

Calhoun Intermediate School District Early Childhood System

MI - Battle Creek Squad
P-P3034200-2016 | \$6,237,200.00
Lead: Megan Russell Johnson | Support: Tammy St. John
Start Date: 7/1/2016 | End Date: 11/30/2020

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Lead: Megan Russell Johnson	Phone: 269.969.2324 Email: mrj@wkkf.org
Support: Tammy St. John	Phone: 269.969.2696 Email: tammy.stjohn@wkkf.org
Manager: Lynn Wilson	Phone: 269.969.2043 Email: lynn.wilson@wkkf.org

▼ Organization Contacts

Organization Legal Name:	Calhoun Intermediate School District
Project Director:	Erika Burkhardt
Signatory:	Terance Lunger
Financial Signatory:	Christie Green
Additional Alert Recipient:	
Additional Finance Contact:	
Will a fiscal sponsor be used for this request?	No

▼ Letter of Inquiry

Project/Request Name: Early Childhood System

Primary Content Area:

Which area(s) is your requested funding going to impact?

Briefly describe your funding request:

If you have had previous contact with a WKKF staff member about this request, please enter their name here. Ongoing consultation and partnership with Megan Russell-Johnson, our Program Officer.

▼ Proposal Questions

Start Date:	7/1/2016
End Date:	11/30/2020
Duration in Years:	4 year(s) and 5 month(s)

Total Project Budget:

Amount Requested from WKKF:

Referencing your Total Project Budget, will any part of your project include lobbying activities?

What are you seeking WKKF funding to accomplish?

Project Overview: An aligned subsystem of early care and education in the Greater Battle Creek and CISD service area is a vital component in the larger early childhood system. This system, dedicated to improving access, quality and coordination, focuses on the supports ultimately needed for families to be informed, engaged, empowered, and armed with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure children are ready for school at the time of kindergarten entry, and equipped with the tools to sustain academic and social achievement into their early elementary years. The Early Childhood Services Department has evolved as a result of the many highly successful individual early childhood programs in place over the past several years (Early Childhood Connections, Great Start County Connections, Great Start Readiness Program, Raising A Reader, Three Year Old Scholarship Program). This history of programmatic success sets the stage for a more comprehensive systems approach to planning and service delivery. Working with various partners in the community, CISD will strengthen, expand, and integrate various programs and services to develop a subsystem of early childhood care and education (0 to Pre-K), which will become an integral and vital part of a larger system of early care and education, both horizontally (addressing the needs of the whole child) and vertically

(supporting the education continuum from prenatal through college and career readiness), in Greater Battle Creek.

With this early childhood subsystem in place, three primary hypotheses will guide the work:

1. Coordination of programs and services across the early childhood continuum will promote a more effective, responsive, accessible system of supports for families;
2. Families who are informed, engaged and empowered with the resources needed to embrace their important role in their child's educational success and who will access the programs and services available to support their family's needs and child's school readiness; and
3. An effective early childhood system includes a continuous quality improvement process that supports ongoing learning for all service providers/organizations that serve children and families across the early childhood continuum.

- Goals/Strategies:
1. High quality and consistent practices across early childhood programs.
 2. Comprehensive and effective coordination and alignment of cross sector partnerships across the community to support families with young children.
 3. Support implementation of effective referral systems, including seamless transitions between programs, centers, and K-12 systems.
 4. Effective online single-point-of-entry child application and integrated data system that enables data sharing and analysis of cumulative child outcome across the early childhood system.
 5. Increased number of available high quality childcare and preschool slots.
 6. Increased opportunities and supports for informed, empowered, and engaged families.

The attached logic model describes in detail each of the project goals, strategies, and activities along with the outputs, outcomes and expected impacts.

Activities: The Calhoun Great Start Collaborative was born in 2009 from the desire to create a community-driven, systems-building approach to early childhood. The work of Calhoun ISD's Early Childhood Department, in partnership with BC Pulse, created the opportunity to build a coordinated, responsive system of programs and supports for families with young children. The evolution of the project, made possible through collaboration with multiple partners, has transformed the manner in which we approach the conditions that exist in our community that prevent children and families from succeeding in school and in life. With this evolution came the realization that program-based solutions result in isolated outcomes. A systems approach - focusing on equity, quality, coordination, and access - has transformed the programmatic goals of our project into a comprehensive system of supports. This collaborative methodology promotes positive outcomes for children and families across organizations and agencies, shifting the focus from programmatic outputs to system outcomes. This shift requires a focus on equity, ongoing Action Learning facilitated by BC Pulse to inform strategies that promote the transformation of how we respond to the diverse needs of children and families in our community. Guided by the Office of Great Start and informed by community data that addresses root causes of conditions in our community that impact families, the following outcomes guide the work of the early childhood system:

Children are:

- Born healthy
- Healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track from birth-3rd grade
- Ready to succeed in school at the time of entry
- Prepared to succeed in 4th grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade

Families are:

