



welcome
to the
bornlearning[®]
trail!



Save the Children.

COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY LEARNING PROJECTS

OVERVIEW AND MENU OF OPTIONS

GENERAL

There is no question that student achievement and family and community engagement are inextricably linked. The landmark Coleman Report, published in 1966, was the first major study to categorically find that academic achievement had less to do with the quality of a child's school and much more to do with the social composition of the school and surrounding community—together with the child's level of early learning support at home (Gamoran & Long, 2006).

Family and community engagement is not incidental—it is essential. To this end, Save the Children is committed to developing resources and services that enable families, educators, and community-based partners—including businesses, social service agencies, churches, community colleges, and universities—to support children at school, at home, and in a range of community learning programs. *“Working together, we can achieve far more than any one of us can achieve alone” (Worrell, 2012).*

COMMUNITY-BASED

EARLY LEARNING PROJECT OVERVIEW

Save the Children is committed to supporting innovative approaches to early childhood education. Community-based organizations and coalitions with an early childhood focus may apply for funding to develop and implement a local or regional initiative that supports early learning.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicants must be a community-based organization or coalition of community stakeholders with the capacity to implement their proposed project
- Applicants must serve high-poverty, rural communities
- Proposed projects must clearly demonstrate how they will utilize a variety of community partnerships in the planning and implementation of their proposed project to align efforts for maximum impact and avoid duplication of services
- Proposed projects should must one or more of the following:
 - Kindergarten Readiness
 - 3rd Grade Proficiency in Reading
 - 5th Grade Proficiency in Math
- Proposed projects must apply the following key Community Engagement strategies:
 - Increasing access to books, high-quality learning resources, and programs that support early childhood education
 - Increasing awareness about the importance of early childhood education and early childhood education programming available to families in their community
 - Building capacity of caregivers, educators, and community partners to support learning and healthy development
 - Building partnerships to take action, increase the messenger pool, leverage resources, and strengthen support for children and families

Communities are encouraged to:

- Engage cross-sector community partners in project design and implementation

- Integrate project activities into existing initiatives to support sustained impact
- Utilize partnerships that support broad-reaching impact

FUNDING RANGE

Local projects: \$5000-\$15,000

Regional projects (multiple counties; only open to Early Childhood Councils): \$20,000-\$40,000

SCOPE OF WORK

Project Lead: The person who can serve as the primary contact and lead for the project. This person should be able to answer any questions about the project, mobilize partners to support implementation, and support data management.

Planning Team: Applicants must establish a project planning team comprised of parents/family members and various community sectors. Sectors represented may include but are not limited to local government, business, K-12 education, early childhood, social service, health care, faith community, parenting networks/support groups, philanthropy, first responders, media, housing, and informal learning institutions, including libraries and recreation centers.

Partner Requirements:

- Convene or utilize an existing cross-sector planning team, including parents/family members and community partners, to identify needs and opportunities
- Implement the early learning community project described in their funding proposal
- Participate in technical assistance to support project implementation, including ongoing check-ins to monitor progress toward project objectives
- Submit an interim progress report and final impact report upon project completion; Awards of \$25,000 or greater require additional financial reporting.

Save the Children Support:

- Funding for project materials, supplies, stipend for project lead, and transportation costs associated with project development and implementation
- Technical assistance



SUMMARY OF MENU OPTIONS



PROFESSIONAL & PARENT/CAREGIVER CAPACITY BUILDING PAGES 4 - 6

- Early Childhood Professional Development Conference
- Early Learning Workshop Series for Childcare Professionals
- Family Engagement Conference
- Early Learning Workshops for Families
- Pop-up Family Learning Stations

INCREASING AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING PAGES 7 - 8

- Local & Social Media Awareness Campaign
- Early Learning Summit

INCREASING ACCESS TO LEARNING MATERIALS & OPPORTUNITIES PAGES 9 - 11

- Community-based Early Learning Spaces
- Literacy Program Sponsorship

PARTNERSHIPS & SYSTEMS BUILDING PAGES 12 - 13

- Kindergarten Transition Team
- Community of Practice



Note: Some programs referenced in this guide are the intellectual property of their respective organizations. If you start a similar program or duplicate their concepts or resources in your community, please adhere to their guidelines for allowable use of their copyrighted materials. Visit their website for allowable use guidelines.

