Washtenaw Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative

Strategic Plan Summary 2016-2018
Dear Community Member:

As the early childhood organization of Washtenaw County’s new Cradle to Career Collaborative, Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative (SB6GSC) is a group of over 40 organizations working together to strengthen and streamline the early childhood system of programs and services in our county. Together, we envision a time when every child will start school ready to succeed. The evidence is clear. Supporting parents and helping their children develop the social, emotional and cognitive skills needed for school readiness greatly increases the likelihood of a child’s success in school and life, and delivers a tremendous return on investment for our community.

As supporters of this strategic plan, we pledge to demonstrate our commitment to young children through action and investment. Our work, and the process we followed to develop this plan, continues to focus on including the voice of families with young children. Their involvement is critical to understanding how to make the system of services work best. In addition, this plan focuses on equity. The average child of color in Washtenaw County, as in Michigan, has less opportunity to live in a safe neighborhood, less access to quality education, and adults in their family have fewer job opportunities. Additionally, they are more likely to have poorer health and be involved in the criminal justice system. Without an emphasis on equity we cannot improve outcomes for all children. It is the hope of Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative that this call to action will promote an understanding of the importance of investing in the early childhood years and provide actions that will help us reach the shared vision of ensuring that every child in Washtenaw County starts school ready to succeed.

Executive Committee

Martha Darling
Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative
Co-Chair

Vernä McDaniel
Washenaw County

Shannon Novara
Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative

Neel Hajra
Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation

Scott Menzel
WISD

Vince Price
Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative
Co-Chair

Marj Hyde
Ann Arbor Public Schools

Susan Miller
Birth to 6 Learning Network

Alan Oman
WISD

JaVon Jason
Great Start Parent Coalition

Camarrah Morgan
Child Care Network

Pam Smith
United Way of Washtenaw County

Our local funding partners:
Leadership Commission Members

Sheree Askew
Jewish Family Services

Jeanette Beck
Great Start Parent Coalition

Jeanette Bentham
Great Start Parent Coalition

Barbara Brookens-Harvey
Washtenaw County Community Mental Health

Adelia Clark
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Washtenaw

Jerry Clayton
Washtenaw County Sheriff

Erika Cook
WISD

Linda Edwards-Brown
Washtenaw County Juvenile Court

Louey Guillen
Community Action Network

Jyoti Gupta
Washtenaw Area Council for Children

Vidya Guruprasad
Great Start Parent Coalition

Andrew Hashikawa, MD, MS
Michigan Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics

Norman Herbert
Rotary Club of Ann Arbor

Sandra Hilton
Foundations Preschool of Washtenaw County

Christina Katka
Washtenaw County Public Health

Ashley Kryscynski
Washtenaw Alliance for Children and Youth, Washtenaw Futures

Andrew LaBarre
A2Y Chamber

Polly Neill
HighScope Foundation

Jane Nickert
Washtenaw County Public Health

Josie Parker
Ann Arbor District Library

Alice Penrose
Washtenaw County Public Health

Patricia Piechowski
Great Start Parent Coalition

Ellen Rabinowitz
Washtenaw County Public Health

Jillian Rosen
Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation

Kate Rosenblum, PhD
University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry

David Rutledge
Michigan House of Representatives

Cassandra Sheriff
Ypsilanti Community Schools

Marilyn Sievert
Community Representative

Kelly Stupple
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Washtenaw Health Plan

Maria Thomas
University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital

Larry Voight
Catholic Social Services

Rhonda Weathers
SOS Community Services

Kathy Wyatt
Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office

* Organizations are listed for identification only.
Vision

Our vision is that every child in Washtenaw County is healthy and enters school ready to succeed.

Mission

To ensure that every Washtenaw County family has access to a comprehensive and collaborative system of community-based early childhood programs, services and supports.

The work of Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative is to improve all parts of the early childhood system of programs and services for children, with a particular emphasis on children with high needs. Children from low-income families are less likely to have the opportunity to build the skills that help many of their middle class counterparts enter school ready to succeed.

While we have always emphasized our system change work, this strategic plan places a greater intentional focus on working together with other organizations to address complex problems. Our work consists of identifying gaps in early childhood services, aligning existing programs and improving the effectiveness of the system so that families have access to the services they need and children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Washtenaw County families with young children agree that...

83% Parents play an important role in getting their kids ready for school.

69% Children need to go to preschool to be ready for kindergarten.

22% I can’t afford to send my child to preschool.

