

Community Schools Stakeholder Meeting

February 22, 2017

Early Childhood Work Group Notes

(facilitator – Sue Carpenter; scribe – Joelynn Avendano)

Question 1: What are some ways that early childhood is connected to academic achievement/positive child development?

The earliest years have a big impact on development. Over 100 trillion neural connections are made in a child's first 4 years – more than at any other time of life -- and the strength or fragility of those connections is largely based on the relationships and experiences the child has. Developmental gaps between family income groups are observed by age 2.

On average, by age 3, a child in a family living in poverty hears 30 million fewer words than an infant living in a more advantaged household. The number of words a child hears in the early years predicts later reading and vocabulary proficiency.

According to E3 data, children in Central Texas who attend PreK are 3X more likely to be ready for Kindergarten – and children who were ready for kindergarten are 5X more likely to pass the 3rd grade reading assessment and 6X more likely to be on track for college in math.

Question 2: What would it look like for early childhood to be part of an effective community school?

Culturally and linguistically sensitive services for families beginning at or before the child's birth. Dedicated and appropriately furnished spaces for parents and infants to come for support groups, breast-feeding support, post-partum depression groups, parenting education. Services for the parents, such as ESL, GED, parenting ed, or workforce training during the day while their children are in high-quality, nurturing, stimulating infant/toddler care in the same building. (Ala ASPIRE, AVANCE).

EDUCARE would be an amazing model. (National model that is a partnership between school districts, head start, and subsidized child care – with the highest quality standards and full wrap-around services. Closest Educare model is in Tulsa.)

Access to mental health services for the parents, and mental health consultation for young children as requested.

After-PreK services on site where preschoolers are not mixed with big kids in the cafeteria. Summer programming. (PreK and Kinder children experience the most dramatic summer learning loss.)

Cooking classes for parents. Nutrition supports during the school year and summer – check food program eligibility criteria. Perhaps partner with Brighter Bites to get healthy food to families.

Evening or Saturday workshops for families to come to together. (Ala the literacy fairs that Mary Ellen Isaacs used to organize for PreK families)

Toy lending library

Regular developmental screenings for children (by the County First Steps program or other specialists) with referrals to appropriate services if the child is eligible.

On-site pediatrician on certain days for well-child check-ups.

Storytimes for toddlers and parents in the school library. Access to age-appropriate books to check-out.

Hub for infant home visiting services.

Head Start and/or Early Head Start classrooms.

Transition support between home and school. (Kindergarten camps, for example) Kindergarten teachers visiting neighborhood child care centers to talk to children who are transitioning to kindergarten.

School district professional development days for PreK would be open to child care/head start teachers in the neighborhood.

High-school students could do supervised volunteer work with early childhood children.

Question 3: What are some of the barriers that stand in the way of early childhood being part of an effective community school?

Current political climate – fear of deportation

Lack of consistent programming due to funding cycles.

People don't think early childhood is important – or they pigeon-hole it as PreK only. Belief that all it takes is someone who likes kids. Lack of investment in appropriate programming, prepared staff, and dedicated spaces.

Need for campus-level coordinators to make sure that all of the possible resources are being tapped into.

Need collaborative funding opportunities.

Hard to recruit appropriately trained staff in languages other than English and Spanish

Question 4: What resources in early childhood do you know that could be leveraged?

Success By 6

SRAP

Workforce Solutions, Texas Rising Star System

Faith based organizations

WIC

Rec Centers, Libraries, PARD

Federally Qualified Clinics

Existing strong programs: ASPIRE, 2-Gen partners, Head Start, Safe Place, Refugee House, Toy Berry, Mom's Place, Prenatal and Perinatal Coalition, First Steps, Book Spring, AVANCE, Any Baby Can, YMCA ELR, SB6 Literacy Coaching Project, Healthy Families, Sustainable Foods, Easter Seals

Expand resource maps to include early childhood resources