

# FAMILY ACTION LEARNING TEAM

## Meeting Minutes

*Date: September 19, 2016*

Meeting Participants: Amber, Jodi, Melissa, Sean, Keayba, Jackie

Ready/Ready Staff: Rachael Burrello, Mary Herbenick

Facilitator: LaMonica Mitchell

<b>SYSTEMS CHANGE TARGET: Engage families as partners and change agents in the community</b>	
<b>A. Agenda Item: Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	
<u>Summary of Discussion</u>	<u>Action Items</u>
<p>LaMonica Mitchell introduced herself to the group as facilitator. She is a parent and grandparent, and has experience in early education and working with families, and has worked with Ready/Ready as a member of other Action Learning Teams (ALTs).</p> <p>Amber reviewed Why We're Here: to eliminate barriers for children being ready for kindergarten, Family ALT members act in three key roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultants who offer perspectives and feedback about how we can better prepare children in our community for kindergarten;</li> <li>• Partners who are directly involved in the design and decision making related to programs, projects and plans within Guilford County's early childhood system; and</li> <li>• Change agents who do what matters to families, and who galvanize others to join them.</li> </ul> <p>Summary of last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Chris Payne shared information about how parents can support cognitive development of young children.</li> <li>• Families gave feedback on where NC Pre-K could take applications around the community, and where other programs can reach families.</li> </ul>	<p><b>RACHAEL:</b> Put Dr. Payne's presentation on the Ready/Ready website</p>
<b>B. Consultant Role</b>	
<u>Summary of Discussion</u>	<u>Action Items</u>
<p>Families were asked to think about the stages of their child's life: prenatal/birth; newborn/infant; 2 years old; 3 years old; 4 years old/preschool; kindergarten entry. Families were asked: what was it like at each stage, and what kinds of supports did you need at that time? What kind of support would have been really beneficial to you, reflecting back to each of these stages? What would have been ideal? What kind of services would have been beneficial? What supports did you have that you found helpful?</p> <p>Ready/Ready has a system building focus, which means thinking about what it would be like to "start from scratch" and build a new early childhood system, or to find new ways to connect the pieces of the system that are working well. One of Ready/Ready's strategies is for all new parents to get connected to the supports they need, so what does that mean in our system? What does that look like system-wide? What do families want to build for the future?</p>	<p><b>RACHAEL:</b> Take family feedback on reading and literacy system changes to the Early Literacy Design Team.</p> <p><b>MELISSA:</b> Send information on the DHHS 24-hour/extended-hour child care to Rachael to send out to full email list.</p> <p><b>MARY:</b> Take feedback on health care system back to Terry Aiken, CEO of Cone Health Systems.</p>

Some themes arose in the conversation. (See the end of this document for specific comments families wrote.)

- Parents often get told about the downsides of parenting. They need to hear positive messages about parenting, not just negative ones.
- A very helpful message is that it's okay to ask for help, and to get help from programs and agencies in the community.
- There are lots of things to do in Guilford County, but no central list of information on what is going on, where, and when.
- New parents need inexpensive baby clothes, and information about consignment sales or giveaways would be helpful.
- After the first year of life, children are so unique that they don't follow a book formula or manual, so even having a manual is not helpful. Additional information that would give parents confidence to trust their child and themselves as they develop together would be helpful.
- The relationship with pediatricians is very important. They need to be relatable and treat parents like human beings so that parents feel comfortable asking questions.
- Families would like online access to library resources to help their children learn to read (and other skills) so they can work on these skills at home.
- Families would like to see story times and reading activities at community events that are already happening.
- Families want to build a sense of community and connect with other families.
- Help with breastfeeding (lactation specialists, information, coaching on getting the baby to latch) would be great for families with new babies.
- The hospital process (prenatal and birth) needs to be more dad-friendly. Parenting is not just a woman's job, and everyone (professionals, family members, friends, and community) needs to help dads feel involved and empowered as parents.
- Families need 24-hour child care or after-hours child care.
- When interacting with families with young children, the parents need to have the "final say" and have their wishes respected when it comes to who interacts with their child, when, and how. Even family members need to ask for permission, not forgiveness.
- A parent shared that in a hospital in Virginia, each waiting room/patient room had a TV that showed educational videos on pregnancy, labor, delivery, and infant care that were tailored to the patient. So while waiting, a family can select and watch a video about what they are experiencing or what they can expect.
- Families would like classes on skills and tasks like hair care for their children. Many families use YouTube to learn skills, but having a person in the room to teach them is more helpful.
- Families with young children are not sure where to start and what to teach children who are about to enter kindergarten.

Families shared some resources that were helpful for them:

- School bulletin boards (but if your child takes the bus you may not see the information posted).
- Piedmont Parent magazine
- The books "What to Expect When You're Expecting" and "What to Expect the First Year"

- Local libraries have DVDs and other materials to help parents teach skills like reading
  - The Children Learning Reading program and curriculum
  - The WIC office offers help with breastfeeding for moms who are having trouble
  - Liftoff to Learning event at Greensboro Children’s Museum in January will be a good place to ask questions and get resources.
  - Guilford County Schools’ website is a good place to get information on schools.
  - Dollar Tree, Wal-Mart, and Target have workbooks you can use to begin teaching your child skills for kindergarten.
  - Brainfuse through Guilford Parent Academy has a lot of resources for children and for adults.
- Parents also bring their own talents and passion to the system, but getting together is difficult because finding times and places that work with everyone’s schedule is not always possible.

