

St. Mary Parish Ready Start Network  
Blueprint

11/22/19

## **Introduction**

Ready Start Networks are coalitions of individuals committed to creating and implementing a bold local vision for early childhood. RSNs are driven by a community's need to improve opportunities and inspire change for children birth to age five. Each RSN brings together partners to continuously improve the quality of and access to early childhood opportunities in their community. Driven by local data and context, we do this in three key ways: develop intentional plans, secure and weave together resources and implement creative solutions. Empowered Ready Start Networks accelerate efforts to help children be ready for school and successful in life. The work must be done to ensure our children's futures, and it takes a village to make the change; we cannot do this without the help of strong forces.

The research is clear- ninety percent of brain development happens before the age of five. In addition, two out of three Louisiana families have both parents working. 35 percent of Louisiana children are not ready for kindergarten, only 46 percent can read on grade level by 3rd grade; and our state is 49th in education overall. Investing in early childhood strengthens our state's overall education system and ensure kids have the foundation they need to learn and succeed on the first day of school. Quality doesn't just happen. As educators, we know the first 2,000 first days of a child's life sets the foundation for language development and socio-emotional skills. Research shows that children who receive quality early childhood education are better behaved, get along better with other children and adults, more likely to read on grade level, and more likely to graduate on time. Having an intentional focus on establishing the conditions for quality is critical to Louisiana's future success and vital for the future of the children of St. Mary Parish.

Louisiana's future is tied to the success of its children and today we have the opportunity to transform our future in one generation. Everyone has a shared responsibility to support the economy of today and shape the workforce of tomorrow. Working together will ensure our community of St. Mary parish thrives. We encourage support as we embark on this great endeavor of uplifting our St. Mary parish children through early childhood education.

## **Guiding Statements**

Vision: The St. Mary Parish will be educated and united through childhood education in preparation for children ages birth to five's success in early childhood education.

Mission: St. Mary Parish Ready Start Network brings together ECE providers to work together cohesively for the greater good while providing premier education for children ages birth to five throughout St. Mary Parish.

## **Strategic Plan**

### **Goal 1: Establish a local collaborative governing structure for shared decision-making that has by-laws and adheres to public meeting requirements**

The St. Mary Parish Ready Start Network is the Lead Agency which conducts all administrative functions for the network. Network members consist of representatives from all early childhood education providers in St. Mary Parish. Committees will be formed as needed. The ideal governance for the community network would be structured as an intermediary or place-based organization, in which it will lead, plan, coordinate and manage across a group of stakeholders to develop and implement common goals. This structure is the most equitable as the Network was initially formed to bring together Early Childcare Education providers and stakeholders.

The Network's goals will be:

- Engage in ongoing strategic planning, including constant reviewing
- Convene stakeholders from across the sector
- Provide neutral assessments of progress and performance and foster a better understanding of the current landscape
- Develop ways to help ECE providers enhance performances of teachers using professional development
- Develop ways to encourage existing or new providers to continue addressing unmet needs in St. Mary parish

Equitable representation will be ensured by determining that all network will have at least one representative on the Executive Committee. The makeup of this committee will be nine members- two representing childcare centers, one from the Chitimacha School, two representing Head Start, two representing St. Mary Parish School Board, and one representative each for Glencoe Charter and Early Start. All

Executive Committee members will serve for a period of two years and can be voted on for another two-year term. The Network membership will include multiple levels of participation. Stakeholders that are Network members fall into several categories:

Tier I- Represents those who are critically involved in systems serving young children and their families including schools, social services, early learning and child care programs, family support programs, higher education and issue area funders.

Tier II- Community stakeholders invested in the work of the Network from a less direct perspective. These stakeholders may include elected officials, business leaders, and chamber of commerce, and community members.

Under the proposed governance structure, the Executive Committee, Tier I, whose role will evolve as a strategic plan is completed and implemented, will oversee meetings and have voting privileges. This Executive Committee will be responsible for major organizational decisions, high-level strategic oversight, and reviewing and approving the Network's budget.

Committee member responsibilities include:

- Attend monthly meetings
- Joining subcommittees (as needed)
- Offering connections to important community and funding resources that will advance the Network's goals and objectives

Resources:

- Existing: St. Mary Community Action, LANO, ACS
- Needed: workshop/informational

Performance Metrics: Monthly meetings, RSN by-laws, RSN Strategic Plan

**Goal 2: Measure the need for the affordable access to quality care and education for children birth through age four within the community**

The ideal system for measuring the need for access in our community network will be a management software module that would be aligned with the Community Action Agency's Cap60 Management Data Collection to its fullest, which in return will allow all partners to see where they are currently, and where there are needs for additional slots and support. Partners will be able to access their data and create

reports to help improve their overall quality of their classrooms. This would accomplish several objectives that some Network partners say would enhance the quality of their programs.