- Informed, engaged, empowered, and financially secure

To reach these outcomes, CISD engages families in a continuum of services and supports, and partners with organizations across multiple sectors in the community including but not limited to:

- Welcome Baby Education - To engage families in the EC system, provide safe sleep and child development education, and connect them with community resources
- Home Visits and Playgroups- Using Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum, coach parents to reach their goals for their child and their family, model and support rich adult/child interactions focusing on developmentally appropriate learning objectives
- 3 and 4 yr old preschool through Scholarships & GSRP - high quality preschool with transition support, coaching/training for parents, coaching and PD for teachers to promote K-readiness
- Raising A Reader - A focus on early literacy providing quality books for children to exchange on a weekly basis - to promote reading in the home
- Car Seat Clinics and Training - Provide car seats and installation/safety training for families
- Action Learning and Community-driven Action Teams - To increase quality, coordination, access across the EC system

Anticipated Outcomes: Children are born healthy -

- Increased awareness of the importance of safe sleep resulting in reduced infant mortality rate
- Increased partnerships among programs resulting in improved transitions and increased coordination of services
- Increased knowledge of the importance of prenatal care specifically in teen population.
- Increased knowledge of what families need and what is available in the community by ECS team resulting in more effective referral process.

Children are healthy, thriving & developmentally on track from birth through third grade -

- A community level understanding of and focus on equitable practices
- Data-driven practice; Utilizing Unique Identification Codes to track the impact of the continuum of services in the early childhood system
- Increased participation of vulnerable families in ongoing services resulting in more informed, engaged families and thus, more children developmentally on track
- Increased knowledge of child development for vulnerable families resulting in families armed with the information and skills to support their child's healthy development and school readiness.
- Increased participation in early childhood services by families of color, resulting in equitable outcomes for vulnerable families

Children are developmentally ready to succeed in school at time of entry

- Increased quality in early learning programs serving vulnerable families resulting in increased developmentally appropriate practice, increased effectiveness of program strategies to support learning and thus more children developmentally ready for school
- Increase in community will acknowledge that learning begins at birth and rich early learning experiences are essential

Children are ready to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade

- A community-wide focus on the importance of early literacy - and the value of families reading with their children starting at birth

Families are empowered, engaged, informed & financially secure

- Equity drives the strategies used to engage, empower and inform families
- Increase in participation of diverse families in services and supports
- Increase in parents as emerging leaders in the community

Share with us how you know your project will work.

WKKF priority places impacted by this work (if applicable):



2019-20 ECS Budget

11/1/2019-8/31/2020

	11/1/19- 8/31/20
Personnel	
Asst. Superintendent (.4 FTE)	\$54,850.00
Early Childhood Director (0 FTE)	\$53,200.00
Finance Coordinator (.4 FTE)	\$1,600.00
Childcare/Preschool Coach (3.2 FTE)	\$211,200.00
Leadership Coach (1.0 FTE)	\$28,700.00
Family Coaches (8.3 FTE)	\$554,050.00
Admin/RAR Support (.1 FTE)	\$12,500.00
	\$916,100.00
Contracted Services	
Contracted Coach/RAR support/College Intern	\$28,000.00
Communication and Marketing	\$6,000.00
Playgroup/Fieldtrips	\$6,500.00
Family Transportation	\$1,000.00
Preschool Visits - Sub Costs	\$400.00
Translation Contracted Services/Legal	\$1,000.00
Training/PD	\$29,600.00
	\$72,500.00
Project Supplies	
Welcome Baby Baskets/Home Packets	\$23,900.00
On line assessments for preschools	\$11,750.00
ASQ Screener Kits	\$1,000.00
Emergency Family Fund (car seats, etc.)	\$5,000.00
GSRP Coach/Teacher Resources	\$500.00
	\$42,150.00
Capital Assets & Equipment	
Office Equipment	\$1,000.00
Computer & Phones	\$1,000.00
	\$2,000.00
Evaluation	
External Evaluator	\$98,000.00
	\$98,000.00
Meetings/Conferences	
Meeting & Conferences	\$1,500.00
	\$1,500.00
Travel	
Travel/ Mileage	\$7,000.00
	\$7,000.00
Indirect Costs	
Printing	\$1,000.00
Office Supplies	\$4,000.00
Phone & Technology	\$3,000.00
Office Space - UW/CACC	\$21,000.00
	\$29,000.00
TOTAL	\$1,168,250.00

Budget Descriptions

For each line item entered in the previous section, a brief description is needed to show how it relates to the proposed activities for this project. Include:

- personnel roles/positions and the percentage of FTE
- types of work to be performed by subcontractors
- specific capital equipment
- planned meetings and conferences
- all types of expenses included in the 'Other' category
- types of indirect costs

Budget Descriptions:

Personnel: Ass't Supt & Director will provide shared leadership to guide the vision & alignment of all early childhood programming for BC/CISD service area ensuring fidelity in implementation of funding. Transition and referral systems will be a specific focus area. EC instructional coaches will work in the classrooms and will serve the area as early childhood specialists. Family coach responsibilities will continue to advance and efficiencies implemented to create alignment and coordination of services

Contractual Services: Transportation will continue to be provided to families in need through resources available in Battle Creek. Playgroups and field trips include collaborating with KCC for music instruction and other Battle Creek groups for Zumba, dance and other physical education instruction. Training includes: Leadership that Works in a reduced capacity to allow for transitioning Leadership coaching in-house, HighScope training, Parents as Teachers, car seat training, & other training deemed necessary.

