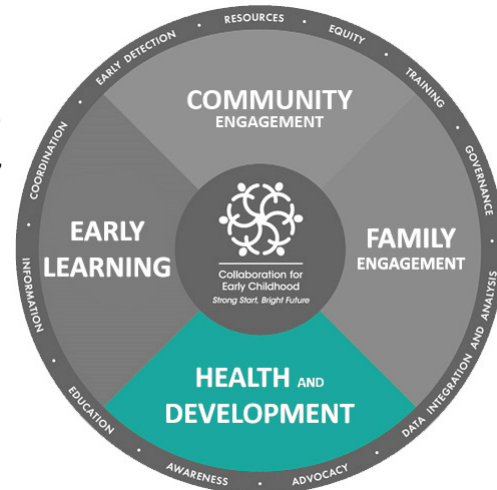
- Child Health and Screening
- Maternal Health and Home Visiting Support
- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Health Practitioner Support
- Support for Children with Disabilities

*"It was really helpful as I needed a dental exam for my toddler and he didn't have any dental provider"*

*– Parent Feedback from the Community Screening Day*

Our developmental screening project continued without disruption and our Hearing and Vision Screening Technician continued to screen children's vision and hearing at participating programs with COVID-19 safety protocols in place during the 2021-22 program year. In late June of 2022, the Collaboration for Early Childhood hosted their first Early Childhood Community Screening event since 2019 at the Park District of Oak Park's Carroll Center. It was a fully masked event. We partnered with the Children's Clinic (Infant Welfare Society of Oak Park), the Village of Oak Park's Health Department, Easterseals, and the Park District to offer developmental screenings, vision and hearing screenings, and dental screenings. Board members and volunteers helped to staff the event. Attendees also had the opportunity to receive COVID vaccines (compliments of the Oak Park Health Department) and left with a "goodie bag" of snacks and giveaways. Fifteen children attended this event.

Dr. Stephanie Weller, in partnership with a sub-committee of the Health and Development Committee, applied for and was awarded an American Academy of Pediatrics, Community Access to Child Health (CATCH) grant. Dr. Weller will oversee the work of the new "Community Connect" program which will connect families to needed community resources and will build off of the Collaboration's existing screening partnerships in the community to incorporate social determinants of health screenings for children and families. Social determinants of health are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. As she writes in a guest blog post on our website, "Interventions to connect families with the social and community resources they need are important for improving overall health and wellbeing in our community."



Dr. Gina Lowell volunteers at the Community Screening day with her two daughters.

## Chapter 5. Narrative Overview of the Collaboration's Work in the Four Program Areas

The Physicians' Network meetings are held twice a year, in April and October and are organized by the Health and Development Committee, which is facilitated by the Collaboration's Manager of Health and Development. In the fall, we welcomed Dr. Madeleine Shalowitz of Rush University Medical Center for *Horses and Zebras: An Out-of-the-Box Approach to Addressing Early Childhood Health Challenges*. In April we explored how Early Intervention has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by looking at Family and Provider Perspectives of Early Intervention Services Delivered through Telehealth. Since the pandemic had shifted these gatherings to an online format, we took the opportunity to organize these presentations and the supplemental materials provided into an online archive of resources for physicians to access on-demand.



*“A solid body of research shows the cost-effectiveness of early childhood development in helping to prevent achievement gaps, boost school achievement, promote better health outcomes, improve our workforce, increase productivity and reduce the need for costly social spending.”*

– James Heckman, Nobel Prize-winning economist

### Community Engagement

**Inquiry - For the first time, the Collaboration hired a “warm-line” intake coordinator. How has that been going?**

*“Coordinated intake has had a huge impact on reaching new families and enrolling them into a home visiting program. Last fiscal year, Easterseals received over half of our referrals, 25 out of 42, from coordinated intake. These were caregivers who contacted the Collaboration’s warmline about preschool, socialization opportunities for their child, baby bundles, and childcare. The referrals were also from local organizations and programs who reached out for additional help for the families they were already working with. I believe that without coordinated intake and the visibility of the Collaboration in the community we would not have had the opportunity to serve these families, leaving them without the support that has become increasingly important over the last two years.”*

– Michelle Howell, Program Manager, Partnering with Parents Home Visiting Program

In Spring of 2021, the Collaboration launched a dedicated coordinated intake role to serve as a “warm-line” for families and community members that contact us. This person serves as a friendly guide through the many resources and services that are available and relevant to the individual’s specific circumstances. Through the Intake Coordinator, we provide parents and caregivers who reach out to us with a comprehensive, personalized set of supports and referrals.

When a parent calls us to ask about free preschool, they will speak to a person who can also share information with them about home visiting programs, parent workshops, and, if they are expecting a new baby, sign them up for a Baby Bundle. From July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, our Intake Coordinator connected with 256 people, speaking 11 languages other than English, and directed them to a variety of supports and resources including:

**158** - Free Preschool and Early Learning Program Openings

**29** - Home Visiting Enrollments

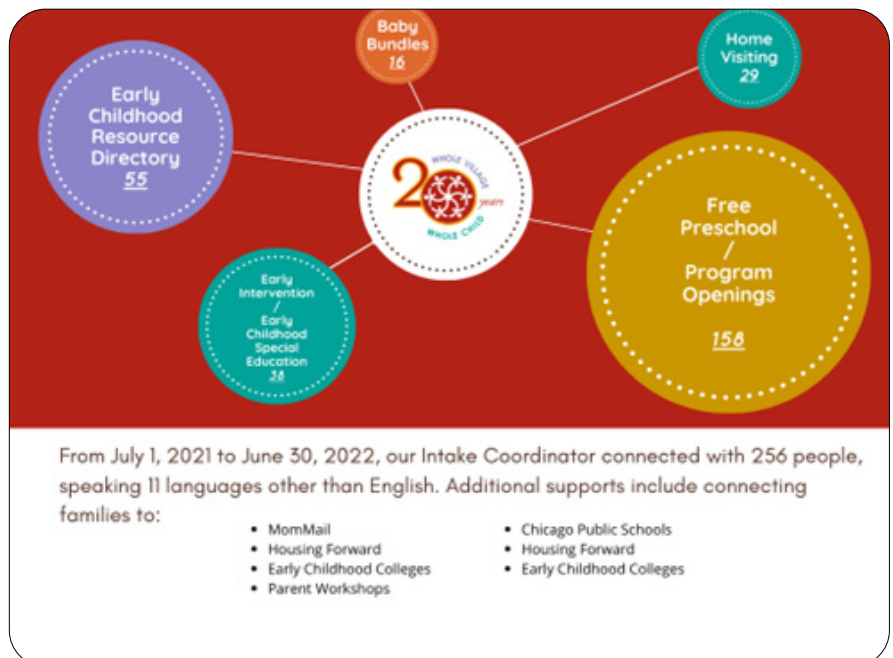
**55** - Early Childhood Resource Directory Referrals

**38** - Early Intervention and/or Early Childhood Special Education

**16** - Baby Bundles

We also referred people to:

- Housing Forward
- CCAP (Child Care Assistance Program)
- Parent Workshops
- Chicago Public Schools
- Mommail
- Early Childhood Colleges







### Early Learning

#### Inquiry - Have early learning classrooms transitioned out of COVID?

*“COVID-19 has made people tired. So that’s a consideration. This is the fourth school year impacted by COVID. For people who have been working in education, this is the fourth school year that has impacted what they do and how they do it; impacted their own fears and anxieties about their health and whether they are doing what’s best for their students. It’s a heavy load. So if we could help them set it down, I think that would be great.”*

– Amy Cardin, First United Nursery School

As we continue to see disruptions in child care service, work, and canceled plans because of continued COVID-19 infection, we should reiterate that COVID-19 is still very much with the world of early childhood. For this reason, the Collaboration has spent the past program year focusing on the immediate needs of educators and directors, while also planning ahead for a sustained and accelerated recovery.

We have relied on the expertise of our local early childhood educators and program directors to guide our work and to let us know what they need. Last fall, in the third school year effected, we invited them to share what they were seeing at the start of school. The conversation was frank and emotional. At the end of the 2020-21 school year, programs were still functioning at limited capacity and under strict COVID-19 safety protocols. The 2021-22 school year began at full capacity for many programs. This, along with many students entering the classroom for the first time and needing more support than before, presented challenges for staff and directors. The increased needs that the students required due to not having the previous socialization of an early childhood program or school setting put educators close to burn-out. As one program director said in fall, 2021, “The students need more from the teachers and the teachers are already depleted.”



The challenges Directors faced last fall were exacerbated by the Omicron strain of COVID-19 in January. They had to make difficult decisions about whether or not to reopen, reduce capacity again, or to forge ahead even while week over week they did not know if they would have healthy staff to care for all the students. As if these challenges were not enough, Directors were also the main point of communication for the diverse opinions of parents, particularly around masking policies.

Educators are ready to reconnect with their local early childhood professional peers through more in-person professional development programming. They also need the continued classroom support of people like our early childhood mental health consultant and help getting families connected to early childhood program openings. This is all work that we are doing and will continue to build on.

### Family Engagement

#### Inquiry - What do families with young children want right now?

*“We’ve been thoughtful about building community virtually. For many parents, attending a Parent Leadership Training or a workshop on Zoom is amazing because they don’t need to worry about child-care or travel logistics. On the other hand, it can be a struggle to sustain engagement when we’re all online. So we are trying to strike a balance. Just like our Parent Leadership Trainings, we are there for whatever the cohort needs at the time, whether it’s accountability, a sense of community, or achieving goals. We are maintaining those connections, and parents are, too.”*

— Whitney Brooks, Community Ambassador

The foundational work within the Family Engagement Program Service area was created in response to a community needs assessment that informed the 2016 Parenting Resource Program Strategic Framework. It has grown significantly since then, but has not strayed from the key takeaways from that needs assessment. Among the rich information that the Collaboration gathered from parents during that process was the desire for more socialization opportunities, more parent education programs, and for someone to coordinate parenting resources. Five years later, these needs haven’t changed; in fact, the pandemic has made parents hungrier to connect to community and parenting resources. The feedback Easterseals gathered from program participants in the Partnering with Parents program was very telling:

What would you change to make this program better?

“More family meetups”

“More bringing parents together, play dates.”

“More outings”

Historically, the Collaboration has hosted a Child Care Meet and Greet where parents can learn about different child care options as well as an Early Childhood Resource Fair. Due to the continued safety concerns of the pandemic, these events shifted to online formats. Our Family Engagement Manager teamed up with our Early Learning Coordinator to host a series of drop-in sessions on Zoom about finding child care. Parents and caregivers were welcome to ask any question they had about searching for child care and get the answers they needed. We created an early learning resource fair webpage where parents could browse the local resources available to families with young children, a supplement to our Early Childhood Resource Directory.



Whitney Brooks, Community Ambassador, at the June 2022 Community Screening Day.



An Aztec Dance Group performs.



## Chapter 6: Areas of Inquiry

Families First | La Familia Primero also bridged the social-isolation-gap by delivering themed Activity Kits, and hosting outdoor parent gatherings like their winter outdoor playdate in Thatcher Woods. They also launched their online newsletter that shares a calendar of local early childhood events each month and were involved with community events such as Ofrendas de Día De Muertos, which was started by Alma Martinez, a local early childhood educator.



A close-up of one part of the Families First | La Familia Primero ofrenda at the Collaboration for Early Childhood office at 171 S. Oak Park Avenue.



### Health and Development

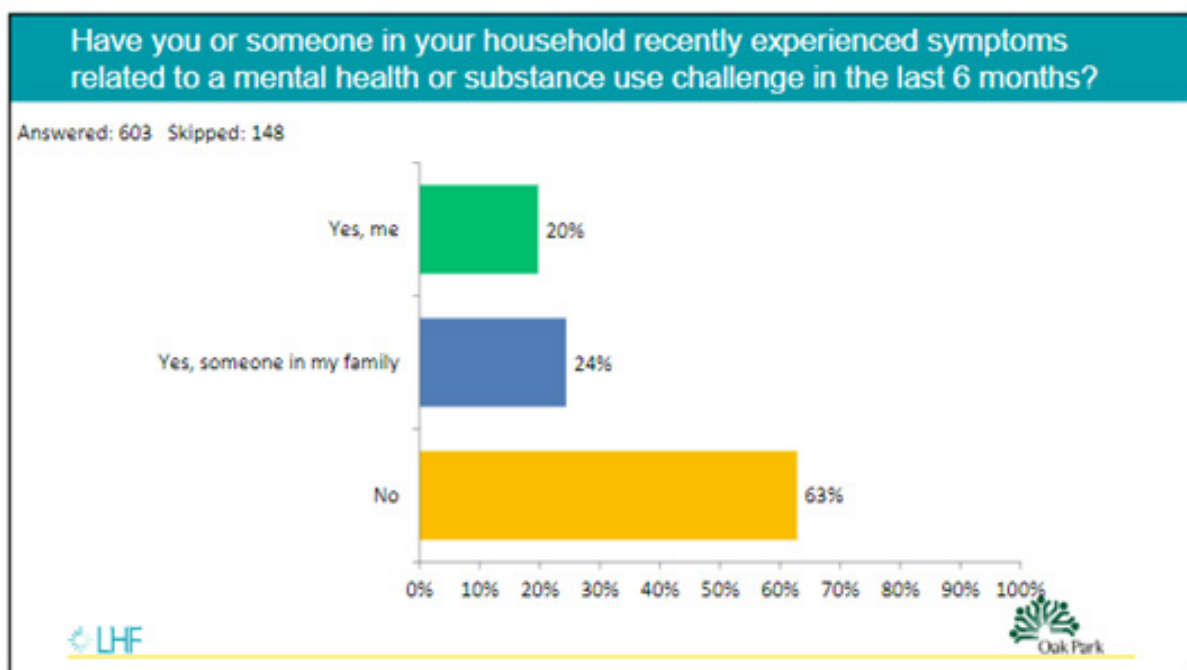
**Inquiry - What are we doing to understand and respond to health and mental health needs in the early childhood community?**

