



IGA Progress Report 7/1/2017 - 6/30/2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Highlights from FY 2017-18

Fiscal Year 2017-18 was a year of significant program growth and organizational development for the Collaboration for Early Childhood. Major strides were made this year in building the comprehensive system of integrated high-quality early learning programs envisioned by our founders. One of the significant changes was a transition in executive leadership. As part of this process, the Board of Directors engaged a national search for a new Executive Director and John Borrero started October 1, 2018.

The following list outlines evidence of the Collaboration's growth and significant achievements during the 2017-18 fiscal year:

Growth of the New Parenting Resource Program. Last year was a period of growth in building a continuum of services for the Parenting Resource Program (PRP). This program uses a variety of outreach materials to educate families about child development topics and program services, and over 7,500 informational materials were distributed to parents. The Collaboration for Early Childhood participated in many community events, facilitated the Week of the Young Child with 15 partner organizations, and organized a new Early Childhood Resource Fair and Child Care Meet & Greet. Other new parenting programs included a community ambassador program for hard to reach families with Community Organizing & Family Issues (COFI) and the Chicago Parent Program (a parenting skills training program) in partnership with three Oak Park and River Forest early childhood programs: Easterseals, The Day Nursery, and Future Leaders Learning Center. The Collaboration also implemented a coordinated intake process for home visiting in partnership with Easterseals, Hephzibah and New Moms. As part of this process there is one contact point for referrals and intake for home visiting. The Village of Oak Park's Public Health Nurse serves as the hub for home visiting programs in the Oak Park and River Forest area.

Preliminary Screening for Publicly Funded Preschool Programs. In our continuing effort to strengthen the intake process in all of Oak Park's publicly funded preschool programs, a coordinated intake process has been agreed to by all four programs in Oak Park (ABC Toon Town, The Day Nursery, Hephzibah Head Start and District 97's Pre-Kindergarten Partnership (PKP)). The Collaboration now conducts preliminary screening for these programs, referring families who qualify for additional assessment for program participation. By coordinating this intake process, the Collaboration helps ensure that the most at-risk children in Oak Park and River Forest are able to avail themselves of this high-quality early education resource. The Collaboration's role as the entry point for the Longfellow PKP program in particular provides meaningful support to District 97.

Professional Development Opportunities. Over the past year, 10 workshops on social emotional learning were attended by 109 early learning providers from 28 sites. Workshops included:

- *Decision Makers: Facilitating Play & Navigating Feelings*
- *Community Helpers: Connecting Books with Emotions & Curiosities*
- *Adapting Activities and Lesson Planning for Diverse Learners*

In addition, the 15th Annual Symposium: *Growing Together* was held on February 24, 2018. The keynote speaker was Angela Searcy, PhD. There were 381 early learning providers that attended the conference. Of those attendees, 71% live or work in Oak Park.

Big Ideas of Early Mathematics by Erikson Institute. This past year, the Collaboration participated in the *Big Ideas of Early Mathematics* by Erikson Institute's Early Math Collaborative. As part of this joint effort, a professional learning community was formed for 12 Oak Park teachers. From February thru May 2018, there were 4 in-person sessions plus an additional online component. The initiative increased the comfort level of early childhood teachers in mathematic instructional strategies and allowed them an opportunity to connect with each other. Child assessment information was promoted to monitor instructional efficacy and student progress.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant Services. An early childhood mental health consultant educated, trained and coached early childhood providers at The Day Nursery, ABC Toon Town and Hephzibah Head Start, which serve many vulnerable children. The consultant worked on building the capacity of program staff to address challenging behaviors and mental health issues by conducting child and classroom observations, designing and implementing specific interventions tailored to children's individual needs, providing guidance on classroom management, providing staff crisis intervention, assisting staff in linking families to community services, and providing staff support for reflective practice.

Steady Growth of Early Detection Screening. A steady number of preschool age children were screened in FY 2017-18 for vision, hearing, developmental and social-emotional well-being. The developmental screening program, now in its fifth year, continues to make screening available to young children through new avenues each year. Growth in the reach of this program is due in large part to the efforts of our Developmental Screening Coordinator whose responsibilities include educating providers and parents on the importance of early detection and helping the former set up developmental screening programs at their locations. Notable progress was also made in tracking post-screening referrals and linkages by improving provider follow-up documentation.