Source: 2015 Survey of 533 parents in Washtenaw County
Systems Change is an intentional process that alters the status quo by shifting and realigning the form and function of a system, including aligning the system’s parts and their interactions. Systems are changed when the PATTERNS within the system have shifted. (Foster-Fishman and Watson, System exChange, Michigan State University)

Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative’s strategic planning process was guided by Governor Snyder’s four early childhood outcomes, listed in the yellow star to the left. Additionally, the seven guiding principles from the Michigan Department of Education’s Office of Great Start (at right) and the five aspects of a child’s life that affect his or her school readiness, (physical, social, and emotional health, early care and education, family support and parent leadership) directed our process.

We utilized the ABLe Change Framework developed by Drs. Pennie Foster-Fishman and Erin Watson at Michigan State University’s System exChange to identify the needs and goals of our system. The framework provided a process to identify our targeted community problem that too many children are entering school without the skills needed to be successful. To understand why, we used the framework to gather information and data including the system characteristics (resources, regulations, connections, components, mindsets, and power) that impact Washtenaw County’s system of early childhood programs and services.

Once we determined the conditions of the community problem, we worked to uncover the underlying root causes that, if fixed, could resolve or reduce the community problem. Understanding the root cause helped us design powerful strategies to address those conditions. The following pages outline the strategies that will guide our community in order to improve the experience for families and the outcomes for young children in Washtenaw County.

For more information about the ABLe Change Framework visit: systemexchange.msu.edu.
We are fortunate to have many early childhood resources in Washtenaw County, but more families can benefit from high quality services if those resources are working together toward common goals and sharing resources.

**Challenge**

There are not enough opportunities for organizations to share information with other organizations, and it’s difficult to keep track of all the available services in the community. Providers are reluctant to refer when they don’t know or trust other providers.

**Objective**

Improve service providers’ knowledge of all early childhood resources available in the community.

**Strategies**

- Use social media to facilitate interaction and relationship building among early childhood providers.
- Convene and facilitate Washtenaw’s Alliance of Home Visiting Professionals.
- Lead the cross-sector Washtenaw Trauma Informed Collaborative.
- Work to align the Early Childhood System with the School-Aged Youth System and the local college access network, Washtenaw Futures, via the Cradle to Career Collaborative.
- Work to ensure that children with developmental delays are identified early and referred to appropriate services.
- Promote early literacy in the areas of highest need.
- Work to reduce infant deaths by making the community aware of ways to reduce preterm births and infant safe sleep practices.
- Strengthen the alignment of the early childhood system by facilitating Systemic Action Learning.

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**Challenge**

There is currently an effective mechanism in place for health care providers and early childhood providers to communicate with each other.

**Objective**

Increase the number of referrals from health care providers to family support and/or child development services.

**Strategies**

- Create opportunities for relationship building by convening a Pediatric Health Action Team.
- Expand the library of Early Childhood Community Resource Videos and promote them to medical providers.

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**Challenge**

There is a lack of information sharing between early childhood providers and K-12 providers.

**Objective**

Improve information sharing between early childhood providers and K-12 providers.

**Strategies**

- Learn from other Great Start Collaboratives who have successfully built relationships between Pre-K and K-12 to find what has worked to make communication and information sharing a priority.
- Work to encourage local district superintendents to build communication and information sharing between Pre-K and K-12.
- Build relationships with elementary school principals to increase communication and information sharing between Pre-K and K-12.
Service providers and decision makers value the input of people with young children.

In a county with so many highly educated people and the presence of two major universities, it’s easy to think we know what people need. We often forget to ask the people being served what they need before assuming we know best.

Challenge
Funding organizations value quantitative data over qualitative data. Programs don’t make family input a priority.

Objective
Create more opportunities for families to give input, so that families are guiding decisions that impact them.

Strategies
• Work with funding organizations to encourage programs to involve people with lived experiences in program development and improvement.
• Create a consistent, feasible process to gather family input via a variety of surveys.

Diverse stakeholders hold unique perspectives on the systems, its problems, and possible solutions. The more perspectives accessed and understood, the more accurate the understanding.

Source: Foster-Fishman and Watson 2013 System xChange, Michigan State University
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Employers have family-friendly practices.

Washtenaw County has many successful businesses, but business leaders have not been asked to join the effort to ensure that kids start school ready to succeed.

**Challenge**

Too many business leaders are not aware of the high return on investment in early childhood.

**Objective**

Help business leaders understand that they have an important role to play in ensuring that children are ready for school.

**Strategy**

Reframe the case for early childhood support by businesses.

**Objective**

Encourage businesses to have family-friendly rules/policies for their workers who have children.

**Strategy**

Develop relationships with local business leaders to be champions for family-friendly business practices.