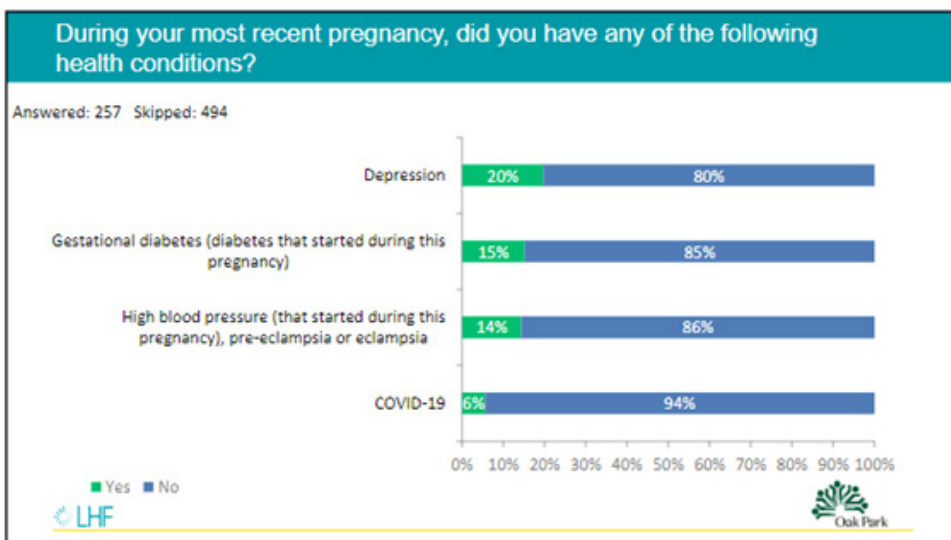
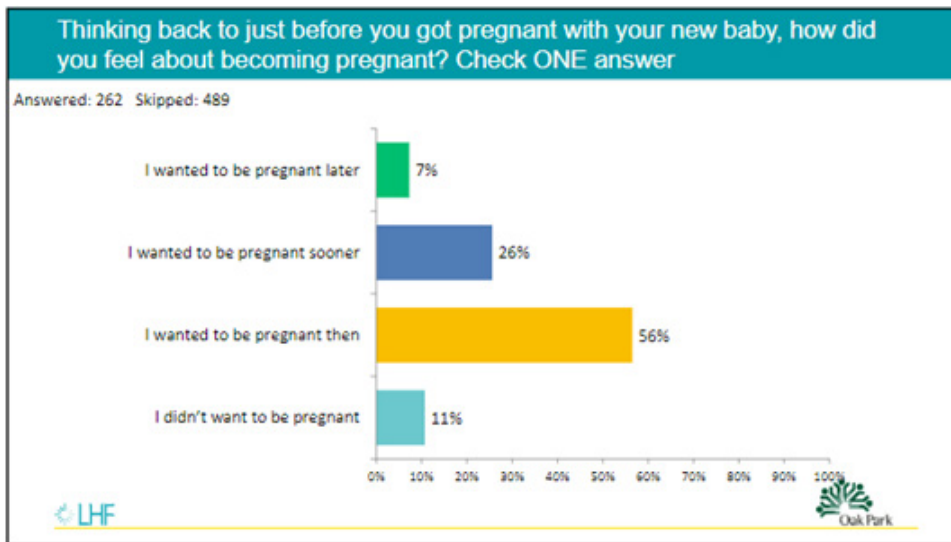
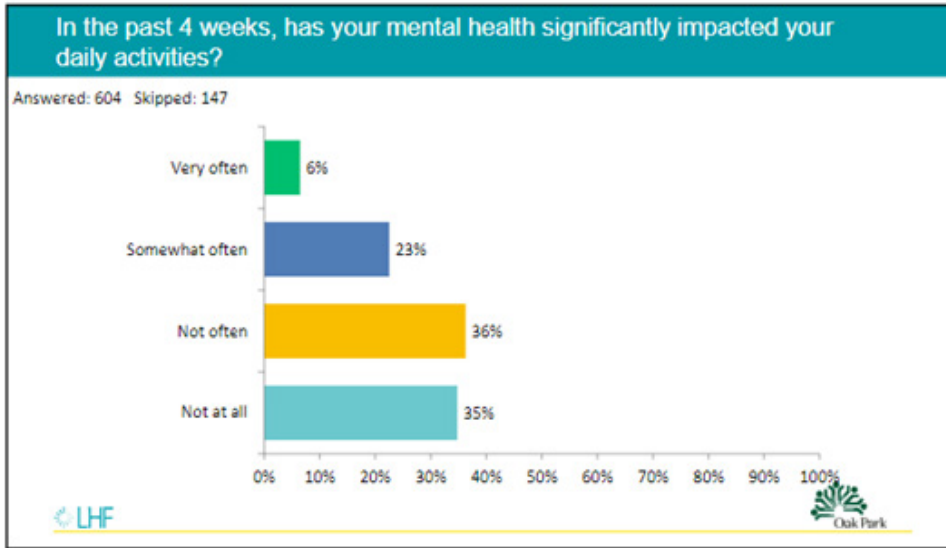
*“50% of all mental health disorders begin by age 14. Prevention and early intervention are the most successful, compassionate, and cost-effective practices to identify signs and symptoms of mental illness before our children experience crisis. In no healthcare setting would we delay care until a Stage 4 diagnosis. Mental health is no exception.”*

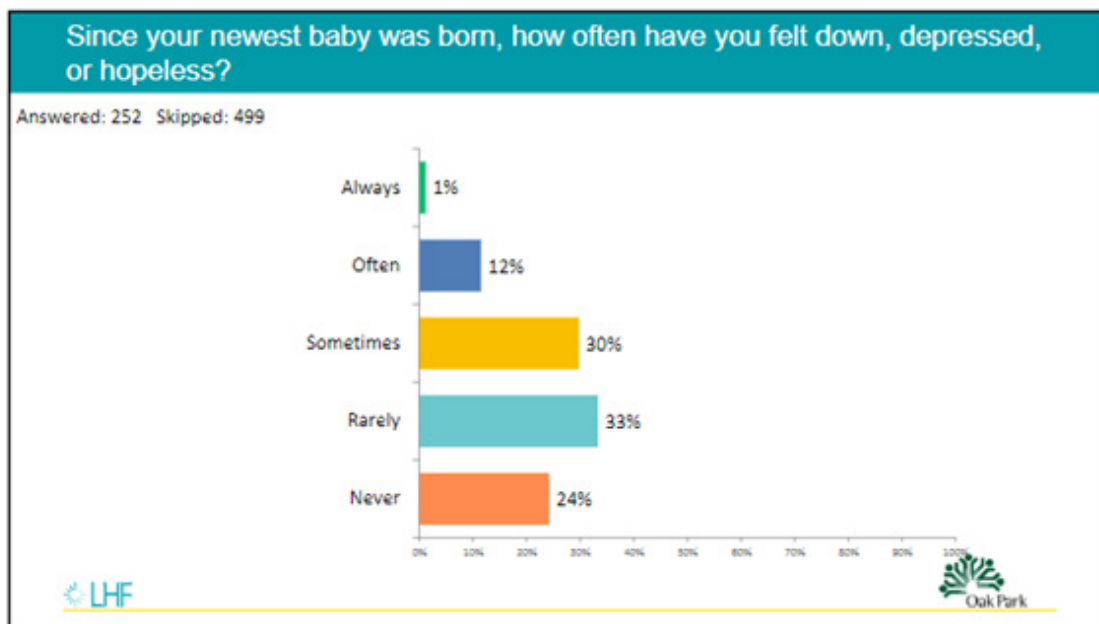
— Cheryl Potts, Executive Director, Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township

The Collaboration addressed health concerns and the increase in mental health needs in a variety of ways during the 2021-22 program year. Data shows that women who have just given birth are vulnerable to mental health concerns, but giving birth during a pandemic increased the sense of isolation that many new and expecting parents felt, and with it the risk for unmet mental health needs.

The CDC’s most recent data from 2018 shows that 1 in 8 women experience postpartum depression; in Illinois, it is 1 in 10. Below, we have pulled data from the Oak Park Health Department’s Community Health Status Assessment that they shared this summer, 2022. You’ll see that nearly half of our community (roughly 600 respondents) is or knows someone who is navigating a health or substance use challenge, and over a quarter of our community has mental health challenges that have impacted their daily lives. We also see that of over 250 respondents of child-bearing people, nearly 20% did not want to be pregnant, or wanted to be pregnant later, and that 20% reported depression after the child’s birth with even more reporting feeling “down, depressed, or hopeless.”







The Collaboration for Early Childhood, in partnership with Home Visiting Programs, has been intentional about engaging new and expectant mothers and parents to ensure they are connected to resources and support if they need it, whether the support they need is related to mental health or otherwise.

We continued to connect with new families through the delivery of Baby Bundles, loosely inspired by the Finnish Baby Boxes that are given to all Finnish mothers by the State. Baby Bundles are tote bags that include onesies, diapers, and a collection of resources for new families to have and use when and if they need them on their parenting journey. We built Baby Bundle distribution into our coordinated intake work. Each sign-up is followed up with to coordinate the Baby Bundle delivery. Then a little while later, our Intake Coordinator reaches out again to check in with the recipient and answer any questions they may have. By welcoming new and expectant parents with a tote bag filled with goodies and resources, the Collaboration has been able to ensure that we are connecting parents to things they may benefit from for their child from day one. During the 2021-22 program year, we distributed 103 Baby Bundles.



Members of the Oak Park Women's Guild help to assemble Baby Bundles.

Three cohorts of the New and Expectant Moms Connection and Education Group were offered this program year. This Group is a 6-week series of virtual get-togethers where mothers can drop in and join in a conversation about topics such as sleep, breastfeeding, mental health, and parenting support.

## Chapter 6: Areas of Inquiry

Educators also navigated health and mental health challenges this year. The Collaboration created a dedicated meeting space for early childhood directors to get their COVID-19 safety protocol questions answered directly in an ongoing weekly ZOOM Q&A with Dr. Chapple-McGruder, Director of the Village of Oak Park's Public Health Department. This was also a space for Dr. Chapple-McGruder to share resources that are available for early childhood programs including access to personal protective equipment and reimbursement, changes in mandates, and Mobile Response Van Testing. While Dr. Chapple-McGruder is on leave, the meetings have continued with the Public Health Department and the early childhood community. The meeting has become a space for educators to find clarity and reassurance, and they were crucial in the spring as mask mandates and protocols evolved. Those conversations will continue and will expand on topics such as monkeypox, ringworm, strep throat, and lice.

*"I am grateful for the weekly meetings with the Collaboration and the Oak Park Health Department that cover relevant health topics. During the last meeting, a PowerPoint presentation was shared with valuable information on Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease. Just the very next day after receiving a copy of the presentation we had a student diagnosed with HFM. The timing of the presentation was perfect for us, I was able to quickly and easily share the PPT presentation with our families to help answer their questions and explain the symptoms. It truly made my job easier. Thank you!"*

— Christina Harris, Administrative Director, La Casa Montessori School





### Inquiry - What has our equity work looked like this year?

“Race is the multiplier for nearly every systemic barrier we face.”

— Tony Martinez, President and CEO of the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation

Equity is an early childhood issue. Systemic racism is an insidious, deep-seated part of our history and a part of our present story too. The effects of racism start from birth. For example, race and ethnicity in mothers plays a bigger role in childbirth risks than their age. But let’s be clear. **“Race isn’t the issue. It is the social determinants of health including racism that is the issue,”** as Dr. Spinks-Franklin clarified in her spring 2021 Physicians’ Network presentation hosted by the Collaboration for Early Childhood: “Racism: A Societal Pathogen.”

Because implicit bias is so interwoven into what we see, read, and experience in our daily lives, changing those familiar lenses is not something that can be checked off a list in a day’s work. It requires deep systemic change, self-reflection, and a hard look at internal structures, and what barriers lie in the way for some people and why. In other words, our equity work is a journey, and it’s a journey we continued during the 2021-22 program year.



In 2020-21 we contracted with the Mary Morton Group to undergo Racial, Equity, Access, Diversity and Inclusion (READI) training for our board and staff. After these workshops, we examined where we could do better, and we began to make changes. We looked at our leadership. In 2021 we expanded our board, bringing on leaders of color with a variety of expertise. 43% of our current board identifies as a person of color. Our staff participated in “Decolonizing Data & Language,” a workshop series facilitated by Erikson Institute. We have become intentional about reframing our reports and data to highlight the flawed *systems* that have let our communities down, rather than placing the onus on the people within that system.

Members of our Families First | La Familia Primero group participated in a 7-week training called “In-Out-N-Through” with Nat Vikitsreth. Her practice guides parents toward social justice parenting, and teaches them to identify, and then break from their trauma so that it is not perpetuated in their children. This is powerful subject-matter that requires vulnerability and courage. More members of Families First | La Familia Primero will take the training this year.

We received a ‘Care Constellation’ grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in partnership with IDEO.org to address three intersecting and cyclical challenges in the early childhood landscape: preschool expulsion, early childhood workforce shortages, and racial equity. Over the course of the year, the Collaboration for Early Childhood partnered with researchers at University of Illinois at Chicago to develop a racial equity ‘roadmap.’ This is a guide that can be adapted for any community that is seeking guidance around how to pave the way for Black boys to succeed and for Black men to find a place for themselves in early childhood. The roadmap addresses early childhood expulsion (of which a disproportionate amount are Black boys), the absence of men from the early childhood workforce, and most ambitiously, builds community-wide supports for men who have recently had a their criminal record expunged as a result of the legalization of marijuana. Specifically, the guide or “roadmap” will help these individuals secure the training and schooling required to become early childhood educators, and to serve as role models for young boys.

## Chapter 6: Areas of Inquiry

We contracted with Tajuana Rice, an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant to build the social-emotional capacity of our educators. In her work, she focuses on teachers and their practice and guides them to think about what they can do to serve children who may traditionally be seen as having challenging behaviors. We have encouraged programs not to wait until they encounter a challenge to schedule an early childhood mental health consultation. In fact, giving teachers a toolbox of ways to think and teach before a challenge arises is the key to making the classroom more accommodating to all types of students and to reducing preschool expulsion. When adults have a mindset toward shifting their practice to fit a child, rather than expecting the child to fit their practice, we all become better.

We still have work to do. We know that not everyone in our community accesses their information in English, and providing translated resources is important to us. But we feel strongly that the preferred language should be fully and completely offered all the way to the end call to action. For example, we worked to translate our

June Community Screening Event into Spanish. Our flyer and website had information about the event available in both English and Spanish. When we were unable to confirm that a Spanish speaker would be at the event to provide translation, we made the call not to promote in Spanish. Our equity journey continues.





*“The early learning of every child is the groundwork for his future growth and development. This early training means so much to each individual, not only in childhood but throughout life.”*

– Helen Keller



## Reporting History

The below timeline shows the history of the Collaboration’s data collection and reporting to the IGA Board. You can see how our data collection has evolved and you can also see that the information that we share every year reflects findings from the previous year. This is the nature of data gathering and analysis: we will always be looking over our shoulder at the previous year, and making tweaks as we go for better and more comprehensive data gathering processes.

On May 6, 2015 the Collaboration provided its first full report to the IGA Governing Board. That first report provided baseline measurements for the 11 outcome measures which you will see in the following pages. The two following reports to the Governing Board included updates and adjustments to those baseline measures. To learn more about the history of the first few reports, please [see page 2 of the 2016 IGA Report](#).

## Data Pipeline

This past year the Chapin Hall team has devoted significant effort into revising the Collaboration’s data pipeline, procedures, and codebase. The data pipeline steps include: ingesting raw data from the District 97 school district, Teaching Strategies GOLD and ASQ assessment data collected by the Collaboration, and other available sources of data on young children (i.e., SNAP enrollment, Early Intervention involvement, CCAP use); sorting, verifying and deduplicating the raw data to create standardized data sets across school years; using probabilistic record linkage to match children across datasets from different sources; and building de-identified cohort files for analysis. The revised pipeline and code base will facilitate a more efficient workflow for future IGA reports. They also institute quality control best practices such as version control and automated data checks. Finally, in addition to creating annual data for the IGA report, the new pipeline standardizes and compiles current and historical data to be ready for a range of additional analyses.

