



## FAMILY ACTION LEARNING TEAM

### Meeting Minutes

*Date: May 15, 2017*

Meeting Participants: Pam, Keayba, Amber, Jodi-Ann, Melissa, Octavia, Jackie

Ready/Ready Staff: Rachael Burrello, Michelle Chapin

Facilitator: LaMonica Mitchell

Special Guest: Jenny Gore, Reading Connections

<b>SYSTEMS CHANGE TARGET: Engage families as partners and change agents in the community</b>	
<b>A. Agenda Item: Report out from Steering Committee</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary of Discussion</u></p> <p>The Ready/Ready Steering Committee met on April 10, 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Steering Committee is making family voice a priority in its work.</li> <li>• During the meeting, committee members broke into two groups for a group activity; one brainstormed on the priority of responsiveness to family voice. The ideas contributed included some from Family ALT.</li> <li>• Steering Committee member Jim Hoffman and Ready/Ready’s public will building team have been making presentations in the community, and are working on forming partnerships with Rotaries and High Point Chamber of Commerce.</li> <li>• Schoolhouse Partners is doing a funding study in Guilford county to understand what money is coming into the early childhood space from federal, state, and local sources, how that money is used, and where there are gaps. The results of that study are due to be delivered in June.</li> <li>• Cindy Watkins presented a legislative update. Senate Bill 594 and House Bill 608 address issues within North Carolina’s child welfare system. These bills seek to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consolidate county DSS agencies into no more than 30 regions by 2022 to standardize practice and reduce inter-county disparities in service and workforce;</li> <li>○ Give the state greater authority to enforce performance standards;</li> <li>○ Bring in a third party to evaluate and reform the child welfare system, including the creation of a statewide practice model;</li> <li>○ Create a council to align children’s services across government agencies;</li> <li>○ Reduce the time to permanency for children in the child welfare system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Action Items</u></p> <p><b>FAMILIES:</b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to see a list of Ready/Ready’s Steering Committee members.</p> <p><b>FAMILIES:</b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to read SB 594.</p> <p><b>FAMILIES:</b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to read HB 608.</p>
<b>B. Agenda Item: Discussion of the LENA Start program</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary of Discussion</u></p> <p>Guest Jenny Gore of Reading Connections gave an overview of the work of Ready/Ready’s Early Literacy Design Team and the LENA Research Foundation’s LENA Start program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jenny has been a member of Ready/Ready’s Steering Committee, and led a 100-Day Challenge Team around early literacy.</li> <li>• With support from Ready/Ready and systems change experts at Michigan State University, Jenny co-led the Early Literacy Design Team (ELDT) that grew from the 100-Day Challenge work.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Action Items</u></p> <p><b>FAMILIES:</b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to learn more about Reading Connections.</p> <p><b>FAMILIES:</b> <a href="#">Click here</a> to learn more about the LENA Research Foundation.</p>

- Membership on the ELDT was very broad, bringing together early literacy and early learning experts with systems thinkers and disruptive thinkers from across Guilford County.
- The ELDT met from October to April and worked together to understand local conditions and best practices in early literacy, and to come up with powerful strategies that will shift the system.
- The ELDT’s strategies will be put into a final strategic plan that will be implemented beginning in June.
- One potential strategy for implementation is the LENA Start program, out of the LENA Research Foundation in Colorado.
  - The LENA Start program is a 13-week program ideally for families with children ages 9 months to 2 years.
  - The LENA wearable device tracks the number of words adults say to a child, and the number of back-and-forth interactions adults have with a child.
  - Families meet weekly for an education segment on topics like early talk, nutrition, active reading, early math skills, etc. Families also get a specialized report on how many words they spoke to their child and how many interactions they had, and individualized coaching on how to raise the number of words and interactions they have.
  - One key would be to have something for families to connect to after the 13 weeks are over.

Families gave feedback on the proposed LENA Start pilot in Guilford County.

- Families think LENA would make parents more aware of when and whether they’re having real conversations.
- Families think that day cares, hospitals, pediatricians’ offices, and Family Connects could be great touch points for recruiting.
- Families might have objections to using the LENA device due to concerns about privacy or fear of judgment. Letting pilot families do a one-day “test run” with the device and analysis could alleviate some of those concerns.
- A LENA Start pilot would need to have incentives built in for families.
- Families have participated in programs like Raising a Reader and Motherhead before, and enjoyed them.

