

ReadyStart

OPENetwork

Your Choices Shape Their Chances

Ready Start OPENetwork Blueprint

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

[1/30/2023]

Introduction

OPENetwork stands for Ouachita Parish Early Childhood Network. OPENetwork’s goal is to make high quality early care and education available to in-need children in Ouachita Parish and that all children will enter kindergarten healthy and ready for success. OPENetwork will also work to help families to make the best choices for their child’s early care and education and to be involved in supporting their child’s early development.

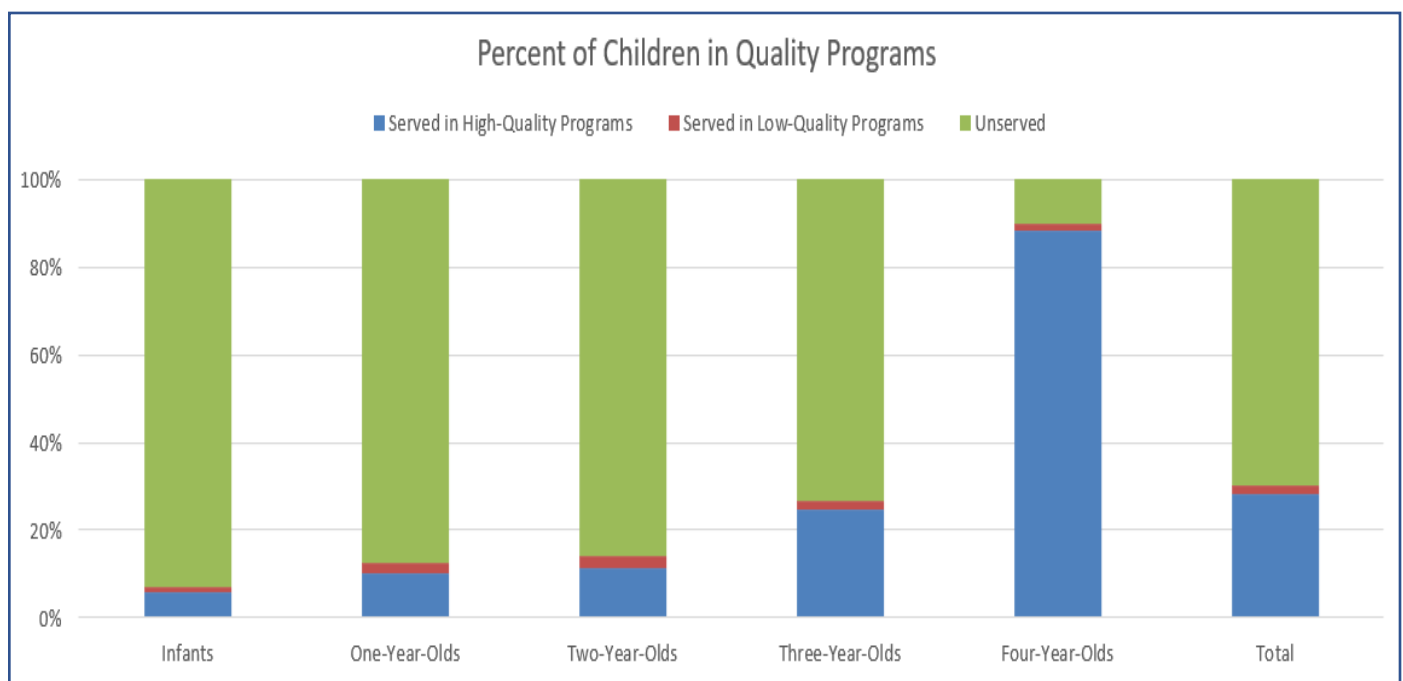
In 2012, the Louisiana legislature passed Act 3, the Early Childhood Act. Act 3 requires BESE (the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education) to create a unified system to manage all publicly funded early childhood programs. To begin this process, the Louisiana Department of Education selected communities around the state to become “Early Childhood Network Pilots.” Ouachita Parish was one of 13 communities selected to become a pilot in the first round.

All publicly funded early childhood programs must comply with Act 3. These programs include public school programs (LA 4, 8g, Title I), special education programs, Birth to Three Program, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Steps, and the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) program.

The primary goal of the OPENetwork is to make high quality early care and education available to all children in Ouachita Parish so that all children will enter kindergarten healthy and ready for success. OPENetwork works to help families to make the best quality choice for their child’s early care and education and to be involved in supporting their child’s early development.

Ouachita Parish has critical gaps in access to quality early care and education for our communities’ youngest learners. In 2020-2021 only 19% of the Infants and Toddlers group had access to quality early care and education programs. Investing in Infants, Toddlers and Threes is key to the success of our community today and tomorrow.

Access to Quality Early Childhood Ouachita Parish by Age Group 2021– 2022



Guiding Statements

Statement: Your Choices Shape Their Chances

Purpose: Children in Ouachita Parish will enter kindergarten healthy and ready for school.

Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Increase access to early care and education opportunities for Infants, Toddlers and Threes.

Strategies:

- Evaluate availability of current Infant, Toddler and three-year-old seats by age and location with monthly child count.
- Identify potential sites to add additional slots
- Request funding for B-3 seats
- Explore EHS funding options
- Early Childhood Guide available to assist families with referrals and CCAP application
- Provide supports for eligible Type III Child Care Centers to support with the City of Monroe or expand their facility.
- Provide supports for eligible CACFP providers transitioning to become licensed Family Child Care Provider.
- Child Care Recovery Stipends

Resources:

Existing

- 5 EHS centers and two EHS childcare partnership sites. Several child-care centers with space to provide care for Infants, Toddlers and Threes, 9 Family Child Care Providers that have opted into Academic Approval
- Community Supply Building Access and Expansion Coordinator
- Early Childhood Guide

Needed

- Birth to 3 funding to fund available spots for Infants, Toddlers and Threes.

Performance Metrics: Increased enrollment of Infants, Toddlers and Threes by 30 children overall.

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021: Winter 2021 OPENetwork applied for Birth to three seats. However, the network was not awarded seats as seats were prioritized for Ready Start Networks and OPENetwork was not yet a Ready Start Network. Summer 2021 OPENetwork applied to become a Ready Start Network.
- 2021-2022: OPENetwork was awarded Ready Start in Fall 2021. OPENetwork is currently in the process of applying for Birth to Three seats for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year. Community Supply Building Access and Expansion Coordinator launched survey to inquire about childcare needs with

families and businesses. CSBAE Coordinator worked with Children's First Finance to complete CSBAE Strategic Assessment Plan that outlines the childcare needs in OPENetwork. Early Childhood Guide assists families with childcare referrals and Child Care Assistance Program applications.

- 2022-2023: OPENetwork was allocated a total of 20 Birth to 3 seats. The seats were placed at Little Flower Academy and Open Arms After-Hours Child Enrichment Center, LLC. Birth to Three Seat allocations have been adjusted to support the high demand in Ouachita Parish. Thirty one out of thirty two seats have been filled as of November 16th, 2022 with a continued demand for more seats present. Early Childhood Guide continues to assist families with childcare referrals and Child Care Assistance Program applications. CSBAE Coordinator held an informational meeting for eligible Type III Child Care centers about potential supports to partner with City of Monroe or expand their facility. CSBAE Coordinator held an informational meeting with eligible CACFP providers to gauge interest in transitioning to a become a licensed Family Child Care Center. One CACFP provider is working to become a licensed Family Child Care Center. Director of Early Childhood & CSBAE Coordinator held an informational meeting with high performing Type III Child Care center directors to gauge interest in expanding classrooms or expanding their business to another location. Seven Type III child care centers are also working with the CSBAE to open 20 new classrooms. Child Care Recovery Stipend payments for eligible Type III Child Care Centers to assist with operating costs. The funds will be dispensed one time per quarter.

Goal 2: Increase access to quality ECE for four-year olds.

Strategies:

- Ready Start Coach for all programs (CLASS, Curriculum, GOLD)
- MMCI coaching for all Pre-K classrooms
- Professional development training (Frog Street Differentiated Instruction, Frog Street Making Center Time Intentional, Frog Street Classroom Strategies)
- Regularly scheduled training is offered to PreK teachers during professional development days during the school calendar. These trainings are prioritized for sites that are proficient or lower.
- Teacher Wish List

Resources:

Existing

- Scheduled professional development throughout the year, teacher wish lists for school system and NSECD PreK classrooms

Needed

- Trainings and workshops

Performance Metrics: CLASS Scores/Performance Profiles – all Preschool programs high proficient or excellent

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021: Conscious Discipline training was offered to preschool teachers. Teachers completed the training, received Emotional Support Materials.
- 2021-2022: August 2021, PreK teachers were trained in CLASS Instructional Support and CLASS Instructional Support Kits were provided to all preschool classrooms. During Spring 2022, PreK teachers

in Ouachita Parish and in Monroe City Schools were given the option to participate in a teacher wish list. This allowed the teachers to be able to purchase needed materials to enhance their classrooms. Frog Street Differentiated Instruction and Making Center Time Intentional were offered during the year. Provided transition backpacks to children attending summer PreK programs to assist with transition to new classroom. These backpacks included manipulative materials to aid in summer learning.

- 2022-2023: Ouachita Parish Schools and City of Monroe Schools received a total of 3 excellent, 18 high proficient, and 5 proficient ratings for the 2021-2022 performance profile. In fall 2022 City of Monroe PreK teachers submitted a teacher wish list. Ouachita Parish schools and NSECD partners will participate in a teacher wish list during Spring 2023. The wish list purchased items for classrooms to support high quality education. Early Childhood Specialist provided CLASS training to PreK teachers in September 2022. Early Childhood Specialist has scheduled Frog Street trainings for October and November 2022. Early Childhood Specialist provided MMCI Pre-K in Fall 2022.

