FAMILY ACTION LEARNING TEAM
Meeting Minutes
Date: January 23, 2017

Meeting Participants: Jackie, Keayba, Sean, Amber, Willie, Melissa, Bethany
Ready/Ready Staff: Rachael Burrello
Facilitator: LaMonica Mitchell

SYSTEMS CHANGE TARGET: Engage families as partners and change agents in the community	
A. Agenda Item: Presentation About Language Development & Communication Domain	
<u>Summary of Discussion</u>	<u>Action Items</u>
Tammy Miller of the Greensboro Public Library delivered a presentation to families on the Language Development and Communication domain of kindergarten readiness. (See the end of this document for more details on the presentation.) - It's important that children hear sounds that come from our language – not just words, but things like rhymes and rhythm. - Before children begin to recognize specific words, a big step in children's development is to recognize that words are not just part of the pictures. - One of the most important things is just to expose children to new words. Building vocabulary is building the brain. - When adults help children to see books as entertainment, it motivates them to learn to read. - When you read to your child, you can use different voices and be dramatic – just like if you were telling an exciting story about something that happened to you. Don't be afraid to get silly! - The most important thing about reading to your child is to just launch in and do it! One parent shared that she gets overwhelmed in the children's section. Finding what she's looking for can be a challenge. If you feel overwhelmed in the children's section, you can: - Ask the children's librarian for help. Tell them your child's age and some of the things they like, and the children's librarian can help you find some books. If they are unable to help you right at that time, you can ask them to set some books aside for you to pick up on your next visit. - When browsing books, look at how many words are on the page. Books with few words and big pictures are great for young children. - If you and your child like a particular book, check for more books by the same author. - Look for books that match your child's personality and interests The Greensboro Public Library offers more than just books! Some other offerings include: - Story times at all of the libraries	**FAMILIES**: To view the Greensboro Public Library calendar of events, including story times for infants/toddlers and for preschoolers, click here. **FAMILIES**: To learn more about the Greensboro Public Libraries, click here.

- A calendar that shows all their events and programs (both print and online) - Lots of board books for infants and younger children who are not ready to handle pages yet. - Reading programs that offer prizes, even for young children who are emerging readers, or for parents who read books to their very young children.	

B. Agenda Item: Questions from the Early Literacy Design Team	
Summary of Discussion	Action Items
Families gave feedback on questions for Ready/Ready's Early Literacy Design Team, a team of 20 experts and design thinkers from across the county who are designing an early literacy system for Guilford County. (See the end of this document for additional details.) *We've learned that many early literacy programs are having a hard time filling their slots. Have you used any literacy, language, or reading programs for your children 0-5? If so, how did you get connected and enrolled? Why aren't families enrolling in these programs? What are some challenges you and other families encounter when trying to enroll in these programs?* - Families have used the library, and Raising a Reader. - One challenge is just knowing what is available. There are many resources, but parents find out about them through word of mouth. - Families will go to free events that they find out about through Facebook. - Families find out about programs and events from other families. - Families will use programs that make it convenient for them to participate. - Families like programs that offer incentives to participate, like raffles or prizes. - Families like programs that offer child care. *We've heard from families that some programs are offered at times that are difficult for families to use. What times of the day should early literacy programs be scheduled to make it easy for you and other local families to participate?* - Multiple times throughout the day, because children's daily schedules and parents' work schedules fall at different times. - If a program can't be offered multiple times in one day, have sessions at a few different times per month – one in the morning, one in the mid-day, one in the evening. - It is easier to attend programs (at any time) that offer child care. *We've heard from families that there are some trusted sources for information about literacy: pediatricians, teachers, other parents, churches, speech therapists, and grandparents. Who is missing from that list?* - Piedmont Parent magazine, a resource for what is going on locally. They have standards for what they publish, so the information has been vetted, and families trust that. - Libraries and librarians. Jamestown Public Library, for example, has recommended reading lists for children Pre-K to 5th Grade.	**FAMILIES**: To view Jamestown Library and Guilford County Schools' recommended reading list for preschoolers, click here. **FAMILIES**: To learn more about the Early Literacy Design Team, click here.