**FAMILIES:** [Click here](#) to learn more about the Early Literacy Design Team.

**FAMILIES:** [Click here](#) to learn more about Raising a Reader.

**FAMILIES:** [Click here](#) to learn more about Motherhead.

**JENNY:** Find out from LENA what a roll-out of LENA Start cohorts might look like.

**JENNY:** Find out from LENA if children with identified disabilities/delays can participate in LENA Start.

**C. Agenda Item: Change Agents Role**

Summary of Discussion

The National Smart Start Conference is the nation’s largest conference devoted to early education systems and strategies. The conference provides advanced professional development for early education leaders committed to improving the quality of and access to early childhood services for all children ages birth to five. It is intended for professionals who support families, for professionals who support those who work with children, and professionals engaging in early care and education systems change.

The 2017 conference featured many different panels and sessions where early childhood professionals could learn more about early care and education; early childhood health and development; family support and engagement; public engagement, fundraising, and nonprofit management; and early childhood systems and leadership.

Action Items

**FAMILIES:** [Click here](#) to learn more about the 2017 Smart Start Conference.

**FAMILIES:** Think about what you might want to talk about next year at the Smart Start conference.

Ready/Ready would like the Family ALT to present a session or panel at the 2018 Smart Start Conference. Families agreed that they would like to present on the topic of how the early childhood system can best connect with families.	
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**Meetings will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at His Glory Child Development Center, 3223 Yanceyville St. Greensboro. Here's the schedule for 2017:**

- **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](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 THE CONVERSATION ON LENA START

- The strategies developed by the Early Literacy Design Team (ELDT) fall into three main “buckets” of work:
  - Supporting parents to be their child’s first and best teacher.
  - Supporting child care settings to be high-quality and culturally competent.
  - Galvanizing the community so that every adult sees their role in supporting early literacy.
- LENA Start is one possible strategy that could be implemented in Guilford County.
- LENA Start is done with children ideally 9 months to 2 years. Between the ages of 0-3, children’s brains are developing at a remarkable rate, and this is the ideal time to expose them to language and vocabulary. The more children are talked to and interacted with, the stronger their brain becomes.
- The LENA device measures how many words are said, and how many interactions are had. The device can differentiate between a live voice and an electronic voice, like radio or TV.
- At LENA Start sessions, parents get a printed report on how much they talk to their child, and parents get stars for increasing the amount of talk and interaction they have. The device makes it like a game for families to compete against themselves for their best.
- Incentives for families to participate in LENA Start will be discussed as part of the plan for a pilot.
- Families would like to see LENA Start participants get coaching on building vocabulary, to make sure that verbal exchanges with infants are high-quality. Coaches need to be sensitive to participants’ desire to be identified (or not identified) as needing help with vocabulary. Families suggested offering an incentive to participate in vocabulary-building activities and supports.
- Families observed that being able to look back on the progress made over the 13-week program would be a motivator to make more improvements in supporting children’s language development.
- Families observed that putting in 13 weeks of time is a big commitment, but anyone motivated to help their child build language would be willing to do so, and would probably be motivated to finish the process.
- Families suggested piloting LENA Start with targeted focus groups (like foster families, families of children with autism, etc.) to gather data on how LENA Start affects those groups specifically. A local Rotary Club is interested in a LENA Start pilot, and if all 12 Rotaries support a pilot, it might be possible to pilot with 12 different groups.
- Families observed that every family can benefit from awareness of how much they actually speak to their child.
- The ELDT’s work focused on 6 indicators:
  1. Families using effective reading strategies daily with children.
  2. Families report confidence in their ability to prepare children for literacy success.
  3. Percent of children engaged in quality, culturally competent early literacy programming.
  4. Percent of formal and informal childcare settings with high-quality, culturally competent early literacy programming aligned with NC Foundations for Early Learning & Development.
  5. Percent of literacy programs effectively building parents’ skills to promote literacy at home.
  6. Percent of adults who see their role in supporting early literacy.
- The Family ALT was asked: Will LENA Start drive changes in Indicators 1, 2, and 5?
  - It will make parents more aware that children are human beings and you have to talk to them. My grandson watches and listens to everything we do, and even though he’s 20 months he will mimic what we do and try to help with household chores.
  - I read an article emphasizing the importance of connecting with our children, not just commanding them. It’s made me more aware of how I interact and connect with my own child, and changed my behavior.
  - I think it will bring awareness.
- The Family ALT was asked: Where/in what setting should a pilot program be held?
  - Day cares have a ready supply of children 9 months to 2 years. So maybe going to a day care as a partner?
  - The hospital is the place to go. When they have the child, and they’re new parents, capture them at that point with a postcard they can mail in to become a participant. If you can nip it in the bud at the beginning, that’s good.
  - I would also say pediatricians’ offices are a good place to recruit. During the first few months to a year, parents are going to come. Handing out flyers at well-child visits could capture families to participate.

When I was pregnant, we had someone come to our birthing class at the hospital to talk about the Triad Child Study, and that's the only way I would have known about it, and that's why I participated.