Project Supplies: On line assessments track preschoolers attending GSRP in public schools & community based organizations & transitions data to public school data warehouse. Assessments are also tracked w/ B25 application from birth. Family Emergency fund provides funding for car seats, pak n plays & other supplies needed in the community through 211. GSRP Resources are used to enhance quality instruction in classrooms. Transition resources are used to streamline students from one program/grade to the next.

Capital Assets & Equipment: Computers for staff are replaced on a three year rotation. Other funding for replacement of office desk, chairs, cabinets, computers, copy machines and phones as needed.

Evaluation: Utilization of the programs within the subsystem of ECS proved to have a statistically significant impact on children's school readiness in the last grant cycle. External eval will be used again to focus and grow the EC system and provide feedback to the leadership team on program effectiveness. Evaluator(s) will work with CISD tech staff who oversee the school level data.

Meeting and Conferences: Early Childhood Services staff holds monthly and quarterly meetings with service providers, community members, and parents to align programs and services for vulnerable families in Battle Creek.

Travel: Staff use their vehicles for travel to family deliveries, visits, play groups and other staff functions. The mileage is reimbursed at the allowable rate of the IRS.

Indirect Costs: Printing and office supplies necessary for conducting PD, visits, playgroups and other ECS functions. Staff phones to allow flexibility to contact and access email offsite. Office space is rented from CISD and United Way for program use.

Project Summary Quality & Partnerships

High quality and consistent practices across early childhood programs

The work of Calhoun ISD's team of instructional coaches in GSRP classrooms and Three Year Old Scholarship Child Care Centers was designed to promote high quality and consistent practices across childhood programs. The team of five coaches are all trained or in the process of being trained to be High Scope Curriculum trainers. With the goal of aligning curriculum across programs, this High Scope training is required for all GSRP staff and offered to teachers in classrooms across the community. To extend the impact of High Scope in classrooms, CISD hosted Infant High Scope Curriculum last fall and two of the instructional coaches completed the *train-the-trainer* component to expand the capacity of the team to provide High Scope training to teachers across age groups in Child Care Centers.

A close partnership with the Shared Services Alliance (SSA) has also been a strategy to promote high quality, consistent practices. Understanding the unique needs of teachers in Child Care settings is essential to providing the individual supports teachers need to improve their practice and in turn, meet the needs of the children they serve. This year, multiple coaches have been providing support to the SSA Centers in multiple classrooms. Understanding consistent pedagogical supports are valuable in raising quality throughout the participating centers, the current coaching model has been under close examination this summer.

Comprehensive and effective coordination and alignment of cross sector partnerships across the community to support families with young children

Through our strong partnership with BC Pulse, system scanning and strategy building in the Action Team setting has truly been a catalyst for change in our community this past year. Action Team priorities have also driven the goals and activities for our Great Start Collaborative/BC Vision Kindergarten Readiness Action Team work. These goals include: Increased access to early learning opportunities for children, increased quality in early learning environments, supports for children into to the k-3 space (transitions and extended supports into elementary school), and engaging, informing and empowering families to connect them to the supports they need.

Some examples of this work include:

1. Partnership with Workforce Development: A partnership with Goodwill Industries, Community Action, BC Pulse, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to support a two generational approach to financial security/kindergarten readiness for families through the Good STEPS program. Calhoun ISD provides recruitment supports for the program as well as provides training to GoodSTEPS participants on child development and the importance of high quality child care/preschool. Additionally, learning that occurred through participation in the GoodSTEPS partnership informed the need for a more formal partnership between Calhoun ISD and DHHS to support families with young children .

Project Summary Partnerships (cont.)

2. Partnership with Local Businesses: The long standing partnership between Calhoun ISD and Lakeview Ford continues to allow consistent supports to families with young children through weekly Car seat events. Vince Pavone continues to be a strategy partner and pushes us to think outside the box when considering our plans to engage families and advocate in the community about the importance of early childhood. Vince has played a role in the Public Will Building Action Team leading facilitating the Rotary's funding of a survey at Denso to examine child care needs.

3. Partnership with Faith Based Organizations: Calhoun ISD's collaboration with First Presbyterian Church has grown into a reciprocal relationship – supporting each other in our goals. Hosting two weekly playgroups year round, the church leadership not only provides space, they also have members, led by Jean Parker, who attend and support families each week at the playgroup. Further, the church hosts the Strong Families Parent Coalition each month, cooking and serving dinner for families and carefully packaging left-overs for the families to bring home with them. Starting our fourth year of this partnership, this summer the church mission team reached out to Calhoun ISD and the BC Vision Kindergarten Readiness team to co-facilitate a health fair held in July. With the goal of providing health and dental screening and preventative care to families in the downtown area, the Early Childhood Connections team provided developmental screening information for families, taught each participant about car seat safety, provided free books to children and joined the participants in playing games and winning prizes.

Over the last six years, our relationship with First Presbyterian Church has changed as the needs of our families have changed. Sharing common goals has allowed us to shift the way we work together so that it is evident that the church mission team values our support just as we value theirs. Our shared goal is meeting families where they are and empowering families by connecting with the resources they need through gentle supports. During the health fair, a clear illustration of the power of this partnership became strikingly evident:

Six years ago, a single mother and her eight-year-old daughter began attending the Parent Coalition. For several years, the mother shared her struggles to maintain financial security and find care for her child so she could maintain employment. Parent Coalition staff provided referrals to workforce development organizations for this mother, supported her in completing childcare subsidy documents and made referrals to other supportive organization. After a few years of attendance, this mother met a family at parent coalition and began trading childcare with them; however, the family had barriers of their own: no means of transportation and three children with special needs. At the same time, this mother began attending First Presbyterian Church. Through the First Pres. Mission team, the church provided this mother with a car. The mother then provided rides to doctors' appointments and therapy for the family who cared for her child while she worked.

Project Summary Partnerships (cont.)

This anecdote illustrates the unintended benefit of collaboration, the power of connecting families together to support one another. A final note to this anecdote, however, came the day of the health fair. As family coaches chose the games they would lead families in playing, a young woman walked up and volunteered to lead the marble game.

Confident yet gentle, this young woman encouraged children and adults in maneuvering their marble down the game board. She stood in the 85-degree sun for 5 hours - a picture of volunteerism and of giving back to her community. It was not until well into the day that we realized that this young woman was the child that the single mother first brought to parent coalition all those years ago. The connection for that family, made possible through our partnership with First Presbyterian Church years ago, continues to influence this family - and in turn, continues to impact others in our community through the efforts of this young woman.

Another partnership with the faith based sector that has grown and evolved is Calhoun ISD's collaboration with New Harvest Church. Initially a partnership to support the church in opening Great Start Readiness Program classrooms, our relationship with Pastor Lee and New Harvest has also grown into a true collaboration. New Harvest has hosted professional development for early childhood educators, and will be hosting a series of training for teachers this fall supporting trauma informed pedagogy.

Following the same theme of evolving relationships, Calhoun ISD's partnership with New Level Sports has also grown and is ever evolving. Two years ago New Level Sports and ECC partnered to hire a Family Coach. This coach had strong ties to the families who attend Faith Assembly Christian Fellowship Church and New Level Sports activities. This partnership promoted relationship building and as a result, additional African American families are participating in home visits and playgroups.

It is important to note, however, that engaging and retaining African American families in ECC activities continues to be a challenge. Employment challenges and household transiency contribute to difficulty in maintaining contact with families. Consequently, we have learned that traditional program practices are not always the most effective means of engagement for these families. Therefore, we have modified our home visit planning with these families and adjusted the requirements. Home visits occur when families are available, home visits focus on parenting and child development but often begin with addressing the immediate needs of families. Families whom we temporarily lose touch with remain in our active files and door hangers and personal check in visits replace traditional phone outreach practices. We know that these practices take time and patience, however, we feel that shifting the usual one-size fits all policies will help to foster trust and grow our relationships with families. Our relationship with leaders at New Level Sports needs the same nurturing. Our hope is that our new opportunity for an authentically "shared" position with New Level will support learning for both organizations.

Project Summary Partnerships (cont.)

Finally, our partnership with Dr. Glass and the residents of Parkway Manor also addresses many of the same challenges. In the past our strategies to engage these “hard to reach” families were consistent with engagement of all families in our community: hold a playgroup, attend an event in the neighborhood, invite families to Parent Coalition. These strategies have not reaped participation. We acknowledge that understanding the unique needs of families, the barriers they face, and their authentic aspirations for their families and neighborhoods is the only means of truly, meaningfully engaging these families. As a result of this acknowledgement, we are reaching out to families to ask them what they need. An ECC Family Coach, in partnership with a family leader from Parkway Manor are meeting with families, bringing a pizza and sitting down to discuss what families want and need, and how ECC can play a role in supporting them as their child’s first and most important teacher.

Our partnership with Willard Library has grown over the last year from “a place to hold a playgroup” to collaboration that really supports the needs of the community. Over the last year, our only evening playgroup was held at Willard Library in which the library did some targeted recruitment for Spanish speaking families. That Thursday evening playgroup was often busting at the seams. Participation reached the point we had to consider alternate advertising or limited the number of families who could attend. In response to this identified need for evening playgroup opportunities, ECC will be holding two evening playgroups in the fall – one at Willard Library and one at the Helen Warner Branch of the Library.

Additionally, Calhoun ISD Early Childhood Leadership has been working with Willard Library Imagination Library Staff to develop a proposal to integrate Imagination Library into the continuum of Calhoun ISD early literacy supports. Coupling Imagination Library with Raising A Reader could potentially amplify the benefits of both programs, allowing IL families to receive additional educational materials, and information about early childhood programs while increasing access to high quality books to families who participate in the Raising A Reader program. With Imagination Library housed at Calhoun ISD, more comprehensive outcome data could be collected utilizing the Birth to Five Services Application. Subsequently, the IL address update service will also provide us the opportunity to connect with families whom we have lost contact because of address changes. Willard Library will also continue to play a role in the enrollment process leveraging their connections to families to promote the program and linking families to the library’s services for continued literacy supports. Calhoun ISD will submit this proposal to the Battle Creek Funders group in September for consideration. Lack of funding has been the major barrier to IL sustainability. Willard Library’s capacity for fundraising is limited and therefore, our hope is that this partnership will provide expanded opportunities to reach out to the community for support.

Project Summary

In conclusion, Local research conducted by Dr. Jianping Shen provides evidence that children exposed to the cumulative effects of multiple programs/interventions experience better educational outcomes than children who do not. Adding Imagination Library to the continuum of programs evaluated in his research will provide a deeper understanding of its impact and value within the early childhood continuum.

Support implementation of effective referral systems, including seamless transitions between programs, centers, and K-12 systems

The Birth to Five application and data portal, along with Skyward and Illuminate student information systems used in the K-12 system have allowed the early childhood system to monitor what programs and services the children in our community have been engaged in from birth through school entry. The connection of these systems also allows for monitoring of student achievement during the K-12 system. All children entered into the Birth to Five system have a UIC (Unique Identification Code) this number follows the children into the K-12 system as well so the progress of the children is monitored over many years. The Quality Early Childhood Experiences action team is working toward effective transitions and referrals between all early childhood programs and the K-12 school system. Our partnership with Early On has allowed for the start of one point of entry for our families into the early childhood system of supports. A next step is to work through service delivery options for Early On families to ensure they are receiving all the supports needed and that are available to their families without a duplication or interruption of services from service providers.

We will continue to work with our local school districts to develop a seamless transition between pre K and kindergarten programming as well as a stronger connection between early childhood and K-12 teaching staff and professional development opportunities.

Effective online single-point-of-entry child application and integrated data system that enables data sharing and analysis of cumulative child outcome across the early childhood system

The use of the Birth to Five application and data portal has evolved within the last year. Once only a site for preschool enrollment and ECC data capture, the least year has provided advancements in the use of both the application and portal sides of the B-5. Now, all children whose application is entered in the system is assigned a Unique Identification Code (UIC) allowing data to be tracked as children transition through the EC continuum. Additionally, through the collective work of members of the Home Visiting Hub, six organizations/program have all agreed to support families in completing a B-5 application as well. (Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, Grace Health Maternal and Infant Health Program, Family and Children's Services, Community Unlimited, and Early On). Currently CISD tech department is working to enable "dosage" data collection for these programs so that continuum data can include these programs and level of "dosage" of each program families received.

Project Summary

An online waiver for Headstart/GSRP enrollment is now in place that promotes efficiency in the enrollment process. Quality improvement and intentional monitoring and brainstorming of other potential utilization of the B-5 is ongoing and supported by the Data Action Team .

Increased number of available high quality childcare and preschool slots

The increase in state and federal supports for Head Start and GSRP programs slots over the past several years has exponentially increased access to high quality preschool in Calhoun County. However, reaching the families with the highest needs has been a challenge as the “hardest to reach” families are often those with the highest needs. Although the efforts of BC Vision K-Readiness and Public Will Building Action Teams are working to expand and coordinate recruitment efforts to fill the spots we have, additional efforts to increase quality in existing childcare and preschool slots in private programs has been a focus of our 3 year old preschool instructional coach. The new partnership with the Shared Service Alliance will expand these efforts. The shared Pedagogical Leader position provides coaching and supports to all classrooms within the SSA Centers through scaffolding of pedagogical leadership for instructional leaders in each of the participating programs. Consequently, by the building internal capacity for quality improvement in the existing SSA Centers, this SSA Pedagogical Leader will then be available to move on to the next cohort of SSA participants. Coupling that coaching with the partnership between CISD, SSA and Child Care Resources to provide a shared professional development plan for preschool/child care staff across the community, the goal is to provide a tiered system of professional development from basic classroom management to specific curriculum-related instruction centered on best practice and focusing on the individual needs of teachers/staff.