Use of Unified Early Childhood Database. An in-depth report was generated from the Unified Early Childhood Database which linked Collaboration, state administrative, and kindergarten registration data to provide a unique look at the 2015-16 kindergarten cohort. The report informed discussions by the Collaboration's Measurement & Evaluation Committee that generated research questions to help the Collaboration better support children and their families, and established key findings to monitor progress over time. This database is the lynchpin of the longitudinal study that the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) Contract for Services supports and which now has data points from four kindergarten cohorts that can be used to detect trends

and identify patterns. Significant progress was made on the technical back-end of the system to enable more timely, direct access to query results. Looking closely at specific data sets also helped our Professional Development committee identify the need for an early math training for staff in the Preschool for All and Head Start programs.

DETAILED ACTIVITY BY PROGRAM AREA

Parent Information and Support

Parent Information. The Collaboration continued to grow its reach to engage with families of young children.

- The Parenting Resource Program Committee Partners hosted two outreach events during the report period.
- The Parenting Resource Program Committee attended many community events: Fall Fest; A Day In Our Village (at Rehm Park); an MLK Day Event; and multiple Thursday Night Out events.
- The program continued to grow digital communication strategies and build an online presence. We ended the reporting period with 600 Facebook followers, 110 Twitter followers, 198 Instagram followers, and 14 followers on Pinterest, which is our newest platform.
- A bi-monthly e-newsletter was sent to parents/caregivers in Oak Park and River Forest.
- For the second year, the Parenting Resource Program Committee led efforts to support a community-wide celebration during the Week of the Young Child (in April 2018) including compiling a community calendar that listed events throughout the week. 1,200 of these print calendars were distributed throughout the community. A Facebook calendar post reached over 1,500 people and had 15 shares. There were 15 community partners that hosted Week of the Young Child programs and many reported engaging with new families.
- In May 2018, the Parenting Resource Program Committee began distributing early childhood resource bags throughout the community. Approximately 150 bags have been distributed each month since then.
- 10,000 Early Childhood Resource Directories were distributed this year. This was a new edition and it went to locations around town where families visit: community spaces; preschools; realtor offices; local businesses, etc. The directory was also distributed to Kindergarten families at all eight District 97 elementary schools.

Parent Support. The Collaboration prepared for an evidence-based, research-informed parenting workshop series called the Chicago Parent Program. In February 2018, we issued a request for proposals for vendors interested in implementing the Chicago Parent Program. This program is a 12-session group parenting program designed to strengthen parenting skills and communication and improve young children's behavior. In April, Easterseals was selected as the lead agency with three co-facilitators including The Day Nursery, Future Leaders Learning Center, and an early intervention specialist. In June 2018, Easterseals staff, one staff from each co-facilitator agency, and the Parent Resource Program Coordinator completed the Chicago Parent Program training. Three workshop series will be offered throughout FY 2018-19. Parents and caregivers who attend are expected to feel more confident as parents and have stronger, more positive relationships with their children.

Parent Leadership Trainings with Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI). COFI and the Collaboration's Parenting Resource Program Coordinator have been working together to lead trainings and support parents in Oak Park and River Forest. The goal of this partnership is to engage and empower parents who often feel that their voices aren't heard in the community.

COFI's unique family focused leadership development and community organizing model are used to achieve this goal. Training provides parents the tools to become early learning leaders and peer advocates. In FY 2017-18, 14 parents participated in the Phase 1 training, *Self, Family and Team*. In addition, we hosted two Phase 1 trainings. Collaboration staff attended Phase 2: *Community Outreach and Action/Train-the-Trainer Training*. In June 2018, COFI and the Parent Resource Coordinator hosted a one-day training on *Community Outreach and Action* which led to five parents signing up to be 2018 Summer Early Childhood Community Ambassadors.