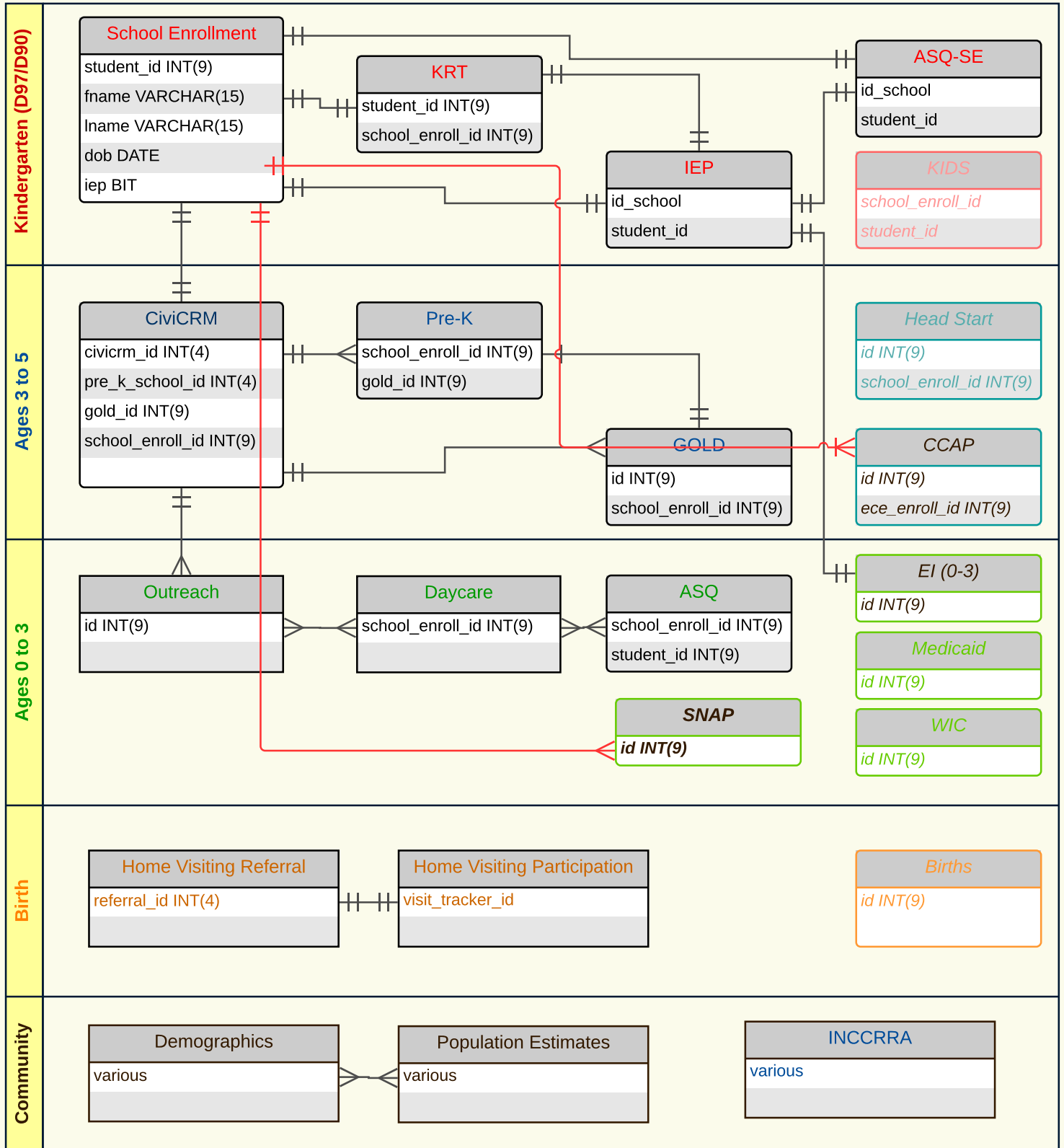




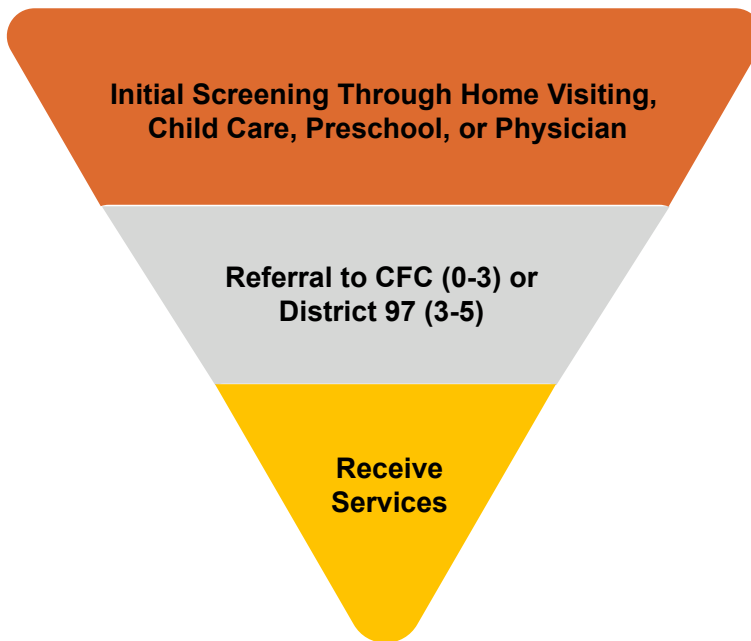
# Integrated Database Schema

Oak Park Collaboration for Early Childhood

## Integrated Database Schema 2018



## Child Outcome 1: Children identified through screening as needing assessment or services receive them.



**Vision and Hearing Screening Program.** Data shows that uncorrected vision and hearing deficits were connected to lower student focus, perseverance, and class participation, and these reductions negatively affected academic functioning and stress. Additionally, other research shows that youth with visual deficits have lower self-esteem and higher anxiety than youth without visual deficits. Vision and hearing screenings can help by detecting issues early, preventing adverse outcomes for children.

This year we conducted 1,060 vision screenings and 1,063 hearing screenings at 33 participating programs. Twenty-five children were referred for vision follow-ups and one was referred for a hearing follow-up. One of the parents wrote to us after his child had been referred for an eye exam to say:



*"[Matilda]\* received her glasses today and has been enthusiastically wearing them all day since we picked them up! They seem to work well; she says she can see much better."*

**Developmental Screening Project.** Currently, 25 early childhood, pediatric and community sites participate in the Developmental Screening Project and are trained to conduct developmental screenings in their programs. During the 2021-22 Program Year we on-boarded King's Kidz, our newest partner in the project. Our partner Amy Cardin of First United Nursery School facilitated the last "Building and Implementing your Developmental Screening Program" training session for them. Thanks to the work of our community partners implementing screenings, we screened 1,754 children through the developmental screening program.

### Submeasure 1: Number of children screened

The ASQ-3 is a global developmental screening tool and the ASQ: SE-2 is a social-emotional screening tool. The tools do not provide a diagnosis, rather they offer a valuable perspective on where the child is developmentally in relation to their age. The results may indicate that additional evaluation is warranted. The Collaboration strives to ensure as many children as possible are screened at regular intervals, at least once per year, prior to kindergarten entry.

The ASQ screening tools can be completed by parents or other caregivers in a variety of settings. Medical practices make them available to families, as do preschools and child care programs, home visitation programs, or even the public library. While caregivers (parents, guardians, grandparents, etc.) complete the screening questionnaires, early learning and health professionals review the completed questionnaires and should share the screening results with caregivers soon after screening completion.

The Collaboration makes it easier for families to share their results across providers. For instance, if a caregiver completes a screening for the child’s preschool program, the caregiver can give permission for the completed screening to be shared with their doctor, also in the ASQ Online system. This service has been received

very positively by both families and providers. It means the family doesn’t have to complete the screening questionnaire multiple times within a close period and important information about the child is shared among those supporting families.



### Impact from COVID-19

Over the past two school years, our Hearing & Vision Screening Technician has been able to conduct screenings on-site using strict health and safety protocols. The state provided guidance on how to conduct them.

### Community Awareness

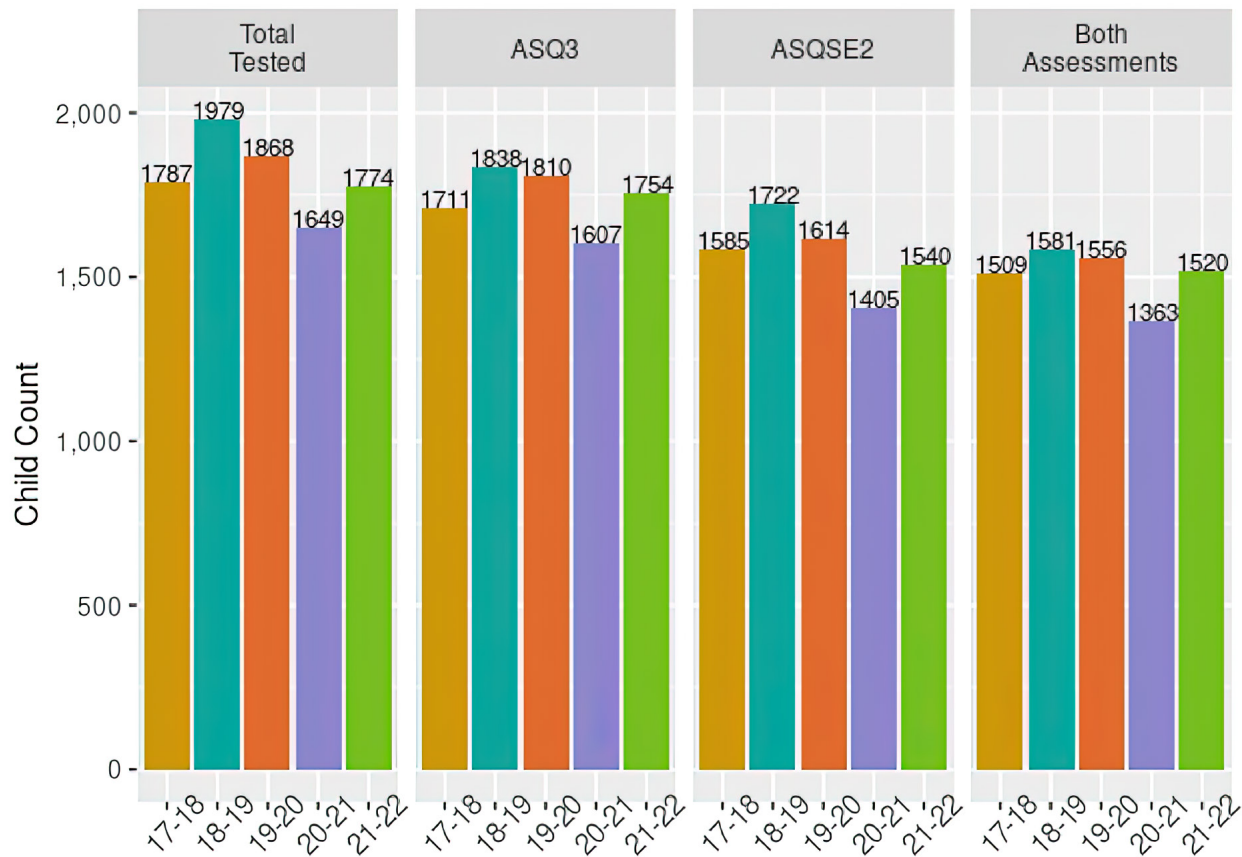
This summer, we conducted a community-based screening event. Held on a Saturday at a Park District of Oak Park center, the public was invited to sign up for hearing & vision screenings, developmental screenings, or dental screenings (done by the Infant Welfare Society Children’s Clinic Mobile Dental program). Staff from Easterseals’ Partnering with Parents program volunteered to conduct screenings, as well as the Collaborations Vision and Hearing Technician. The Village of Oak Park was on hand to provide COVID-19 vaccinations. Fifteen children attended this event.

Preschool Vision and Hearing Screening Program	Total	Referrals	Referral Follow-up Recieved
Vision/Glasses Check	1,060	25	12
Hearing	1,063	1	1

### Number of children screened by ASQ

Cohort Year	Total Tested	ASQ3	ASQSE2	Both Assessments
2017-2018	1,787	1,711	1,585	1,509
2018-2019	1,979	1,838	1,722	1,581
2019-2020	1,868	1,810	1,614	1,556
2020-2021	1,649	1,607	1,405	1,363
2021-2022	1,774	1,754	1,540	1,520

## Number of Children Screened by ASQ



### Submeasure 2: Number (percent) of children referred for assessments receive them.

- 663 children scored as “monitor” or “refer” (for further evaluation for additional support services) on the ASQ:3 questionnaire and 135 children scored as such on the ASQ:SE-2 questionnaire.
- In order to streamline this complex data collection effort more efficiently, we continue to work with Chapin Hall to revise code to streamline the ASQ:3 and ASQ:SE-2 screening data compilation process.
- In order to make developmental screening follow-up data collection more user-friendly for our screening partners, we have created a follow-up survey using the secure survey system called Qualtrics. This new survey is being finalized now and it will allow programs to report on follow-up specific to each child who scored in the “refer” range on the ASQ-3 and/or ASQ:SE-2 in a consistent way. This will help us to tabulate the numbers of children referred, determined eligible and receiving services as a result of the Collaboration’s developmental screening project as tracked by screening partners.



## **Child Outcome 2: Percent of children in Oak Park and River Forest Preschool for All and Head Start (PFA/HS) who demonstrate age-appropriate proficiency in each domain of development in accordance with the Illinois Early Learning Standards.**

Proficiency is typically measured using the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system, an authentic, ongoing, observational, portfolio-based assessment tool used by Preschool for All teachers to regularly evaluate children's proficiency in 38 developmentally appropriate learning objectives across 8 early learning domains. These learning domains include Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and the Arts.

By entering observational data for children at regular benchmarks through the school year: fall, winter, and spring, the GOLD assessment allows teachers to individualize their instruction to meet and support the developmental stages of each child in their classroom. The Collaboration reviews the quarterly benchmark data to assist in identifying programmatic support needs and topics for professional development. In the past, we have focused on the spring benchmark scoring data to make year-to-year comparisons for students who attended Preschool for All in Oak Park.

We do not have spring GOLD scores for SY20-21 due to COVID-19. That disruption caused us to step back and consider other ways to look at this data. The PFA committee expressed interest in seeing the growth of a cohort during a school year, from fall to winter to spring. Teaching Strategies GOLD reports on growth, but it has limitations around looking at the three programs as a whole.

This year, Chapin Hall created a new set of reports to look at a cohort for the PFA programs together. The charts below show how children attending Preschool for All changed during the 2021-22 school year. The charts below show the percentage of children meeting widely held expectations from fall to spring in the six domains.

What we see is significant growth throughout the school year in all domains.

Now that we have these new visualizations, we will continue to look at them in other ways, such as by FRPL status and race. In general, showing tables with those filters results in numbers too low to report on but teachers can look at them for educational purposes.

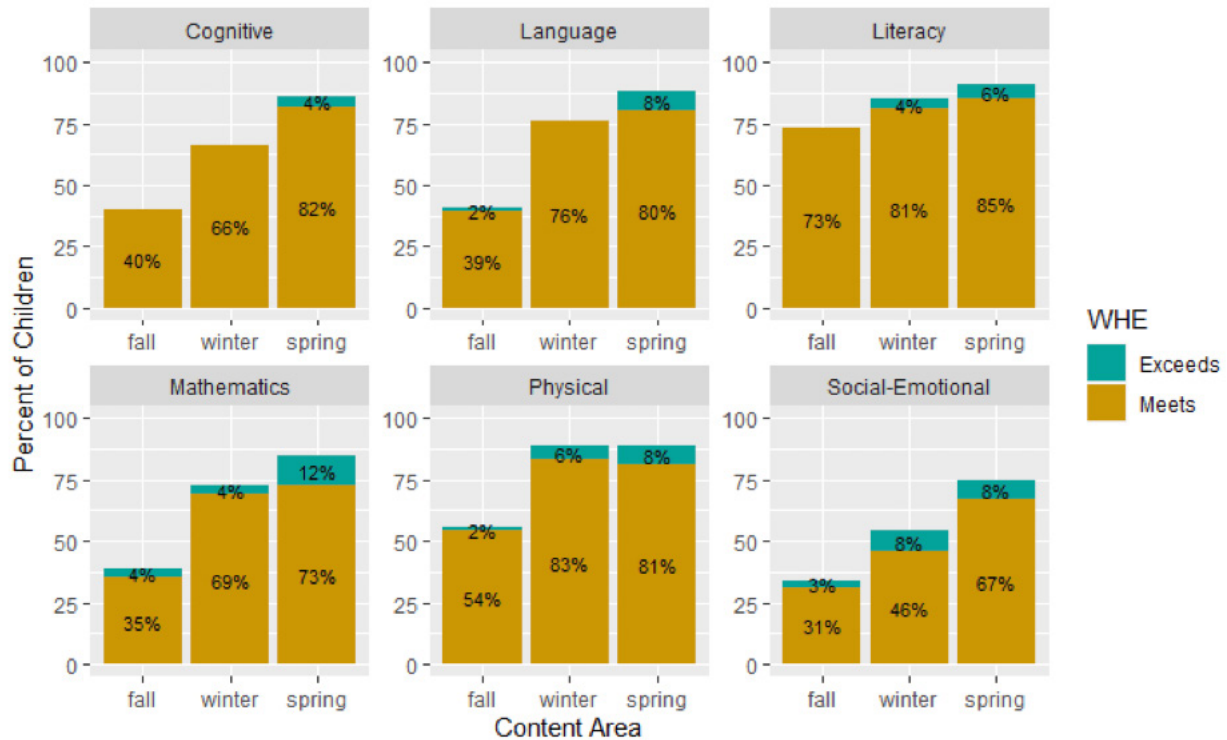
When we compare spring scores year to year, we notice a dip in the social-emotional readiness that corresponds to the pandemic. Interestingly, literacy and math went up slightly during this same time. Language remained consistent across years, which is notable in a time when most people were wearing masks. We have heard anecdotally from educators that they are noticing more speech delays. This will be an area to monitor in younger children.

