

IGA Progress Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

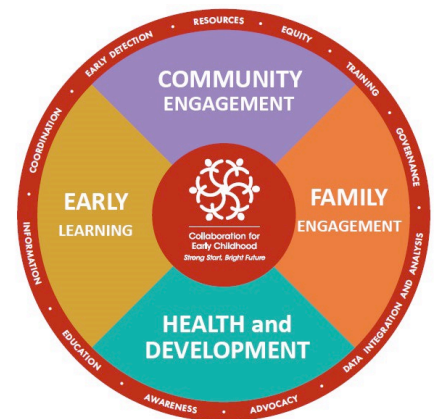
Mid-Year Update

November 2020-February 2021

As more and more educators, child care professionals, and seniors in our community receive the coronavirus vaccine, we look forward to a time on the near horizon where we can all stop, pause, and *exhale*. Although we are buried in snow, spring is not far off, and with it comes a feeling of hope and renewal. Our work has remained remote, but we have remained immersed in our community here, and have continued to provide key services and programming that support Oak Park and River Forest children's healthy development in important ways.

As our work grows, we are building our team to sustainably scale and increase our impact. This winter, we welcomed Wendy Giardina to our team as our part-time Community Engagement Coordinator. Wendy manages our invaluable community of volunteers that build our capacity and allow us host large events like our annual Early Childhood Symposium. We are currently in the process of hiring a part-time Intake Coordinator. This individual will serve as a "warm line" for people who reach out to us for information or coordinated intake around home visiting services or access to preschool. This person will serve as a hub, seamlessly connecting families to our many programs and partners.

Learn more about this quarter's key achievements below.



EARLY LEARNING

Roundtables and Committees. Heather Duncan, our Director of Early Learning & Equity Initiatives, continues to convene the Directors' Roundtable, and Family Child Care Professionals Roundtable every other month. She convenes the Publicly Funded Preschool Committee and the Professional Development Committee, who leads work on the annual Early Childhood Symposium.

Expanding Equity. Heather represents the Collaboration for Early Childhood on the Illinois Action for Children Community Systems Development Equity Workgroup Subcommittee and is in the midst of work on an equity framework for the agency. She has partnered with colleagues at Chicago Public Schools and District 97 to learn more about the process behind designing a framework that reflects the priorities of all members of the organization and the community it serves, and is building the framework in partnership with Lisa Peloquin of New Teacher Center.

The development of the Collaboration's Equity Framework is occurring in tandem with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work that we are doing as a team with the assistance of the consulting firm, the Mary Morten Group. Mary Morten has worked with the Collaboration staff to

identify opportunities to strengthen equity and anti-bias priorities. Mary Morten will mirror this process with the Collaboration's Board of Directors in the spring. Ultimately, the Collaboration aims to share this equity framework with other organizations in a way that they can take and adapt to their own scenarios.

Early Childhood Symposium. This year's annual Early Childhood Symposium will take place on February 27th and it will be the first time in its 18-year history that it will not be held in person. The symposium will focus on the role of empathy and compassion in early childhood. Workshops will explore why compassion is important in the classroom, and how to nurture self-care amidst competing demands. The theme is ComPASSION Matters! Educators, parents and anyone who connects with young children are encouraged to attend.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building capacity for volunteers. With Wendy Giardina, our new Community Engagement Coordinator, we have been able to begin to cultivate more strategic volunteer coordination. We also have more capacity to host community events that bring awareness to the importance of early childhood. This capacity is especially valuable now that many volunteers may need additional skills training to assist in remote events like our Symposium.

Lifting Little Voices 2021: Planning for Change. On February 18, we hosted Lifting Little Voices 2021: Planning for Change. The first event of its kind, Lifting Little Voices is a biennial community forum designed to bring local leaders together to discuss the importance of early childhood in policy and leadership decisions. We were thrilled to have panelists Rebecca Barbato, pediatrician based out of the Loyola Center for Health at North Riverside, Whitney Brooks, Community Ambassador at the Collaboration for Early Childhood, Dr. Jaqueline Moore, Psychologist and School Board President at Oak Park and River Forest High School, Jill Pacyna, Prekindergarten

teacher at Henry Wadsworth Longfellow School (PKP), Robert Tucker, COO and Executive Vice President of Programs at Chicago Community Loan Fund, and Raheem Young, Co-founder of Welcome to Fatherhood. After the panel discussion, Dana Garner, an Early Childhood Education Program Manager with the Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF) spoke on the implications for policy and advocacy in early childhood. Grace Araya, Director of Community Systems Statewide Supports at Illinois Action for Children, also spoke. If you were unable to attend, we encourage you to view the video recording: <https://vimeo.com/user15087453>



