



## A Summary of Work from Guilford County's 100-Day Challenge Projects

### The Pathway to School Success



**Supportive and Supported Families**

**Responsive and Innovative Early Childhood System**

**100-Day Challenge Celebration  
May 24, 2016**

## Guilford County's 100-Day Challenges

On February 4, 2016, more than 425 Guilford County residents gathered at the *Get Ready Guilford Early Childhood Summit*. Together, we learned from early childhood and systems change experts. We interacted with the Ready/Ready Pathway to Success and Framework for Change that was built by hundreds of community members. We reviewed and wrestled with data reflecting what we knew about the state of young children in Guilford County. And we pledged to **join together to create a more responsive, innovative early childhood system to eliminate barriers that keep children from being ready for school and for life.**

**About Ready for School, Ready for Life**  
*Ready for School, Ready for Life* is the backbone initiative tasked with transforming Guilford County's early childhood system. Through a strategic focus on first 2,000 days of life — the time when a child's brain develops most rapidly and when the foundation for all future learning is built — our goal is to ensure that each child in our community enters kindergarten ready to succeed.

At the Summit, 100-Day Challenge Teams formed to begin **chipping away at obstacles in the system** that keep children from being ready for school. Team members identified specific problems aligned with the Ready/Ready Pathway and Framework, and that they were energized by or curious about. Together, they rolled up their sleeves and started digging into root causes of “wicked problems” within the system.

**Challenge Teams consisting of almost 150 community members continued working together for the full 100 days.** Teams used the ABL Change Framework — a **systems change approach** that helps communities more effectively address significant social issues. They dove deep into root causes, evaluated best practices, sought out local data about the problem, and sometimes started over when the data pointed them in another direction. Many also became pros at using Basecamp to collaborate across organizational boundaries.

Some teams started designing powerful strategies to address the problem. Others conducted a pilot program to test their proposed strategies. Everyone **learned along the way and made significant contributions** to revealing and understanding system problems that hold children and families back.

Guilford County can be incredibly proud of what the 100-Day Challenge Teams achieved together. New leaders have emerged. More of us understand the landscape of our community, and the complexity of the system in which we operate. Small wins have been achieved. **Working together toward a common goal energized us.**

The 100-Day Challenges have been a big commitment for participating team members and for their organizations. ***Ready for School, Ready for Life* is thankful for the investment of time, energy, brainpower and good humor to jump-start the systems change work in Guilford County.**

Families and children need each and every one of us to help build a system that meets the needs of today's children and families. There's much work to do as we **continue to align with the Ready/Ready Pathway & Framework, move to action, and focus on improved outcomes for children and families.**

Let's take a look back at just how far we've come over the past 100 days together.

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#### LEARN MORE!

This booklet gives high-level summaries of the work of each 100-Day Challenge Team, what they learned, and their recommendations for moving the systems work forward.

For the full story—including best practice documents, survey results, guides, and other work products—visit [www.GetReadyGuilford.org](http://www.GetReadyGuilford.org) or contact the Ready/Ready team directly at **(336) 273-0247** with questions.

# Breastfeeding-Friendly Community Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Community Volunteers, United Way of Greater Greensboro, Greensboro Parks and Recreation, UNC Physicians, Nurse Family Partnership, UNCG, Guilford County Partnership for Children

**Community problem tackled:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be breastfed exclusively for the first six months; only 33.2% of children under age 5 were breastfed for at least 6 months<sup>1</sup>

**Challenge goal:** Exploring interest in and creating a pathway for Guilford County to become a breastfeeding-friendly community.

**Perspectives engaged:** Businesses who have been awarded the Breastfeeding Friendly Business or Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace designation from the North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition, Guilford County Breastfeeding Alliance, La Leche League

## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Many local efforts to support breastfeeding mothers including lactation consultants and La Leche League; no coordinated effort to gain the community-wide breastfeeding friendly designation.
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** Reviewed several pathways to becoming a breastfeeding-friendly community; adopted NC Breastfeeding Coalition's definitions of Breastfeeding-Friendly Businesses and Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplaces.

## What we learned:

1. **Breastfeeding Friendly Businesses:** (1) do not advertise infant formula/related products directly to consumers; (2) always welcome and respect breastfeeding mothers, who will never be treated poorly or asked to stop breastfeeding, cover up or move.
2. **Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces** have made accommodations to support employees who are breastfeeding mothers, including: flexible breaks; access to a private room for expressing milk/nursing that is not a bathroom; room must have comfortable chair, door lock, electrical outlet and hand hygiene station. In addition, the workplace does not advertise infant formula or related products directly to consumers.

