

Mapping Collier County: An Early Learning Systems Landscape Analysis



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence
in Early Childhood Studies
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Underwritten by:
NAPLES CHILDREN
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FOUNDATION

Created by: University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning and
The Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies



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Executive Summary

Since 2015, Future Ready Collier, a network of more than 60 partners facilitated by Champions For Learning has intentionally planned and executed collective impact strategies and examined how to best support families with young children to improve early childhood outcomes (Future Ready Collier, 2017). In order to understand the current landscape of early learning systems and support services in Collier County, Florida, the Naples Children & Education Foundation has underwritten a planning process as part of the Future Ready Collier network, and has partnered with the UF Lastinger Center for Learning and the UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies to complete a systems-wide early learning landscape analysis. This work builds on the past research that NCEF has underwritten, including the studies of Child Well-Being in Collier County (Pemberton, Dow & Luallen, 2005; Pemberton, Dow & Foege, 2010; Romano & King, 2017).

This process occurred from August- December, 2018, and required UF researchers and FRC leaders to engage and listen to stakeholders to ascertain needs for Collier’s most vulnerable populations and programs; examine Collier County Kindergarten readiness data from 2017 to illuminate areas of academic performance combined with demographic and geographic data sets; and synthesize other existing supplementary data sources to create a comprehensive picture and answer the question, **What do Collier families and their young children need to be future ready?**

As the Future Ready Collier network has been working toward common goals of Kindergarten readiness and career readiness, the leadership role of Collier County Public Schools in this collaboration has been fundamental to its success by providing data and a system with which to interact and engage regarding student performance. The goal of this landscape analysis was to accurately understand all systems and structures related to early learning and Kindergarten readiness, and was accomplished with a three-phased approach of research design: (1) a review of previous research, indicators and inputs to understand strengths and gaps in these systems; (2) a new data gathering and analysis investigating educational structures, the geographic mapping of children’s Kindergarten readiness assessments, stakeholder input and system capacity within early learning, K-3 schooling, and community services and supports; and (3) a targeted search and review of state and national examples of similar early learning system processes to provide potential strategies, research, and levers for improvement. From these combined analyses and findings, **three specific areas of needed systems creation, change and alignment emerged:**



High quality care and learning for all children



Supported families



Community and healthcare investment and assistance

Phase 1 Findings: Previous inputs and research

The following findings were constructed through review and analysis of supplementary data sources from previous research, practice, and Collier County community engagement from 2005- 2017:



There is inconsistency throughout Collier County in awareness, capacity, and access to quality early education and care options.



Residents struggle with income disparity, high cost of living, and high cost of quality child care in Collier County.



There are gaps in family mental health care and child developmental screening access and services.

Phase 2 Findings: Current data gathering and stakeholder input

The following findings were constructed in a substantial data gathering and analysis based on: current educational structures in Collier County; geographic mapping of 2017-2018 Collier Kindergarten Readiness assessment data overlapping student demographic data; stakeholder input and recommendations; and systems capacity for PreK- 5 school and supports. Geographic “hot spots” were determined in which specific high-density areas were identified as high-need, low-income, linguistically diverse, and containing limited early learning resources (high-quality learning centers and family child care homes):



There is a wide range in kindergarten readiness across the vast geography and diffuse demographics of Collier County. On one hand, there are a few pockets of excellence where high percentages of young children are kindergarten ready in geographic “hot spots,” signifying that these small but distinct areas potentially provide supports for non-English speaking and low-socio economic families through supplemental learning and family service programs.



On the other hand, overall trends show children not being kindergarten ready in geographic areas where parents seem to have little understanding of or access to resources, and encounter barriers related to communication, access, and eligibility for programs.



Stakeholder feedback suggested that most parents need as much help and support as their children to overcome barriers, and this inclusive support should align social services with intentionality to better support positive outcomes for children and families in tandem.

Phase 3 Findings: Case study analysis to determine common levers of change

After a comprehensive review of similar early learning systems, both nationally and within Florida, that have engaged in early learning collective impact and change initiatives towards these same goals, the following critical levers for successful systems change and capacity building were identified:



Sustainable funding for targeted early learning quality improvement;



Parent partnership, engagement, and leadership;



Alignment of systems' objectives, activities, resources, outcomes and measures.