PROFESSIONAL & PARENT/CAREGIVER CAPACITY BUILDING

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Yet, many caregivers in rural,

high-poverty communities report that they do not feel fully confident in their ability to support their child's healthy development and earliest

school readiness skills. Likewise, early childhood educators play an integral role in children's lives and beginning learning experiences but often lack adequate opportunities to continue their education on best practices in early childhood development. To build knowledge and technical capacity in areas critical to early learning, applicants may apply for funding to create professional development and caregiver learning opportunities in topics such as:

- Protective Factors and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)
- Family engagement to support learning at home
- Social-emotional learning
- Supporting transitions
- Brain development
- Dual language development
- Inclusive practices to support children with disabilities
- Understanding and developing school readiness skills
- Best practices in early literacy and numeracy skills development
- Differences between an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Special education-related services (occupational therapy, social work, etc.)



OPTIONS

Early Childhood Professional Development Conference

Coordinate a local or regional Early Childhood Conference focusing on multiple learning tracks tailored to meet local needs, interests, and culture. Consider including a mix of keynote speakers, expert panels, presentations, exhibits, and networking opportunities.

Early Learning Workshop Series for Childcare Professionals

A workshop series allows facilitators to lead a deep dive into one area of early learning and build on skills learned in previous sessions. Early childhood professionals develop a peer support network by participating in multiple sessions together.

Family Engagement Conferences

Family Engagement Conferences can connect parents and caregivers with evidence-based strategies to promote family interaction, build practical communication skills, promote social-emotional development and increase early literacy and numeracy skills. Consider including speakers and exhibits from community-based service agencies like the health department, SNAP, WIC, senior services, the public library, disability-related nonprofits, etc., to connect caregivers to resources that provide wrap-around support to families.

Early Learning Workshops for Families

A workshop series allows facilitators to lead a deep dive into one area of early learning and build on skills learned in previous sessions. Caregivers develop a peer support network by participating in multiple sessions together. Consider structuring workshops to allow children and caregivers to learn and practice new skills together.

Pop-up Family Learning Stations

Pop-up learning stations capitalize on existing community events and gatherings to engage families in quick, fun learning activities that are easy to replicate at home. While not as comprehensive as a family learning workshop, pop-up learning stations can mitigate transportation barriers that may keep families from participating in other early learning opportunities.



Engaging in fun learning activities at community events



TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- To inquire about getting your professional development session approved for credit hours, visit your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R).
- To ensure that the information shared with your conference or workshop participants aligns with research and best practice, always verify speaker credentials and only use curricula and resources from a reputable company or educational institution.
- Establish a conference or workshop planning committee with representatives from local educational and service agencies and caregivers to ensure that conference topics and resources address their needs and interests.
- Consider various ways partners can support your conference or workshop, for example, fiscal sponsorship, donating food and drinks or door prizes, providing childcare, supporting registration and on-site coordination, promoting the event through their networks, etc.
- Highlight local resources to support family connections to services such as home visitation, early intervention, early childhood special education, WIC (Women, Infants & Children), family support services, etc.
- Provide meals and childcare to increase attendance at family workshops! Some parents may need to bring their children, and others may be coming to the event directly from work with no time to go home to prepare dinner first.
- Consider supports and accommodations necessary to ensure equitable access, such as American Sign Language (ASL) or other language translation services. Evaluate the accessibility of event spaces and review the reading level of print materials to support individuals with low literacy levels.

EXEMPLARS

Professional Development Conference for Childcare Providers - Perry County, KY

Early learning professionals partnered with the local Early Childhood Council and Community and Technical College to host a conference for childcare providers. Pediatricians and early learning professionals overviewed infant and toddler brain development focusing on the critical role of early relationships and back-and-forth interactions.

