



Collaboration for
Early Childhood
Strong Start, Bright Future

IGA Progress Report 7/1/16 -6/30/17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Highlights from FY 2017

FY 2017 was a year of extraordinary program growth and organizational development at the Collaboration for Early Childhood. Major strides were made in building the comprehensive system of integrated high-quality early learning programs envisioned by our founders and restated in our newly worded mission statement.

Creation of New Parenting Resource Program A major accomplishment in 2017 was the redesign of the Parenting Resource Program (PRP). A needs assessment conducted in the spring of 2016 provided the foundation for the development of strategies for improving access to information on child development, early childhood resources, and child-centered activities for parents and child development professionals. The first step in restructuring the program was to hire a full-time Parent Resource Coordinator in February who will coordinate the expanded agenda.

Steady Growth of Early Detection Screening The developmental screening program, now in its third year, continues to grow, screening more pre-k children every year. A record number of pre-k children were screened in FY 2017 for vision, hearing, developmental progress and social-emotional well-being at child care centers and homes and preschools, and, now, the River Forest Public Library and Wonder Works Children's Museum. The steady 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. Notable progress was also made in tracking post-screening referrals and linkages by improving provider follow-up documentation.

Preliminary Screening for PreKindergarten Partnership The Collaboration now conducts preliminary screening for the PKP program at Longfellow School. By screening families for PKP, the Collaboration helps ensure that the most at-risk children in the Village are able to avail themselves of this quality early education resource. The Collaboration's role as the entry point for PKP also provides meaningful support to District 97.

Engagement of License-Exempt Providers We have, for the first time, made contact with 42 of the previously unknown license-exempt providers in the Village (family, friends and neighbors who provide child care in the home) thanks to a data-sharing agreement with Illinois Action for

Children, which gives us unprecedented access to their contact information. The significance of this development cannot be understated. There are more license-exempt providers in Oak Park and River Forest than all of the licensed child care centers and homes and preschools combined. As such, they have a considerable influence on the school readiness of a substantial number of our pre-k children. Our Early Childhood Consultant began to engage these providers in a variety of professional development activities this summer.

Selection for the Early Development Instrument Pilot Project The Collaboration was one of four Illinois communities selected by the Erikson Institute as a site for their ground-breaking Early Development Instrument Pilot Project (EDI). EDI will map children’s development and the early childhood environment in Oak Park in order to “identify needs and strengths to promote more targeted interventions, equitable distribution and alignment of resources.” Executive Director Carolyn Newberry Schwartz is the point person for the Collaboration on this initiative, which will involve leading and coordinating the effort with D97 Superintendent Carol Kelley.

Building of the Unified Early Childhood Database There have been several noteworthy advancements in the development of the Early Childhood Database. We have secured major data-sharing agreements with the State of Illinois (for CCAP, EI, SNAP, TANF and WIC administrative data), several non-profit agencies, and District 97, which will allow us to create a more complete profile of our youngest children. We have raised private funding for the project through a \$90,000 multi-year grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation. The funds will enable us to conduct an in-depth analysis of school readiness by examining the impact of several different variables on school readiness such as participation in Preschool for All (PFA) and Early Intervention as well as race and income. In terms of the longitudinal study, we now have four data points and are beginning to detect trends and identify patterns.

DETAILED ACTIVITY BY PROGRAM AREA

Developmental Screening

Screenings The developmental screening program experienced an exponential increase in the number of children reached for developmental, social-emotional, hearing and vision screenings:

- 30 sites (17 child care centers and preschools, 9 family child care providers, 1 social service agency, and 3 medical practices) participated in the developmental screening program.
- 1,806 children received either a developmental or a social-emotional screen, a 13.8% increase in children screened from FY 2016, exceeding the 7% increase projected.
- 1,726 children received a developmental screen, a 14.5% increase from FY 2016.
- 1,604 children received a social-emotional screen, a 22.4% increase from FY 2016.
- 1,353 children received a hearing screening at 38 child care and preschool sites, an 8% increase from FY 2016.
- 1,411 children received a vision screening at 38 child care and preschool sites, a 7.6% increase from FY 2016.

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

- 8 staff from 3 new participating sites received 15 hours of training on how to implement a successful screening program.
- 120 hours of mentoring on program implementation was provided to 3 new sites (up to 6 hours each per month), 27 existing sites (up to 4 hours each per month), and 3 medical practices (up to 15 hours of technical support each per month).
- 43 early childhood providers from 21 sites attended 5 workshops on the referral process for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Services and how to support children with delays in the classroom.
- 30 pediatricians and family medical professionals attended a Physicians Network Breakfast meeting on sensory processing and 33 attended a second breakfast on gender identity.

