

SMART BEGINNINGS ALEXANDRIA: THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKGROUP | JUNE 2019 COMMON AGENDA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND KEY ACTIVITIES

Highlights of this year:

- The Early Care and Education Workgroup (“ECEW”) voted to become part of the Virginia Smart Beginnings network (through the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation), and has transitioned to the name **Smart Beginnings Alexandria (“SBA”)**.
- This has allowed SBA to access communication resources and additional funding streams through the state, including:
- A \$250K grant to support Alexandria’s mixed-delivery system that would fund several pilots exploring mixed-fee programs and new locations, as well as funding for communications and website development.
- A \$530K federal Preschool Development Grant. Alexandria is one of 11 pilot communities in Virginia to participate in the grant, which focuses on expanding the use of CLASS across early childhood settings, including family daycare providers, and recognizing the early childhood workforce through financial stipends.
- This year, SBA organized itself into a robust committee structure, and this move has been very effective at moving forward specific projects for the group.
- By the end of this school year, more than **280** professionals in the city working with young children have received introductory training in working with children who have been exposed to trauma.




**Strategy:
Glass
Doors**
(Access)


Ensure that the early care and education system is easier to access for families, by creating *better processes to assess eligibility for services* and ensuring more *targeted engagement of families not currently reached* by early care and education services

Key Activities	Timeline	Progress
<p>Develop a universal eligibility screening tool that will enable families to have a more transparent understanding of their eligibility for various programs, and potentially also reduce the enrollment administrative burden</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VPI programs are currently utilizing a consistent enrollment form and process. The enrollment coordinators from all of the VPI programs have been meeting quarterly to share what they are learning about enrollment and strategies for recruiting families, and plan collaborative activities like a preschool information fair. The enrollment coordinator who has taken on leadership of the group recently presented at the monthly SBA meeting. This summer and fall, SBA will be pursuing a more comprehensive enrollment strategy through funding awarded to the group through the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. • ACPS has been hosting a registrar at the Early Childhood Center at John Adams ES in addition to ACPS central office to better accommodate families living in the West end of the city who need to

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		<p>register for PreK/VPI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VPI program directors and city staff have been meeting on an ongoing basis to co-create a new funding process for the city-funded early childhood programs towards. The resulting process being piloted FY20 will be presented at the June 25th City Council meeting.
Explore the creation of two large scale Early Childhood Centers in Alexandria		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACPS Early Childhood Center is up and running at John Adams elementary school. The center principal and staff have participated in collaborative PD with other programs in the city through the Quality Collaborative.
Develop stronger feedback mechanisms for families to engage with providers in a culturally and geographically accessible way		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SBA Family engagement committee received a grant from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation for \$30K to support work with families with young children in the city. Project consultants conducted interviews with local organizations serving families with young children, as well as focus groups with nearly 50 families, and are currently compiling their findings. The group has been invited to apply for additional funding to support the next phase of work.
 <p>Strategy: Seamless Support</p>	<p>Ensure connections among the prenatal to third-grade provider community so that families receive coordinated and comprehensive support, especially when it comes to <i>health in the early years</i> and the ability to more easily <i>refer families</i> to fitting support services</p>	
Key Activities	Timeline	Progress
Forge connections among health and education providers, especially in the prenatal to 3-year-old space, in order to identify specific ways the ECEW can support comprehensive pre-natal care, a comprehensive medical home approach, and more referral conduits between health-focused and other programs	March--Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBA has added members from the health community. A revamped 0-3 committee with over 20 members from health and other organizations has been meeting as part of SBA since October to discuss possible projects, and is in the process of surveying members about their services to create a better understanding of the landscape among members as well as consider how to centralize information for sharing with families. The workgroup received a grant from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation for \$30K to support our work with families

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		<p>with young children in the city, and the consultants working on the project have completed focus groups with nearly 50 families. We anticipate that this research will inform the 0-3 subcommittee's work.</p>
<p>Ensure stronger transitions for pre-K, grades K-3, with greater information-sharing across early learning pathways</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year registration is underway. The enrollment coordinator group is planning two Preschool Information Sessions in collaboration with The Campagna Center, ALIVE!, Creative Play School, and Child and Family Network Centers over the summer where parents can learn about publicly-funded preschool options, eligibility, and registration requirements. • Smart Beginnings Alexandria is also exploring ways to convene elementary school leaders with Pre-K directors as well as bolster more information sharing across the early childhood and K-3 settings in the city.
 <p>Strategy: QuALLity:</p>	<p>Ensure that our services reflect the highest quality standards of local, state, and national evidence-based best practices by providing more <i>professional development for early care and education personnel</i> as well as by <i>aligning curricula and assessment practices</i>.</p>	
<p>Key Activities</p>	<p>Timeline</p>	<p>Progress</p>
<p>Continue to implement and strengthen the collaborative professional development through the Quality Collaborative grant, which supports improved teaching practices in early childhood settings across Alexandria</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Quality Collaborative has focused its activities on three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trauma-informed practices:</i> This year we sponsored a variety of trauma-related PD opportunities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Several all-day introductory workshops on “Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma”, including targeted training for child welfare workers through DCHS. A workshop targeting family daycare providers was offered on the weekend and offered translation in multiple languages. - Deeper dive workshops for educators who have been attending previous workshops on the impact of technology on the growing brain, and self-regulation; - Site visits/consulting “office hours” at two sites; -Meetings with ACPS staff to explore alignment with K-12 professional development in this area. To date, 280