Recommendations:

Based on these findings and through continued conversations and planning, Future Ready Collier and its community partners must continue to engage in further exploration through community needs assessments, research and capacity building efforts to design and build systems where interconnections are essential for optimal results for children and families. This strategic planning is outlined in Figure 3, and provides the following recommendations for continued efforts towards this initiative:

1. Create an Early Learning Backbone Role/Organization that will be responsible for efforts specific to early learning collective impact coordination, communication, and data integration.
2. Engage in early learning systems strategic planning to develop collective capacity; align goals, objectives, inputs, metrics, outcomes and improvements; and identify and procure sustainable funding sources.
3. Engage in ongoing, continuous research to further inform data-driven decision making around early learning systems' needs, stakeholder priorities, and community investments.
4. Build on community impact goals that reflect collective impact efforts by creating a strategic plan for future efforts and improvements.



Parent Cafes have already started to take place throughout Collier County and show early success by impacting more than 300 parents.

Discussion

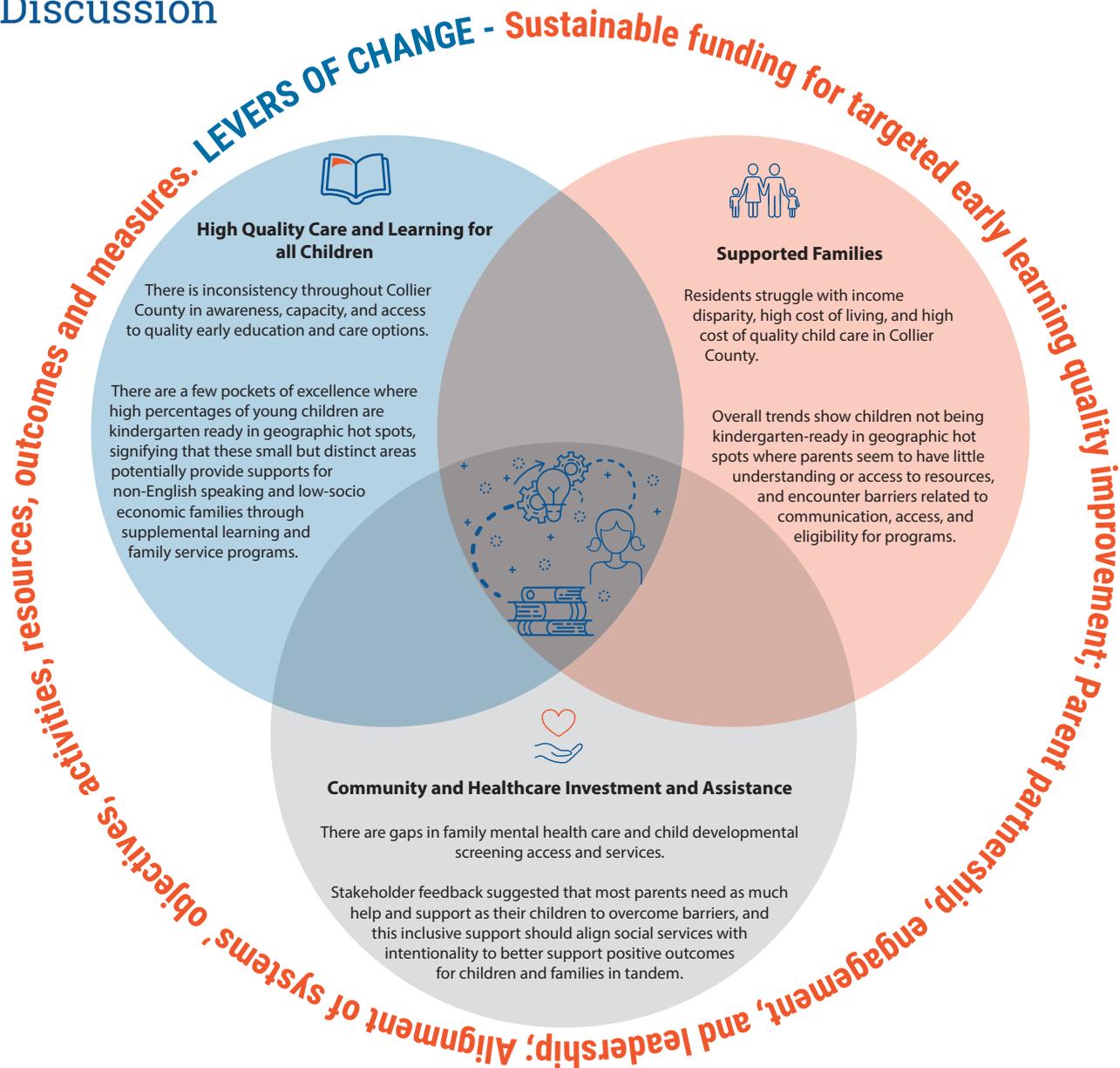