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. A total of 47 children were referred for additional assessments. Ninety percent of participating sites now record their follow up activities. We have received information from 24 parents (53%) confirming that their child was assessed and received treatment, if indicated, for vision and 9 parents (60%) reported that their child's hearing was assessed and received treatment, if indicated. Additionally:

- 22 children were referred to Early Intervention (EI) for an assessment, up from 17 in FY 2016.
- 11 children were referred to Early Childhood Special Education in Districts 97, 90 and other area school districts as appropriate.

- 14 children were referred to physicians and private service providers for developmental assessments and 60 children were referred for hearing or vision assessments.

Parent Information and Support

Restructuring the Program The Parenting Resource Program (PRP), previously housed at Parenthesis Family Center, was absorbed into the Collaboration and revamped in FY 2017. The framework for the reimagined program began in May and June 2016 with a needs assessment conducted through electronic surveys of Oak Park and River Forest parents and early childhood professionals, parent focus groups, and professional interviews. Parent respondents indicated an eagerness to connect with other parents, bemoaned their lack of access to parenting resources, and expressed an interest in learning more about social-emotional and cognitive development and discipline. The professionals who responded identified the need for service coordination and collaboration and communicated an interest in offering more education, support and activities for parents. Recommendations included the hiring of a PRP Coordinator to be housed at the Collaboration and Jennifer Little was hired for the position in February. A 7-member Parent Resource Committee was assembled to plan activities and coordinate resources. In its brief existence, PRP has accomplished the following:

Communications Improved communications with parents

- Developed a communication strategy to reach more families and providers through web development, Twitter, frequent postings on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest
- Promoted the **Week of the Young Child** in April through online communication, social media and the distribution of 1,500 flyers
- Launched a **Kindergarten Readiness Awareness Campaign** in August, sharing information on school registration and tips for making a smooth transition, through online communication, social media and the June Collaboration e-newsletter.

Outreach in the Community Increased outreach efforts and dissemination of information for parents, both online and at community events.

- Produced and distributed 750 summer information outreach cards with summer activity ideas
- Created a playgroup page on the website, providing a forum for connecting with other parents and a resource for finding playgroups
- Created a scholarship page on the website to disseminate information about free and reduced fee activities and programs and those that offer scholarships
- Distributed information on early childhood at A Day in Our Village in June and Barrie Fest and Oaktoberfest in September.

Survey Follow-Up Conducted 2 follow-up surveys to ascertain how and where parents acquire information on parenting and how often they search for information on early childhood programs and activities. The surveys also helped identify parents interested in leading playgroups and serving on the Collaboration's parent committee.

New Coordinated Intake Process for Home Visiting In December 2016, the Collaboration signed a contract with the Oak Park Department of Public Health to establish a coordinated

intake system for the three home visiting programs operating in Oak Park -- Easterseals, the Collaboration's home visiting subcontractor, Hephzibah Children's Association, and New Moms. Studies show that simplifying intake for home visiting programs by centralizing the intake process increases referrals for all programs. The contract stipulates that the Village of Oak Park's Nurse Family Case Manager, hired in June, will be the sole point of contact for all home visiting program referrals and will conduct preliminary screening for program applicants. We believe that the new process will reduce confusion about to whom referrals should be made and help improve the rate of referrals from social service agencies.

Easterseals, our subcontractor for Partnering with Parents, reports the following accomplishments over the past 12 months:

- Hired and trained 2 full-time parent educators
- Received 46 referrals
- Completed 395 home visits
- Actively engaged 19 new families, for a total of 26 families participating in the program by the end of the fiscal year. Four 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 uptake rate.
- Held 13 Group Connections to promote socialization of the children and increase social connections and parent knowledge about important early childhood milestones
- Extended program eligibility from 36 months to 48 months
- Provided a 6-week parenting workshop for 4 families with 5 children
- Provided 2 playgroups for 10 families, including 7 fathers.

Professional Development

Progress on professional development goals and objectives for the year were impeded by the state budget impasse, which reduced state-supported training and created instability in the Child Care Assistance Program. As a result, staff turnover increased as child care enrollment declined.

License-Exempt Providers For the first time, we have made contact with license-exempt providers (family, friends and neighbors who provide child care), a group of providers to whom we previously had no access, thanks to a data-sharing agreement with Illinois Action for Children. This is a major development as there are more license-exempt providers in Oak Park and River Forest than licensed ones. By June, the Collaboration had engaged 22 of the 42 license-exempt providers who receive state child care subsidies.

