



Early Learning Network of Central

Blueprint for the Future—2020-30

“Ignite in every child a passion for a lifetime of learning”

The *Early Learning Network of Central* is a dedicated alliance working together to create a safe, engaging learning environment that nurtures the well-being and growth of each child on their educational journey. Together we

- ❖ support improved early childhood care, education, and health outcomes for all of Central’s youngest community members and
- ❖ work to strengthen the Central community’s future by ensuring that all children enter school prepared for success not only in school but in the workplace and in the community.

The Current State of our Alliance’s Work:

Since its launch in 2015, the Early Learning Network of Central has worked steadily to increase the quality of early childhood programs in the Central Community, and we have already achieved great success!

From the 2015-16 school year to 2018-19, our toddler and Pre-K classrooms have demonstrated continuous quality improvement, with site scores steadily improving in each level of Louisiana’s early childhood classroom assessment tool (called CLASS):

- ❖ We have improved by +0.23 in some areas and as much as +1.06 in other areas¹, with overall improvement across all areas by +0.60.

We are particularly proud that many of these gains are higher than the state average of improvements.

Each participating area early learning site has increased scores: due to these strong gains, all participating area child care centers reached the state’s quality rating (called *Proficient*), and the area’s school-based Pre-K program reached the level of *Excellent*, with the Early Learning Network of Central achieving a state Quality Rating score in 2018-19 of *High Proficient*.

¹ We have improved by +0.23 in Pre-K *Emotional Support*, +0.29 in Toddler *Emotional & Behavioral Support*, +0.32 in Toddler *Engaged Support for Learning*, +0.63 in Pre-K *Classroom Organization*, and +1.06 in Pre-K *Instructional Support*

There are several reasons for these early learning sites' gains:

- ❖ First, the programs participating in this quality improvement work have *lower classroom ratios*:

These ratios allow us to have fewer children per teacher in order to ensure that each child's needs is met.

- ❖ Additionally, 83% of these sites currently use a *high-quality curriculum* in their classrooms:

These curricula, assessed by the Department of Education as high-quality, provide the teachers at these sites with engaging lesson plans that teach children widely about the world around them and enable children to develop critical social-emotional, language, and cognitive skills. Furthermore, this high-quality curriculum allows early childhood teachers to assess the progress of the children in their classrooms, to support each and every child's development.

- ❖ Next, the Early Learning Network of Central and its participating early learning programs have made intensive efforts to provide *professional development* to classroom teachers, to help them further strengthen and improve their teaching practice:

We have provided this professional development to teachers through both on-site, one-on-one coaching—observing and modeling how to teach young children in the ways that best help them learn and advance—and through group teacher and leader trainings. We see the teachers and site leaders participating in these efforts improving their classrooms and sites each year.

- ❖ Finally, *strong relationships* among the Network members and continued strengthening of *collaboration* is a significant reason for the gains we have achieved together across these participating early learning classrooms:

- Child care sites combine to offer multiple, shared training days for their teachers, and these trainings are centered around the collective data of teacher needs.
- Child care site leaders conduct formal assessments of each other's sites, which not only provides the Network with important data on instructional quality but also allows these Network partners to observe and be inspired by effective strategies of peers. Site leaders note and take back to their own sites the best strategies and ideas that they observe in other sites' classrooms, thereby raising the quality of all participating sites in the Network.
- Teachers in participating Network sites are provided opportunities to observe the teaching of peers measured as high-quality. The *Excellent* school site, for example, hosts child care Pre-K teachers in observing all that makes the school's classroom practice and activities successful.
- Early learning sites participating in the Network assist families, together, in accessing available programs and services.

The Next Phase:

While proud of what we have accomplished in these 5 years, we want to achieve even greater success for the Central community, with your help. To help us do so, we have set the following Goals—

- ❖ Increase community understanding of the importance of social-emotional skills
We can further improve the quality of early childhood classrooms and other experiences by helping all caregivers understand that early childhood care and instruction is not just about ABCs...children have to develop social-emotional skills as well that help them learn to interact with others, follow instructions, work collaboratively, and more.
Strategies to accomplish this goal include:
 - Engaging additional community early childhood programs, such as other child care centers and Mother's Day Out programs, in our training opportunities, to ensure that those programs have the same access to research regarding best practice for early care
 - Sharing information with stay-at-home parents, grandparents, and other guardians about ways they can effectively support their children's development at home

- ❖ Increase identification of more of the community children at risk for developmental delays and link their families to needed resources
Strategies to accomplish this goal include:
 - Engaging pediatricians to inform them of other available community resources
 - Conducting additional assessment of all children in participating early learning sites with a unified assessment tool

- ❖ Continue to improve classroom quality through continuing professional development opportunities
Strategies to accomplish this goal include:
 - Conducting ongoing assessment of data to determine lowest-scoring areas and opportunities for improved instruction
 - Gathering ongoing feedback from teachers regarding their needs for supports

- ❖ Maintain classroom quality by working to retain high-performing teachers
Strategies to accomplish this goal include:
 - Developing a plan for local business to provide incentives to teachers for high-quality instruction
 - Developing a plan for recognizing high-performing teachers in the community

- ❖ Further improve children's access to high-quality early care
Strategies to accomplish this goal include:
 - Analyzing school data to determine Central Community children's entry Kindergarten-readiness assessment scores
 - Developing a plan for working with local business to provide incentives for early learning sites joining the Network and participating in quality improvement or for adding seats

With YOUR help we hope to serve higher numbers of Central children and continue to strengthen this community's early learning sites, so that we *ignite in every child a passion for a lifetime of learning.*