## Significant wins:

1. Researched and interviewed local businesses with Breastfeeding Friendly Business or Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace award from the NC Breastfeeding Coalition.
2. Identified realistic first steps toward becoming a breastfeeding friendly community with focus on: encouraging businesses to become breastfeeding friendly (patrons and employees); identifying breastfeeding advocates in the community; and raising the level of public discourse on the importance of breastmilk.

## Recommendations:

1. **Encourage more businesses to become breastfeeding friendly** by starting with our own businesses or organizations applying for the NC Breastfeeding Coalition award.
2. **Create a peer network** of businesses and organizations that are open to taking the next steps to be designated breastfeeding friendly for patrons and/or employees.
3. **Collaborate with existing organizations** to stay involved in ongoing efforts to encourage breastfeeding.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Supportive Families &gt; Healthy Families &gt; Healthy prenatal and postnatal behaviors</p>
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# Early Literacy Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Community Volunteers, Family Support Network of Central Carolina, Greensboro Housing Authority, Guilford County Schools, High Point Housing Authority, Reading Connections, Say Yes Guilford, United Way of Greater Greensboro, YMCA Greensboro

**Community problem tackled:** At least 35% of children in Guilford County enter kindergarten without the literacy skills needed to be on track for grade-level reading by third grade.<sup>2</sup>

**Challenge goal:** Identify assets and gaps in the current early literacy landscape.

**Perspectives engaged:** Directors of early literacy programs, heads of local public libraries, directors of early education centers/family childcare homes in order to understand what early literacy programs and practices currently exist.

## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Decided to focus on birth to age 5; used Milestones of Early Literacy Development<sup>3</sup> as a developmental framework; reviewed local data about kindergarten literacy<sup>4</sup> and qualitative family data; reviewed The Colorado Literacy Framework<sup>5</sup> and Campaign for Grade Level Reading materials as background.
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** Identified 29 programs with early literacy focus or components; distributed a comprehensive on-line survey to learn about early literacy programs/practices; analyzed data and made recommendations.

## What we learned:

1. **Early literacy assets:** High engagement with families when their child participates in programs; majority report focusing on key components of early literacy (reading for phonemic awareness, vocabulary, enjoyment, comprehension, writing/pre-writing).
2. **Early literacy gaps:** Small percentage of children birth to age 5 served by programs; programs tend to recruit by word-of-mouth and may not reach children who need services most; most programs report excess capacity and no waiting lists; programs not offered at times/places convenient for families; most programs do not use an early literacy curriculum; only 50% conduct formal assessment of the child's progress.
3. **Early Childhood System:** Data collection challenging due to lack of data or no response; lack of early literacy network/system (or definition of which organizations/sectors are focusing on early literacy).

**Significant win:** Developed survey and collected baseline data about early literacy programs.

## Recommendations:

1. **Make early literacy and grade level reading a community priority.**
2. **Build internal capacity** with current programs and scale to meet need.
3. **Implement proactive recruitment strategies** based on who most needs services.
4. **Embed early literacy programming** where families with young children congregate (school buildings, waiting rooms, rec centers, laundromats, parks, faith communities)
5. **Develop a Literacy Network** focused on shared professional development in four key areas: (1) participant assessment; (2) program assessment (data collection/analysis); (3) early literacy curriculum; and (4) cultural appropriateness of materials.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Supportive Families &gt; Empowered &amp; Engaged Families &gt; Support learning and literacy at home</p>
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## Families as Change Agents Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Community volunteers, parents, Thriving at Three program

**Community problem tackled:** Families are not always engaged in decision-making for policies, programs and practices that could help get their children ready for kindergarten.

**Challenge goal:** Launch a Family Action Learning Team (ALT) made up of families with children age eight and under who will serve as consultants, partners and change agents within the Ready/Ready initiative. They will be part of the Action Learning Network along with organization leaders and direct service providers.