C. Agenda Item: Group Project	
Summary of Discussion	Action Items
The Family ALT continued work on selecting a group project to carry out in the community. The Family ALT is part of making sure the early childhood system is	**FAMILIES**: Come to the February meeting of Family

responsive to and respectful of family voice. The team is ready to put their voice into action. (See the end of this document for additional details on the discussion.) Families want to address the 5 domains of kindergarten readiness, and recognize that the domains all overlap to some degree. Families want to raise public awareness of some of the skills they have learned themselves, and want to share visually with parents how to develop early literacy. The Family Action Learning Team will work on creating a video on the importance of talking to and interacting with infants. Infants are learning and communicating even before they can talk, and simple activities like talking, singing, and playing with your infant help to build their brain and develop their pre-literacy skills. The team will reconvene in February and begin work on a script.	ALT ready to begin work on this exciting group project!

Meetings will be the 3rd Monday of each month. Here's the schedule for 2017:
Locations TBD
- **Monday, February 20, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, March 20, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, April 17, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, May 15, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, June 19, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, July 17, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **NO MEETING IN AUGUST**
- **Monday, September 18, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, October 16, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, November 20, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, December 18, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE PRIORITIES – GUILFORD COUNTY

1. Ensure all new parents are connected to critical early childhood information and community supports/services.
2. Connect more young children and their families to needed services by embedding coordinated developmental screening and referral processes into settings that provide services for families with young children.
3. Improve family access to needed programs through the creation of an effective referral and coordination network for young children and their families.
4. Leverage and expand early literacy resources/services to meet community need by determining and launching priority program and system changes.
5. Leverage and expand parenting resources/services to meet community need by determining and launching priority program and system changes.
6. Improve school readiness by addressing affordability and accessibility of high-quality child care in Guilford County.
7. Create seamless and easy transition experiences for children and their families by aligning Pre-K and kindergarten priorities, curriculum, and transition processes.
8. Ensure the local early childhood system is responsive to and respectful of family needs and voice.
9. Increase public demand for school readiness by implementing a public awareness campaign focused on building community buy-in about the importance of early learning and development (0-8).
10. Embed continuous improvement orientation within the local early childhood system.

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Ways to stay involved in Guilford County once your children reach kindergarten:

- Guilford Parent Academy (through Guilford County Schools) -- visit http://www.gcsnc.com/pages/gcsnc/Departments/Guilford_Parent_Academy
- School-based opportunities through PTA and other school focused activities, or to volunteer through GCS.
- The Say Yes Guilford Pre-K to Grade 5 Task Force has three sub-groups that focus on different parts of the Pre-K to Grade 5 pathway. Talk with Amber, Mary or Rachael to get connected.
  - Kindergarten readiness
  - Reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3
  - High stakes proficiency in ELA and Math by the end of Grade 5
- Ready/Ready Design Teams, to work on designing parts of the system around each of the 10 Key Priorities. These teams will not have age limits, and family voice will be critical to their success.

Additional Details from Presentation on Language Development & Communication:

- One thing that matters is to hear sounds that come from our language, like rhymes, rhythm, and story language (like the E-I-E-I-O in "Old MacDonald Had a Farm").
- Before children begin to recognize words, it's good for them to recognize that words aren't just part of the picture – that is a big step, to realize that those are words and those are different.
- One of the most important things is just to be exposed to new words. Another thing is specifics, like instead of calling everything a truck, there are different kinds of trucks. They are hearing more words, and specific words, and it helps build vocabulary and build brains. The more words they know, the better, the more the brain builds up.
- The other thing that's important is that they love books. If you don't learn to read until kindergarten or first grade, reading is a lot of work. But if you already love books and see them as entertainment, they're already motivated to learn.

