

## **Region 47 Discussion Notes**

### **Lee, Ogle, Whiteside**

#### **General Comments**

- There is a need to understand the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) world and how it operates.
- If the business community, employers, and other non-ECEC partners are to be engaged in this process, there has to be a glossary of terms and concepts to explain ECEC operations. For example, the federal poverty level: what is it and what does it mean?

#### **Strengths/Assets**

- Region has already been doing the work through the Community Based Planning process.
- Region has been processing the data and has a lot of partners already at the table, including the business community, parents, child care providers, Preschool For All (PFA) districts, etc.
- This region has gathered a lot of information. We have done two surveys. One survey was sent out to ECEC providers in the 24 school districts in Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties. The data is coming in from PFA administrators to find out if they have room to expand services. The other survey was sent out to families to find out what would be more useful to them and what they would like to see in terms of ECEC services.
- The new ISAC-ECACE scholarships, available through Sauk Valley Community College, will help the workforce improve their skills (credential/degrees).
- The legislation is a huge win for ECE Associate students; however, it will take time to fill the current staffing gaps.

#### **Needs/Challenges**

- Dixon – need for more Pre-k classrooms in the public schools. There are two PFA classrooms, and we could use two or three more.
- There is a need for a more collaborative relationship between Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS), and Preschool For All/Preschool For All-Expansion (PFA/PFA-E) to make everyone aware of the various ECEC options available to all families.
- Head Start grantees have birth to five programs in Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside communities. The State has an abundance of money coming in from the federal government to provide support to children and families eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. With programs talking about additional classrooms, it is important to know that in many communities HS and EHS remain under enrolled despite the memorandum of understanding with school districts.
- There is a need for more collaboration among all ECEC providers to ensure the greatest number of children under the age of 5 are served in a high-quality, equitable, and affordable early childhood setting.
- Staffing shortages.
- Region does not have transportation and loses students because of this need.