**Ready/Ready Framework**

**Element Addressed:**  
Supportive Families >  
Empowered &  
Engaged Families >  
Effective advocates  
for needs of child/  
family & community

**Perspectives engaged:** Parents with children ages eight and under, direct service providers

### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Reviewed family data from Family Photo Voice Project and family meetings about need/desire to be involved in decision-making.
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** Identified key reasons why families aren't always engaged in decision-making about services (time, don't know how to do it).
3. **Improved responsiveness.** Reviewed best practices about parent coalition building;<sup>6</sup> interviewed MI and NC organizations who had this experience; engaged families in designing Family ALT meetings to meet their needs, i.e. choose guest speakers.
4. **Identified quick wins and where to pilot, anticipate barriers.** Launched Family ALT on April 25; offered free childcare/meal and held session when many parents could attend (Monday, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.); rotating locations around Guilford County.
5. **Tracked success.** Most returned for second ALT meeting; their feedback improved 100-Day Challenge Team projects (Parenting Education, Developmental Screenings) and the Guilford Free Play Project, a pilot program promoting unstructured play.

### What we learned:

1. **Families provide valuable insights/guidance** about how to support school readiness.
2. **Families quickly become a support system** for one another.
3. **Families are highly motivated** to help their children and other children succeed in school and are committed to improving the community.

### Significant wins:

1. Launched Family ALT as part of Ready/Ready Action Learning Network.
2. Engaged interpreter to encourage participation of Spanish-speaking families.

### Recommendations:

1. **Expand Family ALT** so membership reflects the true diversity of Guilford County.
2. **Engage families in the development phase** of programs, policies, practices and changes in order to get better outcomes, i.e. changes to Guilford Free Play Project.
3. **After action is taken, tell families about the difference their input made.** Families say they rarely hear what difference their input makes, which discourages engagement.
4. **Work with the Family ALT to design and distribute resources** in family-friendly language and formats about developmental milestones, kindergarten readiness, early literacy, and more.

## Developmental Screenings Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA), Guilford County Partnership for Children, Partnership for Community Care, UNCG, United Way of Greater High Point, YWCA of Greensboro

**Community problem tackled:** Many 4-year-olds are not developmentally on track.<sup>7</sup>

**Challenge goal:** Identify where children get developmental screenings, tools used, what happens as result (i.e., referrals, electronic medical record) and if data is available.

**Perspectives engaged:** Sought data from variety of agencies/organizations; asked Family ALT about screening experiences and tested concept of online screening tools for families.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Supported Families &gt; Sufficient Supports Available for Children &gt; Children have yearly wellness checks &amp; developmental screenings</p>
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### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Reviewed local kindergarten readiness data and best practices; align with *Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive*<sup>8</sup> report.
2. **Identified root cause of problem.** Disjointed system of care due to lack of systematic approach to developmental screenings—little coordination among providers, multiple screening tools, lack of confidence that referrals will result in connections, developmental milestone conversations cut short due to time constraints.
3. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** Surveyed providers; analyzed results.

### What we learned:

1. **Developmental screenings assets:** Screenings conducted in a variety of settings including visiting nurses, pediatrician offices, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), agencies/organizations, child care centers; most use a valid and reliable screening tool; Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and ASQ: Social Emotional (SE) are most common; Parents’ Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) is used in health care system).
2. **Developmental screenings gaps.** No common, coordinated approach for how screenings are conducted; no population-level data to determine how many children are on/off track; Bright Futures<sup>9</sup> guidelines are recommended, but insufficient data to know whether they are followed.
3. **Early childhood system.** Unable to obtain data from pediatric medical homes where majority of developmental screenings occur.

### Significant wins:

1. Identified big gaps when it comes to tracking the development of young children.
2. Best practice protocols are available, which can support our efforts.
3. Identified local effort within a pediatric practice that could serve as effective implementation model.

### Recommendations:

1. **Convene a Work Group** to develop common approach for developmental screenings in Guilford County, including broader representation, i.e., all local health systems at the table.
2. **Implement ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE system-wide in all pediatric medical homes** as it is the evidence-based standard for developmental screenings.
3. **Provide supports within pediatric medical homes** to ensure screening tools are implemented to fidelity, (i.e. health navigators who help families complete screening, understand results and connect to resources).
4. **Collect ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE data on a population level basis** to identify trends and track progress.
5. **Build families’ knowledge about developmental milestones and screenings**, i.e., waiting room videos about developmental milestones, serve and return, resources, etc. (Watch Me Grow model).

# High-Quality, Affordable, Accessible Child Care Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** EQuIPD, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), Bringing out the Best, child care center directors, teachers from a range of facilities (private, non-profit, lab centers, family child care, public i.e. Head Start), parents

**Community problem tackled:** Not all children in Guilford County have access to high-quality, affordable child care.

**Challenge goal:** Define local issues around accessibility, quality, and affordability of care for children under age five from various perspectives and make recommendations for improving the system.