## Spring Scores Only for Kindergarten Cohort Year 2021-2022

### PFA Kindergartners Meeting Widely Held Expectations (WHE) on Spring TS GOLD, by FRPL Status



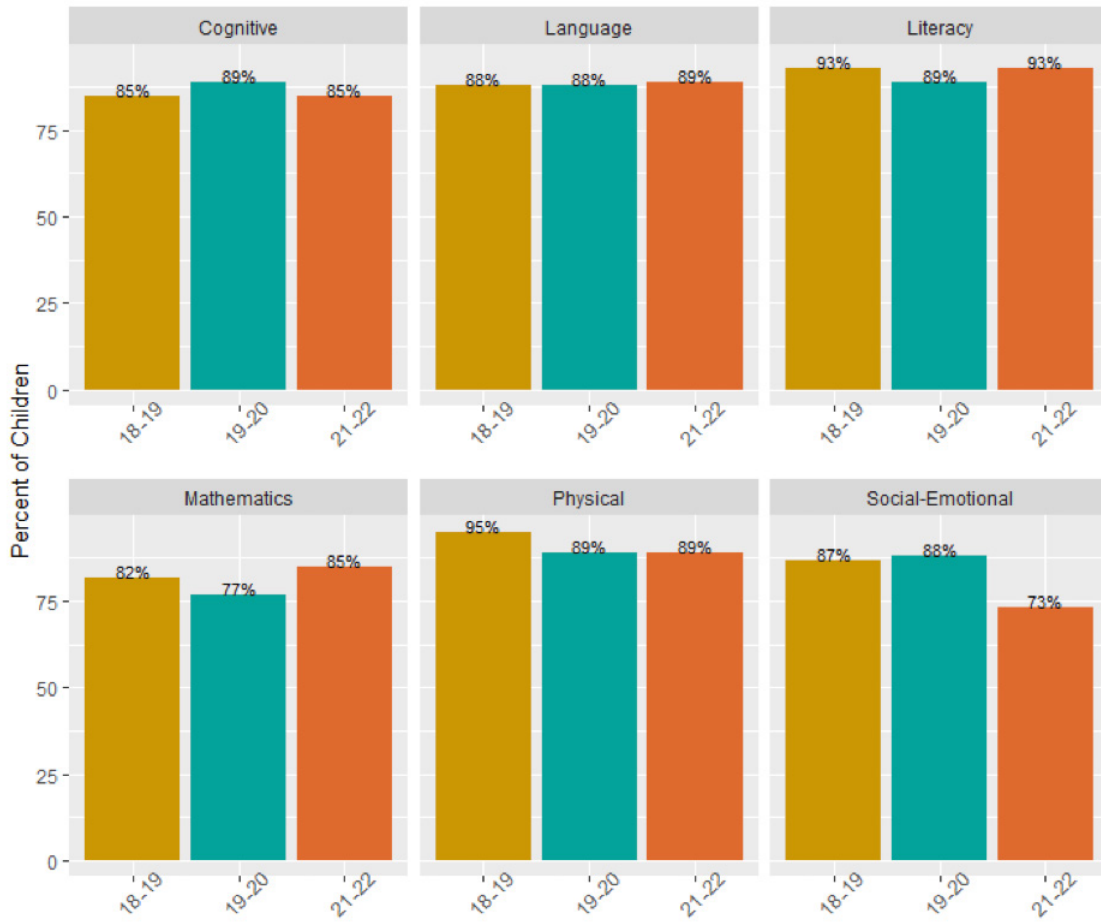
### PFA Kindergartners Meeting Widely Held Expectations (WHE) on TS GOLD, by Season



## Spring scores only All Available Cohort Years– Split tables

We do not have spring data for the Kindergarten cohort SY2020-2021.

### PFA Kindergartners Meeting Widely Held Expectations (WHE) on Spring TS GOLD, by Cohort Year



### **Child Outcome 3: Percent of children entering kindergarten demonstrating age-appropriate proficiency in the kindergarten readiness assessment administered by District 97.**

We rely on the Kindergarten Readiness Test (KRT) for assessing the proficiency of children entering kindergarten. In a typical year, the KRT is administered to incoming kindergarten students over the summer and through the third week of school. It is conducted by someone, usually a teacher, who sits with the child for approximately half an hour, asking them to complete questions in a workbook.

From 2016 to 2019, the Collaboration administered the KRT for students attending the three Preschool for All programs on behalf of District 97. This was during the month of May at the very end of their preschool year in an environment where they were comfortable and attending class. These results inform additional kindergarten readiness opportunities such as summer enrichment with District 97.

The Collaboration provides District 97 with the KRT results of students from Preschool for All programs if they are attending kindergarten in District 97. District 97 administers the KRT for all other children entering kindergarten.



#### **Impact from COVID-19**

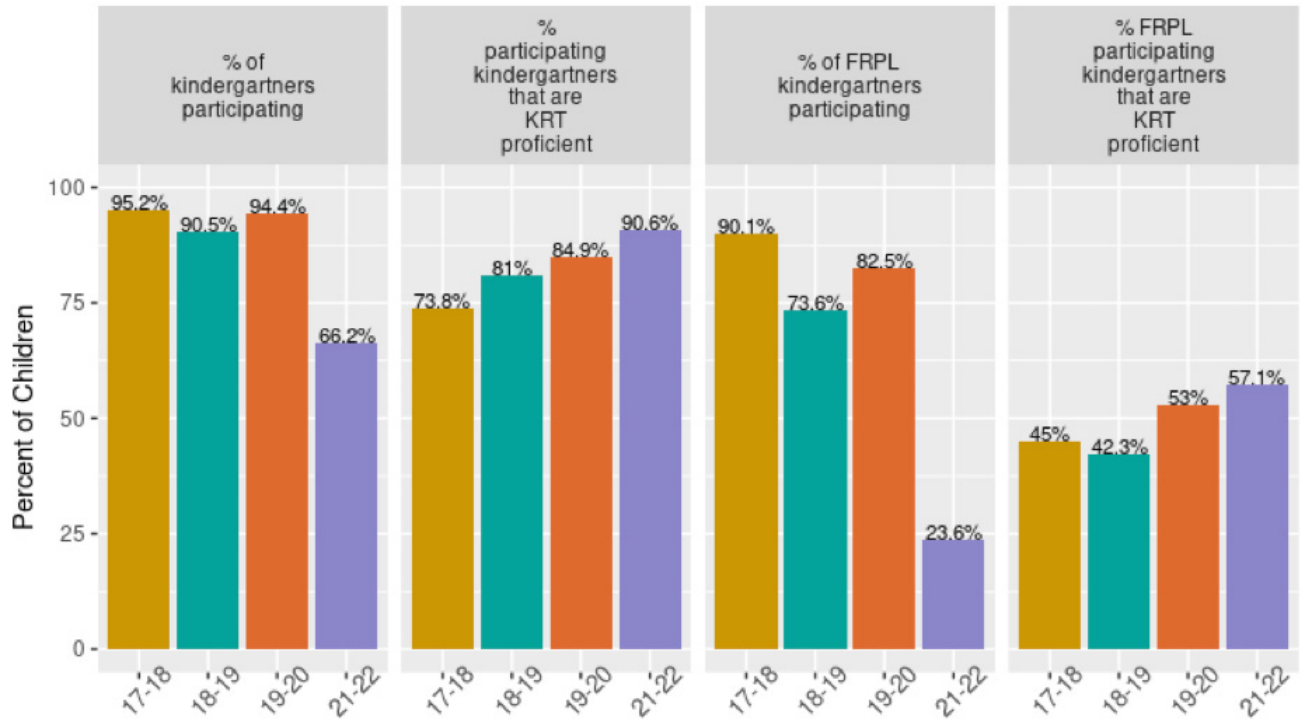
- In the Spring of 2020, due to the pandemic, the Collaboration did not administer the KRT to students in any of the Preschool for All programs. District 97 did not administer the KRT to any incoming kindergarten students for the 2020/2021 school year.
- In the Spring of 2021, the Collaboration did not administer the KRT to Preschool for All students due to ongoing concerns related to the pandemic. The charts below show that the participation of students who had been enrolled in Preschool for All dropped significantly. Participation was particularly low for PFA students who qualified for the free lunch program (24% as opposed to the usual 97%). This points to the need to push-in to the early learning programs where students are already spending their time, especially for families who may not be able to bring children to scheduled assessment times. When this occurs at the end of the preschool year, qualifying students can be invited to participate in summer enrichment programming.
- The typical process for taking the KRT for all students, including Preschool for All, was that after families registered for kindergarten, they were asked to sign up for a time in the summer to take the KRT at a District 97 location. KRT participation was low because families were still very concerned about COVID-19; this was prior to vaccinations being available for children under age 5.
- District 97 was also evaluating the usefulness of the KRT and ultimately decided to switch to a different assessment, the ESGI, starting with the 2022-2023 school year. This assessment is considered to be better aligned with what children know at the start of kindergarten and is more in line with the kindergarten curriculum. It is an online assessment tool.
- It should be noted that the difference in timing can make an impact on scores within a cohort. Students who were assessed in the late spring prior to kindergarten may score differently than those who take it at the start of the kindergarten year.



### KRT participation and proficiency by FRPL status

Cohort Year	# of kindergartners participating	% of kindergartners participating	% participating kindergartners who are KRT proficient	# of FRPL kindergartners participating	% of FRPL kindergartners participating	% FRPL participating kindergartners who are KRT proficient
2017-2018	619	95.2%	73.8%	100	90.1%	45.0%
2018-2019	630	90.5%	81.0%	78	73.6%	42.3%
2019-2020	570	94.4%	84.9%	66	82.5%	53.0%
2021-2022	384	66.2%	90.6%	21	23.6%	57.1%

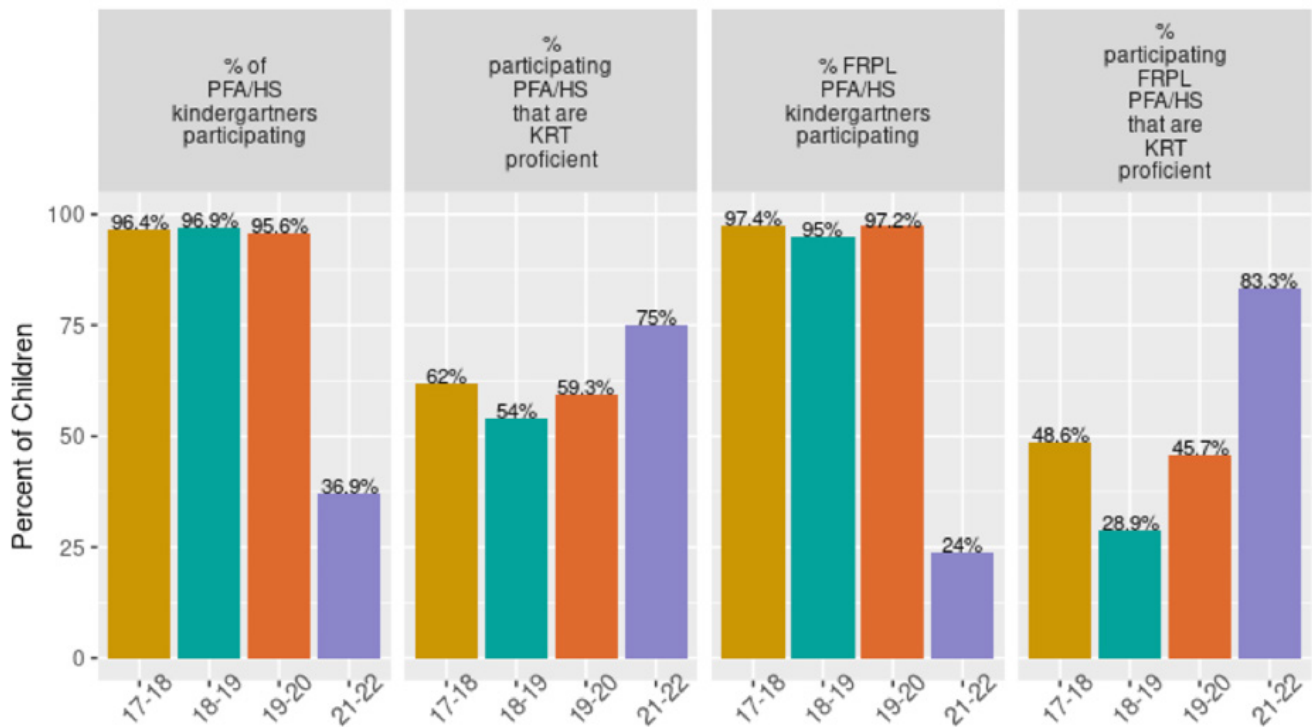
### KRT Participation and Proficiency by FRPL Status



## KRT participation and proficiency by FRPL status for PFA/HS students

Cohort Year	# of PFA/HS kindergartners participating	% of PFA/HS kindergartners participating	% participating PFA/HS who are KRT proficient	# of FRPL PFA/HS kindergartners participating	% FRPL PFA/HS kindergartners participating	% participating FRPL PFA/HS who are KRT proficient
2017-2018	108	96.4%	62.0%	37	97.4%	48.6%
2018-2019	126	96.9%	54.0%	38	95.0%	28.9%
2019-2020	86	95.6%	59.3%	35	97.2%	45.7%
2021-2022	24	36.9%	75.0%	<10	—	83.3%

## KRT Participation and Proficiency by FRPL Status for Preschool for All/Head Start Students



## **Service Delivery Outcome 1: Kindergarten students with Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) assistance have a history of participation in a PFA/HS/NAEYC accredited program, or a program meeting the Illinois Quality Rating System (ExceleRate) Gold Circle of Quality.**

**Sub-measure:** What percent of kindergarten students with an IEP were enrolled in one of the programs described above?

This indicator looks at whether District 97 kindergarten students have had a history of high-quality preschool. When families enroll in kindergarten, they answer a set of questions about the child's preschool history and early experiences. This data is connected with the quality ratings of those preschools to provide a snapshot of whether children attended preschool, and whether it was a program we can identify as high-quality.

The information below is specific to the Preschool for All (PFA) programs, which are all high-quality and free. They are designed to support the needs of children who meet certain criteria including, but not limited to, developmental delays, economic circumstances, and multilingualism.

The Collaboration coordinates intake for the three PFA programs in Oak Park by conducting an initial screening with families and connecting them with the program that may fit their needs the best. Each program continues the enrollment process until its available spaces have been filled. The PFA programs in Oak Park are District 97's PKP program at Longfellow School, ABC Toon Town, and Day Nursery. All of the spots at Longfellow are for PFA students and some of the spots at ABC Toon Town and Day Nursery are for PFA students.

