

Region 31 Discussion Notes Kane

General Comments

- There is a high number of potentially dual-language learners in the region
- Attendees were surprised:
 - By the percentage of white people.
 - That our Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and pediatric dental clinic serve children living in high poverty areas.
 - By the high amount of lower income children.
 - By the concentration of young learners in two areas compared to the size of the region.
 - The number of children under six.
- Data can be deceiving. If the data for the region is not disaggregated, there are families living under 200% of FPL that may be missed. Unsure of how to get resources to those families, as it is difficult to find services for them.
- Families live in a pocket where there are not many resources.
- Preschool For All and Preschool For All-Expansion (PFA/PFA-E) programs have slots that are open, but there is difficulty making the choice to fill slots because the staff are stretched thin supporting the children who are traumatized and fragile and need additional care and support. There are no mental health supports available for such young children. They have a waitlist but are afraid to put more children in the open slots.
- Early Childhood Collaboration reviewed this data with the school district to decide where to have an early childhood classroom – where are the child care deserts? How can they get dollars and classrooms in those areas?
- There are mental health and health disparities.
- Lack of transportation.

- Families need help navigating and understanding the systems.
- We need supports for Family Child Care. They are vital for essential workers and often representative of the cultures they serve.
- We need providers who speak other languages besides Spanish - Aurora has a high population of refugees from many countries.
- Early educators need help with challenging behavior, which has significantly increased.
- We need to rethink our approach to outreach and recruitment so that we can reach families furthest from opportunities. This is where local family engagement efforts are crucial.

Strengths/Assets

- Early childhood collaborations.
- A coordinated intake system.
- Strong partnerships among the school districts.
- Great partnerships among multiple stakeholders.
- Several agencies have community outreach workers going into the community to connect with families.
- Health, human, and social service organizations and agencies try to work together.
- Avoiding duplicating efforts.
- Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS) is used to make direct referrals for families to services without violating HIPAA laws.
- Community outreach efforts going into the community to find families.
- Bringing together multiple cross-sector partners to streamline resources to families.

Needs/Challenges

- Transportation and housing.
- Provider shortages.

- Lack of qualified staff.
- Impact of trauma on children and teachers.
- Slot gaps and lack of services.
- Family trust, especially in COVID environment.
- Capacity for collaboration work; there needs to be more funding to support the work of early childhood community collaborations.
- Barriers that happen due to required paperwork and documentation for enrollment.
- Affordable housing. People want affordable housing, but not in their community.
- Outreach for programs could be better coordinated and marketed.
- Transient families.
- All the certifications early childhood teachers must have in order to teach.
- Finding bilingual teachers.
- Lack of coordination with mental health and schools.
- Cost of marketing.
- Better coordination of all services.
- Pockets of need/child care deserts.
- Lack of pipeline for people going into the Early Childhood field.