**Perspectives engaged:** Families, early childhood professionals (leaders, various agencies, teachers, directors, family child care providers), and community members.

## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem:** Aligned work with NAEYC's policy statement "A Call for Excellence in Early Childhood Education", [www.naeyc.org/policy/excellence](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/excellence)
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** At least 22,913 children need childcare because one or both parents are working or in school.<sup>10</sup> In 2015, an average of only 9,952 children were enrolled in a licensed child care center.<sup>11</sup>
3. **Conducted root cause analysis.** Themed/analyzed qualitative data.

## What we learned:

1. **Systemic connections among quality, affordability and accessibility;** can't address one without addressing the others.
2. **Respondents defined and interpreted "quality child care" differently** based on experiences and perceptions.
3. Specific issues were highlighted in **infant and toddler care.** (Details at [www.GetReadyGuilford.org](http://www.GetReadyGuilford.org).)
4. **Centers have few dollars to support staff retention efforts and parents can't afford to pay more for care.** Turnover is high as low wages and poor working conditions cannot be significantly improved without public funding (models such as Head Start, NC-PreK, K-12 system).
5. **Affordability affects more families than those who qualify for assistance or programs** (i.e. many families that make too much for subsidy yet still can't afford high quality).
6. Respondents related **accessibility mostly to wait lists and affordability.**

## Significant win:

1. Process included multiple perspectives about quality, affordability, and accessibility.

## Recommendations:

1. **Immediate recommendations** are: to secure funding resources to implement a salary supplement program to attract and retain high-quality teachers. In addition, adjusting eligibility requirements for subsidized programs, which will increase the number of families accessing child care. By addressing affordability, we will increase accessibility.
2. **Grow network of advocates** to rally around issues related to quality, affordability and accessibility of child care.

## Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:

Supported Families >  
Sufficient Supports  
Available for Children >  
Children in high-  
quality, affordable  
early learning settings

# Safe & Stable Homes/Financial Literacy Challenge Team

**Organizations Represented:** Care Coordination for Children (CC4C), Community Volunteers, Congregational Nurses, Department of Public Health, Family Justice Center, Greensboro Housing Authority, High Point Housing Authority, Parents, YWCA High Point

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Supported Families &gt; Sufficient Quality Supports Available for Families &gt; Basic needs are met</p>
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**Community problem tackled:** No clear understanding of system interactions that create housing instability.

**Challenge goal:** Explore the complexity of system characteristics linking housing, financial literacy, and basic needs.

**Perspectives engaged:** Families, direct service providers who have experience with financial literacy programs, staff of Greensboro Housing Authority and Housing Authority of the City of High Point.

## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the targeted problem/population/setting:** Lack of financial literacy skills can create housing instability for families no matter their other circumstances, but families experiencing poverty face additional barriers to safe and stable housing.
2. **Root cause analysis:** Examined system interactions among safe and stable housing, financial literacy, and basic needs; identified financial literacy education best practices.<sup>12, 13</sup>
3. **Assess fit and capacity of existing efforts:** Interviewed six local financial literacy education programs about services, curricula, and data they collect; engaged in sense-making with the data gathered.
4. **Identified powerful strategies to target root causes.** Identified roadblocks in the search for data, realized these are artifacts of the system, and used a systems scan tool to classify obstacles and generate recommendations on how to overcome them.

## What we learned:

1. **Financial literacy assets:** There are many financial literacy offerings, through public and private sources, that address a variety of needs, skill levels, and audiences. Some of these resources use best practices (including Housing Authority of the City of High Point's Financial Literacy Classes; Consumer Credit Counseling through Service Family Service of the Piedmont; United Way of Greater Greensboro & Family Success Center, among others).
2. **Financial literacy gaps:** No centralized source connecting families to financial literacy education unless crisis occurs or family is working toward home ownership.

## Significant wins:

1. Challenge team led by a family leader, who also participated in the Ready/Ready Family Photovoice Project.
2. Team engaged deeply in the systems work by taking on a large and complex problem, exploring it through several lenses and being willing to change course when data pointed in another direction.

## Recommendations:

1. **Strengthen 2-1-1** to be a central connector for information and resources on basic needs, financial literacy, and housing.
2. **Embed financial literacy resources** in touch points where families receive basic needs services, such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Food & Nutrition Service.
3. **Identify and engage trusted champions** to normalize financial literacy improvement.