Progress Toward Goals

1. Shift in Welcome Baby Early Learning Program:

In July of 2016 we transformed the “Welcome Baby Basket (WBB)” into the “Welcome Baby early Learning Program”. Analysis of data showed us that less than 20% of basket recipients went on to participate in home visits or playgroups. Our goal in shifting the program was to provide a more tiered system of supports and promote retention of families within early childhood supports. The new plan modified the initial time spent with families from the original ½ hour basket delivery to the 2-3 hour Welcome Baby Visit process. All families who participate in the full Welcome Baby Early Learning Visit Process are also engaged in an ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE with their child with the goal of arming them with the tools and understanding that they can monitor and support their child's development even without continued visits. All families are then invited to participate in playgroups for additional, ongoing developmental supports. Families with multiple risk factors or who live within 250% of the federal poverty level are also introduced to intensive home visiting.

Although ideally we would like to offer this service to all families, our capacity to do so is limited. Therefore, offering the most support to families with the greatest needs is equitable practice. According to our evaluation during the 16-17 year, among the “364 unique kids who had Welcome Baby Visit 1, 255 children went on to have Welcome Baby Visit #2, 181 kids went on to Welcome Baby Visit #3, 62 kids went on to have home visits, and 46 went on to join playgroups. The above all happened within one year. The figures would be higher when we track children for two years or more”. This data shows an increase from the less than 20% retention for baskets to 70% retention for at least a second visit, 50% retention for all three Welcome Baby Visits, and an overall 30% long term retention in ongoing home visiting or playgroups. As Dr. Shen also reports this data only considers families who began participation this year. With the new process in place for a full year now, we anticipate additional increased retention when tracking this process for more than one year.

2. Continuous Quality Improvement in Coaching Practices and Professional Development across System Components

In building the professional development plan for ECS staff in the past year, we have continued to support capacity in the areas of coaching, understanding and using data to drive our work. Our goal to be proficient in trauma informed practice led to our partnership with Starr Commonwealth to provide training to Family Coaches, Instructional/Preschool Coaches, and teachers in GSRP, Head Start and private programs. Continued trauma work includes partnering build a cohort of trauma trainers in the community to expand trauma informed practice into early childhood work across the community.

Progress Toward Goals

To address the high turnover rate for early childhood educators in Calhoun County, and to improve quality across programs, we recognize the need for a shift in our current professional development practices. Existing teachers in GSRP, Head Start, and private centers come from a variety of educational/experiential backgrounds. We know that a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development does not meet the diverse needs of existing teachers.

In response, we have partnered with Child Care Resource's Regional Resource Center, Shared Services Staff, GSRP Staff and the Three Year old Scholarship instructional coach to provide a tiered system of training for teachers with diverse needs. *The Calhoun County Shared Professional Development Plan* offers a menu of training options to address the learning needs of all preschool teachers in the community. Additional options for infant and toddler lead teachers will also be available, expanding the once 4 year old preschool PD options to all early childhood teachers in the community.

Progress Toward Outcomes

Children are born healthy:

- 1. Increased awareness of the importance of safe sleep resulting in reduced infant mortality rate:* The expanded Welcome Baby Early Learning Program devotes the first one-hour visit to safety including safe sleep while providing a sleep sac to each child further promoting safe sleep practices.
- 2. Increased partnerships among programs resulting in improved transitions and Increased coordination of services:* The Home Visiting Hub, led by CISC has developed a transition plan supporting families' transition from one program to another as they age out or have needs that other programs better support. The joint Nurse Family Partnership/ ECS Playgroup event is one example of this plan in action. Shared visits between NFP and ECS staff to support home visit transitions are also a common practice.
- 3. Increased knowledge of the importance of prenatal care specifically in teen population:* The ECS Teen Specialist met with pregnant and parenting teens at two area high schools weekly throughout the year to support their knowledge in healthy prenatal and parenting practices.

Progress Toward Outcomes

4. Increased knowledge of what families need, and what is available in the community by ECS team resulting in more effective referral process: To increase our knowledge of the authentic needs of all families, we first had to acknowledge that our tried and true practices were not always effective in engaging and understanding the needs of the underserved families in our community. Providing an equitable approach to our work with families has to be a priority. Although our work in the past has been done with best intentions, we acknowledge that there is much more learning that needs to happen when attempting to understand the barriers to participation and the best way to engage families who have not yet engaged. As a next step we are now focusing on building relationships and trust, partnering and leveraging existing relationships, and reaching out to the natural connectors in neighborhoods where families of color live to learn exactly what supports they need and what they would like to see in our early childhood support system. Additionally, we have worked with Safe Place, DHHS, Goodwill Industries, Charitable Union, the Calhoun County Health Dept and others to provide professional development or information sharing with the ECS in order to provide more informed referrals. One example is bringing the Health Dept to the Great Start Collaborative Meeting to train the community about the dangers of lead in our community. As a result of that training, Family Coaches now ask each family about their child's lead testing and provide information to families. Concurrently, the health dept. sent a draft of the post cards they were going to send to families for input from CISD ECS families before they were distributed in the community. The reciprocal relationship between CISD and the Health Department illustrates the shift in system thinking by leveraging existing relationships, including family voice, and coordinating efforts between programs.