Goal 3: Increase parent and community awareness of their ECE options when choosing a program for their children.

Strategies:

- Marketing Campaign - TV ads, radio PSAs, digital ads, social media, posters, flyers, postcards, explore other types of media such as digital billboards
- Hold informational parent events
- Share Choosing Quality Child Care checklist
- Annual Coordinated Enrollment Community Event
- Network folders shared with local sites to share with new families

Resources:

Existing

- Templates already exist for flyers and posters. Met with marketing team to create a new more informative TV ad.
- Community Supply Building Access and Expansion Coordinator

Needed

- Update flyers and posters.
- Survey parents on experience following Coordinated Enrollment.

Performance Metrics: survey data

Annual Progress Update:

- 2020-2021 Held a virtual parent Q & A via Zoom prior to early childhood roundup week. Shared early childhood program “spotlights” in the weeks leading up to early childhood roundup. The marketing campaign included improved TV ads, radio PSAs, digital ads, social media, posters, flyers, postcards.
- 2021-2022: Shared early childhood program “spotlights” in the weeks leading up to early childhood roundup. The marketing campaign included TV ads, radio PSAs, digital ads, social media, posters, flyers, postcards. Families were surveyed in June 2022 on the experience of Coordinated Enrollment. Results stated that most families were aware of their early childhood options through friends & family or

through the director/administrator of a site. Results were mixed because a small number of providers that also participated in the survey. Early Childhood Guide commercial and webpage was created.

- 2022-2023: Continued marketing campaign for Early Childhood Guide. Continued marketing campaign for Early Childhood Guide. Birth to Three flyers were updated in summer of 2022. Marketing materials are being updated to include Family Child Care Providers that have opted into Academic Approval and 2023-2024 Round Up dates. Early childhood program “spotlights” will be shared in the weeks leading up to early childhood roundup. The marketing campaign included TV ads, radio PSAs, digital ads, social media, posters, flyers, postcards. Coordinated Enrollment Community Event is scheduled with anticipated larger event and after Early Childhood Round Up to reach more families. Director of Early Childhood, Ready Start Coordinator and CSBAE Coordinator are working together to build marketing materials around the importance of awareness of early care and education.

Goal 4: Community network and programs partners will hold at least 2 family engagements events annually.

Strategies:

- Parent Focus Group held in January 2022
- Developmental Play Kits distributed throughout the parish such as The Ouachita Parish Library, The Children’s Museum, Melanie Massey Physical Therapy.
- Coordinate Enrollment Community Event
- Past Family Engagement Events at Program Partner sites: Parent/Teacher Conferences, Zoom session with parents, Donuts with Dad, activities for families to join in the classroom.
- Family Engagement Event Incentive

Resources:

Existing

- Desire to create activities that will engage families throughout the parish.
- Family Engagement Event Incentive

Needed

- Calendar of community events happening throughout the parish
- Community events to partner with
- Resources to assist in implementing events at program partner sites
- Community partnerships to build little libraries, developmental corners and distribute developmental play kits

Performance Metrics: We will know this goal is met when community network and program partners hold at least 2 family engagement events annually in Ouachita parish.

Annual Progress Update:

- 2021-2022: Parent Focus group held in January 2022. Developmental Playkits distributed throughout the parish at various community locations (The Ouachita Parish Library, The Children’s Museum, Melanie Massey Physical Therapy). Program partners collaborated in June 2022 on potential ways to engage families with different activities or events at their sites.

- 2022-2023: Development play kits continue to be distributed to community partners. Salt of the Earth Church, and Ester Gallow Community Center in Monroe installed a little free library in fall 2022. Children’s Coalition continues to partner with the Ouachita Parish Library by purchasing big book kits and installing developmental corners in across the 10 branches in Ouachita Parish. The big book kits are available for families to check out. The developmental corners will assist with making developmentally appropriate materials available for children aged birth to five in different branches of the library across Ouachita Parish. Family Engagement Event Incentive will assist eligible providers with a stipend for materials purchased for Family Engagement Events.

Goal 5: Conduct developmental screenings for every child aged birth to 3 years old enrolled in early childhood programs in the network by 2023-2024 school year.

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
- Trainings on how to conduct ASQ-3, Early Steps referral process, and 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.
- ASQ-3 offered during consultation with Early Childhood Guide and Birth to Three Coordinator

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
- Staff that are trained in ASQ-3 Train the Trainer
- Developmental Screening Initiative Coordinator

Needed

- Trainings scheduled or accessible to sites in parish
- Consistent step by step process for conducting screenings as part of intake and enrollment

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

Annual Progress Update:

- 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. Training was held in each parish in April and May 2022.

- 2022-2023: Developmental Screening Initiative Coordinator began work in July 2022. Developmental Screening Initiative Coordinator is actively promoting the ASQ-3 at various events within the community. Providers receive support as they request on-site training or if directors/teachers attend one of the monthly training courses offered on the topic of developmental health, screenings and/or milestones.