# Parenting Education Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Community volunteers and advocates, Children’s Home Society of NC, Cone Health Center for Children, Cone Health Pediatric Teaching, Greensboro Housing Authority, Guilford County Health Dept., March of Dimes, Parents as Teachers Guilford County, YWCA High Point

**Community problem tackled:** Not all families receive parenting supports to help them prepare their child for kindergarten.

**Challenge goal:** Understand best practices in parenting education, what’s available today and where gaps exist.

**Perspectives engaged:** 25 agencies/organizations; health care providers; parents in the Family Action Learning Team (ALT) and a Centering Pregnancy® class.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Supported Families &gt; Sufficient Quality Supports Available for Families &gt; All new parents connected to parenting supports</p>
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## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Used National Parenting Education Network<sup>14</sup> framework; developed parenting education vision; reviewed qualitative data from family meetings; examined parenting practices/resources available in other states (CA, IL, MA).
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** Gathered data from 25 parenting education programs/components; analyzed data; identified assets and gaps; made recommendations.

## What we learned:

1. **Parenting education assets:** Families across all demographics say they are concerned about school readiness and want to help prepare their children; 25 programs available.
2. **Parenting education gaps:** Many pediatricians don’t know where to refer families for parenting education; cultural norm that parenting is individual responsibility not community priority; programs treated as separate entity instead of embedded into the flow of touch points with families; families say they want more “real-time” parenting advice.

## Significant wins:

1. Created vision in which high-quality parenting education resources are embedded in system, i.e., OB/GYN and pediatrician offices, child care/preschool settings, 24/7 resource.
2. Developed online parenting education resource guide for families, service providers, pediatricians and others to connect with what’s available (See [GetReadyGuilford.org](http://GetReadyGuilford.org).)

## Recommendations:

1. **Convene ongoing Work Group to develop and implement strategies to support the vision for parenting education resources embedded in system.** Determine where services might overlap, what should be expanded and where, how referrals are made, tracking progress, what might be scaled/implemented to achieve better outcomes.
2. **Normalize and de-stigmatize parenting education** since all families regardless of education, socioeconomic status, etc. say they need help with parenting.
3. **Educate families, service providers, and medical professionals** about available parenting education resources; keep the resource lists updated.
4. **Increase use of (and support for) the Family Connects program**, a home visit by nurse offered to all new mothers; 75% receive visit (all within 13 days of birth). Review disaggregated data, build pipeline for future parenting education connections (in-person, by-phone connections, Skype).
5. **Create more “real-time” opportunities** for parents to join together, lead, learn and share experiences to improve parenting skills (social media, Circle of Parents groups).

## Electronic Referral System Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central Piedmont, Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) Children’s Home Society of NC, Family Services of the Piedmont, Family Success Center, Good Will, Greensboro Housing Authority, Guilford Child Development (Head Start/Early Head Start), New Arrivals Institute, Reading Connections, Boys and Girls Club of Greensboro, Senior Resources of Guilford, The Salvation Army Center of Hope, YMCA

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Responsive &amp; Innovative Early Childhood System &gt; Aligned &amp; Accountable Policies &amp; Programs &gt; Effective coordination and referral network</p>
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**Community Problem tackled:** Families are not aware of many resources available in the community and not successful in accessing needed services. Service providers need the ability to communicate with other agencies about family’s needs (with appropriate consents) to coordinate services.

**Challenge goal:** Develop an Electronic Referral Network that establishes referral reliability and provides HIPAA (and FERPA) protected communications among agencies.

**Perspectives engaged:** Families and direct service providers through focus groups; Family Success Center partner organizations; United Ways of N.C. and Greater Greensboro (for 2-1-1 alignment); Say Yes to Education (for alignment); Decision Dynamics, Inc., (system developer).

### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Families and direct service providers shared feedback about the reliability of referrals and the need for protected communications network.
2. **Assessed fit and capacity of local efforts.** The Family Success Center in Greensboro (“one stop shop” for workforce development services) is addressing the need for a reliable referral system and protected communications across organizations.
3. **Identified powerful strategies to target root causes.** Data system for appropriate data sharing among service providers and with families; modeled after Greenville DMCN Health System (of South Carolina) and Nurse Family Partnership data systems.
4. **Anticipate and address implementation barriers.** Building readiness among providers who will use the system; trainings, convening partners.
5. **Launch changes.** Pilot program is underway.