**Early Childhood Is A Smart Investment**

![Graph showing the rate of return to investment in human capital throughout different stages of life, from prenatal care to schooling and job training.](image)

Source: James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics

37% of pregnant women surveyed had difficulties getting prenatal care because they couldn’t take time off from work.

Source: 2015 survey of 533 parents in Washtenaw County
Service providers are committed to equity and are knowledgeable and respectful of the cultural differences of the families they serve.

*Washtenaw County is a diverse community with people of various races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Providers need to have an understanding of these differences to best serve young children.*

“My biggest concern for my African-American boys is that they are less likely to receive quality education and more likely to be expelled, suffer from depression and be victims of other discriminatory practices.”

*Source: A Washtenaw County Parent via 2015 Survey of 533 parents*

**Challenge**

Some service providers believe that parents don’t care about their child’s development.

**Objective**

Dispel the perception that parents don’t care or value the importance of early childhood development.

**Strategy**

Reframe the perception that some early childhood professionals have that parents don’t value preschool.

**Challenge**

Some organizations have class and/or racial biases.

**Objective**

Build trust between parents and service providers so that parents will utilize their services.

**Strategies**

- Incorporate an equity focus in Great Start Collaborative meetings and work to increase the cultural proficiency of early childhood professionals.
- Hold an event for early childhood providers to highlight implicit race and class biases.

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Early Childhood services are accessible and reaching all families.

While Washtenaw County is fortunate to have many early childhood services, not all services are readily accessible for the families who need them most.

**Challenge**

It is difficult to keep information current on programs and resources.

**Objective**

Improve parents’ knowledge of services that are available to them and how to obtain them.

**Strategies**

- Make updates and improvements to a variety of avenues for sharing information.
- Host the annual Touch-a-Truck event to connect parents of young children to community resources.
- Increase the number of Great Start Readiness Program (state-funded preschool for 4-year olds) students who have dental homes.
- Promote the work of the Great Start to Quality Southeast Resource Center in assisting families in finding high quality child care.

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**Challenge**

Some services that have community boards don’t publicize information about how to contact them.

**Objective**

Improve staff/client communication within service organizations so that families can more readily access services.

**Strategies**

- Work with other Coordinated Funding Planning & Coordinating agencies to determine ways of supporting local state agencies in improving communication in the county.
- Apply for membership on the County Social Services Board.
The very early experiences in a child’s life, both positive and negative, lay the groundwork for all learning to come after.

The importance of quality programming that supports healthy development, prenatally to age eight, cannot be overstated. By the time a child reaches the age of four, 90% of his or her brain has developed. The very early experiences in a child’s life, both positive and negative, lay the groundwork for all learning to come after.

According to Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Director of the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University, the process of “building the architecture of the brain is dramatically influenced by life experiences. It is not genetically hardwired.”

Twenty percent of all children and 55% of African American children in Washtenaw County are living at or below the federal poverty level ($24,250 for a family of four). Poverty creates an environment that frequently lacks opportunity for access to healthcare, high quality education, and safe neighborhoods—the very ingredients of a child’s life that are important for school and life success.

The good news is that this is also the time in a child’s life when high quality, evidence-based programs can have the biggest impact. The Perry Preschool Study, conducted in Ypsilanti fifty years ago, documents that impact.

The ABLe Change Framework that we utilized to create our strategic plan will help our community align those high impact programs to improve outcomes for children. Below are some examples of actions you and your organization can take to ensure that this generation of young children can succeed and reach their full potential.

**Support** federal, state and local policies that provide high quality early childhood care and education, ensuring that every child with high needs has access to quality care and education.

**Encourage** your organization to work with Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative or another organization in the Cradle to Career Collaborative.

**Get** involved and join one of our Action Teams to work on a specific need within the early childhood system.

**Make** a commitment to equity. Learn about the implicit biases that each of us has. Take an implicit bias test such as Harvard University’s at: implicit.harvard.edu. Being aware of bias is the first step in changing it.

**Encourage** your employer to adopt family-friendly policies. Do they provide sick time for all workers? Do they allow parents to use their sick time when their child is sick?

**Urge** parents of young children to get involved with the Great Start Parent Coalition or attend a Parent Café.

**Inform** families about free developmental screenings for their child age 0-5 at: www.WashtenawSuccessBy6.org to be sure his or her development is on track.

**Assure** that the voice of the families you serve is included in decisions your organization makes.

**Read** to your children!

**Spread** the word that high quality child care can be found by searching: GreatStartToQuality.org.
To view the complete 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, please visit our website.