Commonwealth Preschool Planning Grant Final Strategic Plan

The Lawrence Early Achievement partnership (LEAP)

Final Report- June 30, 2016

**Commonwealth Preschool Planning Grant Final Strategic Plan**

1. ***Executive Summary***

The Lawrence Early Education Partnership (LEAP) has a long history of collaboration and a demonstrated ability to work together successfully to implement planning processes. In an effort to strengthen communication, information sharing, and program quality, a comprehensive plan to review current practice and early childhood program availability was developed and carefully reviewed to inform decision making. In addition, new and innovative strategies and management processes for improving city-wide communication pertaining to the provision of high-quality care and enhanced school readiness standards have been identified for systemic alignment, and embedded in the strategic directions and associated long and short-term goals within a three-year strategic plan.

In an effort to define and develop strategic goals and directions aimed at involving community partners in the expansion of preschool offerings for children ages 2.9-4.0, the Lawrence Public Schools, The Community Group, and the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, identified four key components and their related activities to inform decision making and shape the prioritization of strategic planning in the year ahead:

1. The development of a comprehensive inventory of licensed early education programs and providers including; program descriptions, program pricing, brief program history, current seats and projected seats/availability inclusive of demographic/pre-k census data and related program quality ratings.
2. The development of survey questions and the facilitation of focus groups designed to engage families in discussion and planning processes, and as a means of gaging and collecting programmatic needs and preferences among families living in Lawrence with children turning three.
3. The exploration of electronic platforms used to inform the public and private programs and associated constituency groups of community needs related to; program availability and expansion, school readiness standards and student assessment data, communication and information sharing among early educators and families, and timely and relevant professional development opportunities for teachers.
4. The development of a summary report based on findings with recommendations for strategic prioritization and related action steps toward the design of a multi-year strategic plan.

Through this collaborative effort and as a result of the research and consideration of the initiatives outlined above, five strategic directions and their associated goals have been identified and will frame a three-year strategic plan. Underlying each goal and direction is a commitment to closing achievement gaps and providing quality early education experiences to young children from different ethnic, racial, gender and income groups. The directions and related goals identified in the plan include; teacher effectiveness, cross-sector collaboration and leadership, instructional tools and learning environments, family engagement and continuity of services, and data driven improvement and program expansion research.

Further, the construct of the strategic plan reflects the commitment and effort on the part of LEAP to strengthen existing programs, communication, and curricular alignment. The related activity and outcomes of this work over the three-year cycle will be used to inform decision making and to identify opportunities to expand current programming to full-day, full-year learning experiences to PEG eligible four year-olds, and to then explore ways to extend these opportunities to PEG eligible three year olds.

***II. Leadership Plan***

Leadership and shared responsibility for the implementation, assessment, and monitoring of the strategic plan is essential if meaningful progress and informed decision making is to be realized. To that end a strategic implementation team will be structured to address each of the strategic goals and the monitoring of the related objectives.

**Strategic Leadership Plan**

Strategic Steering Committee: Comprised of Leaders & Co-Leaders of Goal Teams

Leader: TBD

Co-Leader: TBD

Team Members: Membership will include leadership from The Community Group, The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Inc., Lawrence Public Schools, and The Child Care Circuit (among others representing the community, sectors of early childhood support services, business partners, and families). The steering committee is charged with the oversight, facilitation, and implementation of the plan with the support of a professional process manager.

Dissemination of responsibilities and assignment of strategic goal leadership and team membership will be among the first action steps taken upon plan approval.

The Strategic Steering Committee is comprised of strategic goal team leaders and co-leaders. The over-arching responsibilities of the steering committee include; charter development for each of the strategic goal teams, meeting at least once monthly, over-all leadership, cross-sector collaboration, reporting, monitoring, and communicating the strengths and challenges associated with goal attainment to stakeholders, and the development of informed improvement plans via the progress reporting provided by strategic goal teams and in alignment with budgetary allocations.

Strategic Goal Team 1: Teacher Effectiveness

Leader:

Co-Leader;

Team Members: (cross-sector participation)

Strategic Goal Team 2: Cross-Sector Collaboration & Leadership

Leader:

Co-Leader

Team Members: (cross-sector participation)

Strategic Goal Team 3: Instructional Tools & Learning Environments

Leader:

Co-Leader

Team Members: (cross-sector participation)

Strategic Goal Team 4: Family Engagement & Continuity of Services

Leader:

Co-Leader

Team Members: (cross-sector participation)

Strategic Goal Team 5: Data Driven Improvement & Expansion

Leader:

Co-Leader;

Team Members: (cross-sector participation)

The strategic goal team leaders will convene working groups comprised of a cross-section of stakeholders representing public and private early education programs, community members, parents, administrators, teachers, support service providers, among others, along a pre-determined set of meeting dates established in alignment with a progress reporting structure and the monthly convening of the steering committee.

