

## **Region 35 Discussion Notes**

### **Marshall, LaSalle, Putnam**

#### **General Comments**

- Poverty guidelines align with our programs, where we see the centers in the area, and where most children are attending.
- The map shows lack of services in the more rural/impoverished areas.
- Data is powerful! Kindergarten Readiness data is also something I believe the council should be looking at and analyzing.

#### **Strengths/Assets**

- The local early childhood collaboration.
- Early childhood community college.
- About 5 Preschool For All (PFA) programs that are the anchors for services in the area.
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

#### **Needs/Challenges**

- Staffing, not able to keep full classrooms because we don't have enough staff.
- Child care in general; we do not have enough places in town to accommodate our community. A lot of families cannot get into child care due to staffing shortages with COVID protocols.
- The Ottawa area lacks child care and services for 0-2 year olds.
- Transportation is an issue for many families; if transportation is not provided, many children are unable to attend the programs. There is a lack of drivers.
- There are no opportunities to reach our earliest learners. This area does not have many, if any, Park District programs/services.
- If we want to reach the rural/impoverished areas, we have to communicate better because those areas are under-served.
- Many families have to go a distance to receive care, such as healthcare access, dental, vision, etc.
- Low-income areas do not have healthcare services or transportation; there's a high rate of homeless families in the shelters; there is a high special needs ratio in the Ottawa, LaSalle/Peru areas; and there is no Prevention Initiative (PI) for young families until they begin Early Intervention.
- Home-based services are lacking.
- The biggest challenge for Ottawa is that the buildings are maxed out.
- We need more information on building grants, or how to create more space before the next grant cycle. We have a lot of children on waiting lists, and we can open up more classrooms to provide PI, but there's no space.