



Collaboration for  
Early Childhood  
*Strong Start, Bright Future*

**Annual Progress Report to  
Oak Park Elementary School, District 97  
Oak Park River Forest High School, District 200  
Village of Oak Park  
Period Covered by Report: July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016  
Date of Report: 11/18/2016**

**Introduction:**

Before we report the Collaboration's activities over the past year, we would like to share a scenario:

*A four-year-old boy recently entered preschool. After an initial period where everything went well, he began having angry outbursts. The boy would become frustrated and stomp around the room, making loud noises, disrupting his classmates and sometimes ending the episode by covering his ears, letting the teacher know that he did not want her to approach him. The teacher and the preschool's administrator spoke to the boy's mother expressing concern that they were not sure if they would be able to keep him in the program. The boy's mother was very concerned. Moving him to a different preschool didn't seem to make sense. Would it make him lose faith in himself and more likely to act up in a new preschool or kindergarten? She worried that he was receiving very poor messages about whether he could be successful in school.*

Every day, the Collaboration for Early Childhood works to ensure that children, parents, and early care providers have the resources and assistance they need to handle situations like the one described above. We conduct a program that includes developmental (including social-emotional) screenings for all preschool children. We provide professional development training and coaching to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) providers to improve competencies and increase program quality. We inform families about supports and how to connect to them. We provide home visiting services to families whose children meet risk criteria. We work with local physicians to ensure that they have the resources and information to partner effectively with ECE providers. And we assist school administrators and physicians with sharing information about the referral process for preschool special education in the Oak Park and River Forest school districts. Because of our work in these areas, parents, like the mom described above, have cohesive early childhood team providing insight into their child with the resources to help their child thrive. In addition, we partner with Chapin Hall at University of Chicago to study the impact of our efforts and annually share the results with our community.

## **Report on Activities Completed in 2015-2016 Program Year**

The Collaboration for Early Childhood made significant progress toward establishing an integrated early childhood system of high quality services and programs in our community during 2015 - 2016. Our work is guided by twelve committees comprised of 195 volunteers that met 82 times over the past year. We continue to focus our work on five key areas:

### **1. Developmental Screening and Referral System: Our Work to Ensure Early and Periodic Screenings for All Children in the Community**

- The Collaboration expanded the reach of developmental screening work from 20 sites in 2015 to 30 sites in 2016. Included in the 30 sites are 16 child care centers and preschools, 11 family child care providers, 1 social service agency and 3 medical practices.
- All 30 providers implemented a formal developmental screening program using the web-based Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2).
- The Collaboration's Developmental Screening Coordinator provided up to six hours of technical support each month to the 10 new participating sites and up to two hours per month to the sites that participated in the program the prior year. The three medical practices each received 15 hours of technical support during the year to help ensure successful implementation.
- The participating early learning and medical programs achieved a 77% completion rate for the ASQ-3, with 1,508 out of a possible 1,913 children completing developmental screenings. The participating programs achieved a 72% completion rate for the ASQ: SE-2 (social and emotional screening), with 1,310 out of a possible 1,813 children completing social-emotional screenings.
- The Collaboration also provided 1,311 children with hearing vision screenings at 35 childcare and preschool sites in Oak Park and River Forest.
- The Collaboration's Development Screening Coordinator has worked closely with providers this year to ensure that they document follow-up referrals for children whose screenings indicate a need for extra support. The Collaboration is collecting data on how many children are referred to Early Intervention services, Early Childhood Special Education, medical providers, or private therapists.
- The Collaboration offered five workshops to participating providers aimed at increasing their familiarity and comfort with referral processes to Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education services for children with identified needs.
- The Collaboration also hosted two educational meetings with pediatricians' practices to provide information and resources on making referrals to early childhood special education and supporting parents and children in building social emotional resiliency in early childhood.

## 2. Parent Information and Support Programs

An integral component of the Collaboration's work is providing information, resources and supports to parents, so that they can make the best decisions about quality early care and services for their children.