Annual Symposium 384 early childhood teachers, developmental therapists, teaching assistants, directors, and early elementary school teachers attended 30 workshops at the Collaboration's 14th Annual Symposium, "Here and Now: Respecting Childhood," on February 25th. Luis Hernandez, MA, education specialist, author, and speaker, delivered the keynote address, "The Fire Within: Rekindling Our Professional Passion." Attendees earned up to 5.5 professional development hours, approved by Early Intervention, ISBE, and the Gateways Registry.

Workshops 133 early childhood staff from 31 child care centers and 24 child care homes attended the Collaboration professional development trainings.

- One hundred and twelve early learning professionals attended 20 workshops on “**Project Social-Emotional: Using Project-Based Learning to Promote Social-Emotional Competence.**” Attendees earned 2 hours of professional development credit for each workshop.
- Forty-three early childhood providers attended one or more **intervention-specific trainings.** The following trainings were offered: Social-Emotional/Behavioral Development: The Top 5 Things Children Wish Their Early Childhood Teachers Knew; Sensory Integration and Its Impact on Social-Emotional Development; Moving From What’s Wrong with This Kid to What’s Happened to This Kid: Effective Responses When You Recognize Trauma in Your Classroom, and You Don’t Have to Be a Therapist to be Therapeutic.

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.

Roundtables An average of 12 child care directors and 10 family child care providers participated in bi-monthly roundtables sponsored by the Collaboration for 2 hours of Gateways Registry approved professional development credit. Topics for the 5 director’s roundtables were: What’s New: Policies That Impact Your Business; Stop Thinking about It and Leap into a Higher Circle of Quality; Multi-Tiered System of Supports: Improving Outcomes for All Children; Implementing a Program-Wide Model of Response to Intervention in Early Childhood Settings; and Professional Development. Topics for the 5 family child care provider roundtables were identical to the director’s roundtable topics except for the final one which was Taking Care of You: Self-Care for the Family Child Care Professional.

Family Child Care Credentials Three licensed family providers received the new Family Child Care Credential (FCC) with assistance from our Professional Development Coordinator. The FCC, unveiled in July 2016, is the first step that family child care providers need to complete in Illinois’ ExceleRate Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Public Preschool Coordination

Intake for PKP In an effort to strengthen the intake process in D97’s PreKindergarten Partnership (PKP) program and increase program participation for the most at-risk children, D97 asked the Collaboration to conduct preliminary intakes for the program. As a result, the number of intakes conducted by the Collaboration more than doubled in FY 2017 to 186 from 83 in FY 2016.

Head Start The Collaboration provides additional professional support for Oak Park’s Head Start teachers. In FY 2017, our Early Childhood Consultant:

- Conducted 8 hours of classroom observation and led 8 hours of post-observation discussion with Head Start staff, tying classroom reflections to social-emotional

development and the Project Approach. Administered a pre and post social-emotional questionnaire after training and coaching to facilitate the reflection process

- Provided 6 hours of coaching on the use of the Teaching Strategies GOLD Fidelity Tool for Administrators and Teachers and developed a worksheet to use at weekly staff meetings. (Teaching Strategies GOLD is an observation-based assessment tool for evaluating individual child development.)
- Completed the Administrator's Fidelity Checklist for one classroom, reviewed and discussed the results with the teachers, and helped them compile documentation for their Continuous Quality Improvement Plans.

Support for Preschool for All Programs

- Promoted the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD's assessment system to increase the number of complete records
- Provided coaching and training to the OPRF Day Nursery and ABC Toon Town on implementing project-based learning and the Creative Curriculum, tying lessons to specific Early Learning Standards including social-emotional standards
- Hosted a "Lunch and Learn In" for the staff at the OPRF Day Nursery to help them prepare for the new school year.

Unified Early Childhood Database

The Collaboration has made significant progress on the complicated and lengthy process of building a Unified Early Childhood Database, thanks to a 2-year \$90,000 grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation.