### **Impact from COVID-19**



- This area continued to fluctuate due to the pandemic. Programs had limited capacity due to pandemic restrictions and staffing issues.
- Enrollment has been low universally across the country and Oak Park is no exception. Enrollment counts for both kindergartners and first graders increased this year after a decline in enrollment from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. We see a decrease in children who were enrolled in a PFA program prior to entering kindergarten. This is likely a reflection of overall lower preschool enrollment due to COVID.
- We have seen an increase in qualifying prescreens for free preschool programs due primarily to pandemic-related job loss.
- This year the Collaboration, in partnership with Preschool for All programs, has developed a more automated system of prescreening for Free Preschool eligibility. Historically, information was exchanged via paper forms and scans, with data manually entered into a database to share with programs for enrollment. Now, the form is online and the information can be shared safely and confidentially across programs in a consistent and streamlined way using a platform called Qualtrics.

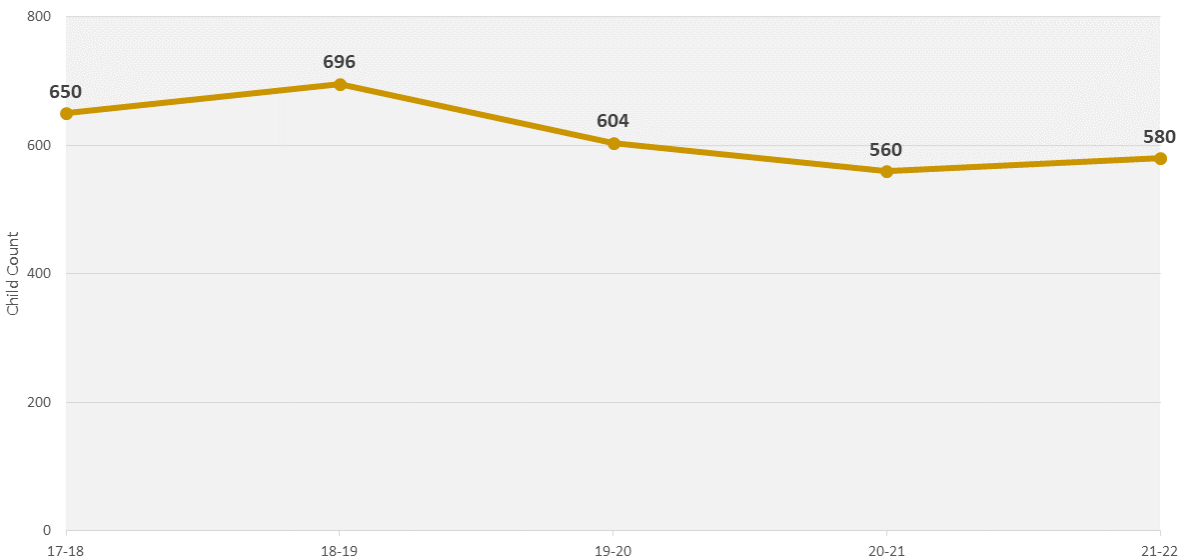
## Kindergarten and first grade enrollment (counts)

Cohort Year	# of kindergartners enrolled	# of kindergartners attended OPRF PFA/HS preschool	# of kindergartners receiving FRPL	# of first graders enrolled	# of first graders attended OPRF PFA/HS preschool	# of first graders receiving FRPL
2017-2018	650	112	111	707	100	126
2018-2019	696	130	106	691	106	129
2019-2020	604	90	80	714	124	103
2020-2021	560	92	77	577	74	79
2021-2022	580	65	89	654	91	98

## Kindergarten and first grade enrollment (percents)

Cohort Year	# of kindergartners enrolled	% of kindergartners attended OPRF PFA/HS preschool	% of kindergartners receiving FRPL	# of first graders enrolled	% of first graders attended OPRF PFA/HS preschool	% of first graders receiving FRPL
2017-2018	650	17.2%	17.1%	707	14.1%	17.8%
2018-2019	696	18.7%	15.2%	691	15.3%	18.7%
2019-2020	604	14.9%	13.2%	714	17.4%	14.4%
2020-2021	560	16.4%	13.8%	577	12.8%	13.7%
2021-2022	580	11.2%	15.3%	654	13.9%	15.0%

## Kindergarten Enrollment





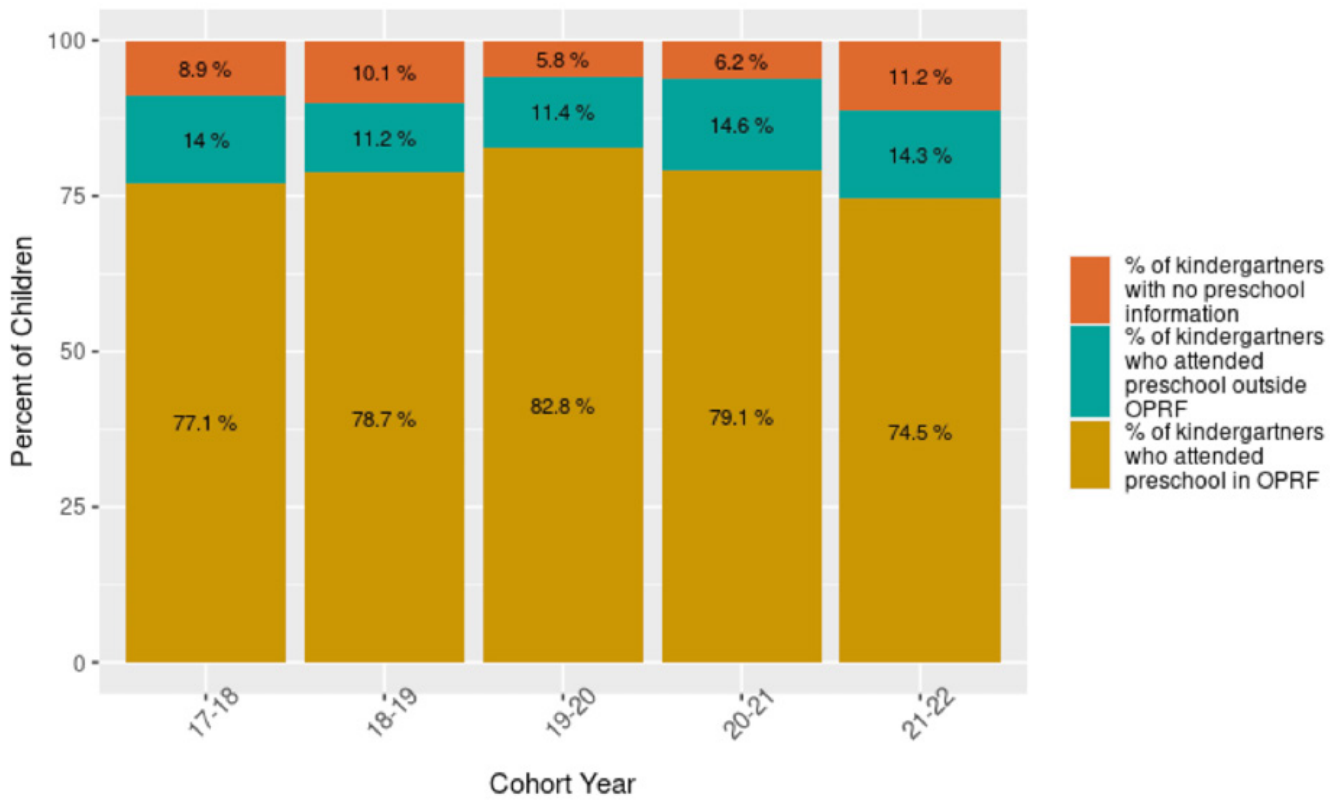
### Kindergartners by preschool location (counts)

Cohort Year	# of kindergartners who attended preschool in OPRF	# of kindergartners who attended preschool outside OPRF	# of kindergartners with no preschool information	Total kindergarten enrollment
2017-2018	501	91	58	650
2018-2019	548	78	70	696
2019-2020	500	69	35	604
2020-2021	443	82	35	560
2021-2022	432	83	65	580

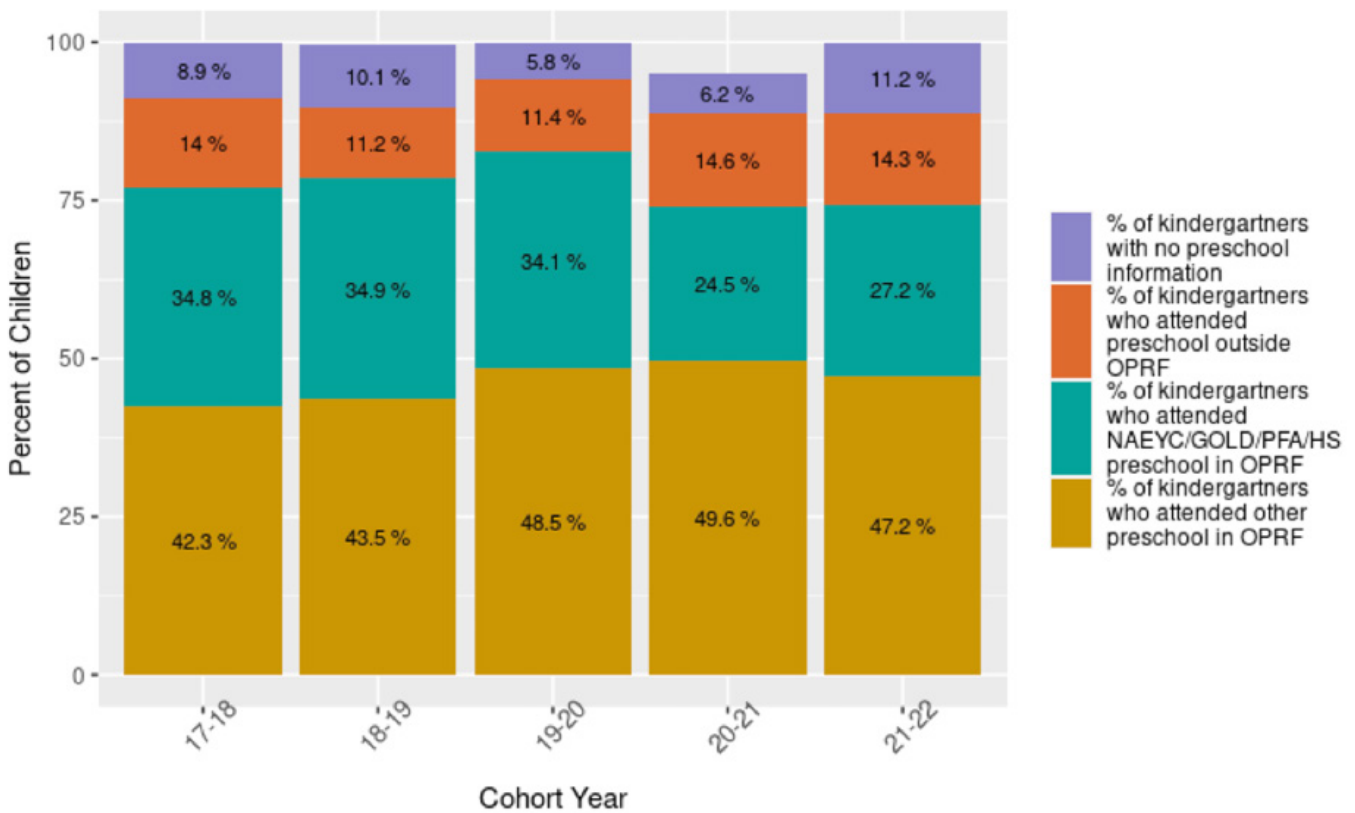
### Kindergartners by preschool location (percents)

Cohort Year	Total kindergarten enrollment	% of kindergartners who attended preschool in OPRF	% of kindergartners who attended preschool outside OPRF	% of kindergartners with no preschool information
2017-2018	650	77.1%	14.0%	8.9%
2018-2019	696	78.7%	11.2%	10.1%
2019-2020	604	82.8%	11.4%	5.8%
2020-2021	560	79.1%	14.6%	6.2%
2021-2022	580	74.5%	14.3%	11.2%

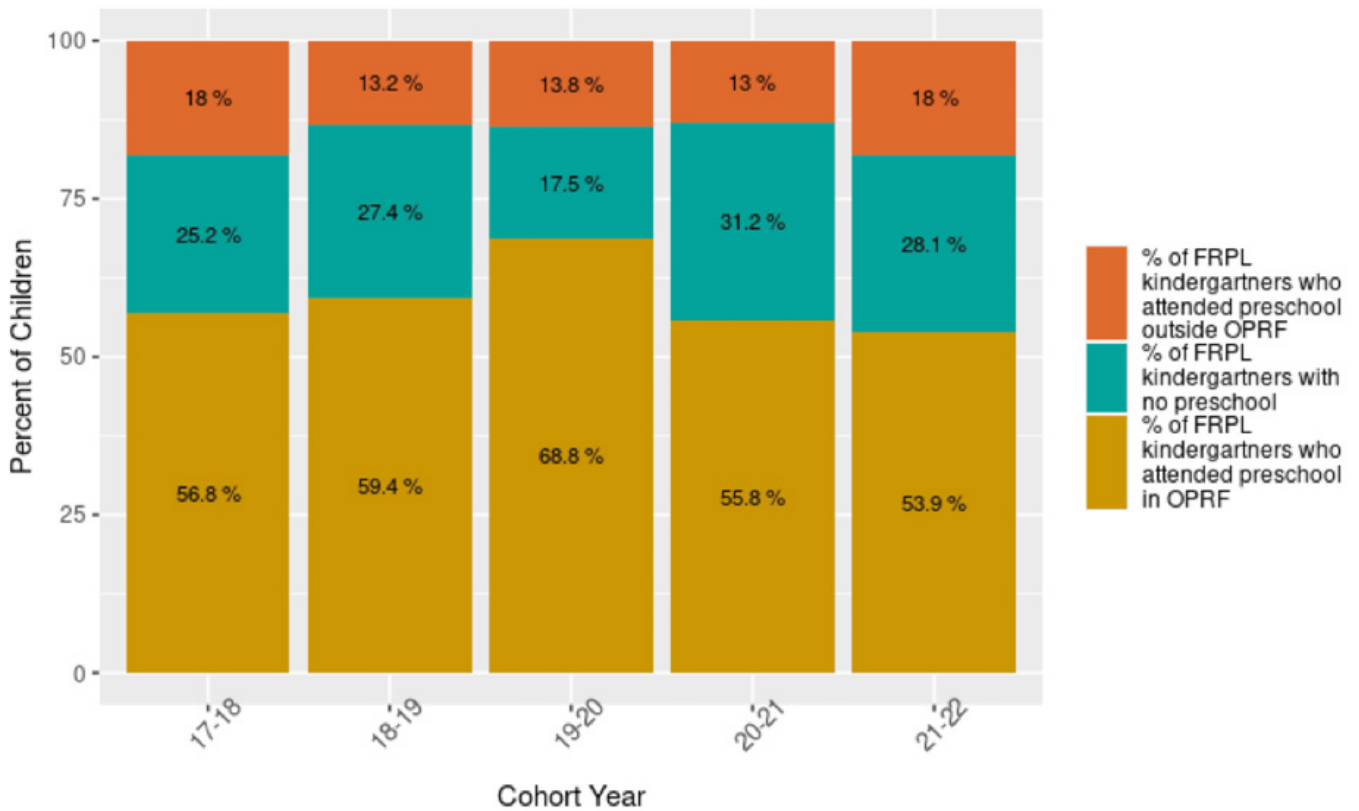
## Kindergartners by Preschool Location (Percents)