**What we learned:** Lessons shared on [www.GetReadyGuilford.org](http://www.GetReadyGuilford.org)

**Significant wins:** Bringing together 15 organizations to launch an electronic referral network that makes effective connections: (1) families-to-agency; and (2) agency-to-agency.

### Recommendations:

1. **Evaluate data and use Action Learning Process** to determine how system is working on the ground from perspectives of families, participating service providers and leaders.
2. **Develop shared consent form and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** to address how data will be shared.
3. **Evaluate pilot and determine how to bring new partners into system.** What agencies and organizations in Guilford County would benefit from joining? How could the data system interface with 2-1-1 systems/process and other systems with goal of improved services for families and children?

## Pre-K to K Transition (Communication) Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Guilford Child Development Head Start, High Point Public Library, Kindernoggin (preschool and childcare program in High Point) Guilford County Schools (GCS)

**Community problem tackled:** Parents, early childhood educators, teachers and administrators report significant challenges for many children during the transition from Pre-K into kindergarten resulting in lost instruction time and social and emotional issues.

**Challenge goal:** Develop a pilot program that would: (1) improve connections between early childhood settings (Pre-K) and kindergarten classrooms; (2) help 4-year-olds get more socially and emotionally comfortable with the kindergarten setting prior to starting school.

<b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Responsive & Innovative Early Childhood System > Aligned & Accountable Policies & Programs > Effective coordination and referral network
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**Perspectives engaged:** GCS administrators; families; Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools teachers; curriculum facilitator, Pre-K and kindergarten teachers at Allen Jay Elementary in High Point.

### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Reviewed themes from focus groups with principals, and Pre-K and kindergarten teachers about kindergarten transition; adopted *Effective Transitions to Enhance School Readiness*<sup>15</sup> approach, which describes four connections for successful kindergarten transition.
2. **Identify root causes.** Lack of “school to school” connections (between Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms) means missed opportunities to learn from one another and to make transition easier.
3. **Identify powerful strategies to target root causes.** Learned about a practice used in a Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School where video conferencing helped build stronger connections between classrooms.
4. **Identify where to pilot idea.** Pre-K and kindergarten teachers met with the curriculum facilitator at Allen Jay Elementary, brainstormed implementation ideas, and identified opportunities/potential barriers; agreed to conduct a pilot program at Allen Jay with three activities.
5. **Started developing materials to support the pilot.** Team is creating a toolkit for three kindergarten experiences: (1) a video tour of the school building and kindergarten classroom; (2) a Skype call of a planned lesson, i.e. guided reading; and (3) a Skype call highlighting a transition moment in the classroom. These experiences will be completed before an in-person visit.

### What we learned:

1. **Pre-K teachers want to learn** about the kindergarten curriculum, classroom structure and atmosphere.
2. **The NC Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)**, a formative assessment tool aligned with the five domains for kindergarten readiness, will be implemented during 2016-17 school year.

### Significant wins:

1. Fostered solid working relationships between Staley Head Start team and Allen Jay Elementary kindergarten teachers; will co-create intentional, beneficial interactions for Pre-K children next year.
2. Developed draft toolkit to be tested with Pre-K and kindergarten teachers, improved and launched.

### Recommendations:

1. **Work with GCS to finalize the toolkit**, make it available to a broad audience, and train teachers to use it.
2. **Create opportunities for Pre-K teachers to gain exposure to the kindergarten curriculum** so they can prepare children and parents for transition to kindergarten.
3. **Create a system-wide approach for Pre-K children to connect with kindergarten teachers and students** through technology and/or in-person visits.

## Pre-K to K Transition (Policy) Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Bringing Out the Best program, community volunteers; Greensboro Children’s Museum; Guilford Child Development (Head Start); Guilford County Schools (GCS); Guilford County Partnership for Children

**Community problem tackled:** There is no system-wide process for transitioning children into kindergarten making transition more difficult for some children, parents and teachers.

**Challenge goal:** Engage elementary school principals, GCS administrators, and Pre-K programs to improve policies and processes for Pre-K to kindergarten transition.

**Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:**

Responsive & Innovative Early Childhood System > Aligned & Accountable Policies & Programs > Equitable, aligned policies & practices

**Perspectives engaged:** GCS Exceptional Children’s (EC) Services, GCS administrators and principals, Guilford Child Development, NC Pre-K

### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Reviewed notes from focus groups held with kindergarten teachers, Pre-K teachers and school administrators at two schools; aligned with *Effective Transitions to Enhance School Readiness*<sup>15</sup> which describes four connections for successful kindergarten transition; identified elementary school principals as key decision-makers about transition practices; developed survey to gain insights from GCS elementary principals about current practices.
2. **Identify root causes.** Lack of standard policies and practices related to kindergarten transition.
3. **Identify powerful strategies to target root causes.** Convened key decision makers in Pre-K and GCS administration to get feedback on proposed strategies; agreed to pilot two actions.

### What we learned:

1. **Accountability** for a successful transition into kindergarten isn’t clear.
2. **Standard policies and practices** for the transition from Pre-K to kindergarten across the system are lacking, putting a burden on individual schools (both early childhood programs and GCS) to create experiences to promote easier transition.
3. **Opportunities exist** to create a more family-friendly process and warm hand-off for children enrolled in Head Start, Pre-K and Exceptional Children Programs from the Pre-K environment to GCS.

### Significant wins:

1. Agreement from GCS to hold focus groups with eight principals in June 2016 to gather data on current kindergarten transition policies, practices and procedures.
2. Nationally recognized early childhood expert to facilitate short training with principals in July 2016 about brain development in young children and the importance of the first 2,000 days, including transition to kindergarten; the first of a proposed series of trainings with GCS principals.

### Recommendations:

1. **Evaluate current state of Pre-K to K transition against the four connections framework.** Identify “small wins” to improve transition process for 2017-18 school year, including improved transitions for Exceptional Children and shared professional development for Pre-K and kindergarten teachers.
2. **Develop shared accountability for kindergarten transition** between early childhood programs and GCS for kindergarten transition through shared measures of success.
3. **Align kindergarten registration materials** (checklist, registration packet, etc.); and standardize across the system; test with families and incorporate family feedback.

# Social-Emotional Support for Childcare Professionals Challenge Team

**Organizations Represented on the Team:** Bringing Out the Best; Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R); EQuIPD; Guilford Child Development (GCD); Guilford County Partnership for Children (GCPC); His Glory Child Development Center; Irene Child Care Service; Single Portal of Entry (SPoE); UNCG Center for Youth, Family & Community Partnerships

**Community problem tackled by this challenge team:** Not all early childhood professionals have the social-emotional support they need to model positive social-emotional behaviors for children in their care.

**Challenge goal:** Determine what supports would most benefit early childhood professionals, and launch peer-to-peer supports.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Responsive &amp; Innovative Early Childhood System &gt; Aligned &amp; Accountable Policies &amp; Programs &gt; Capable formal &amp; informal providers</p>
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**Perspectives engaged:** Early childhood teachers, caregivers, directors, parents, consultants, technical assistants, and administrators

## Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Define the targeted problem/population/setting:** All professionals working in a child care setting needed to be engaged (including unlicensed/half-day programs); identified best practices around social emotional behaviors.<sup>16,17</sup>
2. **Identified root cause of the problem:** Analyzed data collection instruments about adult social-emotional behavior and developed a modified survey; 64 responses.

## What we learned:

1. **Early childhood educators across all settings say they need better training** around social-emotional development in children.
2. **There's a strong connection between social-emotional health of early childhood educators and social-emotional development of children** in their care;<sup>18</sup> must address both.
3. **There's no easy way to share information with** teachers/caregivers/early childhood professionals.

## Significant wins:

1. New level of trust among organizations and childcare professionals with the realization that we want the same things for children and for ourselves.
2. Created "10 Simple Tips for Children (and Adults) in Early Childhood Settings" to promote positive social-emotional behaviors in the classroom that can be shared broadly.

## Recommendations:

1. **Provide in-depth professional development opportunities for early childhood educators to address** social-emotional development in young children and in adults (self-knowledge, relationship building, conflict/stress management, professionalism).
2. **Create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** for early childhood professionals to continue the learning.
3. **Provide training and technical assistance for teachers and directors** focused on giving/receiving feedback to create a more supportive work environment; survey results indicate this is an area of need.
4. **Create process to make it easy to get in touch** with early childhood professionals.

## Building Public Will Challenge Team

**Organizations represented:** Bryan Family Foundation, The Cemala Foundation, Guilford County Partnership for Children, NC Early Childhood Foundation, *Ready for School*, *Ready for Life* Steering Committee Members

**Community problem tackled:** Lack of understanding about the importance of the first 2,000 days (birth to age five).

**Challenge goal:** Develop a plan to build public will for school readiness so that when community leaders make decisions about quality of life and a strong economy and workforce in Guilford County, their first priority is young children.