Home Visiting Coordinated Intake. Coordinated intake is an initiative of the Collaboration for Early Childhood in collaboration with Easterseals, Hephzibah and New Moms. This program is designed to make it easy for social service providers, physicians, hospitals and child care providers to refer families by providing a single point of entry for home visiting programs in Oak Park. Coordinated intake removes the need for referring partners to have to determine which home visiting program makes the most sense for their clients or to have to keep track of multiple names and contact numbers. It also ensures that each family is referred to the most appropriate family support service based on their needs and the availability and requirements of the service. In November 2017, the Home Visiting Task Force hosted a training about the Home Visiting Coordinated Intake process. Twelve community partners learned about the importance and benefits of home visiting programs and how community partners can make a referral. From January through June 2018, nine families were referred through coordinated intake to our community partners.

Home Visiting Services. Easterseals, the Collaboration's provider of Partnering with Parents, reports the following accomplishments in FY 2017-18:

- Connected with parents on a deeper level through home visits, group connections and timely referrals. In a parent satisfaction survey, 87.5% of parents were very satisfied with the program.
- Received 29 referrals.
- Completed 395 home visits.
- Actively engaged 14 new families, for a total of 38 families participating in the program by the end of the fiscal year. Two families discontinued service primarily due to work schedule conflicts and moving outside the community. Families referred to the program due to developmental concerns at birth often cited frequent medical appointments and conflicting work schedules as reasons for nonparticipation, reducing the intake rate.
- Held 15 *Group Connections* sessions to promote socialization of the children and increase social connections and parent knowledge about important early childhood milestones.

Public Preschool Programs

Preschool for All (PFA) Program Support. The Collaboration supported all PFA programs with the launch of the newly revised Teaching Strategies GOLD child assessment platform, and provided valuable insight on the new system to publicly funded preschool staff throughout this year of change.

Public Preschool Coordinated Intake and Outreach. In FY 2017-18, the Collaboration screened 154 Oak Park and River Forest families through the public preschool coordinated intake

process and 110 children were referred for further preschool screening. Families were asked a series of preliminary questions around topics such as income, developmental concerns, residency, and family situations to determine eligibility. The Collaboration also conducted outreach efforts through the Parenting Resource Program to help families become aware of the public preschool programs. As part of this outreach, 100 public preschool posters were posted around town in local businesses, laundromats, grocery stores, and central locations.

Preschool for All (PFA) Funding. The Collaboration supported all PFA programs with developing, writing and submitting the successful re-compete grant for continued funding of the PFA programs. Data from our Unified Early Childhood Database also provided a unique picture of our community’s most vulnerable families. Some of this insight is provided in the database section below.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant. The Collaboration’s early childhood mental health consultant provided consultation services to:

- Continue to improve the capacity of early childhood providers to address social-emotional issues;
- Establish a supportive professionally-guided opportunity for early childhood teachers to discuss behavioral/social-emotional development and their personal and professional responses;
- Identify key mental health issues in the early childhood setting.

From October 2017 thru June 2018, the consultant spent approximately 25 hours per month with 14 staff members at three centers. There were 129 children whose teachers received this early childhood mental health consultation.

An evaluation of staff who participated found that:

- 25% of teachers reported an increase in their ability to identify and address problematic behavior;
- 21% of teachers reported a decrease in stress experienced due to student behavior.

Professional Development

Engagement of License-Exempt Providers. Thanks to a data-sharing agreement with Illinois Action for Children, the Collaboration engaged early childhood providers in a variety of professional development activities. In addition, the Collaboration supported 22 license-exempt providers in attaining newly required training hours and credentials.

Annual Symposium. The 15th Annual Symposium: *Growing Together* was held on February 24, 2018. The keynote speaker was Angela Searcy, PhD. There were 31 workshops and 12 interactive “play stations,” and representatives from 17 organizations shared resources and educational opportunities with attendees. There were 381 early learning professionals and parents that attended the conference. Of those attendees, 71% live or work in Oak Park or River Forest. Participants were able to receive professional credit from a variety of accrediting institutions for their participation.

Roundtables. An average of 16 child care directors and 10 family child care providers participated in roundtables sponsored by the Collaboration for Gateways Registry approved professional development credit. Topics for the Director Roundtables were: Stress and Burnout for the Child Care Worker, Equity in Early Childhood Education, Illinois Farm to School and Sensory Processing in the Early Childhood Classroom. Topics for the Family Child Care Roundtables were: Development of Math Skills in the Young Child, Nature Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom and Stress and Burnout for Early Childhood Staff.

