



Ready Start Richland  
Blueprint  
[1/10/2022]

## Introduction

Ready Start Richland is a community coalition comprised of early care and education programs; Head Start, school system, and childcare committed to creating and implementing a unique vision for early childhood. Driven by the unique needs of the community to improve opportunities and inspire change for children birth to five.

The future of Richland parish is dependent on the success of its children and families, together we have an opportunity to transform the future of our parish in one generation. Access to quality early care and education programs ensure parents keep working or complete higher education and that children are on track to a brighter future.

**2 out of 3 children ages birth to five in Louisiana have both parents or their single parent in the workforce. Increased access to reliable, quality early care and education is necessary to ensure our economy thrives today & tomorrow.**

*- Louisiana Policy Institute for Children*

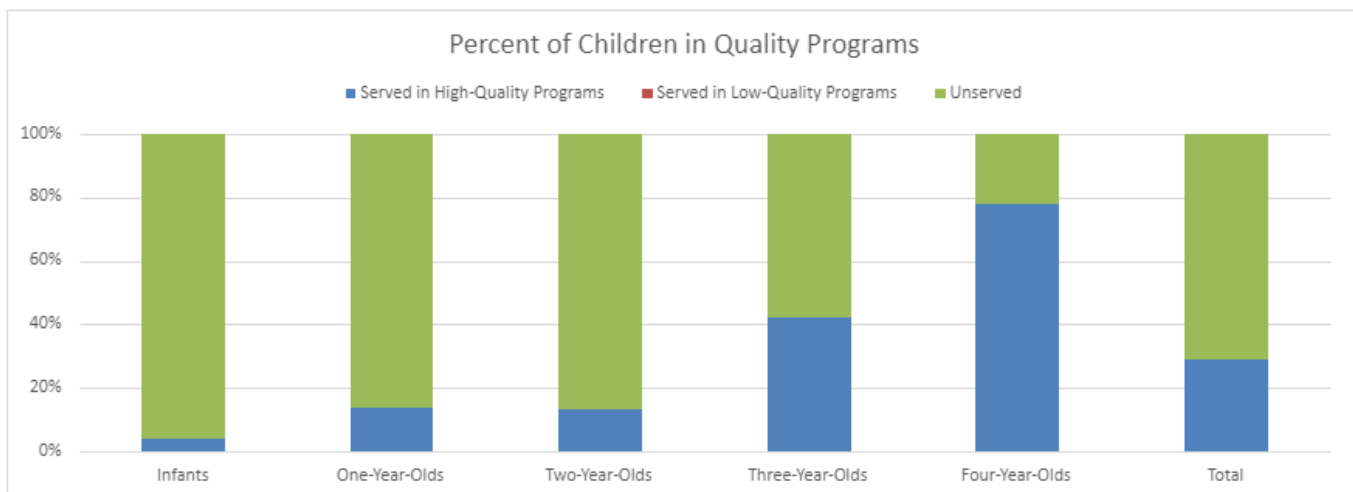
Research on early brain development indicates that 90% of brain development occurs by age four. That means that if we are waiting to provide quality early care and education until age four when most children arrive at preschool, we have missed out on the most critical period of human development.

***It's easier and less expensive to provide access to quality early care and education right from the start. Doing so ensures that our youngest learners have brain building experiences that prepare them for school and lifelong success.***

*-Amy Clancy, Director of Early Childhood Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana*

Two out of Three children ages birth to five in Louisiana have both parents or their single parent in the workforce. Richland parish has critical gaps in access to quality early care and education for our communities' youngest learners. In 2020-2021 only 21% of Infants and Toddlers had access to quality early care and education programs. Increased access to reliable, quality early care and education is a necessity to ensure our local economy thrives today and tomorrow.

## Access to Quality Early Childhood Richland Parish by Age Group 2020 – 2021



***Building a brain is like building a house. It's easier and less expensive if it's done right from the start. Rewiring an old house can be done, but it's going to take longer, it will be more expensive, and it still may not work as well as the wiring of a new house.*** -Dr. Laura Jana, Early Childhood Comprehensive Services

## Guiding Statements

Statement: Enriching children from the ground up.

Purpose: Prepare the current and the future workforce by making quality early care and education accessible to children Birth to 5 and their families, supporting teachers, and increasing knowledge of community members about the value of early childhood.