The teams have been designed to establish inclusivity and transparency, and will serve to strengthen communication and collaboration. Each working group will co-create a team charter outlining the work for each year of the three-year plan (one year at a time) as described in the strategic plan. Essential to goal attainment are measurable and manageable outcomes and budgetary allocations aligned accordingly. Prioritization of the goals and objectives will be determined by the working groups and shared with the steering committee as a means of identifying and mitigating duplicated efforts, establishing a dashboard of shared data points and mapping over-arching action plans.

In an effort to establish shared governance and responsibility, each of the LEAP partner agencies will assume responsibility for at least one strategic goal team, and as such each will also serve on the strategic steering committee. In addition, each goal team will include representation from each LEAP partner as a means of further establishing co-creation and cross-sector collaboration. Ideally, each goal team will include a leader and co-leader representing different agencies, experiences, and perspectives.

The strategic goal teams will be provided a progress reporting template and a schedule of due dates and deadlines. Progress reports will be used to inform decision making, identify areas of strength, and address areas with challenges (a sample Gantt chart and progress report are included in the appendices, p.9)

***III. Program Design and Development***

The strategic goals and their related objectives have been designed to; address and formalize communication among early educators horizontally and vertically, engage teachers and administrators in meaningful discussion and planning aimed at community-wide alignment and program expansion, and as a means to strengthening family and community engagement and foster a shared responsibility for learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

The strategic plan takes into account the challenges identified in the research conducted via the Commonwealth Preschool Planning Grant including findings from; the needs assessment results, an inventory of early learning classroom quality and teacher capacity, a review of comprehensive services and family engagement practices, inclusion models, current curriculum and assessment tools, and difficulties with over-all birth to third grade alignment throughout the city of Lawrence.

In response to the identified areas of challenge, five strategic goals and their related objectives have been developed to guide a three year strategic plan:

* **Teacher Effectiveness:** Develop and implement a systematic approach to professional development grounded in best practice and relevant research.
  + Strengthen best practices in early childhood education through shared professional development opportunities via a well-constructed calendar of trainings for teachers in early childhood and kindergarten classrooms (both public & private programs).
  + Establish working teams comprised of teachers representing a cross- section of program delivery, both horizontally and vertically to improve instruction, program effectiveness, and strengthen communication and processes along critical transition points for young children and their families (birth to third grade).
  + Assess programs and services and identify professional development needs using the quality measures established through the Department of Early Education and Care including the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), as well as topics and trainings identified by principals via school based management and in response to individual teacher professional development plans, in partnership with the Child Care Circuit.
* **Cross-Sector Collaboration & Leadership:** Establish a cross-sector leadership team representing public school and community based partners charged with the responsibility of guiding and making informed decisions, and assessing and managing budgetary considerations and allocations rooted in an in-depth understanding of quality practices in PK-3rd grade teaching and learning.
  + Identify and engage public school and community-based partners in formalized goal teams and working groups charged with establishing demonstrable outcomes and progress toward quality PK-3rd grade programming and trajectory (in alignment with strategic priorities).
  + Create a shared vision and expectations for public and private administrators to build and support constructive and fruitful teamwork among teachers and clearly communicate early education priorities to internal and external community groups.
  + Assume responsibility for timely progress reporting and shared responsibility for the facilitation, implementation, and management of shared goals and related outcomes.
* **Instructional Tools & Learning Environments:** Establish and communicate an identified set of standards, curricula, screening and assessment tools focused on both academic and social-emotional skills in alignment with public and private program preferences.
  + Provide opportunity for on-going discussion and exploration for teachers and administrators as a means of promoting consensus around meaningful, rigorous, and aligned school readiness standards for the purposes of articulating a shared understanding and communication with early education providers and the families they serve.
  + Select curricula that are; balanced, relevant, and easily adapted across diverse early education settings, are in alignment with standards and best practices, embedded in developmentally appropriate learning environments, and demonstrate cultural inclusivity.
  + Select a comprehensive set of screening and assessment tools including diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation that are readily accessible and understandable to teachers and parents.
* **Family Engagement & Continuity of Services:** Promote a culture supportive of families as partners who are actively and systemically involved with PreK-3rd grade teachers and administrators.
  + Establish and implement school and/or program based family engagement teams inclusive of teachers, administrators and families aimed at supporting family involvement, identifying community needs, and providing educational resources and referrals as necessary.
  + Establish and implement communication processes and approaches aimed at developing continuity and pathways that link families to special education services, related support services and systems, and inform early education programmatic development and expansion.
  + Develop and implement a calendar of family and community events designed to engage families in setting educational goals, provide regular and accessible information related to their child’s educational progress, and sustain and increase family engagement over time from Pk-3rd grade.
* **Data Driven Improvement:** Research and create a dashboard of relevant data points among educational partners derived from a shared understanding of early learning assessments, demographic information, and local and national data trends, to address systemic achievement gaps and inform instructional improvement strategies.
  + Establish data sharing electronic platforms and relevant training.
  + Provide data to teachers as appropriate to improve the quality of classrooms and to differentiate instruction.
  + Develop and implement progress monitoring strategies to understand individual student strengths and challenges, and establish communication and accessibility and relevancy of data with parents.
  + Apply relevant data to inform potential expansion of preschool programming to three-year olds in alignment with the models and lessons learned from prior grant initiatives, demographic information, space needs and program availability.