These include:

- Identifying current demand for access, met and unmet, by age and locale
- Available capacity for each provider, by age and locale
- Sites and classrooms where quality improvement is needed
- Where and how unmet access demand is impacting business and industry about hiring retention and attendance
- All public and private funding streams that can be used to improve quality and increase access

The ideal state would be utilizing the Cap60 Management Data Collection to its fullest, which in return will allow all partners to see where they are currently, and where there are needs for additional slots and support. Partners will be able to access their data and create reports to help improve their overall quality of their classrooms. This information will better enhance and support parent choice through coordinated enrollment and parent information initiatives.

A good way for us to further identify current objectives is to have partners complete a needs assessment in which any problems and concerns in their programs and within the Network can be identified. Once the problems are identified then the partners as a group can determine how all data collected can help resolve those problems.

The Network recognizes the need to strengthen the quality of the St. Mary Parish Early Child Education sector in order to meet the overall needs of the community. The collection, analyzing, and sharing unbiased data increases transparency, helps enhance program quality, and keeps all network and community partners informed on how all priorities are being met. By utilizing this Management System Software, all ECE partners, i.e. Head Start, School System and Childcare Centers, will be trained on how the system works, how to input information and how to access data and reports.

Accessible information includes:

- Applications in both English and Spanish
- Coordinated Funding Request Information

- CLASS Observation and Scores
- Classroom Information
- Name of Curriculum
- Teacher Degree
- Type of Funding (LA4, Head Start, CCAP, Title I, etc.)
- Classroom Quality Ratings

Resources:

- Existing: coordinated enrollment plan
- Needed: data package

Performance Metrics: Cap60 Software

**Goal 3: Identify shared resources that can support improved access to quality early childhood care and education programs for children from birth through age four and determine how resources can be leveraged to maximize the impact of such programs for each age.**

The Network is utilizing all federal funds (Head Start, Title I, 8(g), LA4, IDEA, etc.) to foster an increase across the board in children ages infant to four-years old classes. St. Mary Parish School Board braids federal funds to support the universal preschool classes operating with the public schools. Head Start only receives federal funds for the program; however, the child care partners braid funding through CCAP and private funding. Access data indicates that some programs within our Network have waiting lists for their age groups served based on federal requirements. Our Network has mirrored the state numbers in serving over 90 percent of economically disadvantaged four-year olds; we are still working to reach a higher number of disadvantaged three-year olds. We are keenly aware of the need to increase options for ages infants through age two. We have worked diligently to ensure that the seats we do have are of high-quality. Regarding access, we are more informed about what is being done in instruction and learning in each facility. To address quality, all sites are using a state approved curriculum for early childhood education. To enhance the quality of our Network partners, specifically the childcare centers, and based on the anticipated results of the strategic plan ad needs assessment, we propose to

- Hire a mentor coach who will work specifically with childcare centers. This mentor coach will work directly with classroom teachers to give them strategies to help them become effective and develop more effective

teaching practices. This will enhance the quality of learning in each of the childcare center.

- Secondly, we will help 7 childcare center teaching staff to acquire their Child Development Associate (CDA). This is important, particularly for childcare centers by ensuring they have credentials as they are the only ones without teaching credentials.
- Purchase Tier I Curriculum, training and instructional support to ensure that each classroom within the Network has one. Also, if necessary, provide CLASS MMCI and CLASS Reliability trainings. This will support quality interactions. We will also utilize translators from the School Board to help Non-English-speaking children and their families in all childcare centers.

Resources:

- Existing: LDOE
- Needed: n/a

Performance Metrics:

#### **Goal 4: Assemble a financial portfolio and strategy aligned with the community network's need for access and quality**

Currently, the Network's plan to serve the most children includes all funding sources- Head Start, Title I, 8(g), LA4, and IDEA, to implement an across the board increase in the number of children ages infant to four-year olds. We as a Network will create a strategic plan and complete a needs assessment which will take into consideration the following:

- The Network's plan is to review collected data on a regular and ongoing basis that indicates which partners within our Network have waiting lists, and for what age groups served, based on state and federal requirements.
- We will make certain we continue to utilize slots for children with disabilities throughout the Network.
- Based on the review of data reports, we will enhance our outreach efforts to all children and families through diverse coordinated enrollment activities that meet the needs of the families in our area.
- We will collaborate with some of the community partners named in section one in order to further ensure that families are aware of their choices as it pertains to early childcare programs.

The Network will recruit partners that can bring more resources to the group, thus enhancing the work we are doing. We will explore assistance from private funders

and will research and apply for various funding that can be utilized along with the current funding. The Executive Committee will oversee the implementation of the plan. In this plan all partners will be involved in ensuring the plan is properly implemented. Site managers, directors, principals, and administrative staff that will have the responsibilities to ensure that all components of the plan are in place, including

- Participating in coordinated enrollment activities
- Inputting and accessing all necessary data
- Setting up and implementing trainings

Resources:

- Existing: n/a
- Needed: Cap 60

Performance Metrics: