2014
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
READY FOR SCHOOL
Holland, Zeeland & Hamilton
WHO WE ARE
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A thriving community relies on children being ready for school. Entrepreneurial models must engage all sectors of the community. Tactics must be data driven and employ evidence-based practices. Apply sound business principles and achieve measurable results.

Vision

Creating communities of readiness where all children thrive and reach their full unique potential.

Mission

Preparing children for success by equipping parents through integrated support of the Holland/Zeeland/Hamilton communities.

In order to achieve successful outcomes, the community must create an environment where early childhood strategies thrive. An integrated, community-wide, holistic whole-child approach to early childhood is required.
More kids are ready for school.

In Michigan, the number of children living in poverty continues to trend worse (Kids Count in Michigan databook 2015). Education outcomes in our community continue to hold initial gains made in a declining environment.

**IMPACT**

Ready for School has helped:
- Raise awareness of the value of investing in early childhood
- Establish a common assessment and evaluation partnership with all school districts and systems in Holland, Zeeland and Hamilton
- Form public/private partnerships, integrating efforts and engaging all sectors on early childhood
- Expand opportunities, improve access and enhance the quality of programs and services for young children and their families

**OBJECTIVES**

Engage and inform parents through their trusted institutions

Enhance early childhood experiences by working with area schools and early childhood professionals in building bridges that promote a seamless transition from pre-k to kindergarten and beyond

Create opportunities and improve access through strategic investment by expanding services for families where obstacles have been identified, evaluating outcomes, and disbursing funds

**BASELINE**: 35%

**CURRENT**: 61%

**GOAL**: 75%
Leadership

We invite you to join us around the virtual boardroom table, for a candid and casual conversation with our leadership. Representing backgrounds in criminal justice, education, business and economic development, these individuals have committed time, talent and treasure to further the mission of Ready for School and support early childhood programs and services in our community. The spirit of this conversation is to better understand the varying perspectives of our leadership.

If you could reimagine early childhood in our community, what would you like to see?
“Communities are systems that are intricately woven together that have amazing potential to impact the common good or to do harm. Success in early childhood requires the integrated multiplying effect of private and public influence and investments. I’d like to see our community harness integrated efforts for optimal impact for our children.”
Pat VerDuin, Executive Director of Ready for School

As a leader of this organization, what has been Ready for School's most significant impact?
“The magic of Ready for School has been in its ability to engage all sectors. Through the work, private/public collaborations have formed and been fortified. I believe that will be the game changer.”
Bruce Los, softArchitecture

“Every child starts school ready. All organizations working with young children should be working together to maximize results and minimize duplication of effort in a purely collaborative manner without concern for who gets the credit.”
Cal DeKuiper, Superintendent of Zeeland Public Schools

Back, left to right:
Pat VerDuin | Executive Director
Amy Ziel
Bruce Los | Chair
Glenn Vos | Vice Chair
Priya Gurumurthy
Robert Ellis
Boyd Feltman

Front, left to right:
Janet DeYoung
Nancy Miller | Secretary
Calvin DeKuiper
Alma Valenzuela

Not pictured:
Barb Ferguson
David Macias
Patrick Moran
Jennifer Owens
What is it about our community that inspired and fostered an early childhood initiative like Ready for School?

“Failure is not an option. When a group of our community's stakeholders learned that less than half of the children in Holland and Zeeland were entering our schools prepared to succeed, there was no hesitation—we said we will fix this!”
Bruce Los, softArchitecture

From your view, why are early childhood investments important?

“Early childhood education is the foundation of our economy. It is the beginning of creating strong leaders who will mold the future of our region.”
Jennifer Owens, President of Lakeshore Advantage

“Early childhood investments are important because they yield a higher return to society than any other form of investment by breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty.”
Alma Valenzuela, Assistant Director of Probation & Community Corrections at 58th District Court

What is your vision for Ready for School in 2015 and beyond?

“This program will help ensure we have more kids on the right path early, less need for government support or invention and a team of public and private sector leaders all walking together.”
Jennifer Owens, President of Lakeshore Advantage

“Ready for School will greatly impact the positive understanding of the value of a great education for all students, and especially for those students living in poverty or where English is not the primary language.”
Cal DeKuiper, Superintendent of Zeeland Public

“We live in a community where we are first in health and happiness, why can't we also be the first to achieve 100% readiness in the country!”
Pat VerDuin, Executive Director of Ready for School
Ready for School works within neighborhoods as well as with other non-profit agencies and the faith community to meet parents where they are. We have 4-6 Community Ambassadors at any given time working alongside staff to connect with families through community events and learning groups. Our outreach staff and Ambassadors are bilingual and bicultural and are working in the neighborhoods most in need of support as determined by data and community demographics.

Community Outreach

Ready for School works within neighborhoods as well as with other non-profit agencies and the faith community to meet parents where they are. We have 4-6 Community Ambassadors at any given time working alongside staff to connect with families through community events and learning groups. Our outreach staff and Ambassadors are bilingual and bicultural and are working in the neighborhoods most in need of support as determined by data and community demographics.

55% of parents said that family, friends and neighbors are their leading source for information on child development and parenting.

68% of parents of incoming kindergartners recognize the Ready for School brand.

“As Ambassadors it’s imperative that we are open minded and able to interact and build relationships with a diverse group of families. We must be welcoming by greeting families with a smile, sitting with families and kids on the floor, listening to a child’s story, or offering a cup of coffee to parents. Trust is built when you are a consistent presence who is genuinely interested in them and their children.”

Christina Kelley, Ambassador- Christina is a mother of five and is fluent in Lao, Thai and English.
Families participating in the Reach Out and Read model were more likely to read to their children, and their toddlers’ receptive and expressive vocabulary scores were higher, even when adjusting for parental education, foreign-born status, and language proficiency.


there is a direct relationship between health outcomes and income and education. Those with the lowest income and education generally have the poorest health outcomes.

– Key Finding of the 2012 Ottawa County Health Department Community Needs Assessment

Through Healthy Beginnings, Ready for School has become a hub for developmental screening and parent resources. We partner with the Holland Community Health Center and Intercare Community Health Network and work closely with the Maternal Infant Health Program, Early On and other community resources to both refer and accept referrals. Additionally, we engaged 11 area health care practices, representing participation of more than 50 health care providers around the Reach Out and Read program.

Reach Out and Read is internationally operated and acclaimed and promotes early literacy and school readiness by partnering with health care providers to “prescribe” books and encourages families to read together.

44% of parents said they look to their doctors as their leading source for information on child development and parenting.
Early Education and Care Partnerships

There are more than 150 licensed in-home and center-based child care and preschool providers in Holland, Zeeland and Hamilton. The entrepreneurs who run these small businesses are so much more than babysitters. They are the individuals responsible for partnering with parents and teaching our children at the most critical time for brain development. Monthly roundtables allow for professional development, networking, information and referral sharing and help to establish an open communication channel for sharing best practices, needs and obstacles. These meetings are hosted by Ready for School and operate in partnership with the Great Start Collaborative and Western Resource Center.

175 providers attended Building Bridges in 2014, a comprehensive training on kindergarten readiness expectations developed by kindergarten teachers.

In addition to hosting 12 professional development trainings, Ready for School assisted providers in finding trainings and educational scholarships.


Neurological science supports that the architecture of a brain is established early in life and becomes the foundation for language, social behavior, problem solving, and emotional health.

Low-income youth suffer significantly from a loss of academic skills over the summertime. And the losses pile up, contributing to an achievement gap that can make the difference between whether students set out on a path for college or decide to drop out of high school.

Anderson, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007, Summer Can Set Kids on the Right—or Wrong—Course.

Summer of 2014, Ready for School piloted Start School Ready in partnership with Holland Public Schools. Start School Ready is an intensive pre-kindergarten project. 58 children participated in the six week pilot that focused on the child’s learning, parent engagement in his/her learning and the enhancement of the quality of preschool instruction through teacher education.

In 2015 the program will be expanded to serve 90 children in a partnership between Ready for School, the Great Start Readiness Preschool program, Holland Public Schools and West Ottawa Public Schools.

“Ready for School has been instrumental in the Holland, Zeeland and Hamilton communities providing scholarships in high-quality preschool environments. The State of Michigan has invested $330 million dollars over the last two years into preschool for four-year-old children. Through working together with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, Ready for School has been able to focus scholarship opportunities on the greatest area of need within our communities, which is currently three-year-olds. This collaboration allows many children to attend two years of high-quality preschool. This is an advantage for not only our children and families, but also our community.”

Tami Mannes, PhD, Director of Early Childhood Services, OAISD

Ready for School addresses the leading obstacles that families face in obtaining a high-quality preschool experience for their children, including cost, trust, transportation, and hours of operation. We partner with the state and federally funded preschool programs to refer families who qualify. In 2014, Ready for School provided a total of 620 preschool scholarships, and made 148 referrals to the Head Start and Great Start Readiness Programs.

Attending high-quality preschool programs can provide rewards that last a lifetime including: higher test scores throughout grades k-12; lower rate of grade repetition and special education placements; greater rates of high school graduates and college attendance; and increased employment rates and higher earnings as adults.


Preschool Coordination & Tuition Assistance

79% of parents said cost was their leading obstacle to finding childcare and early childhood programs.

“Ready for School has been instrumental in the Holland, Zeeland and Hamilton communities providing scholarships in high-quality preschool environments. The State of Michigan has invested $330 million dollars over the last two years into preschool for four-year-old children. Through working together with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, Ready for School has been able to focus scholarship opportunities on the greatest area of need within our communities, which is currently three-year-olds. This collaboration allows many children to attend two years of high-quality preschool. This is an advantage for not only our children and families, but also our community.”

Tami Mannes, PhD, Director of Early Childhood Services, OAISD

Low-income youth suffer significantly from a loss of academic skills over the summertime. And the losses pile up, contributing to an achievement gap that can make the difference between whether students set out on a path for college or decide to drop out of high school.

Anderson, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007, Summer Can Set Kids on the Right—or Wrong—Course.

Summer of 2014, Ready for School piloted Start School Ready in partnership with Holland Public Schools. Start School Ready is an intensive pre-kindergarten project. 58 children participated in the six week pilot that focused on the child’s learning, parent engagement in his/her learning and the enhancement of the quality of preschool instruction through teacher education.

In 2015 the program will be expanded to serve 90 children in a partnership between Ready for School, the Great Start Readiness Preschool program, Holland Public Schools and West Ottawa Public Schools.
THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY!

INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY SUPPORT

Anonymous

Bob and Anne Ellis

Tom and Rosemary Ervine

Lucy and the DeNooyer Family

Kris and Barb DePree

Dominique and Julie DeNooyer

Robert and Colette DeNooyer

Roger and Janet DeYoung

John and Ruth DeVries

Jim and Deb Steben

Kaitlin and Kids

Kris and Barb DePree

Dominique and Julie DeNooyer

Robert and Colette DeNooyer

Family

Thomas and Susan Den Herder

DeKock Family Foundation

Cal and Beth De Kuiper

Chad and Mary Creevy

Mike and Linda Clark

Jim and Deb Steben

Anonymous

INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY SUPPORT

THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY!

FINANCIALS
INVEST IN OUR FUTURE

Donations can be made online at readyforschool.org or sent to

Ready for School
70 West 8th Street
Holland, MI 49423