- The Collaboration's contract with Parenthesis Family Center ended December 31, 2015. On that date, Parenthesis reported that 56 families were actively engaged in the Parents as Teachers Program and that they had sufficient funds to support their involvement. In addition, Parenthesis reported more than 900 contacts with parents of very young children through an array of activities. Of the 900 contacts, 490 consisted of information packets distributed at outreach activities and events.
- The Collaboration transitioned the contract to Easterseals and the Partnering with Parents program began in late January. Easterseals has established good working relationships with many providers across the Oak Park and River Forest community. The Oak Park Regional Housing Center has agreed to distribute brochures about the Partnering with Parents program to renters known to have very young children and to ask apartment building owners to place posters up in their common areas. Easterseals also worked with faith-based organizations, and met with District 97's social workers, psychologists and nurses to inform them about the home visiting program. Twenty-two families are currently involved in the program

Parenthesis retained the 56 families actively engaged in Parents as Teachers at the end of the Contract. This impacted the work plan for Easterseals. Easterseals' caseload was lower than anticipated when the contract was executed because Parenthesis families were not transitioned. We also experienced a setback with data collection for the home visiting program. We were unable to secure a data sharing agreement with Parenthesis for the families they serve in home visiting programs, including those who had been served under our contract with them. The Collaboration plans to work over the course of the next year to see if we can enact an information sharing agreement that is mutually beneficial.

- The Collaboration hired consultant, Jeanna Capito, to help us restructure our Parenting Resource Program. She facilitated eight focus groups, prepared, distributed and analyzed a survey completed by 444 parents/guardians to better understand the needs of families with very young children. She also conducted a community scan including key stakeholder interviews to ensure knowledge of the resources currently available and the development of a strategy to address unmet needs. The Collaboration has received her report and is starting to implement key recommendations.
- The Collaboration published our 2016-2017 edition of the Early Childhood Resource Directory in January 2016. By June 30, 2016 we had distributed more than 10,000 copies.
- On November 12, 2015, the Collaboration worked with several local sponsors, including Oak Park Public Library, River Forest Public Library, OPRF Community Foundation, and The Book Table, to host a talk by Dr. Dana Suskind, M.D., author of Thirty Millions Words: Building a Child's Brain. Despite inclement weather, the event was well-attended at a packed Holmes School auditorium.

### **3. Professional Development and Public Preschool Coordination**

- At our 13th Annual Symposium on February 27, 2016, "Turning Obstacles into Opportunities: Navigating the Tough Stuff," the Collaboration hosted 365 early childhood professionals. At 28 workshops, we provided a variety of innovative methods and information on supporting every child's learning needs.
- Our Professional Development Coordinator providing a series of trainings on *Creative Curriculum*, a comprehensive research based program that promotes best practices in early learning settings and meets the criteria for use established by the Illinois State Board of Education. Ninety-four early learning professionals attended seven workshops focused on three content areas: Creative Arts, Science, and Mathematics.
- Our Professional Development Coordinator helped sixteen family childcare providers and three family childcare assistants apply for Illinois's new Family Child Care Credential, which was unveiled in July 2016. The FCC is the first step that family child care providers need to complete to engage in Illinois's ExceleRate Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- The Collaboration also provided coaching and workshops to the faculty at two Preschool for All programs.
- We promoted and supported use of a performance and growth report from Teaching Strategies GOLD that enabled teachers to observe incremental growth in individual children. We provided site-specific training and support help staff use assessments and tailor instruction to meet individual children's needs.
- The Collaboration continued to support Roundtables for childcare directors (16 regular participants) and family childcare providers (15 regular participants). These bimonthly meetings provide two-hours of Gateways Registry-approved professional development credit.

### **4. Unified Early Childhood Database**

- The Collaboration worked with Chapin Hall to issue two reports. The first report in September 2015 identified progress targets for data collection and outcome indicators and the activities that would support progress. The second report issued in February 2016 provided a second data point for the 11 outcome indicators incorporated in the contract.
- The Collaboration received data from District 97 to ensure that we have enough information to complete a solid longitudinal analysis of our work. Chapin Hall and the Collaboration recently reviewed and modified the data list of District 97.
- We have worked with Chapin Hall to ensure that Collaboration staff can now run reports directly from our CiviCRM database. This has provided us with more independence and timeliness in gathering information about the children enrolled in publicly-funded preschool programs.