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		<p>professionals who work with young children have participated in trauma-related training from the QC, including 135 ACPS staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CLASS</i> – We have continued offering the Making the Most of Classroom Interactions course as in previous years, and are well-situated to implement the activities of the Preschool Development Grant in the coming months. • <i>Curriculum Alignment</i> – With all VPI programs having agreed to implement the Creative Curriculum (also used in Headstart), we have begun offering collaborative curriculum training and will expand this work in 2019-20.
Understand the current professional development offerings for providers and professionals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year we established an early childhood professional development council to help provide input on decisions around ECE professional development in the city. The council includes representatives from a range of ECE professionals. Members share priorities and opportunities, and discussions help inform future planning. • SBA has been working hard to implement the Preschool Development Grant (which is focused on supporting teacher development in a variety of ECE settings). We have over 150 educators estimated to participate in the project, which will include an educator stipend of over \$1000 (which also requires a survey and a classroom observation before the end of 2019). We recently hosted a two-day training for the individuals who will be conducting the observations using the CLASS framework tool in classroom and home settings.
Align curricula and assessment practices amongst pre-K providers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently working towards having all VPI programs implement the same curriculum, as well as supporting the city Early Childhood division in exploring aligned offerings to home daycare providers.
<p>Increase the number of child care centers and preschools that are: accredited and maintaining accreditation status annually</p> <p>Also, increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the number of centers and homes that are participating in the Virginia Quality QRIS system, -the number of center staff and family child care providers that earn the Child Development Associate credential. 		<p>VQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandria-Arlington hosted six Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) this year focused on Environments and Interactions, Infant/Toddler Social/Emotional Development and Assessment, VA Milestones, Child Development Associate Portfolio Development, Mathematical Concept Development,



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<p>Increase the number of child care centers, preschools, and family child care homes that are accredited, maintaining accreditation status annually, and/or participating in the QRIS system</p>		<p>and Family Childcare Leadership and Management. PLCs were held during evening hours and weekends in various locations in City of Alexandria and Arlington county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VQ also piloted a Professional Learning Community on Challenging behaviors (building on the initial trauma-informed workshops detailed above) for program directors who wanted to go deeper in their understanding of and support for challenging behavior in young children. They are now in the process of planning for phase 2 for next year.
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 <p>Strategy: Data Stewardship</p>	<p>Ensure that the system is surfacing and sharing data that enables a <i>deeper understanding of progress, trends and gaps in the system collectively</i>, as well as the ability to track <i>longitudinal data for children individually</i> to better understand the impact of our services.</p>
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Key Activities	Timeline	Progress
<p>Develop a learning and evaluation plan that outlines the outcomes and indicators the ECEW will track to measure its progress over time</p>	<p align="center">Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBA released its third annual progress report in December. The annual report includes information on projects currently being implemented, community context data, as well as some longer term outcomes that these efforts are ultimately working towards impacting. • The ACPS Chief Accountability Officer co-led the January SBA meeting with the SBA Project Director and the Citywide Early Childhood Programs Coordinator (ACPS) which featured an examination of the Pre-K-3rd grade data included in the SBA Dec 1 report. We conducted a similar exercise with members of the new Professional development council in April, and the results will help shape our professional development for the 2019-20 school year.
<p>Assess what data is currently being collected and what additional data needs to be collected in order to effectively track outcomes for children and families, for the system, and for the ECEW</p>	<p align="center">Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are already planning for this coming Dec 1 report in order to ensure that we are collecting and tracking the appropriate information for understanding the ongoing impact of our work. • Through our related family engagement efforts, we are exploring avenues for tracking more direct feedback from families and gaining a better understanding of what partner organizations are doing in terms of data tracking.

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	Strategy: Community & Funder Mobilization	Ensure that the <i>community understands the importance</i> of the early care and education system as well as better understanding what the potential options are to <i>grow resources</i> dedicated to service provision for children and families in the early years	
Key Activities		Timeline	Progress
Make the case for early childhood investment to the community through clear, consistent messaging about the ECEW's work externally		April – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using funding from our recent state Mixed-delivery grant from VECF, we are in the process of contracting with a communications firm that will support a range of rebranding and communications activities, including a website for Smart Beginnings Alexandria, as well as strategy and messaging support. We anticipate this will be launched by fall 2019.
Commission a study to better understand the feasibility of options to grow public funding resources dedicated to early care and education given Alexandria's political and policy context		Fall 2019 – early 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the mixed-delivery grant, Alexandria is currently in planning to pilot different mixed-delivery approaches in 2019-20 that might have different funding models. Also as part of the grant, we will be updating the Fiscal mapping study that was sponsored by the Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation in 2017. Goals include better understanding of the gaps and opportunities related to existing funding streams, including how to better combine and optimize funding for a more equitable family- and child-centric system.
	Strategy: System Alignment	Ensure that progress is made on system-wide issues, such as <i>understanding the resource requirements needed</i> for realizing our mission across the city and enabling <i>funding to be braided</i> so that needs can be more equitably met in all geographies and across income levels.	
Key Activities		Timeline	Progress
Design and implement an effective project coordination infrastructure to help execute the ECEW's work and the Children & Youth Master Plan's work more broadly		Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year, SBA organized itself into a robust committee structure to execute the priorities of the Common Agenda. Committees on quality/professional development, equity, family engagement, community awareness, and Zero to three have been meeting regularly to develop and move forward specific activities in each area. The SBA Project Director communicates regularly with the CYMP coordinator, and has been participating in meetings regarding the establishment of a trauma-informed community network in Alexandria.