## Strategic Plan

**Goal 1: Improve quality of the early care and education opportunities for all early childhood programs in the network, all programs remain proficient or higher on 2021-2022 performance profile. (Goal Met 2020-2021 all site proficient or higher)**

Strategies:

- Ready Start Coach for all programs (CLASS, Curriculum, GOLD)
- MMCI coaching for all Pre-K classrooms
- MMCI coaching for all I/T classrooms
- All ECE classrooms with Tier 1 Curricula

Resources:

- Existing: Applied to LDE for Classroom Materials funds for all ECE programs, Center Improvement Grant was provided to Type 3 childcare centers, Birth to Three Pilot provided Tier 1 curricula and CLASS video library subscriptions

Performance Metrics: CLASS Scores/Performance Profiles – all programs proficient or higher on 2021-2022 performance profile

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 All programs have received performance profile ratings of proficient or higher for the year 2020-2021. All sites now have a Tier I curricula.

**Goal 2: Increase access to early care and education opportunities for Infants and Toddlers, Birth to age three enrollment has increased by 100 children by 2025.**

Strategies:

- Evaluate availability of current I/T slots by age and location with Monthly child count.
- Identify potential sites to add additional seats. One Birth to Three Site was added in 2021-2022 year.
- Request PDG funding for B-3 seats.
- Allocated 70 Birth to Three seats for 2021-2022 year.
- Explore EHS funding options if needed.
- Local Fundraising targeting businesses - SRTC funds raised in parish are invested into increasing access to seats for B-3.

Resources:

- Existing: Within the network we currently have Early Head Start programs and four childcare centers who serve Infants, Toddlers and Threes, the childcare centers, Tender Touch Nursery, Tender Touch Nursery 2, Little Feathers Childcare and Preschool and Stepping Stones Child Development Center. Childcare centers have a

desire and open space to increase services for Infants, Toddlers and Threes. Little Feathers has a Proficient rating, ECAC certified teachers and have Tier 1 Curriculum Frog Street Pre-K and Kaplan Learn Everyday Infant/Toddler. Tender Touch Nursery has a Proficient rating, lead teachers are ECAC certified and have Tier 1 Curriculum Frog Street Infant/Toddler. Tender Touch Nursery II has a Proficient rating, lead teachers are ECAC certified and have Tier 1 Curriculum Frog Street Infant/Toddler and PreK. Stepping Stones Child Development Center is a new center that opened in October 2020, therefore they do not yet have a rating. The lead teachers are currently enrolled in the ECAC program at the Children's Coalition and are using Frog Street Infant/Toddler and PreK curricula.

- Needed: The barrier to serving in-need Infants, Toddlers and Threes in Richland parish is not the availability of spots in childcare centers, but the funding for the spots that already exist. Both Tender Touch Nursery 2 and Little Feathers Childcare and Preschool have one empty classroom and is prepared to serve infants, toddlers and threes. These classrooms are empty because parents are unable to afford to pay for care.

Performance Metrics: Increased B-3 enrollment by 100 children by 2025

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 school year, Ready Start Richland was awarded a total of 24 PDG Birth to 3 seats to be placed at two sites that met the qualifications to be eligible for the seats. Those sites are Little Feathers and Tender Touch Nursery II with 21 of 24 seats filled as of January 22, 2021.
- 2021-2022 school year, Ready Start Richland was awarded a total of 70 Birth to 3 seats to be placed at three sites that met the qualifications to be eligible for the seats. Those sites are Little Feathers Childcare and Preschool, Tender Touch Nursery II and Stepping Stones Child Development Center with 36 of 70 seats filled as of November 16, 2021.

**Goal 3: Increase community demand for quality early care and education for Infants and Toddlers, met when birth to age three enrollment has increased by 100 children by 2025 and we have a waitlist.**

Strategies:

- Marketing Campaign- Digital Ads, Social media, attend community events, educational campaign ECE
- One sheet to communicate in simple format with visual the vision and primary goals of Ready Start Richland.