ExceleRate. The Collaboration's Professional Development Coordinator, in conjunction with Action for Children, engaged four programs in working towards a Silver Circle of Quality in the ExceleRate Illinois system. ExceleRate Illinois is a statewide quality recognition and improvement system designed to make continuous quality improvement an everyday priority among early learning providers. Completing the four trainings offered by Action for Children, which prepares a program for a Silver rating, also gave them access to funds to purchase materials and equipment the programs needed for the Silver Rating.

Trainings. Over the past year, 10 workshops were held on social-emotional learning. These were attended by 83 early learning providers from 26 programs. Examples of those workshops include:

- *Family Communication - Connecting Social-Emotional Illinois Early Learning & Development Standards at School and Home*
- *Problem Solvers & Challengers - Understanding Stress & Conflict Resolution*
- *Competent & Confident Learners.*

Coaching. 200 hours of coaching on integrating social-emotional learning objectives into the curriculum using a project-based learning approach were provided at 6 child care centers and 4 child care homes.

Oak Park Police Department Trainings. Over a seven-week period, the Collaboration provided training to 91 Oak Park police officers. Topics included:

- *The Roles Of The Collaboration And The Police Department: How Are They Alike/Different;*
- *How We Work Together: Referrals, Importance Of Referrals For Most At Risk, What To Look For;*
- *Many Components Of Collaboration, Early Childhood System, Outreach Efforts;*
- *Why We Should Care?*

The Collaboration launched a “Call the Collab” campaign, printing calling cards for police to easily carry and distribute to families they encounter with young children.

Developmental Screening

Screenings. The developmental screening program is on par with last year’s high level of the number of children reached for developmental, social-emotional, hearing and vision screenings. 29 sites (17 child care centers and preschools, 6 family child care providers, 3 community service agencies, and 3 medical practices) participated in the developmental screening program.

- 1,787 children received either a developmental or a social-emotional screen. There were 2 fewer programs in operation this year from last year which resulted in fewer children in the screening project.

- 1,711 children received a developmental screening.
- 1,585 children received a social-emotional screening.
- 1,313 children received hearing screening at 36 child care and preschool sites.
- 1,367 children received vision screening at 37 child care and preschool sites.

Training and Support. Our Developmental Screening Coordinator continued to provide training and support for sites participating in the screening program.

- 11 staff from 3 newly participating sites received 15 hours of training on how to implement a successful screening program in preparation for the next year.
- 127 hours of mentoring on program implementation was provided to 23 early childhood care and education sites (up to 6 hours each per month), 3 community service programs (up to 15 hours of technical support each per month) and 3 medical practices (up to 15 hours of technical support each per month).
- 34 early childhood providers from 20 sites attended some combination of the 4 workshops on the referral process and services for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education, and a series on how to support children with delays in the classroom.
- The Physicians Network breakfast hosted 44 medical providers and early learning leaders to increase their knowledge on recent legislation on social emotional learning and issues such as anxiety and depression.

Assessments and Referrals. Participating sites have improved in making referrals for additional assessments or services when indicated after a developmental screening and in recording their actions in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) database. Ninety percent of participating sites now record their follow-up activities. A total of 51 children were referred for additional vision or hearing assessments. We have received information from 31 parents (61%) confirming that their child was assessed and received treatment, if indicated, for vision, and 8 parents (62%) reported that their child’s hearing was assessed and received treatment, if indicated. Additionally:

- 26 children were referred to Early Intervention (EI) for further evaluation.
- 7 children were referred to Early Childhood Special Education in Districts 97, 90 and other area school districts as appropriate.
- There were 44 children referred to physicians, private service providers, home visiting and Pre-Kindergarten/Preschool for All programs for evaluation for service eligibility.

Unified Early Childhood Database

In November 2017, the Collaboration presented a preliminary overview of the data resulting from a deeper examination of the District 97 kindergarten class of 2015-16, which was funded in part by a grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation. This grant has enabled us to develop our own research agenda by asking deeper questions of the data collected based on the local context of our work, with a goal of using the information generated to design appropriate and more powerful system responses.