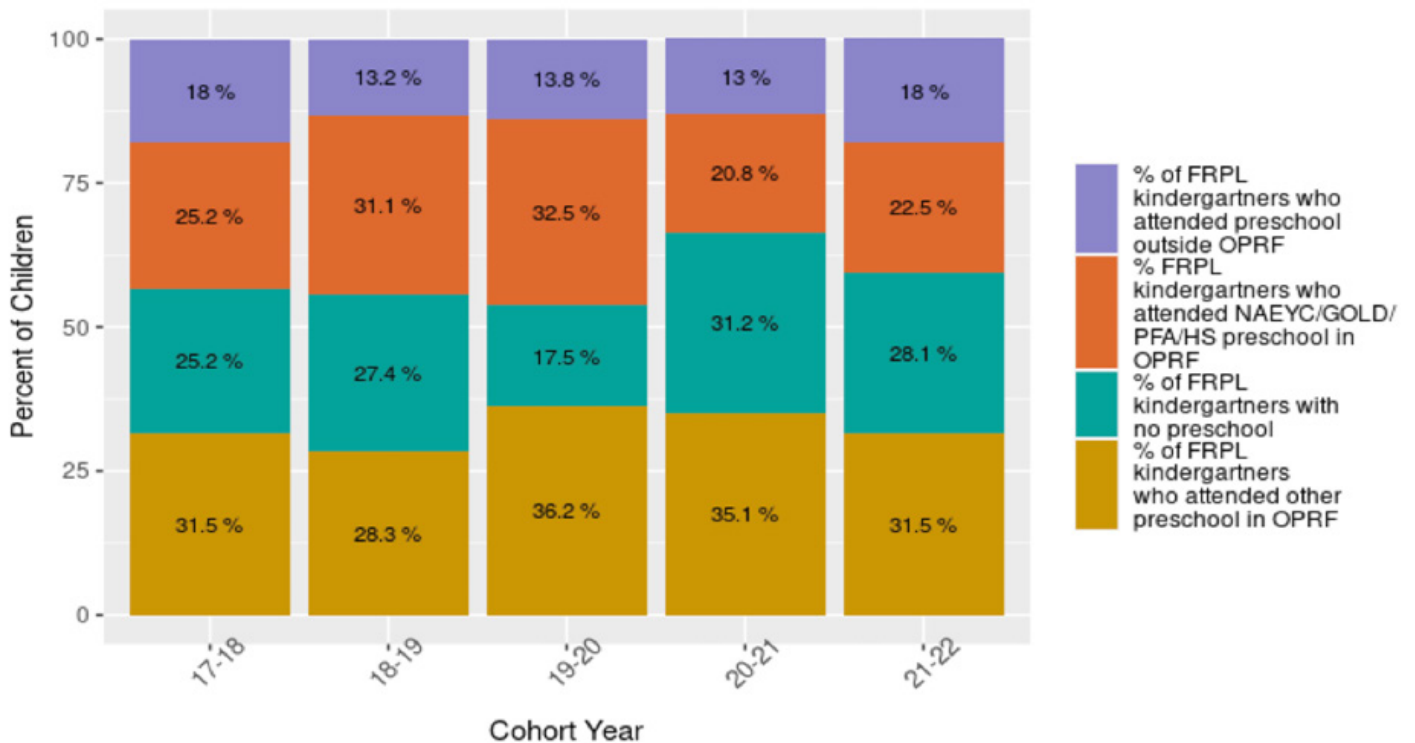
## Kindergartners by Preschool Location and Accreditation



## Kindergarteners Enrolled in FRPL by Preschool Location



## Kindergarteners Enrolled in FRPL by Preschool Location and Accreditation



**Service Delivery Outcome 2: Teen parents and families receiving up through All Kids Level 1 health insurance for their child under age 3 receive referral to intensive parent education program.**

This measure continues to be difficult to obtain due to the limitations of available data on the number of parenting teens and the number of families receiving All Kids health insurance. However, we have four home visiting programs operating in Oak Park, and all are providing some level of reporting to the Collaboration about the number of families who have been referred to their programs.

**Kindergartners by preschool location (percents)**

Teen or Non-Teen Parents	Teen June 2019	Non-Teen June 2019	Teen June 2020	Non-Teen June 2020	Teen June 2021	Non-Teen June 2021	Teen June 2022	Non-Teen June 2022
Number of families in Oak Park and River Forest receiving up through All Kids Level 1*	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail	Not avail
Number of families referred to local home visiting programs for parenting support*	*	31	*	41	*	33	*	57

We do not have a source of data for the number of teen parents or the number of families participating in All Kids Level 1 health insurance.

Additional information on intensive parent education can be found in Service Delivery Outcome 3.



### Service Delivery Outcome 3: Percent of referred parents who choose to participate in the intensive parent education program.

*“Not enough parents know about this resource and many parents feel alone navigating the needs of children.”*

*“Helps me be a better parent. Wish this was accessible to all parents.”*

— Feedback from Easterseals Partnering with Parents Program, 2021-22 Program Year

Easterseals, Children’s Home & Aid, New Moms, and Kids Above All offer the Parents as Teachers parent education model in each of their home visiting programs. The Easterseals program, funded by the Collaboration, combines Parents as Teachers (PAT) program requirements with Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) requirements and standards.

The Home Visiting Task Force meets quarterly and is facilitated by the Collaboration for Early Childhood. Task Force meetings are essential to strengthening relationships with referral sources, increasing awareness of home visiting programs, and creating a direct line of feedback for parents and community partners.

#### Impact from COVID-19



- New home visiting program enrollment was certainly affected by COVID-19 but we are optimistic that it is getting back on track. Staff remained committed to providing all services in a hybrid environment, including visits, group connections, Chicago Parent Program, and even infant massage classes. MIECHV and PAT provide standards for virtual and in-person activities while navigating the pandemic.

	June 2018	June 2019	June 2020	June 2021	June 2022
Number of families referred for home visiting to all 4 programs	47	31	41	33	57
Number of families who actively engaged as new families in the home visiting program funded through the Collaboration (Easterseals)	32	21	28	17	24
Total number of Oak Park and River Forest families engaged in the home visiting programs.	66	71	61	55	60

Coordinated Intake is an initiative of the Collaboration for Early Childhood, Easterseals / Partnering with Parents, Children’s Home & Aid, New Moms, and Kids Above All that is designed to make it easy for social service providers, physicians, hospitals, child care providers, and anyone to refer families by providing a single point of entry for home visiting programs in Oak Park.

Each program has slightly different criteria and works with families with varying circumstances. Kids Above All (formerly ChildServ) serves the Western Suburbs, including Oak Park and River Forest, and has the capacity to enroll 20 families. Their primary funding source is the ISBE prevention initiative. Children’s Home & Aid serves the Western Suburbs, including Oak Park and River Forest, and has the capacity to enroll 24 families. Their primary funding source is Early Head Start.

Between the four programs listed above, there are approximately 120 home visiting spots available. The newest program partner, Kids Above All, began activities at the beginning of the program year, July 2020. Children’s Home & Aid came on in November 2020. Since the fall of 2020, both programs have been actively participating in home visiting coordinated intake. New Moms has been a longstanding partner.

The Collaboration, in partnership with home visiting programs and the Village of Oak Park’s Public Health Nurse, works to make sure families can get connected to a program through a single point of entry. Home visiting programs work in tandem with the Public Health Nurse, who visits newborns and their mothers over the course of the first year of their child’s life. Home visiting programs continue to support children and families through preschool.

Home visiting program partners continue to meet monthly while the Home Visiting Task Force meets quarterly and parents are asked to participate in two meetings per year. Task Force partners are from RUSH, Beyond Hunger, Oak-Leyden Developmental Services, Housing Forward, CEDA WIC, Thrive, CFC #7, and IWS Children’s Clinic. Task Force meetings are essential to strengthening relationships with referral sources.

Easterseals / Partnering with Parents and New Moms helped launch a new initiative two years ago to provide new and expecting families with “baby bundles.” These are large tote bags filled with items that all new families can use like diapers, onesies, bibs, bath thermometers, books, and materials, particularly about maternal health. We follow up with people who receive them to see if they would like a referral to additional services, such as home visiting or publicly funded preschool.

## **Major Accomplishments from Easterseals**

**This summary comes directly from Easterseals, which is funded by the Collaboration.**

*Coordinated intake has had a huge impact on reaching new families and enrolling them into a home visiting program. Last fiscal year, Easterseals received over half of its referrals, 25 out of 42, from coordinated intake. These were caregivers who contacted the Collaboration’s warmline about preschool, socialization opportunities for their child, baby bundles, and child care. The referrals were also from local organizations and programs who reached out for additional help for the families they were already working with. I believe that without coordinated intake and the visibility of the Collaboration in the community we would not have had the opportunity to serve these families, leaving them without the support that has become increasingly important over the last two years.*

— Michelle Howell, Program Manager, Partnering with Parents Home Visiting Program

# Partnering with Parents Program, FY22

The Partnering with Parents Program provides parent education and support to families in the Oak Park and River Forest communities. Our services include home visits, family socialization events, and community-wide workshops. We work with caregivers who are pregnant or have a child under the age of 5.



## Partnering with Parents

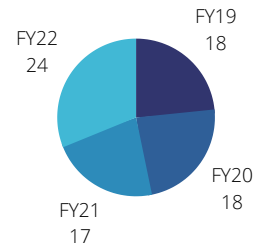
### TOTAL ENROLLED

FY19: 47 Families, 66 Children  
 FY20: 51 Families, 72 Children  
 FY21: 54 Families, 76 Children  
 FY22: 60 Families, 79 Children



### ENROLLMENTS

FY19: 18  
 FY20: 18  
 FY21: 17  
 FY22: 24



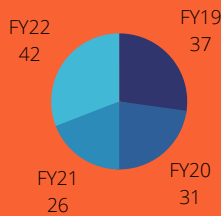
### RETENTION

Retention rates are calculated in two ways: one divides the total exited families by the total number of families served. The other excludes families who completed services or moved out of our service area. This exclusion takes into consideration that our staff have no control over these exit reasons.

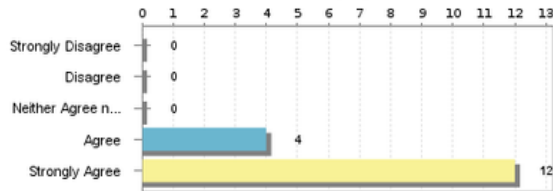
When factoring in families who completed services or moved, our retention rate for FY22 was 90%.

### COMMUNITY REFERRALS

FY19: 37  
 FY20: 31  
 FY21: 26  
 FY22: 42



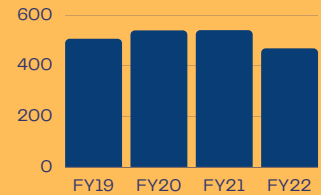
10. I am satisfied with this program.



### PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

What about this program has been most helpful to you & your family?

- Finding resources and information
- Validation, normalization and resources provided
- New ways to approach challenges with the kids
- Connection
- The guidance/feedback on how to achieve my parenting goals, as well as, all the resources
- Helping my toddler navigate her big feelings and calm down, plus create a schedule
- They've assisted with necessary items for home and my child when able and given much needed information about child development
- Learning new strategies. Reassurance that we are doing the right things.



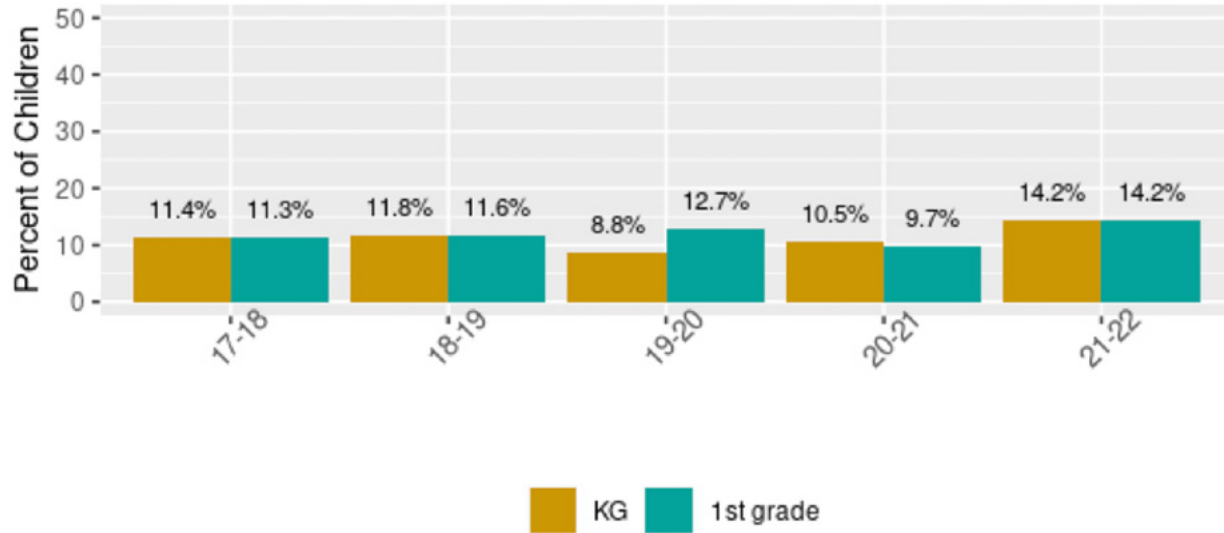
### # OF PERSONAL VISITS

FY19: 506  
 FY20: 539  
 FY21: 540  
 FY22: 468

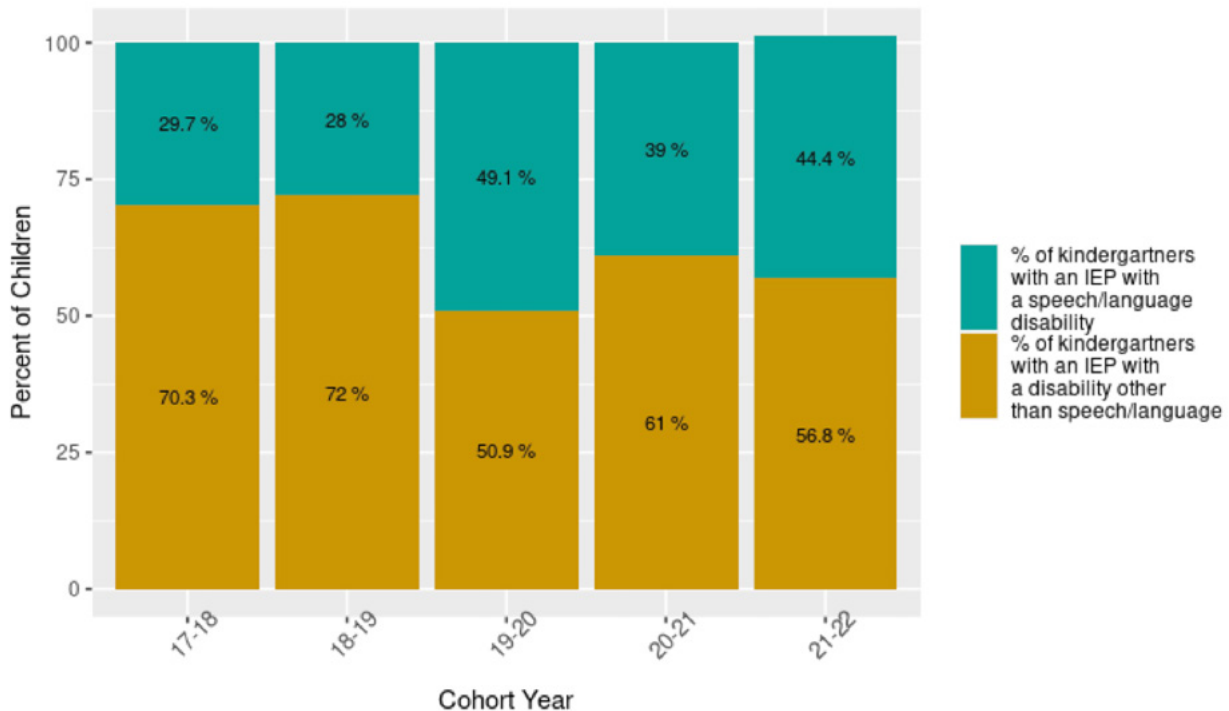
**Service Delivery Outcome 4: Percent of kindergarten and 1st-grade students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) who have documentation of receiving services in early childhood (if they lived in Oak Park or River Forest during their early childhood years).**

The goal of the special education system is to serve all children who need special services. A low percentage of children with IEPs in kindergarten does not indicate success or failure to provide services to children. We look at the children who received IEPs or Early Intervention support prior to kindergarten to determine if they do in fact have fewer IEPs as they progress through elementary school.