Resources:

- Existing: Blueprint, trusted messengers, rebranding, social media
- Needed: One sheet, Marketing

Performance Metrics: Increased B-3 enrollment by 100 children by 2025, we have an infant and toddler waitlist due to increased demand and need to further expand access

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 Marketing campaign included TV ads, digital ads, radio PSA's, flyers, postcards, and social media marketing, and newspaper articles to advertise for the Birth to 3 Seats available in the community. The Birth to Three Coordinator attended community events to educate the public about available Birth to Three seats. We have a Ready Start Richland website for both Ready Start Richland and for PDG Birth to 3 seats. For the 2020-2021 school year, Ready Start Richland was awarded a total of 24 PDG Birth to 3 seats to be placed at two sites that met the qualifications to be eligible for the seats. Those sites are Little Feathers and Tender Touch Nursery II with 21 of 24 seats filled as of January 22, 2021.
- 2021-2022 school year, Ready Start Richland was awarded a total of 70 PDG Birth to 3 seats to be placed at three sites that met the qualifications to be eligible for the seats. Those sites are Little Feathers Childcare and

Preschool, Tender Touch Nursery II and Stepping Stones Child Development Center with 50 of 70 Birth to Three seats have been filled as of December 17, 2021.

**Goal 4: Close the access gap for four year olds, enroll 90% of in-need four year olds by 2025.**

Strategies:

- Marketing Campaign- Digital Ads, Social media, educational campaign ECE is important to school readiness. What does quality look like? This, not that.
- One sheet to communicate in simple format with visual the vision and primary goals of Ready Start Richland.
- Explore reallocation of existing funding sources such as, Title 1 to increase access for four-year-old seats
- Explore other new funding sources such as increased LA4 for the school system or NSECD for 4 year olds that could be placed in childcare centers or private school.

Resources:

- Existing: Blueprint, trusted messengers, rebranding, social media, Title 1 funds
- Needed: One sheet, Marketing

Performance Metrics: Increase enrollment for four year olds to 90% by 2025

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 In collaboration with Richland Parish Schools, using LA 4 funding one new Pre-K classroom serving 10 children was added to Delhi Elementary, which previously did not serve four year olds for the 2020-2021 school year. Prior to COVID-19, Richland Parish Schools intended to use Title 1 funds for the new classroom. However, due to lack of enrollment caused by the pandemic, Richland Parish Schools used 50% LA-4 funds and 50% Title 1 funds to serve more in need four-year-old children at a high need rural area of the parish at Delhi Elementary. Richland parish schools are committed to ensuring they offer preschool at each of their elementary schools. They requested and awarded new LA4 seats to create a new preschool classrooms at Holly Ridge Elementary and for the 2021-2022 school year.
- 2021-2022 school year, one new Pre-K classroom serving 10 children was added to Holly Ridge Elementary, in collaboration with Richland Parish Schools, using LA 4 funding. which previously did not serve four year old in the 2020-2021 school year.

**Goal 5: Conduct developmental screenings for every child aged birth to 3 years old enrolled in early childhood programs in the network.**

Strategies:

- Conduct developmental screenings – ASQ-3 for Infants and Toddlers upon enrollment in Type 3 childcare centers
- Referral to early intervention (ex. Early Steps, School Systems, private therapists) as needed based on screenings results
- Training on how to conduct ASQ-3
- Training on Early Steps referral process
- Training on Red Flags for developmental delays and how to refer out for intervention services.
- Parent Handout – Developmental milestones map with early intervention resources and contacts, Early Steps, School System with step by steps what to expect overview. Consider including Families Helping Families contact for families who are interested in having an advocate to assist them through the process.
- Ensure all new teachers are trained in ASQ-3 and referral processes.

Resources:

- Existing: Childcare centers desire to ensure developmental delays are identified as early as possible so that children have increased access to early intervention services. Partnership with Early Steps.
- Needed: Trainings as listed above. Create step by step process for conducting screenings as part on intake and enrollment.
- Staff that are trained in ASQ-3 Train the Trainer
- Collaboration with statewide Pediatric Developmental Health Coordinator

Performance We will know this goal is met when we increase referrals for children aged Birth to Three years old by 10%.

#### Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 Type 3 childcare centers received a set of the ASQ-3 master copy. The teachers were also provided with training on implementation of the ASQ-3 and the Early Steps Referral process. As of Fall 2020, all Type 3 childcare centers are implementing the ASQ-3 for all children enrolled during the Fall and Spring semesters and upon enrollment. During the 2020-2021 year, 21 asq-3 screenings were completed.
- 2021-2022 Ready Start Network Coordinator, statewide Pediatric Developmental Health Coordinator, and Child Care Resource & Referral Coach began collaborating to create policies for implementing the ASQ-3 and improve the quality of screenings completed. The timeline anticipated for training and implementing the screenings will be April and May 2022.