## **Attachment A**

### **Work Plan for 2016-2017**

#### **Developmental Screening**

1. Over the summer we expanded the ASQ-3 developmental screening program to three additional sites. We will continue to provide technical support and consultation to the 30 sites already participating in the project with a focus on increasing the number of completed screens and the number of referrals and follow up with children whose screenings indicate a need for further assessment. We will coordinate outreach and information to families to increase understanding of the importance of developmental screening. Additionally, we expect the number of sites to grow in smaller increments each year so we are exploring a hybrid (self-paced online and face-to-face) training modules to allow programs to complete training modules throughout the year and begin to screen with new enrollment or at the next structured developmental screening round.
2. We hosted a Physicians Breakfast meeting in October titled “Gender Identity in Early Childhood” attended by more than 40 medical and early learning providers. A second breakfast meeting is scheduled for April 2017.
3. We will continue to work with Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and school districts to align programs and smooth transitions for families so that needed services are provided.

#### **Parent Information and Support**

1. Work with home visiting programs to establish a coordinated intake approach among agencies that are in a position to make referrals to the home visiting programs.
2. Expand the number of families actively engaged in the home visiting program offered by Easterseals to 40, working with all home visiting providers to coordinate intake and ensure that programs funded through other local and federal sources are prioritized for enrollment so that the contract funds are used to expand upon existing programs.
3. Continue to identify and implement creative strategies for outreach to families with infants and toddlers that meet eligibility criteria for home visiting.
4. Adopt the Parenting Resource Program strategic framework and implement prioritized objectives in conjunction with the Parenting Resource Program Guidance Committee.
5. Continue to promote the website and increase the number of connections to our social media outlets to promote increased use as a resource for parents and early childhood providers.

#### **Professional Development and Publicly Funded Preschool Coordination**

1. Promote and support the participation of up to 35 family child care providers and child care and preschool staff in the Illinois Credential Program.
2. In July, initiated an expansion of the *Creative Curriculum* Training series by offering a training series of eight workshops that use the Learning Studies and Project Approach Component of Creative Curriculum. Project Approach is a method of teaching that incorporates all learning areas: literacy and communication, problem solving and math, technology, the arts, and social emotional. The focus of the trainings is to identify social-emotional learning objectives and integrate strategies to support these objectives into all learning activities.
3. Offer a symposium, “Here and Now: Respecting Early Childhood” on February 25, 2017.
4. Promote strategies with the Publicly Funded Preschool sites to find and enroll children with the highest needs in Head Start and Preschool for All. Explore a community organizing approach to the outreach and determine if it is a viable method for finding children under age five whose families are not yet connected in a meaningful way to the Oak Park River Forest community.

5. Support the Preschool for All Programs in the spring 2017 re-competition process for contracts.
6. Continue to work with Preschool for All and Head Start sites to promote use of GOLD assessment data to inform instruction tailored to meet individual children's developmental needs.

### **Unified Early Childhood Database**

1. Establish strategies and targets for making progress on benchmarks.
2. Complete the development of a user-friendly front-end interface for use by Collaboration staff.
3. Continue to transfer and link data across multiple data sources.
4. Develop a stronger profile of children under age five using the information from SNAP, TANF, CCAP, EI and WIC. Identify one or two priority questions for our research agenda.
5. Continue to identify data sources, modify data collection strategies and identify possible new tools in order to improve accuracy and completeness of data collection.

### **Organization Capacity**

1. Continue board development to enable members to meet the funding needs of the organization, and to provide professional expertise and guidance to operations when appropriate.
2. Engage in robust grant seeking.
3. Review the organizational infrastructure and identify best practices for staffing and practices to ensure adequate human resources to meet the demands of the growing early childhood system in Oak Park and River Forest.
4. Effectively use our new communications infrastructure to further increase understanding of the Collaboration's work, the importance of early learning and the innovative approach Oak Park has taken to address shortages and inequities in early childhood.