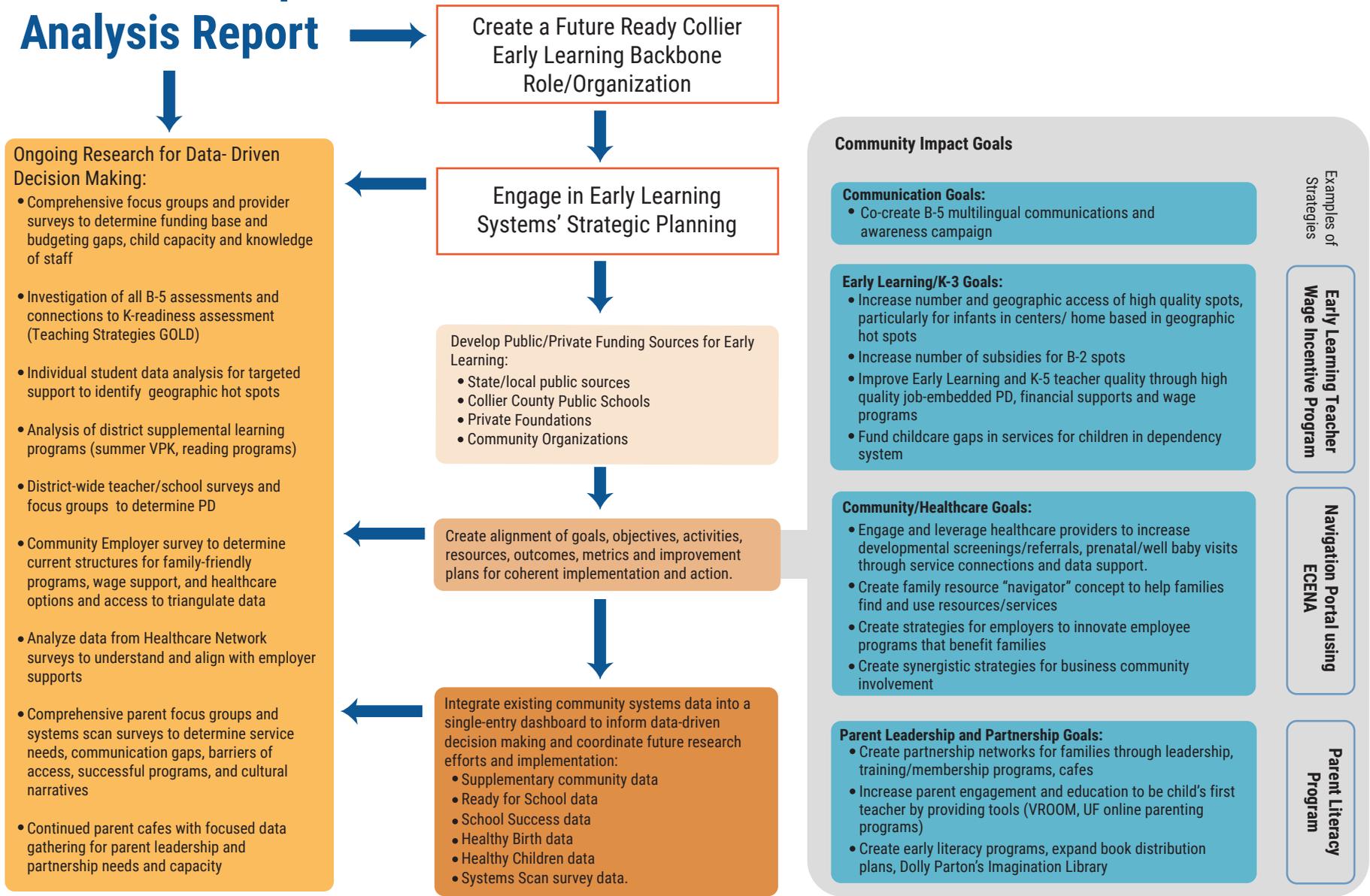


Figure 2. Categorization of Collier County Early Learning Landscape Analysis findings

Investigation and Analysis: Current Findings

The findings and insights from the 2018 Collier County Early Learning Landscape Analysis can be broadly categorized into three areas: **high quality care and learning for all children**, pertaining to all aspects of children’s early learning experiences, grades K-3 education, and transitions; **supported families**, which pertains to parent and family challenges, needs and programs; and **community and healthcare investment and assistance** which pertains to community services, mental health and screening services, employer incentives and programs, and collective impact strategies. As represented in Figure 2, findings overlap in each category, such as findings pertaining to community resources impacting families, and all of these findings revolve around one focus: a child who is successful and future ready.

2018 Landscape Analysis Report



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Figure 3: Planning and Implementation Process for Collier County Early Learning Framework

References

Pemberton, D., Dow, J., & Luallen, J.. (2005). *A study of child well-being in Collier County*. Gainesville, FL: UF Lastinger Center for Learning.

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