Sessions included Vroom Brain Building Basics®, how to access essential resources that support healthy development, demonstrations to illustrate how to integrate Vroom's Brain Building Moments® into existing programming and services, and a peer presentation on how Vroom® boosted their engagement with caregivers. Exhibit tables illustrated early learning resources across age groups.



SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Scholastic Read and Rise Workshop Kits teach hands-on strategies to build early literacy, reinforce that parents are their child's first and most important teacher, and provide take-home books and other resources for families and providers.

Vroom® provides science-based tips and tools to inspire families to turn shared, everyday moments into Brain Building Moments®.

Sesame Street in Communities offers hundreds of bilingual multi-media tools to help kids and families enrich and expand their knowledge during the early years of birth through six, a critical window for brain development. Their professional development offerings build the capacity to engage kids and adults in everyday moments and daily routines—from teaching early math and literacy concepts to encouraging families to eat nutritious foods and serious topics such as divorce and food insecurity.

Mind in the Making is a program of the Bezos Family Foundation that curates the science of children's brain development and learning, shares it with the general public, families, and professionals, and translates this research into transformational in-depth training and materials.

PROFESSIONAL & PARENT/CAREGIVER CAPACITY BUILDING

Continued from PAGE 5



DYSLEXIA/READING DIFFICULTIES WORKSHOP

Reading 101

- How reading happens in the brain
- Types of reading difficulties
- Who do I talk to if I think my child has reading difficulties?
- Dyslexia in Kentucky
- Hindman Settlement School Dyslexia Services

What to do if my child has been identified with a reading disability

- Angry and afraid: It's normal!
- Don't ask for the PROGRAM, ask for the PLAN
- What can I do at home?

Older learners with reading difficulties

- What do I do now?
- How can we embrace the uniqueness of the brain?
- Study skills, study skills, study skills!



Save the Children.



FREE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

TUESDAY
JULY 27, 2021
1:00-3:00

RIGHT CLICK TO JOIN:

Dyslexia/Reading Difficulties Workshop

PRESENTED BY

ANNA HARDAWAY

Master's Level Reading Specialist and Educator

OLA PIGMAN

Dyslexia Program Director
Hindman Settlement School

Dyslexia & Reading Difficulties Workshop for Caregivers

– Perry County, KY

The Perry County Community Collaborative partnered with local leaders in early learning to provide a virtual Dyslexia & Reading Difficulties workshop for parents and community partners.

A reading consultant with expertise in dyslexia provided information on how reading happens in the brain and what parents can do if they suspect their child has dyslexia or another reading difficulty. Participants discussed emotions a child struggling to read might experience, such as not feeling intelligent, low self-esteem, and frustration. They also discussed the feelings of parents who might be frustrated with their child because they think the child isn't trying hard enough in school. The workshop included resources and strategies to illustrate how parents can support reading at home.

A local dyslexia program coordinator overviewed dyslexia in Kentucky and recent state legislation outlining school districts' obligation and available services to assist children with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia support sessions for families.

**Supporting the needs
of *all* children**



INCREASING AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

Increasing awareness of what it means to be “kindergarten ready” or “grade level proficient” is critical to building community support for early childhood education. When schools, families, and community leaders work together to promote the importance of early learning, children are much more likely to receive the support they need to thrive.

OPTIONS

Local & Social Media Awareness Campaign



Effective awareness campaigns engage local leaders and caregivers to raise awareness around the importance of kindergarten readiness and grade level proficiency in math and reading. To create a comprehensive, community-wide awareness campaign, consider utilizing various media and methods such as banners, yard signs, billboards, fliers, newspaper editorials, public service announcements, a mayoral proclamation, and social media posts.