**FAMILIES:** Learn more about the Children Learning Reading program at [www.childrenlearningreading.com](http://www.childrenlearningreading.com)

**FAMILIES:** Learn more about local schools at the [Guilford County Schools website](http://Guilford County Schools website).

**FAMILIES:** Learn more about Brainfuse and other resources on the [Guilford Parent Academy website](http://Guilford Parent Academy website).

**C. Ready/Ready’s Ten Key Strategies**

Summary of Discussion

Mary shared the 10 strategies of Ready/Ready. The strategies are what Ready/Ready is pursuing with other agencies and organizations and in collaboration with families at the center. This community is committed to kindergarten readiness. These strategies come from family feedback, as well as from other sources of work.

Ready/Ready will be bringing together teams to work on each of the strategies, starting in October with early literacy. In January, a team around connecting new parents to information, supports and services will launch. After that, Ready/Ready plans to launch another team every two months to work on other strategies.

The Early Literacy Design Team will be facilitated by Joan Blough at MSU, co-chaired by Jenny Gore of Reading Connections and Dr. Whitney Oakley of Guilford County Schools. The team will be made up of about 20 people, who will look at the early literacy system (birth to five). Ready/Ready will launch the team and learn from the process, and develop a toolkit to create other design teams. For any family members interested in joining the team, the commitment is a full day per month, plus trainings. Members don’t have to have a strong background in literacy, but will need to be able to make the time commitment from October to March.

A team will be launched in the future to do similar work around parenting resources and services.

Developmental screening and referrals need to be woven into settings that provide services for families with young children so that families don’t have to search to make connections to needed information.

Family Success Center is working on piloting a referral and coordination network that will help families get connected to services after they are referred, and make it so they don’t have to fill out the same information over and over again. Because of initiatives like Ready/Ready and Say Yes to Education, national funders are becoming interested in programs and projects like this in Guilford County.

Action Items

**RACHAEL:** Distribute the Ten Strategies document to families.

**FAMILIES:** If you are interested in joining the Early Literacy Design Team, email Rachael Burrello at [RachaelB@getreadyguilford.org](mailto:RachaelB@getreadyguilford.org)

Affordable, accessible, high-quality child care is an important part of school readiness. It is a complex issue, so all three aspects need to be addressed at the same time within the system. The idea is to bring affordability to a reasonable number for families, pay providers well, and have care be high-quality. Ready/Ready is working with partners on wage issues and a proposal to have more funded pre-K slots.

Having a smooth transition from pre-K to kindergarten is important for children and families. Right now teachers in pre-K and kindergarten are not connected to one another because of funding: Pre-K students don't count for elementary school funding numbers. Principals do care about pre-K students and want pre-K programs to do well. Ready/Ready recently held a training for 70 principals on early brain development, which got very positive responses from the principals. "Ready schools" is also a big part of the transition process, and Ready/Ready is working closely with the school system.

Family ALT helps to ensure the local early childhood system is responsive to and respectful of family needs and voice. Feedback from families will go into the system, and Ready/Ready will communicate back to families about what is done with that feedback, and check to see if we are "getting it right."

Ready/Ready is working on finalizing public awareness materials targeting the faith community, business community, and health community to get them galvanized for the importance of early learning and development. There are national and state conversations about early learning and development, and we want to tap into that.

Building a way to measure how our children are doing is critical. We need the right data so we can do the right work for continuous improvement.

**Meetings will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. Here's the schedule for the remainder of the year:**

- **Monday, October 17, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**
- **Monday, November 21, 5:30 to 7:30 pm** – This is the Monday before Thanksgiving. Let us know if this date does not work for you.
- **Monday, December 19, 5:30 to 7:30 pm**

**Location: Martin Dixon Intergenerational Center, Bennett College, 600 Gorrell St. Greensboro**

See more on what families said about supports they want (or had) at each stage of their young child's life, and about Ready/Ready's ten key strategies, on the following pages.

## **SUPPORTS AT EACH STAGE OF LIFE – WRITTEN COMMENTS**

### **PRENATAL & BIRTH**

Hospital kitchen/food service: meals properly portioned for lactating mothers

Nurse: to properly teach me how to get my baby to latch correctly

Breastfeeding classes

“What to Expect When You’re Expecting” book

Wish I had friends and family support

Warning mothers-to-be about the effects of Palmer’s Cocoa Butter

Therapy support prenatal to kindergarten entry

### **NEWBORN/INFANT**

Effective support system

Family and community being a part

Centralized info about things like consignment sales

Give local churches, etc. information regarding child care facilities, Medicaid, clothing outlets, etc. to help new parents

Nurse home visiting program to help with breastfeeding

NC Baby Love Plus: Infant to age 2, workshops

I tried La Leche League, but more support with nursing

Wish my mother would have taken off work and stayed in the home for the first 1-2 weeks

Negative info about raising kids [Want more positive information]

Family and friends support

After giving birth, greater new-mommy mentoring would have been great

### **2 YEARS OLD**

24-hour child care!

Potty training resources

Potty training support/mentoring

Potty training support when child not in day care

“Terrible twos”

How do I get my child to eat a balanced meal independently

### **3 YEARS OLD**

Knowing what I, as a parent, need to start working on with a pre-school child. “Where do I start?”

Tips for building social skills for only children

24-hour child care!

### **4 YEARS OLD**

Head Start and day care helped

Knowing what kids need to know at pre-school/pre-K level

24-hour child care!

## KINDERGARTEN ENTRY

Understanding or lack thereof...public school

School readiness especially if child not in daycare/pre-K full time

Better support for EC students

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE STRATEGIES – 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.