- Laid the groundwork for a profile of Oak Park and River Forest children under 5 by securing data-sharing agreements with the State of Illinois for CCAP, EI, SNAP, TANF and WIC administrative data. Chapin Hall is currently in the process of formatting the data from these programs for the project's database requirements. When the formatting is complete, Chapin Hall will be able to overlay participation in these programs with enrollment in Preschool for All and Head Start to begin to explain the early childhood experiences of at-risk children who enroll in District 97.
- Improved our in-house capacity to run reports and create graphics that translate the data collected into actionable information for program committees and staff
- Renewed data sharing agreements with District 97 and Hephzibah, and negotiated a new agreement with New Moms (formerly, Parenthesis). These agreements ensure that the Unified Early Childhood Database will have the data needed for the longitudinal data study.
- Produced three major reports:
 - The September 2016 Report to the IGA Governing Board presented a third data point on 9 of the 11 outcome measures delineated in the IGA contract.
 - The November 2016 Report to the IGA Governing Board presented findings on the remaining 2 outcome measures, which are on a different reporting schedule due to the timing of our annual survey of the early childhood professional workforce.

- The 2017 Plan for Progress was developed using the targets and activities established using the outcome measures from these reports.
- Expanded the size and qualifications of the Data Committee, adding new members with expertise in data collection and analysis.

Organizational Growth and Visibility

- Collaboration staff served on numerous state committees focused on early childhood issues, professional development, developmental screening, community systems development, and systems integration and alignment.
- A part-time grants and contracts manager was hired to improve our ability to secure new sources of funding and to support written communications including reporting.
- Internet communications increased through monthly e-newsletters, more frequent Facebook posts, and new Twitter and Instagram accounts.
- Mission, values and vision statements were revised to accurately reflect and succinctly communicate the work we do. The new version is attached.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR FY 2018

Developmental Screening

- Increase the number of children screened by 5%
- Add 2 new child care programs, 2 medical practices and 2 community service organizations to the screening program
- Increase the number of completed screens by including the screening consent form in center and preschool enrollment packets
- Improve the documentation of follow-up activities by making the developmental screening online system more user-friendly and sending email reminders
- Host 2 breakfast seminars for pediatricians and other medical providers
- Continue to provide technical support and consultation to participating sites
- Continued 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
- Continue to explore and increase the use of online and hybrid training modules for developmental screening
- Continue to work with Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and school districts to align programs and ensure that children referred for additional testing and services receive them.

Parent Information and Support

Home Visiting

- Increase identification and enrollment of eligible families by changing outreach strategies, from phone calls and snail mail to drop-bys and offering office visits in lieu of home visits
- Hire at least one additional parent educator
- Strengthen referral relationships with other agencies in the community
- Increase visibility in the community by marketing Group Connections to families not currently in the program
- Produce a monthly parent newsletter
- Increase father involvement
- Improve staff support, training and professional development.

Parenting Resource Program

- Stage an Early Childhood Resource Fair
- Improve parent engagement in Collaboration sponsored and supported activities
- Increase parent participation in the voluntary database
- Increase communication and outreach by improving our calendar format and capabilities.

Professional Development

Provide professional development for all early childhood providers:

- Organize a day-long annual symposium on growth mindset in February 2018
- Offer 20 hours of professional development training
- Provide training on the Creative Curriculum with an emphasis on social-emotional learning
- Provide support and coaching on the new Teaching Strategies GOLD platform
- Administer pre and post social-emotional questionnaires at trainings to facilitate the reflection process
- Observe classrooms, share observations with staff, and provide coaching and mentoring based on classroom observations.

Provide specialized professional development for Head Start teachers:

- Orient new Head Start staff to the Creative Curriculum, Teaching Strategies GOLD and the Fidelity Tool
- Continue a second year of support for teachers who participated in last year's Fidelity Tool workshop.

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
- Work with the Oak Park Department of Public Health to ensure that 100% of families receiving family care are referred for home visiting.

Unified Early Childhood Database

- Continue progress on targets set in the 2017 Plan for Progress
- Complete 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
- Create a profile of Oak Park and River Forest children under five using the newly acquired 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.

Organizational Capacity

- Identify new board candidates who are willing and able to support the funding needs of the organization and use their professional expertise to oversee organization operations
- 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
- Use new communications infrastructure to increase community awareness of the Collaboration, the services we provide, Oak Park's innovative approach to addressing the need for quality early childhood education, and the short and long-term benefits of early learning

- Participate in Erikson Institute's Early Development Instrument (EDI) Pilot Project to map the early childhood environment in Oak Park. We will be working throughout the year with District 97 and community partners to create a portrait of our kindergarteners, the developmental strengths and needs by location, and initiate a conversation on how the Village and school districts should respond to these findings. The EDI will allow Oak Park to determine precisely where to intervene and better align resources as well as help identify policy responses and the need for additional assets and programs by community area.