Some of the highlights from this additional research include:

- Nearly one out of every six kindergartners, 15%, come from families that received food assistance subsidies from the state at or before the time they enrolled in District 97 as kindergartners.

- 58% of African-American children received food subsidies during or prior to their kindergarten enrollment, compared to 24% of Hispanic and 2% of white children.
- Less than one out of every ten children entering kindergarten that year was enrolled in an early childhood program paid for with child care assistance subsidies for low-income families from the state. Of those, 71% were African-American, 17% were Hispanic, and there were no white children.
- 88% of the students entering kindergarten that year attended an early learning program of some kind.
- 95% of all white students, 91% of students identifying their race as “other”, 80% of all Hispanic students, and 65% of all African-American students attended an early learning program prior to kindergarten.
- In general, boys are much more likely than girls to be referred and receive interventions for disabilities. 80% of referrals were for boys.

This new research was performed by our data partner, Chapin Hall, which linked state administrative data from SNAP, CCAP, IDHS, Early Intervention, and District 97 for this unusual insight into our early learners.

Some of these findings were included in District 97’s successful reapplication for state Preschool for All funds, which provide public assistance to families who qualify based on income, developmental delays, or other criteria. These funds go toward District 97’s preschool program at Longfellow Elementary School, and to Day Nursery and ABC Toon Town.

The data findings reported in November, and in our September 2017 report to the IGA Governing Board, inform the program work done by the various Collaboration committees throughout the year. Specific progress goals were outlined in the February 2018 Plan for Progress.

In particular, our data work helped our Professional Development committee identify the need for an early math training for staff in the Preschool for All and Head Start programs.

Major progress was made on enabling Collaboration staff to have direct, self-service access to many of the integrated data sources that Chapin Hall links in a secure, de-identified system. This allows for quicker turnaround and more flexibility with the questions we may have of the data.

Organizational Growth and Visibility

- In July 2018, the Collaboration Board of Directors brought on five new board members.
- The Collaboration hired a Director of Operations in March 2018. This hiring was made to strengthen the organization’s internal operations to support its continuing growth and complexity.
- Collaboration staff served on 8 state and regional committees focused on early childhood issues, professional development, developmental screening, community systems development, and systems integration and alignment.
- The Collaboration provided consultation for presentations on our work to 11 communities and organizations. One of the consultations included participation in an early childhood community systems initiative with the Grand Victoria Foundation. The purpose of this

group was to identify leadership skills to foster development and share this information with the State of Illinois and other groups to spearhead growth in the early learning community.

- Digital communications increased through monthly e-newsletters and more frequent social media postings.
- The Village of Oak Park created a video on the Collaboration's developmental screening program. This airs regularly on the Village's TV station and is on the Collaboration's website.
- The Collaboration participated in community outreach events such as A Day in Our Village, Barrie Fest, Oaktoberfest, and the Good Life Race.
- Financial policies and procedures were reviewed and modified for accuracy and relevance.
- The Collaboration board of directors engaged in a national search for the new Executive Director, and John Borrero started in this role on October 1, 2018.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR FY18/19

Parent Information and Support

Home Visiting

- Strengthen relationships with other agencies in the community by having program staff attend staff meetings at referral agencies to help them understand the program better and how to refer a family.
- Continue to increase participation of fathers.
- Improve staff support, training and professional development.
- Serve as lead agency to plan and implement three cycles of Chicago Parent Program.
- Work with the Oak Park Department of Public Health to ensure that 100% of families receiving family care are referred for home visiting.

Parenting Resource Program

- Support Easterseals and co-facilitator agencies as they implement 3 cycles of Chicago Parent Program.
- Host two resource fairs.
- Improve parent engagement in Collaboration-sponsored and supported activities by establishing a baseline of engagement across the continuum of the Parenting Resource Program.
- Continue to support Early Childhood Community Ambassadors and Parent Leadership Trainings.