<p><b>Ready/Ready Framework Element Addressed:</b> Responsive &amp; Innovative Early Childhood System &gt; Foundation for Community Capacity &gt; Public demand for kindergarten readiness</p>
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**Perspectives engaged:** Business leaders, nonprofit agencies and organizations

### Actions taken & associated best practices:

1. **Defined the local problem.** Aligned with First 2,000 Days<sup>19</sup> approach used to build public will across North Carolina for early childhood engagement and investment. Identified groups who can influence policy decision makers in Guilford County and in the state of NC—business leaders, health care leaders, and faith leaders.
2. **Identify root causes of the problem.** Mindset that what happens before a child enters kindergarten is the responsibility of a family, not the community; haven't clearly communicated the community benefits of focusing on and investing in early childhood, i.e., those with high-quality early childhood experiences are more likely to read at grade level by third grade, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to be chronic criminal offenders as adults, etc.
3. **Leverage current assets.** Identified engagement tools to implement action plan, including presentation, talking points, sources, fact sheets, pledges, commitment cards, and specific calls to action.

### What we learned:

1. **The first step for any local or state policy action is building public will** to create favorable conditions for change.
2. **People are ready and willing to step up to advocate;** we just need to ask.

### Significant wins:

1. Identified three target audiences that will be critical to engage.
2. Developed plan to engage community that will launch this summer.

### Recommendations:

1. **Establish a permanent community engagement team** to help implement the plan.
2. **Ask the Steering Committee to engage their networks** in building advocates for young children and their families.
3. **Review and reflect** on accomplishments every six months, and revisit the plan to adapt it to community needs.

## System-Wide Recommendations

Throughout the 100-Day Challenge, common themes emerged across teams because we're all working within the same system. Here are a few final "words of wisdom" about the system from the Challenge Teams who engaged deeply in this work.

1. **Build public awareness** about the role community plays to help families prepare children for school and what supports are available.
2. **Build a centralized data warehouse** for quick and easy access to needed data.
3. **Improve referral processes** to create more "warm handoffs" (and no cold shoulders).
4. **Build a culture of "No Wrong Door"** within all agencies/organizations so families get directed to the right place and connected to the right resources.
5. **Prioritize building cultural competency** of all providers so we can meet the needs of more families residing in Guilford County.
6. **Identify and engage change agents in every neighborhood** who can build bridges to families who might benefit from services.
7. **Engage volunteer pool** to expand capacity within the early childhood system.
8. **Increase public and private funding** to scale services to meet the community's needs.

**Thank you to the funders who generously support the *Ready for School, Ready for Life* early childhood systems building work.**



### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS0, a program of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), 2011
- <sup>2</sup> Guilford County Schools: Pathway to Postsecondary Education and Career, Schoolhouse Partners, 2015
- <sup>3</sup> Milestones of Early Literacy Development, Reach Out and Read, 2013
- <sup>4</sup> Guilford County Schools: Pathway to Postsecondary Education and Career, Schoolhouse Partners, 2015
- <sup>5</sup> The Colorado Literacy Framework: Promoting Effective Practice in Literacy for All Learners, Colorado Department of Education, 2013
- <sup>6</sup> Planning for a Parent Coalition, System exChange, Dept. of Psychology, Michigan State University 2014
- <sup>7</sup> Teaching Strategies GOLD® Growth Reports, 2015
- <sup>8</sup> Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- <sup>9</sup> Bright Futures, American Academy of Pediatrics
- <sup>10</sup> Child Care Services Association, 2015; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2014.
- <sup>11</sup> Child Care Services Association, 2015
- <sup>12</sup> Best Practices Guidelines for Adult Financial Literacy Materials, 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Institute for Financial Literacy, 2007
- <sup>13</sup> National Standards for Adult Financial Literacy Education, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Institute for Financial Literacy, 2007
- <sup>14</sup> National Parenting Education Network, npen.org
- <sup>15</sup> *Effective Transitions to Enhance School Readiness*, National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning
- <sup>16</sup> Social-emotional Development in Early Childhood: What Every Policymaker Should Know, National Center for Children in Poverty, 2009
- <sup>17</sup> NAEYC Standards
- <sup>18</sup> NC Foundations for Early Learning & Development
- <sup>19</sup> First 2000 Days, North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, first2000days.org