Children are healthy, thriving & developmentally on track from birth through third grade.

1. A community level understanding of and focus on equitable practices: In our work within the early childhood system in Calhoun County, equity and the reduction of disparities among the children and families we serve has always been a priority. Through intentional efforts to continuously learn and improve our understanding of the unique needs of families in our community, we acknowledge that there is much more to learn. Analysis of data has informed decisions that have shifted our "one-size-fits-all" work to a more intentional manner of allocating more resources to those with the highest needs. Families living in poverty, families of color, families who are English Language Learners are three priority groups. We know that simply reducing common barriers to participation like transportation is valuable, however we know that there are other issues, conditions, and mindsets that prevent some families from participation. Maintaining equitable practices means that we must continue learning and amend our practices to meet the needs of these hard to reach families.

Progress Toward Outcomes

2. Data-driven practice; Utilizing Unique Identification Codes to track the impact of the continuum of services in the early childhood system: The Birth to Five Services application is now set up to pull UIC codes for all children whom have a B-5 application. Additionally, the Data Action teams allows a cross sector group of stakeholders the opportunity to discuss and utilize data driven practices within the team. This fosters the use of data within programs and highlights the importance of data informing decisions.

3. Increased participation of vulnerable families in ongoing services resulting in more informed, engaged families and thus, more children developmentally on track: Our evaluation reports that of the 3661 children served by the continuum of early childhood services at Calhoun ISD, 47.6% were children of color, 92% lived at or below 250% of the federal poverty level and 8% of families were English language learners. With the shift in Welcome Baby/home visiting practices, more vulnerable families are served through intensive programming while all families are offered playgroups. This provides an inclusive social environment to set the stage for future k-12 educational classroom experiences.

4. Increased knowledge of child development for vulnerable families resulting in families armed with the information and skills to support their child's healthy development and school readiness: The three visit Welcome Baby Process coupled with ongoing home visits provides a foundation of supports for families to build their capacity to foster their child's development. The expansion of the Welcome Baby process allows a solid foundation of information for all families who participate. At that point the focus on vulnerable families for intensive home visiting promotes an equitable approach to program design. The combination of a more intensive Welcome Baby three-visit process, which includes both an ASQ-3 and an ASQ-SE, together with a series of foundational PAT home visits, provides the opportunity for increased knowledge of child development for vulnerable families.

Children are developmentally ready to succeed in school at time of entry:

1. Increased quality in early learning programs serving vulnerable families resulting in increased developmentally appropriate practice, increased effectiveness of program strategies to support learning and thus more children developmentally ready for school: Arming teachers with the knowledge and skills to improve their practices with children and families will impact the overall quality of early education for children. The evaluation reports that "based on 49 pairs of pre- and post-assessments, GSRP classroom quality has been improved significantly in the areas of (a) learning environment, (b) daily routine, and (c) adult-child interaction as measured by PQA.

Progress Toward Outcomes

2. Increase in community will acknowledging that learning begins at birth and rich early learning experiences are essential: The “Because...” joint messaging campaign was born out of the desire to increase awareness in the community that learning begins at birth. Calhoun ISD has embedded those “Because...” messages in our communication with families and community members. This joint messaging project has been the catalyst for strategy partnering on topics including shared fund development, shared information sharing about lead and other health concerns, and additional recruitment and enrollment coordination.

3. Children are ready to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade and 4. A community-wide focus on the importance of early literacy - and the value of families reading with their children starting at birth:

Through the Raising A Reader program, staff participation in the Reading Buddy Program, preschool literacy supports, and our partnership with Willard Library to promote Imagination Library, Calhoun ISD ECS supports literacy learning throughout the early childhood continuum. Data from the evaluation reports that “CISD’s programs and services have significant cumulative effects on children’s kindergarten readiness. When we test the cumulative effects having all three programs of home visit, playgroup visit, and RAR/GSRP, children having all three programs are about 15 points higher (on a 0-54 point scale) on Fall Letter ID than those who did not receive any programs.

4. Increased participation and improved coordination of early literacy supports: Coordination of efforts is a priority for Calhoun ISD ECS. From partnering with Willard Library to promote the Imagination Library Program to partnering with Battle Creek Schools for staff to participate as Reading Buddies, to our collaboration with the Early Literacy Collaborative, our goal is to align our goals and practices with other agencies working to promote literacy. The Raising A Reader Program partners with teachers in preschool and kindergarten classrooms across the community. This partnership provides high quality books to children and promotes parent/child sharing of books.

Families are empowered, engaged, informed & financially secure

1. Equity drives the strategies used to engage, empower and inform families – Providing an equitable approach to our work with families has been raised up as a priority in our work. Although our work in the past has been done with best intentions, we acknowledge that there is much more learning that needs to happen when attempting to understand the barriers to participation and the best way to engage families who have not yet engaged.