Early Learning Summit

An Early Learning Summit effectively brings local leaders together for discussion and idea-sharing on a particular topic. Participants engage in high-level conversations and hear from thought leaders about the subject. Groups come together to tackle a problem and walk away with a plan for how they can move forward. Afterward, attendees tend to have a better sense of belonging and camaraderie.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Engage parents, caregivers, and community partners to help spread the message!
- Ask your mayor to make a mayoral proclamation via video or at a public event. Many local government websites include a link with instructions and a sample template. Be sure to submit your request to the mayor's office early to allow adequate processing time.
- Saturate the community with messaging in various formats; not everyone has access to online messaging.
- Consider factors such as families' home language to ensure information is accessible to all families.
- Place signage in high-traffic locations in the community, for example: across Main Street, in shopping areas, at gas stations, churches, schools, and health clinics.
- Post flyers and campaign messages in local Early Intervention sites, Parent Training Centers, Therapeutic Services sites, and other local agencies dedicated to supporting children with disabilities.
- Get creative! Ask your local restaurants to drop flyers in their take-out or drive-thru orders or print campaign messages on refrigerator magnets so the information is always visible.

Raising awareness of the **importance of kindergarten readiness** through effective local & social media campaigns



INCREASING AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LEARNING

Continued from PAGE 7



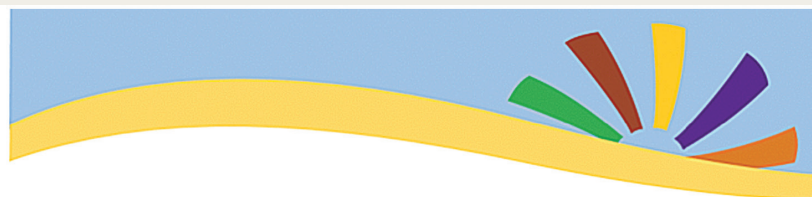
EXEMPLAR

Faith & Foundations Kindergarten Readiness Summit

– Whitley County, KY

The Whitley County Community Collaborative hosted a kindergarten readiness summit to increase awareness and engagement amongst faith leaders. Participants learned about “kindergarten readiness” and how it relates to achievement in school and life.

Presentations from a local superintendent, early childhood council member, and pastor each addressed the critical role of the faith community in supporting early childhood development. Early learning experts shared resources and strategies to integrate Vroom Brain Building Moments® into children’s programming and family outreach efforts. A summit participant shared, “One of the biggest assets we have in our community is our local churches and faith leaders who are dedicated and passionate about improving the lives of children and families.” The summit capitalized on the relationship between faith leaders and families and the expertise of early childhood professionals to establish a framework for working together to support children at home and in the community.



Faith & Foundations: Kindergarten Readiness Summit

Featured Presentations:

- **The Kingdom Connections Between Literacy and Faith:** presented by Dr. Amon Couch, Superintendent, Williamsburg Independent School District
- **School Readiness and Family Engagement Opportunities:** Emma Birchfield, Tri-County Early Childhood Council
- **Developing and Operating an After School Tutoring Program:** Pastor Ande and Michelle Myers, First Baptist Church of Williamsburg

[April 10th, 2018 4:30-6:30 PM](#)

Williamsburg Civic Center
650 South 10th Street
Williamsburg

Free books
and
resources!

[Open to all local pastors and faith leaders in the tri-county area](#)

For more information, please contact:

Tammy Meadors
Community Engagement Coordinator
Phone: [REDACTED]



Save the Children®



SUGGESTED RESOURCES

[Ready Freddy: Pathways to Kindergarten Success](#) program from the University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Child Development provides free outreach toolkits, guidance on creating kindergarten transition teams, kick-off events, and awareness campaign resources and tips to help increase kindergarten readiness and smooth transitions into kindergarten.

[Talking is Teaching®](#) is a public awareness and action campaign that encourages parents to use everyday moments like bath time, dinner, and bedtime to help build their baby’s brains.



INCREASING ACCESS TO LEARNING MATERIALS & OPPORTUNITIES

Community-based programs that support literacy at home or in partnership with trusted community leaders can significantly increase access to books and learning opportunities. Applicants can use funds to create an early learning space in a public location or sponsor a literacy program that builds home libraries.