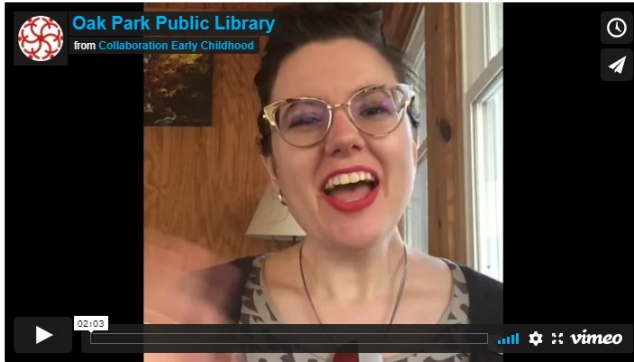
Collaboration for Early Childhood Monthly Newsletter. In January we launched the Collaboration’s Newsletter. While we have a variety of communications that are designed for specific audiences (parents and caregivers, physicians, directors), this communication shares out an update on the work of the organization as a whole. It publishes on the first Monday of every month and provides a regular touch-point for our community. The newsletter not only shares updates about our work, but also focuses on highlighting our many partnerships in the community. (IGA representatives are already subscribed to the newsletter.)

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Early Childhood Resource Fair. In November, Jennifer Little, Manager of Family Engagement, in partnership with the Parenting Resource Program Committee, translated the annual Early Childhood Resource Fair, which usually occurs in person, to a virtual platform. The online site allows parents and caregivers to search for local early childhood resources and programs by age and by category.

Parenting Workshops and more. In partnership with community partners, the Collaboration hosts 2-3 Parenting Workshops per month, and a bimonthly fatherhood group (facilitated by Welcome to Fatherhood). The Parent Leadership Training began in January. Families First | La Familia Primero, which is a parent led group supported by the Collaboration, also hosts virtual “Parent Circles” every month.

Meet Shelley and hear about programs at Oak Park Public Library:



A still of one of the videos on the Early Childhood Resource Fair page and a recent Parenting Workshop hosted in partnership with Beyond Hunger.

The Parenting Resource Program Committee. The Parenting Resource Program Committee consists of community partners: The Day Nursery, Easterseals, Families First | La Familia Primero, New Moms, Oak Park Public Library, Oak-Leyden Developmental Services, Park District of Oak Park, River Forest Public Library, Welcome to Fatherhood, and Wonder Works Children’s Museum.

Home Visiting. Jennifer convenes the Home Visiting Task Force, which consists of home visiting programs. Recently the space has served as a way to further discuss how best to reach families who might need support while providing services virtually due to the pandemic.

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Resources and Outreach. This fall, Shannon Ellison, Manager of Health and Development re-released the webinar series, “Running on Empty: The Cost of Caring in the Time of COVID-19.” This series defines compassion fatigue, moral injury and burn-out. It also provides tools for health administrators to identify ways they can support healthcare staff. She convenes the Health and Development Committee and is focusing on communicating the importance of parents maintaining their child’s well-child doctor visits and routine vaccines. She has partnered with Sarah’s Inn to create promotional materials that identify the impacts of domestic violence on children and the local supports that are available.

Vision and Hearing Screenings. Oak Park and River Forest early childhood center-based programs vision and hearing screening continue in person and with COVID-19 safety protocols in place. We have safely provided vision and hearing screenings to over 20 centers, thanks to the diligence of our Screening Technician, Tiffany Kelly.



Hearing and Vision Technician Tiffany Kelly conducting a hearing screening this winter.

Developmental Screenings. These screenings occur as a part of the Collaboration’s Developmental Screening Project. We partner with twenty-three early childhood, pediatric, and community sites to administer these screenings and conduct follow up as appropriate.