Public Preschool Coordination

- Develop a community organizing program to reach hard to engage at-risk families and encourage them to enroll their children in publicly-funded preschool.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant Services

- Provide mental health consultation at each of the three sites for three hours every other week throughout the 8-month school year.
- Continue to provide early childhood mental health consultation services for publicly funded preschool programs.
- Continue to improve the capacity of early childhood providers to address social-emotional issues.
- Establish a supportive professionally-guided opportunity for early childhood teachers to discuss behavioral/social-emotional development and their personal and professional responses.
- Identify key mental health issues in the early childhood setting.

Professional Development

2019 Annual Symposium

- Plan, develop, implement and assess 16th Annual Symposium.

Ongoing Professional Development

- Continue/develop negotiations with New Teacher Center to provide “Equity in the Early Childhood Classroom” training series (total of 12 hours) to center based providers in Oak Park and River Forest and D97 Faculty.
- Implement “Equity in the Early Childhood Classroom” training series.
- Provide 8 additional hours of professional development for center-based and family child care providers in Oak Park and River Forest.
- Continue hosting Roundtables for directors and family child care providers.

Engagement of License-Exempt Providers (CCAP)

- Continue to access updated Action For Children license-exempt list.
- Keep informed of IDHS changes/updating of requirements, due dates, etc. for CCAP recipients and communicate this information.
- Maintain relationships with license-exempt providers through emails, postal mail and phone calls.
- Continue to facilitate online trainings, technical skill support and computer access (library).
- Provide support for trainings and accessing resources to meet CCAP requirements as these additional requirements are defined and communicated.

Staff Qualification Survey

- Administer the survey, collect the results, and share with the Professional Development Committee.

Professional Development Advising

- Create/advertise a “training” page at Collaboration website.
- Provide professional development advisement.

ExceleRate

- Maintenance/advancement and engagement of programs.

Developmental Screening

- Maintain the number of children screened within 3% of FY 2017-18 screenings.
- Add 1 new child care program, 1 medical practice and 1 community service organization to the screening program.
- Increase the number of completed screenings by including the screening consent form in center and preschool enrollment packets and requiring screening completion for program attendance where possible.
- Increase the frequency of email reminders to bolster screening follow-up activity.
- Host 2 breakfast seminars for pediatricians and other medical providers.
- Continue to provide technical support and consultation to participating sites.

- Continue to coordinate outreach and provide information to families on the value of early detection screening.
- Continue to offer developmental screening program implementation training for participating sites.
- Use new logo treatments to increase community awareness of different components of the Collaboration's work.
- Expand partnership with Riveredge Hospital to support the Physicians' Network Breakfast meeting and provide extended professional education to physicians around early and middle childhood and adolescence.
- Continue to explore and incorporate the use of online and hybrid training modules for developmental screening.
- Continue to work with Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education and school districts align programs and ensure that children referred for additional testing and service receive them.

Unified Early Childhood Database

- Continue progress on targets set in the 2018 Plan for Progress.
- Refine the development of a user-friendly front-end interface for the Unified Early Childhood Database.
- Continue to transfer and link data across multiple data sources.
- Expand the profile of Oak Park and River Forest children under five with integrated data from CCAP, EI, SNAP, TANF and WIC.
- Continue to modify data collection strategies and identify new tools in order to improve the accuracy and completeness of data collection.
- Release the results from Erikson Institute's Early Development Instrument (EDI) Pilot Project to map the early childhood environment in Oak Park. We will work throughout the year with District 97, the Village of Oak Park, and many other community partners to understand the developmental strengths and needs of our kindergartners by census tract and in the community as a whole. We will initiate a conversation for community partners and policy makers to respond to these findings. The EDI results will provide guidance for Oak Park to determine where to intervene and better align resources as well as help identify policy responses and additional assets and programs for our youngest learners before they enter kindergarten.

Organizational Capacity

- Identify new board candidates with professional expertise to guide the organization with the ability to conduct private fundraising and continue supportive relationships.
- Increase efforts to identify and secure new sources of grant funding.
- Identify best practices for early childhood staffing and hiring to help local providers meet the increased demand for early childhood care.
- Increase community awareness of the Collaboration, the services we provide, Oak Park's innovative approach to addressing the need for high-quality early childhood education, and the short and long-term benefits of early learning.