**Percent of Students with IEPs**

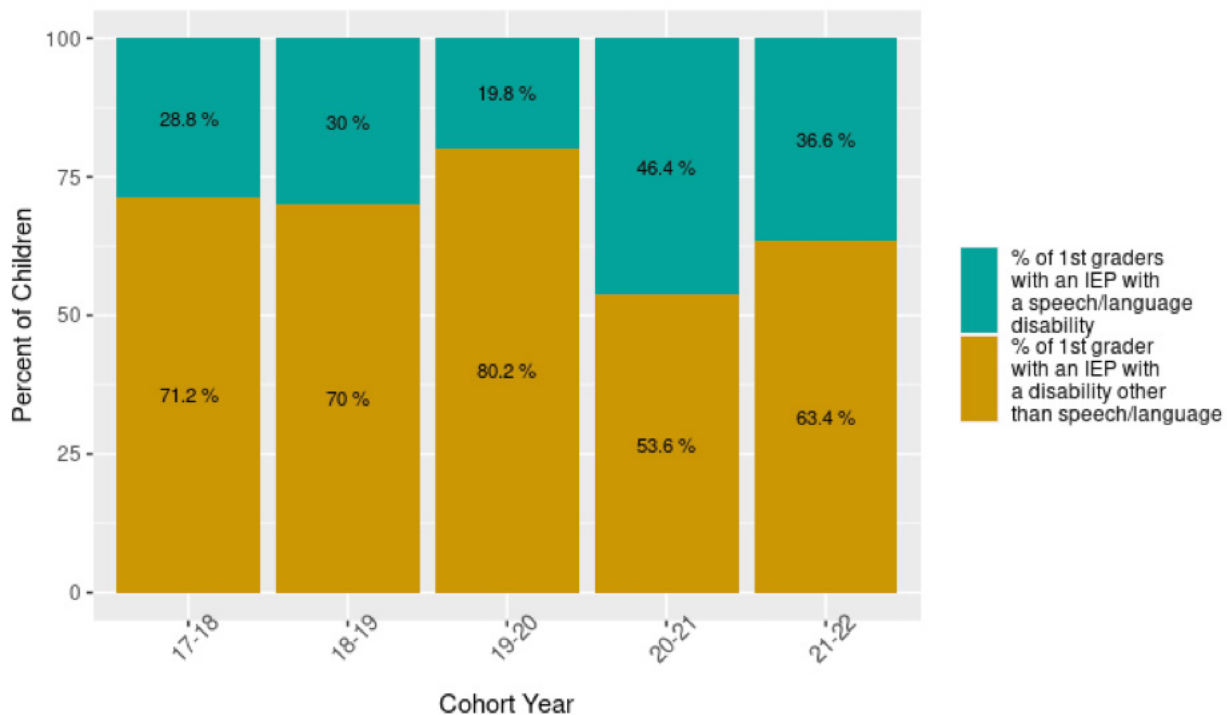


**Kindergartners by IEP Status**

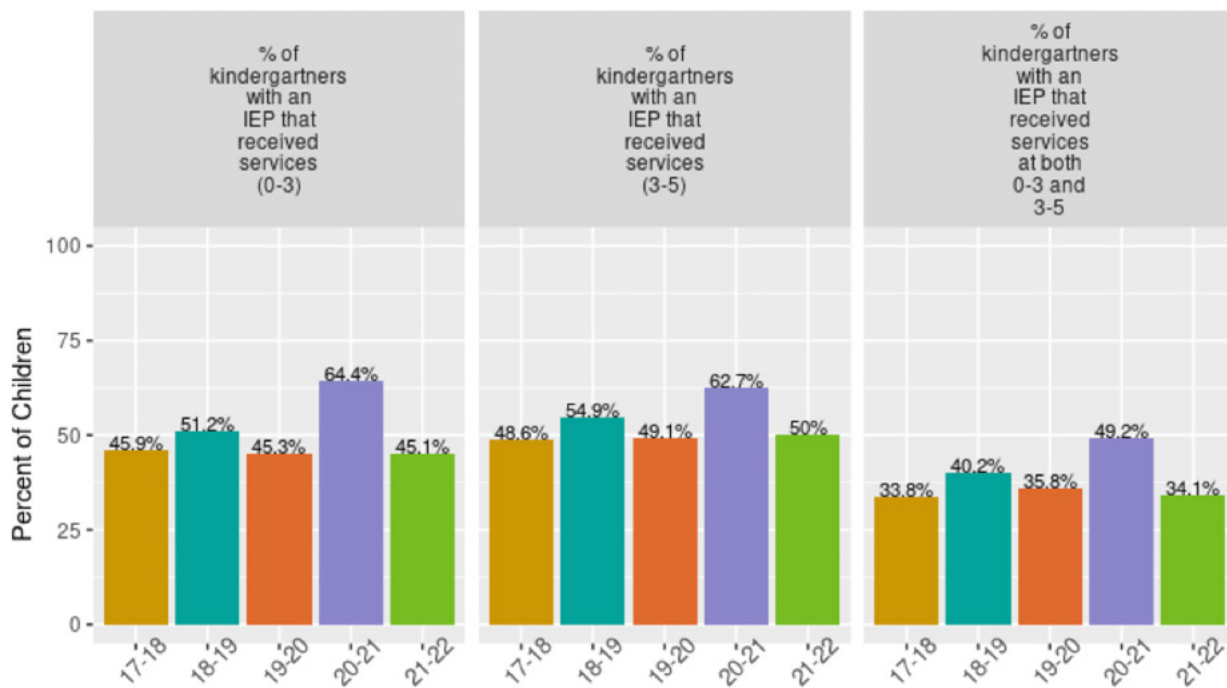




## First Graders by IEP Status



## Kindergartners with an IEP Who Received Services Age 0-5



Additional information is available about the types of services Kindergartners and First Graders received prior to entering District 97.

## System Level Outcome 1: Estimate the Collaboration's connection with all families in Oak Park and River Forest with children under five via direct and indirect measures.

- Estimated percent of families with children under five touched by Collaboration services.
  - **Direct:** Number of families reached through collaboration-sponsored outreach activities and services who provide information voluntarily and are included in our database.
  - **Indirect:** Counts of information distributed, subscribers to information (social media, other open distribution channels).

	June 2018	June 2019	June 2020	June 2021	June 2022
Number of people in Oak Park and River Forest	51,878	51,878	51,878	54,583	54,583
Number of families with children < age 6 in Oak Park and River Forest	3,800	3,800	3,800	4,634	4,634*
<b>Direct: Oak Park/River Forest participants in the voluntary database:</b>					
Number of children enrolled in publicly funded preschool (Preschool for All and Head Start)	199	190	215	124	156
Number of children participating in the developmental screening program	1,787	1,969	1,868	1,643	1,774
Number of families participating in the Parents As Teachers home visiting parent education program	44	47	51	54	60
<b>Indirect: Families receiving information or support through the Collaboration's efforts**:</b>					
Number of families receiving outreach materials from the Parenting Resource Program	7,500	3,500	2,358	2,568	4,297**
Number of people on the Collaboration's email list who receive early childhood information	2,577	2,624	2,956	4,765	4,628***
Number of unduplicated visitors to the Collaboration's website	9,213	8,154	8,204	9,800	17,262
Number of people following the Collaboration's Facebook page for parenting resources and information about early childhood	616	781	970	1,311	1,400
Number of printed Early Childhood Resource Directories distributed	10,000	3,000	500	2,500	3,000

\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census; table P20. Updates to this number are not available until the next census.

\*\* Many of the indirect counts are duplicated since people encounter our materials in many ways.

\*\*\*We have 5,863 contacts, but 4,628 of them are active subscribers.

# Leveraging Online Platforms to Promote Access

## Social Media + Website

We continue to focus on amplifying access to community resources by leveraging our social media channels, our website, and our email communications. This year, we've gained 115 followers on Facebook (total of 1,400 followers) and 207 new likes on Instagram (total of 859 likes). We have also become more intentional about cultivating an audience on our LinkedIn page where we highlight local and national articles about early childhood education as well as our professional development and networking events. Our followers have grown to 170 on LinkedIn. We have an email subscription list of 4,628 contacts and our website received 17,000+ new users this year with a large portion headed to our online early childhood resource directory.

This program year, we published 43 new blog posts (up from 30 last year) and drove traffic to our website's events page, where we promoted Parent Workshops, Parent Leadership Training, and additional events. We know that everyone receives information through different channels. Promoting across multiple platforms ensures that we maximize the chance that families will see and engage in programs and resources available to them.

## Collaboration Newsletters

In addition to the coordination of the website and social media, the Collaboration for Early Childhood publishes three monthly email newsletters, each of which are customized with information specific to our different community audiences. The general newsletter goes out to our subscribers on the first Monday of every month.

The Early Learning Newsletter is educator- and director-focused and launched in January 2022. 255 local early childhood professionals receive the *Early Learning Newsletter*. The *Parenting Resource Program Newsletter* (also known as the *Family Engagement Newsletter*), is managed by the Family Engagement arm of our team. This newsletter is sent to parents who have opted in to receiving parenting information after attending a parent workshop or event, or via the contact form on our website. There are 647 subscribers to that newsletter and it includes upcoming family-friendly events, quick links to parenting resources and more.

The average industry standard open rate for email marketing is 21% though that varies by a couple percentage points depending on the industry (According to Mailchimp, "Education and Training" averages a 23% open rate.) Our newsletters have a significantly higher open rate, hovering around 40%. Our audiences value the resources we share with them each month and we are intentional about ensuring that they can find what they need no matter what their preferred communication platform is.

## Parent Engagement

Ready4K is a free, research-based text messaging program that sparks everyday learning moments without relying on the internet to parents in our community. Each week, parents receive age-appropriate facts, and easy tips and opportunities for growth to boost their child's learning by building on existing family routines. Messages are offered in multiple languages and go straight to the subscriber's mobile device. There are currently 139 people receiving in Ready4K.

## Monthly Parent Workshops

Parenting workshops cover “popular topics” like potty training and kindergarten readiness. 20 Workshops were offered this year, with the most popular being “Mindful Parenting” hosted by First United Church Nursery School, and “What Are the Stories You Want Your Children to Tell About You?” presented by marriage and family therapist Steven Parker. A total of 152 parents/caregivers attended a Parent Workshop this program year. These workshops are coordinated in partnership with the Parenting Resource Program. You can see the full list of topics offered below:

- Expecting & New Parent Meet Up with La Leche Group
- 8-Part Series: How to Grow Your Mental & Emotional Muscles
- Mindful Parenting
- Playdough Palooza
- Potty Training (#1)
- Banish Cabin Fever: Ideas for Indoor Play
- What Are The Stories You Want Your Children To Tell About You?
- How to Support Your Child’s Development
- Potty Training (#2)
- Building Personal & Family Well-Being for Greater Connection and Joy at Home.
- The Power of Touch: Introduction to Infant Massage
- Digital Media Tips for Parents and Caregivers
- Dental health for your little one
- Supporting Your Child’s Development
- Kindergarten Readiness (#1)
- Power of Positivism: How to Implement Positive Parenting Into Your Household
- Movement + Mindfulness: It Starts with YOU!
- Potty Training (#3)
- Kindergarten Readiness (#2)
- Kindergarten Readiness (#3)

## Chicago Parent Program

FY22 marks the fourth year of Chicago Parent Program implementation. This is the first year all the facilitators will be using the newly released third edition materials. CPP runs for 12-weeks (11 consecutive weeks and one follow up session) and uses an evidence-based curriculum and focuses on parenting skills for parents/caregivers of children ages 2-5. To-date there are 11 community partners who are trained group leaders in the Chicago Parent Program.

## Families First | La Familia Primero

Our Community Ambassadors and parent group, Families First | La Familia Primero both began because of Parent Leadership Training. They host family friendly gatherings, conduct outreach, and host workshops that respond to needs that they see and experience from parents in our community. This program year, 300 parents were engaged in conversation at 30+ community events by the Collaboration’s Community Ambassadors.



The team continued to host parent circles, family activities and participate in community events such as: Juneteenth, Dia de los Muertos, PDOP Trunk-or Treat, and River Forest Tree Trimming. Every month the team puts together a bilingual (English/Spanish) parent newsletter.

## **Welcome to Fatherhood**

The Collaboration's partnership with Welcome to Fatherhood, Inc. (WTF) began last program year with help from a grant from the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation. Since then we've continued to engage with fathers and father figures through bimonthly facilitated discussions led by WTF. These discussions help men gain the skills necessary to better impact themselves and their families. Discussions were on the first and third Thursday of the month beginning October 21, 2021 through May 26, 2022. WTF has grown as an organization and we were happy to connect them with HPS Chicago, the consultant we partner with to coordinate our development and grant work. We look forward to seeing where WTF goes next as an organization.

## **Baby Bundles**

Thanks to a grant from the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation, we connect with new and expectant parents through the free gift of a Baby Bundle. Each Baby Bundle – filled with onesies, diapers, and resources for parents – is a touch-point for parents, available whenever they need it most. 100+ Baby Bundles were given to new and expectant parents in the community. We are continuing the Baby Bundles because they have been so successful.

## **New and Expecting Moms Group**

6-week session facilitated by Lindsay Ambrose. Sessions happened weekly on Wednesday. 3 cohorts were offered in FY21-22.

Weekly topics covered:

- Navigating new roles at home: What to expect at the hospital, first weeks at home, and how to manage expectations.
- Newborn needs: Emotional, physical, and social-emotional needs as well as soothing techniques for crying and creating a nurturing environment.
- Feeding Education: Understanding your baby's cues and tips and techniques for breast, bottle, & starting solids.
- Finding a new rhythm with baby: Helping siblings connect with baby, and other mindful family practices.
- Sleep: Creating an environment for sleep, teaching sleep skills, sleep patterns and what to expect developmentally.
- Self-care & community resources: Self-care techniques, sprinkling in mindfulness, additional resources in the community / how to get help.

## **System Level Outcome 2: Percent of teachers and directors in Oak Park early childhood programs who have above minimum state educational requirements for their role.**

**Submeasure:** Percent of teachers and directors who hold or who increase their level of an Illinois Early Childhood Certificate.

This is the second year we have workforce data as provided by the state via INCCRRA. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) is the statewide organization that oversees Gateways to Opportunity and the Gateways Registry. Gateways tracks the credits for early childhood providers to meet DCFS licensing requirements.

In the past, Collaboration staff have administered our own survey of questions to ask whether someone had earned credits in the previous year. The process took many months with in-person visits to collect paper surveys in addition to those that were completed online. While we have always been impressed with our response rate, the INCCRRA report provides us with a systematic, consistent source of the same data with less overhead effort. This success is a result of our partnership with Chapin Hall, which works with INCCRRA.

Overall, there was a 9% decrease in the total early childhood workforce of Oak Park and River Forest between March 2020 and March 2021.

While comparisons for that time frame are hard to find, Chapin Hall reports that in the first few months of the pandemic, childcare in other states had reductions in the range of 23% to 47%.