- Rhymes, rhythm, and skills like counting can be found in books, but also can show everyday activities, or new experiences. Through books, children can see things that are very familiar, or visit somewhere far away.
- Board books are good for little children who are not ready to handle pages. All the Greensboro libraries have lots of board books.
- When you read to kids, you can go all in, and don't worry about looking or sounding silly. You can engage their feelings and help them develop social emotionally. When you read with different voices and bring dramatic storytelling, interpret it in your own way, it helps keep children interested. You can read quiet books quietly, or of you have a loud and active story, maybe don't read it before bed!
- Books with familiar stories (like "Goldilocks and the Three Bears") are great to read to children, and can easily become favorites.
- What can parents do if they are overwhelmed? Ask the children's librarian to help you. Ask if they can set some aside for you. Tell them your child's age and what they like, and ask if they can help you find some things.
- Another thing to do is pay attention to how many words are on the page – depending on how many words there are, you can gauge if your child will sit for that story. Few words, big pictures. Another thing you can look for is familiar authors. If there is a book you or your child like (like Very Hungry Caterpillar), look in their section and see if they have made other books.
- Not every favorite/popular book is right for young children. Dr. Seuss, for example, is a little too hard for preschoolers and more geared toward first and second grade.
- The "right age" for picture books is a range, so the best idea for choosing a book is to probably start with the librarian. There are story times at all of the libraries. The library has a calendar that shows all their events and programs. You can also try to match books to your child's personality and likes – if they like dinosaurs, ask for dinosaur books; if they like fashion and dress-up, ask for books with those features. The biggest thing about reading – just launch in and do it! It's a great experience for children to see the pictures, hear the words, and hear the story.
- Children also like interactive stories, and the library will add props and activities to their story times.
- In the summer the library adds extra programs and performances because they know kids are out of school, so there is something for children to do. There are seasonal calendars that show what they will be doing for the season.
- The library wants to help you with whatever you need, so let them know what you need, and if you haven't been able to get help, let someone know.

Additional details from the Early Literacy Design Team questions

One parent had a child in Raising a Reader at Claremont Courts. They found out about the program through another parent. Raising a Reader provides a book bag and three books every week. Children read the books and then bring them back, and receive their next three books. Raising a Reader makes the program convenient for the families. They also offer incentives.

Additional details from discussion of the group project
- Parents get lots of information from one another. Other parents are a valuable and trusted resource.
- Parents all have some common experiences; parents are looking for support and help, and it takes a village to support them. We are all imperfect, we are all going through some of the same things, and we're not here to judge. It's necessary to build respect with parents before you can give them your input.
- Messages need to be visual. Video is visual, accessible, and exciting.
- Social media is a great way to get messages out – through YouTube or Facebook.
- It's important to still talk to your infant even if they can't talk back yet. There are many different ways of communicating, and it's important to talk to them to develop their pre-literacy skills. One parent shared that a friend thought "once the kid is older, then I can do things like play with him," but at the very beginning is the important time to be involved in play, talking, reading, etc. That's where babies are finding a sense of security, and I can love and learn from this person, and that security is necessary for learning.

- Dad needs time with the baby too, talking and interacting. Mothers can feel awkward talking to an infant, or feel like they're talking to themselves; some dads can feel awkward interacting with a child at all.

- Creating the video is one part of the project. Getting the video out is another part. After the video is created, Family ALT would like to show it to the community in different venues.
- Adding an in-person component, like a role-play or a forum discussion, could be great for sharing more than just the video. A dialogue or Q&A after the video would be a good time to tell other families about resources.
- Libraries, PTA meetings, churches, and community events would be good venues to share the video and other content.
- Language development and communication is an important domain to talk about with families. Some people don't know what their children don't know, what they can understand, and what they can learn.
- If we can reach other parents who have children 0-5 or are planning to have children, that can help with recruiting.