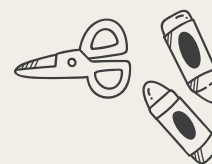
OPTIONS

Community-based Early Learning Spaces

Community-based Early Learning Spaces offer fun, play-based activities that promote parent-child interaction and develop early literacy, numeracy, motor, and social-emotional skills in locations where families frequently spend time together.

Literacy Program Sponsorship

Sponsor a literacy program in your community that builds home libraries by sending a book to participating families each month or partnering with trusted community leaders like pediatricians or faith leaders to promote healthy brain development and early learning skills.



Creating innovative family learning spaces



SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Born Learning Trails® are fun, educational, interactive trails for parents/caregivers and young children. The trails have signs with instructions for simple games that integrate learning into play.

LaundryCares® offers a variety of reading, play, and learning kits to install at local laundromats to create a fun family learning space in a location where families often have downtime.

Little Free Libraries® are weatherproof structures filled with books people can take or borrow. Little Free Libraries can be built from materials you have on hand or purchased as a kit through their website.

StoryWalk® is an innovative way to enjoy reading and the outdoors simultaneously. Laminated pages from a children's book are attached to temporary or permanent

display stands along an outdoor path. Families stroll down the trail and are directed to the story's next page.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library® partners with local organizations such as a public library or civil service organization to provide a free book in the mail each month to children ages 0-5. There are no income requirements for families to participate. The Foundation covers the cost of all books and ships them directly to homes. The local champion advertises the program, registers children, and works with community partners such as hospitals, school districts, and libraries to cover the shipping cost.

INCREASING ACCESS TO LEARNING MATERIALS & OPPORTUNITIES

Continued from PAGE 9

Reach Out, and Read® integrates reading into pediatric practices.

During well-child visits, pediatricians talk with parents and caregivers about the benefits of reading aloud with their young children beginning at birth. They show children how to hold books and interact with the text and images, and caregivers gain a deeper understanding of how they can make family reading time a daily habit. Each child receives a developmentally appropriate book to take home and keep as their own at each visit.



Developing a love of reading

Raising a Reader® mission is to engage caregivers in a book-sharing routine with their children from birth through age eight to foster healthy brain development, healthy relationships, a love of reading, and the literacy skills critical for school success. Raising a Reader offers three early literacy program models to support flexible implementation based on local needs and capacity.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten® promotes reading to newborns, infants, and toddlers; and encourages parent and child bonding through reading. They provide libraries, schools, daycares, churches, nonprofits, and other organizations with a full array of resources that they can utilize to host a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten challenge in their community.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Visit a literacy program's website and use the "Find A Program" search feature to see if a program is already active in your community. Look for the "Start A Program" section for detailed instructions, frequently asked questions, and contact information to support a new program start-up.
- Establish learning spaces at several high-traffic locations across the community to reach as many families as possible; for example, the waiting room of a doctor's office, community park, grocery store, local restaurants, laundromat, speech/physical therapist offices, and barber shop.
- Use various methods to promote your literacy program or learning space and boost participation. Have a ribbon-cutting event to kick off a new community learning space. Consider running a public service announcement or newspaper article in your local media, make frequent posts on social media, post flyers in local businesses, and ask community partners to promote awareness through word of mouth.
- Recruit community partners and service groups to act as stewards of public learning spaces and support ongoing maintenance needs. Youth philanthropic groups like Scouts and Beta Club often seek opportunities to complete public service hours.
- Use high-quality building materials, hardback books, and laminate paper resources to boost the sustainability of your public learning space and minimize the need for frequent replacement. Ensure all materials are accessible to adults and children with disabilities.