<b>Employment Setting and Role</b>	<b>March 2020</b>	<b>March 2021</b>
Licensed Center Administrator	62	55
Licensed Center Teacher	171	187
Licensed Center Assistant Teacher	154	137
Licensed Center Teacher Aide	25	26
Licensed Center School-Age Worker	21	3
Licensed Center School-Age Assistant	10	8
Licensed Center Substitute/Floater	18	12
Licensed Center Other	16	14
Licensed Family Child Care (FCC) Owner/Provider	32	28
Licensed FCC Assistant	25	26
Licensed FCC Other	1	1
Licensed-Exempt Center/School Administrator	9	13
Licensed-Exempt Center/School Teacher	10	8
Licensed-Exempt Center/School Assistant Teacher/ Aide	13	19
Licensed-Exempt Center/School School-Age Worker	2	1
Licensed-Exempt Center/School School-Age Assistant	0	1
Licensed-Exempt Center/School Substitute/Floater	3	1
Licensed-Exempt Center Other	8	11
Licensed-Exempt FCC/Family, Friend, or Neighbor	37	8
License-Exempt FCC Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>559</b>

Source: Gateways to Opportunity Registry 2020 and 2021 Data Sets

Population in Data Set: Zip codes 60301, 60302, 60304, 60305

Gateways credentials are mandated by DCFS (as of 2012) for licensed providers and individuals in programs receiving Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funds (including license-exempt centers and homes) (as of 2017). This is why we now have the new number of license-exempt family child care providers.

License-exempt centers may include those that are parochial, Montessori, or have other accreditation.

INCCRRA has also provided additional numbers of substitutes/floater, assistants, and school-age workers which we can review as needed. With those auxiliary roles added, the total number of people who are employed by licensed or exempt centers or family child care homes in Oak Park or River Forest was 559 as of March 1, 2021, which is when this data was pulled from the prior year.

<b>Illinois Early Childhood Certificates</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020 INCCRRA</b>	<b>2021 INCCRRA</b>
Have a Gateways Illinois Director's Credential (INCCRRA=Licensed Centers Only)	27 people Level 1 8% Level 2 2% Level 3 0%	23 people Level 1 8% Level 2 8% Level 3 2%	21 people Level 1 17.7% Level 2 11.3% Level 3 4.8%	16 people Level 1 14.5% Level 2 12.7% Level 3 1.8%
Have a Gateways Infant Toddler Credential	39 people Level 2 6% Level 3 5% Level 4 1% Level 5 3%	38 people Level 2 18% Level 3 2% Level 4 5% Level 5 7%	32 people Level 2 2.1% Level 3 0.3% Level 4 1.8% Level 5 1.0%	35 people Level 2 2.7% Level 3 0.2% Level 4 2.0% Level 5 1.4%
Have a Gateways Early Childhood Education Credential	117 people Level 1 23% Level 2 4% Level 3 7% Level 4 6% Level 5 11% Level 6 3%	101 people Level 1 25% Level 2 11% Level 3 8% Level 4 10% Level 5 23% Level 6 6%	225 people Level 1 19.4% Level 2 1.0% Level 3 1.8% Level 4 5.0% Level 5 9.1% Level 6 0.2%	193 people Level 1 19.7% Level 2 1.1% Level 3 1.4% Level 4 3.9% Level 5 8.2% Level 6 0.2%



### **System Level Outcome 3: Percent of teachers and child care providers reporting more than the state-mandated 15 documented hours of continuing professional education each year.**

#### **Professional Development Offered by the Collaboration**

From July 2021 to June 2022, the Collaboration offered 53 hours of professional development, well over the 15 hours required by DCFS licensing standards. This was a significant increase over the 28.5 hours we offered in the previous year, which was 8 hours more than the year before. This level of continuing education opportunities allows our local early learning professionals to maintain their licensing in a setting that is convenient for them to access. This is key to maintaining a high-quality early learning community.

Our 19th Annual Early Childhood Symposium was about “Moving From Surviving to Thriving.” Keynote speaker Kristine Mraz focused her remarks on “Joyful Discovery: Building Early Childhood Classrooms that Thrive.” A new Symposium design in 2022 conserved our educator’s limited time and energy by offering sessions across multiple days instead of our typical all-day schedule. This change in format was a response to feedback we received after our first virtual Symposium in 2021. We offered 4-5 sessions per day over two weekends and two weeknights for a total of 20 workshops plus a keynote speaker. We granted 19 scholarships and 1,252 total Gateways credit hours. Even with the virtual format, 60% of attendees live or work in Oak Park or River Forest.

Through our partnership with the New Teacher Center, we offered a “direct to educator” series of training focused on equity in the early childhood classroom. This came with mentor support from NTC staff. There were sessions on Implicit Bias and the Classroom, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Anti-Bias Education. Participants were granted 120 total hours of Gateways credit.

We also offer credit to attend certain roundtables and workshops, such as our Directors Roundtables and ASQ training workshops.

#### **Workforce Survey**

We have workforce survey data from INCCRRA, the state agency that handles credentialing for child care professionals. Last year was the first time we received this report from them. In prior years we have conducted our own survey, which takes many months. Receiving the data directly from INCCRRA will allow consistency over time.

**Percent of teachers and providers with more than 15 hours of continuing professional education\***

<b>All License Categories 2020</b>	<b>Number**</b>	<b>Less than 15 hours</b>	<b>15 hours</b>	<b>16-19 hours</b>	<b>20+ hours</b>
Directors	37	<10	<10	0	29
Assistant Directors	<10	<10	0	0	<10
Teachers	127	32	0	13	82
Assistant Teachers	91	21	<10	11	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>62 (24%)</b>	<b>3 (1%)</b>	<b>24 (9%)</b>	<b>174 (66%)</b>
<b>Licensed Centers Only 2020</b>	<b>Number*</b>	<b>Less than 15 hours</b>	<b>15 hours</b>	<b>16-19 hours</b>	<b>20+ hours</b>
Directors	35	<10	<10	0	29
Assistant Directors	<10	<10	0	0	<10
Teachers	124	32	0	12	80
Assistant Teachers	86	20	<0	11	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>59 (23%)</b>	<b>3(1%)</b>	<b>23 (9%)</b>	<b>168 (66%)</b>

**Source: Gateways to Opportunity Registry 2020 Data Set**

**Population in Data Set: Zip codes 60301, 60302, 60304, 60305**

\* This includes training and college coursework (converted as 1 semester hour = 15 training hours) and is inclusive of both the continuing education that is verified through the Gateways Registry and any additional hours self-reported by the individual.

\*\* For this table, the “N” is limited to those that had at least one training/coursework record for the calendar year 2019.

The minimum requirement for staff at DCFS-licensed centers and homes is 15 credit hours per year. Staff at centers who have ExceleRate Silver or Gold ratings must have 20 or more credit hours per year.

**Percent of teachers and providers with more than 15 hours of continuing professional education\***

<b>All License Categories 2021</b>	<b>Number**</b>	<b>Less than 15 hours</b>	<b>15 hours</b>	<b>16-19 hours</b>	<b>20+ hours</b>
Directors	32	16	<10	0	10
Assistant Directors	<10	<10	0	<10	<10
Teachers	150	79	0	16	55
Assistant Teachers	87	47	0	<10	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>143 (52%)</b>	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>	<b>29 (11%)</b>	<b>101 (37%)</b>
<b>Licensed Centers Only 2021</b>	<b>Number*</b>	<b>Less than 15 hours</b>	<b>15 hours</b>	<b>16-19 hours</b>	<b>20+ hours</b>
Directors	30	15	<10	<10	10
Assistant Directors	<10	<10	0	<10	<10
Teachers	146	77	0	16	53
Assistant Teachers	78	44	<0	<10	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>137 (53%)</b>	<b>1 (0.3%)</b>	<b>28 (11%)</b>	<b>93 (36%)</b>

**Source: Gateways to Opportunity Registry Data Set from March 2021**

**Population in Data Set: Zip codes 60301, 60302, 60304, 60305**

\* This includes training and college coursework (converted as 1 semester hour = 15 training hours) and is inclusive of both the continuing education that is verified through the Gateways Registry and any additional hours self-reported by the individual.

\*\* For this table, the “N” is limited to those that had at least one training/coursework record for the calendar year 2019.

The minimum requirement for staff at DCFS-licensed centers and homes is 15 credit hours per year. Staff at centers who have ExceleRate Silver or Gold ratings must have 20 or more credit hours per year.

**System Level Outcome 4: Percent of preschools, child care centers, and homes that are engaged in the Illinois Quality Rating System (ExceleRate) and improve their scores each year.**

	June 2018	June 2019	June 2020	June 2021	June 2022
<b>Center-Based Programs</b>					
Number of licensed and exempt preschools and child care centers.	44	45	45	42	40
Number of licensed preschools and child care centers.	27	28	28	29	28
A. Number (%) of licensed and exempt preschools and child care centers who engaged in the ExceleRate program.	21 (48%)	22 (49%)	27 (60%)	28 (66%)	28 (70%)
B.1. Number (%) of licensed and exempt preschools and child care centers engaged in ExceleRate and have received a score.	14 (32%)	14 (31%)	19 (42%)	18 (43%)	18 (45%)
B.2. Number (%) of licensed preschools and child care centers engaged in ExceleRate and have received a score.	13 (48%)	13 (46%)	14 (50%)	13 (45%)	14 (50%)
C. Number (%) of licensed and exempt preschools and child care centers involved in ExceleRate that improved their scores.	6 (14%)	13 (46%)	6 (13%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
D. Number (%) of centers initially involved with ExceleRate and choosing NAEYC-accreditation	4 (9%)	4 (9%)	6 (13%)	4 (9%)	4 (10%)
<b>Family Child Care Providers</b>					
Number of licensed family child care homes.	34	34	34	32	28
A. Number (%) of licensed family child care homes that engaged in ExceleRate.	14 (41%)	14 (41%)	15 (41%)	4 (12%)	4 (14%)
B. Number (%) of licensed family child care homes engaged in ExceleRate who received a score.	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	3 (11%)
C. Number (%) licensed family child care homes engaged in ExceleRate who improved their scores.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

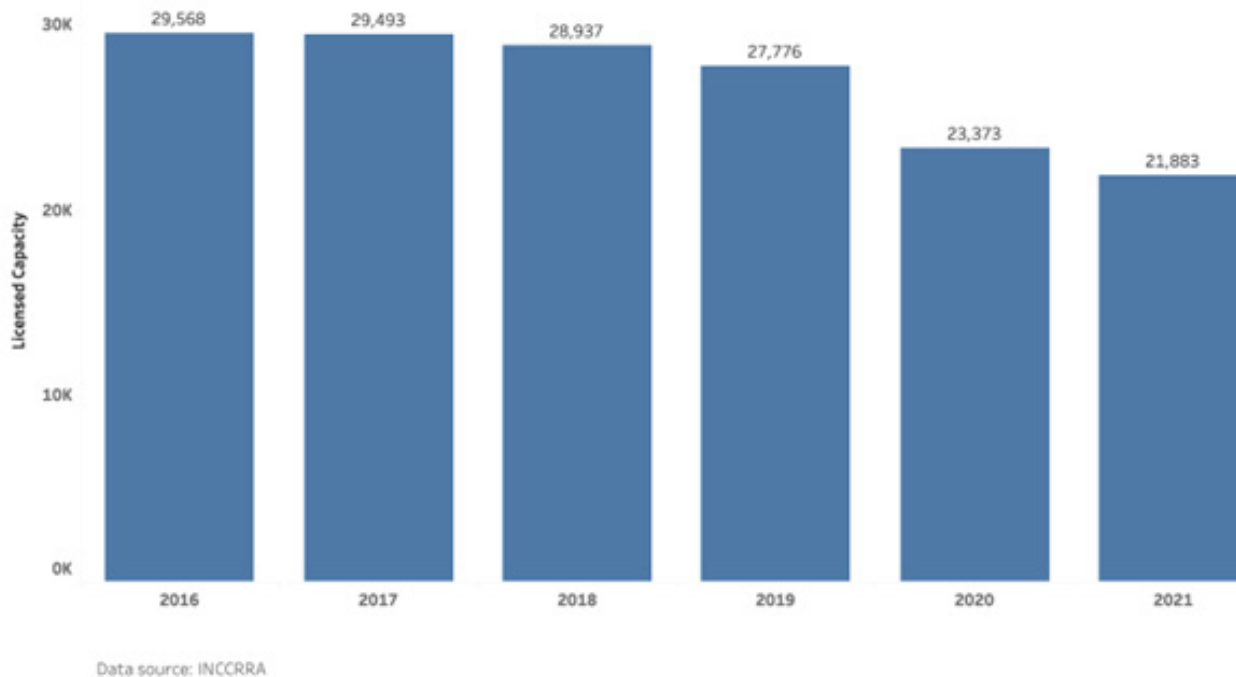
This was a year of reconnecting and listening. Collaboration staff engaged in one on one conversations with program directors throughout the year to determine their needs and connect them to resources. We conducted planning surveys to determine what frequency, time, format, and areas of growth support are important to providers and we regularly heard that programs are still very much bound by the constraints of the pandemic.

One center-based program closed last year. They had two locations, one for infants and toddlers, and one for children aged 3-5. Since this reporting period, which ended June 30, 2022, an additional high-quality center-based program closed because the landlord sold the building. While not directly related to the pandemic, this is an example of the challenges child care owners face in running their businesses.



This chart from INCCRRA, the state agency that looks at child care quality and availability, shows a decreasing trend in the number of high-quality places available for our youngest children, infants to two-year olds, across the state.

While we know that infant care is a challenge in Oak Park and River Forest, we report on the number of programs rather than their capacity. Understanding the capacity of programs is more challenging than it may seem, however, we are starting to look at this in more detail and will consider whether it is useful to track it in a similar way to INCCRRA in the future.



Another area we are examining is the demand for spots available to families paying with funds from the state’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which is subsidized child care for low-income families. CCAP allows families to work when their income may not cover the cost of unsubsidized child care. There are 25 programs in Oak Park and River Forest that accept CCAP. What is the demand and what is the capacity? Can we influence the number of spots available? These are questions we’re considering.

### Engaged in ExceleRate

A program that maintains a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Circle of Quality in the Illinois ExceleRate System or NAEYC Accreditation, within a given fiscal year, is counted as engaged for that year.

### ExceleRate Green

A Green rating means a center has had a DCFS license for at least one year. This is a requirement for engagement in ExceleRate.

#### 1. Engaging in ExceleRate while having a Green Circle of Quality

Within a given fiscal year, a program that is engaged in ExceleRate must accomplish 50% of the following items:

- Complete and submit the “ExceleRate Licensed Center Application.”
- Connect with an Action for Children Quality Specialist.

- Attend ExceleRate Illinois Orientation. (This is required for the program administrator.)
- Attend ECERS-3. (This is attended by the administrator and 50% of staff.)
- All staff are able to pull up and review their Illinois Gateways Professional Development Record (PDR) to create a Professional Development Plan (PDP).
- All staff submit official transcripts to Gateways to Opportunity.
- All staff complete and submit applications for Gateways credentials.
- Help staff attain Credentials and trainings based on program needs for Circle of Quality (Professional Development Advising).
- 50% of staff must complete 50% of Bronze Circle trainings.

For a non-licensed program to be counted as engaged in ExceleRate they must apply and receive a DCFS license within the fiscal year.

**2. Engaging in ExceleRate while having a Bronze Circle of Quality**

Once a program receives a Bronze Circle of Quality, a program can be counted as engaged by completing the yearly required report called a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQUIP). Programs that achieve the Bronze Circle of Quality can hold it for three years. During the three years, the program will need to complete an annual report every 12 months, updating program information and working towards achieving the Silver Circle of Quality. The Bronze Circle of Quality cannot be renewed.

**3. Engaging in ExceleRate while having a Silver or Gold Circle of Quality**

Working towards and/or maintaining an ExceleRate Silver or Gold Circle of Quality is a process with too many parts to describe here. Once a program has a Silver or Gold rating, it can be counted as engaged if a minimum of 50% of requirements are completed within a fiscal year. Programs receive a checklist of requirements that cover the areas of teaching & learning, family & community engagement, leadership & management, and qualifications & continuing education.

**Family Child Care Providers**

The same percentages apply to Family Child Care Programs using the Family Child Care Program ExceleRate checklists.



*“You have to think outside the box because the box can only hold you for so long.”*

– John Borrero, Executive Director (2018-2022)



123 Madison Street, Suite 209  
and 171 S. Oak Park Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 613-6122

[www.collab4kids.org](http://www.collab4kids.org)