- Family Connects could be another great recruiting point, and also CC4C for children who have a disability or delay or who just go to the hospital a lot. Family Connects only sees them up to about 2 months, but CC4C sees them longer.
- The Family ALT was asked: What objections might families have to participating in LENA Start?
  - Privacy would be a big issue.
  - Concerns about judgment, whether it's education level or just about being monitored.
  - Transportation. Wherever it may be held, it would need to be central to bus routes. Or provide transportation.
- The Family ALT was asked: What kinds of incentives could be built into the LENA Start pilot?
  - A break from your children.
  - Transportation.
  - Similar things to this group, where we have a raffle and gas cards.
  - One thing from a class I did, we read a book every week, and they gave us the book to build up our home library (Motherhead), it was important that we get quality books. The things that are on recommended reading lists. I was surprised at how much my child loved the books.
  - Free food and child care.
  - I was in a program in Claremont Courts, Raising a Reader, where you come to so many sessions, you get free items like vacuum cleaners, dishes, blenders, stuff like that. You have to go to at least six, you can get household stuff, even stuff for the babies like cases of diapers. This is every six weeks. It's a great motivator. They start with lunch first, then read a story to the kids, then start with the activities. And at the end the kids get a tote bag with books. We had a game at the library where you had to go to different sections and get books, and talk about them in the class, and then those are the books they take home.
- Families were enthusiastic about the prospect of a program that could help their children prosper for the future.
- It might be possible to integrate a LENA Start pilot with Raising a Reader.
- Word of mouth is a great way to spread information, so if we could get LENA started one place successfully then we have people spread by word of mouth that it's fun, it's not invasive.

#### **ADDITIONAL DETAILS FROM THE CONVERSATION ON THE SMART START CONFERENCE**

- Families brainstormed ideas about what they would like to be different in Guilford County in a year, because of their work.
  - The knowledge base that there are more educated parents in Guilford county; that there is more connection with resources, that people are getting connected with and taking advantage of more of the resources that are out there.
  - Empowering parents to recognize the value and the importance of their role, that they set the stage and set the tone, because there is so much on the teachers and education is such an individual thing, and there's not going to be a teacher that knows your child like you do. The better you know your child, the better you're able to interact with teachers to help your child. You are your child's first and best teacher.
  - Parents need to understand and they need support, they need to know there's a place they can go and say, "I don't know what to do." Even parents with advantages don't know what to do. There shouldn't be a program just for single parents, it should be for parents, period. If you need help we're going to be here. I think this baby could be the next president. They need to know whatever little person is in their world, those are our doctors and lawyers and ministers. Parents shouldn't feel like they're in trouble, it should be from the day they're born we're here to help. It's great that the program in Durham has retired people involved to give parents a break. That's part of raising up parenting too.
  - We emphasized the importance of parents being engaged. The parent needs to be a leader so that children can see them lead. My daughter sees me reading, and it's going to inspire and motivate her. We're superheroes to our kids whether we want to be or not. When a child walks into the room, how do you respond? Our eyes should light up. These are individuals in our community who are valuable. They're a gift.

- Wherever the parent is at, whether it's educational or social level, just finding a place to start, people don't feel like they know where to go or how to start, to get motivated to help themselves and their children. And knowing that it's okay to start at any level and work your way up, there's always a way up. The key is knowing that there's a starting place wherever you may be, and where to find those resources. Listing all the places we know of and have heard of, like Incredible Years, Motherread, early literacy, knowing those things are out there and how to get to that starting block.
- We've all touched on the importance of support, and knowing that it's okay and appropriate to lean on support. The notion of it taking a village. Guilford County is resource-rich, but connecting people to it is the key.
- For those who have a CPS case, when their child goes into the system, a diversion program that would help families in the justice system stay together. Just helping families in the DSS system stay together.
- When we did the roleplay last time, I thought it was awesome just seeing two dads talk about how important it is talking to your kids. And I think that should be a workshop, how important it is to talk to your kids, and how to do it. That, to me, is realistic for this group, because that's something we've been working on and focused on.
- We get trained on all the domains, so that's something we're comfortable with.
- Families brainstormed about what they would like to present at a conference.
  - Parenting strategies from the Family Action Learning Team – touch on all of those things [brainstormed above]. And we would come up with a focus. We want to more touch on strategies that we can all identify with, and it would be a cohesive thing that would give us a chance as we're talking, we can ask what type of things we're going through.
  - Helping to educate the educator from the parent's point of view. We are the ones who could tell them how to connect with us. How parents need and want to be connected to the system. Because there is a disconnect to how that happens now. A lot of those things [brainstormed above] will fall under this category. It needs to be broad enough where we're not repeating ourselves, but focused enough, too.