EXEMPLAR

Early Learning Parks

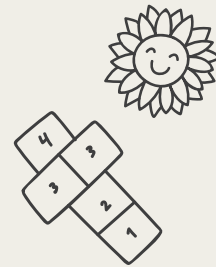
– Cocke County, TN

The Cocke County Cradle to Career Coalition worked with their local Early Learning Community Collaborative, municipal leaders, and healthcare providers to renovate two community areas into shared learning spaces. They established a Born Learning Trail® at a rural clinic where a paved walking trail existed. The clinic loved the idea of adding fun, physical learning activities along the walkway, and their maintenance team supported the installation. Partners worked together to order Born Learning Trail® signage from United Way, developed the trail layout, and painted activities on the sidewalk that correlated with the suggested early learning activities on the signs. The Community Collaborative added a Little Free Library® along the pathway so that community members can read while they are there or take a book home to build their home library.

Because of the success of this trail, a local city park also added one! The parks and recreation department worked with community leaders to have an additional Born Learning Trail® installed along an existing pathway, providing two engaging learning opportunities in the county!



**Renovating community areas
into shared learning spaces**



PARTNERSHIPS AND SYSTEM BUILDING

Long-term, sustainable impact relies on continued collaboration between partners committed to local systems change.

When partners share ideas, align resources, and communicate challenges and successes to each other, they accomplish more together than they could have on their own.

OPTIONS

Kindergarten Transition Team

Kindergarten Transition Teams support a smooth transition to kindergarten by facilitating planning and discussions between early care and education programs, public schools, community partners, and families. Kindergarten Transition Team members review existing transition practices and policies to determine what's working, identify gaps, and create a community-wide kindergarten transition plan with strategies to:

- Promote positive relationships between families and schools
- Help children become familiar with new settings, people, and routines
- Share information and align transition practices
- Provide professional development opportunities
- Share data across programs



Community of Practice

A Community of Practice expands and formalizes conversations and relationships between practitioners. The “community” is a self-selected network of individuals who share a passion for learning more deeply about some aspect of their work. They join with others to advance their understanding and build bridges so that others understand their perspectives. In a Community of Practice, participants come together to learn from each other and share practices and ideas. The peer-to-peer aspect of the learning process may help address community conflicts or misunderstandings. Communities of Practice may be temporary or long-term.



Coming together to learn from each other and share ideas

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

[Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#) is an online toolkit that houses a wealth of information on the importance of kindergarten transition, developing a transition team, and planning a transition summit.

[Ready Freddy: Pathways to Kindergarten Success](#) program from the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Child Development provides free outreach toolkits, guidance on creating kindergarten transition teams, kick-off events, and awareness campaign resources and tips to help increase kindergarten readiness and smooth transitions into kindergarten.

[Wenger & Trayner's Introduction to Communities of Practice](#) and the [Scaled Agile Framework for Communities of Practice](#) are online toolkits that include research, frequently asked questions, and case studies to support the establishment and operation of a strong community of practice.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Kindergarten Transition Teams should engage parents and caregivers of young children and have cross-sector representation from preschool program directors, preschool and kindergarten teachers, Head Start directors, private childcare providers, and community partners.
- Kindergarten Transition Teams should be well-versed in what special education services are offered to children transitioning to kindergarten, especially if the child previously had an Individualized Family Service Plan (ISFP). Foster strong partnerships with early intervention agencies and Child Find programs.
- Foster trust between the Kindergarten Transition Team and Community of Practice members by prioritizing respect for the various experiences and background knowledge they bring to the group. While these groups need leaders to set meetings, facilitate conversations, and develop systems to support ongoing communication and collaboration, the strength of these groups is the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning.
- Communities of Practices are most beneficial when they have a clear focus. Consider members' needs and where peer-to-peer learning would have the most impact. For example, the Community of Practice might focus on practical strategies to engage families and support early literacy or numeracy skills at home. Or perhaps members would benefit from focusing on training and technical assistance to build capacity.
- The best practice for Communities of Practices is to ensure various voices are heard. Consider recruiting a diverse group of individuals, including those with disabilities and of varying backgrounds and ethnicities.



**Building continued collaboration
between partners to attain
long-term, sustainable impact**



Save the Children
U.S. Programs
899 North Capitol St NE #900
Washington, DC 20002
www.savethechildren.org