Progress Toward Outcomes

Building relationships and trust, partnering and leveraging existing relationships and natural connectors in underserved populations are our next steps. Understanding the importance of equity in all areas of our work with children and families, Calhoun ISD's ECS system is constantly assessing and improving our strategies to ensure that we are allocating our resources to where the need is greatest. Our shift in eligibility for home visits is one example. Only families living in poverty or who have multiple risk factors are eligible for intensive home visits, however, all families are able to participate in Welcome Baby Early Learning Visits, playgroups, and Strong Families Parent Coalition.

2. **Increase in participation of diverse families in services and supports:** Our evaluation reports that of the 3661 children served by the continuum of early childhood services at Calhoun ISD, 47.6% were children of color, 92% lived at or below 250% of the federal poverty level and 8% of families were English language learners. With the shift in Welcome Baby/home visiting practices, more vulnerable families are served through intensive programming while all families are offered playgroups. This provides an inclusive social environment to set the stage for future k-12 educational classroom experiences.

Our partnership with Goodwill Industries supports single parents with young children in building employment readiness and connects them to training and employment opportunities. During each cohort, CISD staff present information about child development and the importance of high quality child care/preschool. The CISD CDA coach also provides support to families in the GoodSTEPS program as they work to complete their CDA credential.

3. **Increase in parents as emerging leaders in the community:** CISD and the Strong Families Parent Coalition have long been working to engage families as leaders in their own lives and in the community. Partnering with BC Public Schools, Community Action and other organizations, the work has been ever evolving. This year an opportunity through the Office of Great Start provided us with resources to support a cohort of emerging family leaders. Our multi-tiered framework plan will expand and empower a network of diverse Trusted Advisors in Calhoun County and engage them in connecting with families. This framework includes training and implementation supports, ongoing capacity building and leadership opportunities for families, and various opportunities for all "Trusted Advisors" to play a leading role in creating data driven action plans to address the racial, economic and cultural disparities in our community, increase enrollment in quality early childhood programs, and improve conditions for families in Calhoun County. The intended outputs that will result from the success of this framework include:

1. Inform, engage, and empower a cohort of emergent family leaders (12-15 individuals), building their capacity to acknowledge and respond to their own aspirations for their family and community. Thus, creating a cohort of Family Leader Trusted Advisor "Fellows" to act as liaisons for families in neighborhoods across the community.

Progress Toward Outcomes

2. Increase the understanding of the importance of early childhood across the community, the awareness of the services available for families, and create a multilevel parent-driven system of supports to connect families to the services they need with a focus on families who are not already connected to services.
3. Respond to the conditions in the community that prevent families from supporting their child's development and thwart child success. Through collective action learning and data driven strategy development, Trusted Advisors will create their own action plans to address risk factors and respond to the needs of families.
4. Build the capacity of existing professional "Trusted Advisors" in the community (8-10 individuals), creating a cohort of trainers to support the sustainability of the Trusted Advisor Family Leadership framework in the years to come.

Environment/Challenges/Opportunities

The nature of the work of the early childhood services team lends itself to environmental challenges do to the multiple types of space needs of the group. Large space for professional development, smaller meeting spaces, additional spaces for playgroups, private one on one spaces for meeting with families, as well as just enough space for staff to work with a quality working environment, and others. However, with these challenges great opportunities for partnerships arise. Battle Creek Public Schools, First Presbyterian Church, and New Harvest Church have all offered space to our groups at no cost. These partnerships have increased the strength in collaboration as well as visibility of the program opportunities throughout the community.

Collaboration

See partnerships

Future Plans

Plans for sustainability:

We have made many efforts to partner and collaborate with other agencies as well as shifting practice within the ISD to ensure duplication of services is either not happening at all or at the most minimum level. Our partnership with Early On continues to grow as we build one point of entry for our families into the early childhood system. We are sharing professional development opportunities and support with Childcare Resources and other neighboring ISDs to help build capacity as well as share and save costs. We know that as the department is currently structured it cannot sustain itself without some outside funding due to the limited nature of increases or additions to the current state and federal funding sources. We continue to look for additional partnerships, collaboration, and funding sources to help sustain this important, successful work for our children and families.

Replication of this project elsewhere:

This project has been replicated in a few communities that have been able to take it and shift based on the individual needs of their community and design their own version of this model. We have other ISDs, community service agencies, and state offices asking to come visit and use the strategies we have used to build their own models.

Dissemination

The evaluation will be available to the CISD leadership team and board at the next board meeting. After that, presentations to our stakeholders sharing the data, progress, and next steps to moving forward with our goals for our families and community will be key to sharing where we have been and getting additional feedback on where the future will take us. We plan to share strategies and successes with other County Great Start Collaborative groups (GSCs) at state convening's and ISD meetings.

The Office of Great Start (OGS), The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and Early Childhood Investment Cooperation (ECIC) are all interested in the collective early childhood work being done in Battle Creek. We will share the evaluation results, strategies, and successes with them as potential models for future state level work.

Issues for discussion with program officer

We are privileged to meet with our program officer on a regular basis. We will bring any concerns, issues, and next steps to her at our next meeting.