***IV. Plan for Costs and Sustainability Narrative:***

Estimated Budgetary Calculations: Year 1

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Description** | **Projected In-Kind Contributions** | **Projected Costs** |
| Research & Data Development  Electronic platforms for providers, families, strategic planning and information sharing  Strategic Goal Team | Establish data points, student learning trajectory measures, communication plan, and electronic information sharing platform/s. | Data team comprised of LPS, TCG, GLCAC- to align data points to inform instruction and guide program development-  Lawrence Family Resource Center may serve as a central point of information dissemination for families and providers. | Year 1-3: Research of possible platforms with anticipated costs/budget development for years  2 & 3 |
| Strategic Plan over-site and implementation-  Process Manager  Strategic Steering Committee | Identify key personnel responsible for the management, monitoring, and documentation of strategic progress, alignment, and implementation. | Meeting space  Photocopying  Information sharing among stakeholders, etc. | Year 1  New part-time position  12 hours/week- 52 weeks @65.00/hour  $40,560.00 |
| Preschool Program Expansion Research- Extended length of day for 4 year olds and potential expansion for 3 year olds  Strategic Goal Team | Review and improve current practice in LEAP programs and research potential for expansion of length of day for 4 year olds and seats for three year olds, including staffing, classroom space, and program quality measures in alignment with QRIS. | Strategic Goal Teams will address this work as part of the strategic planning process.  PEG capped per child costs @ $16,000/year @ 260 days for full-day, full year program inclusive of start-up costs | Additional extended day= $61.54/day based on current rates.    Full day- full school year = 180 days at a cost of approximately $11,000.00-16,000 per year/child  30 seats at an average rate of $13,500.00  $405,000.00 |
| Community Preschool Program  Expansion- Research (3 year olds)  Strategic Goal Team | Identification of center-based and family care providers with a QRIS rating of 3 or higher to potentially pilot additional expansion seats in current LEAP and center & home based community settings in year 3 of the strategic plan. | Review community based programs in partnership with EEC to identify exemplars and structure information sessions and application process for interested providers. | Year 1-3: Research quality programs and structure vetting and approval process.  Construct community partner information sessions |
| Shared Professional Development Trainings  Strategic Goal Team | A series of five professional development opportunities constructed in alignment with strategic goals and identified areas in need of development for both public and private program teachers and staff. | Childcare Circuit will support the administration, facilitation, and dissemination of workshop delivery via existing constructs. | 5 workshops @ approximately $3,000.00=$15,000.00 |
| Family Engagement Events/Activities  Strategic Goal Team | A series of four family engagement events designed to strengthen teacher-parent relationships and establish long-term partnerships from PreK-3 and beyond. | Grant partners will co-construct engagement events in alignment with ECE best practice and as outlined in the strategic plan. | 4 Engagement Events @ $2000.00/event=  $8,000.00 |
| Marketing & Communication- Meeting materials, etc.  Strategic Steering Committee | Community awareness materials, events, etc. | Shared responsibility for dissemination and creation of materials. | $6,000.00/year |
| **TOTAL: YEAR 1 Range** | **$474,560.00** | | |