



Framingham

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham



Uniting for Young Children... the Heart of our Community

Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028

Supporting Families and Aligning Early Education Pathways

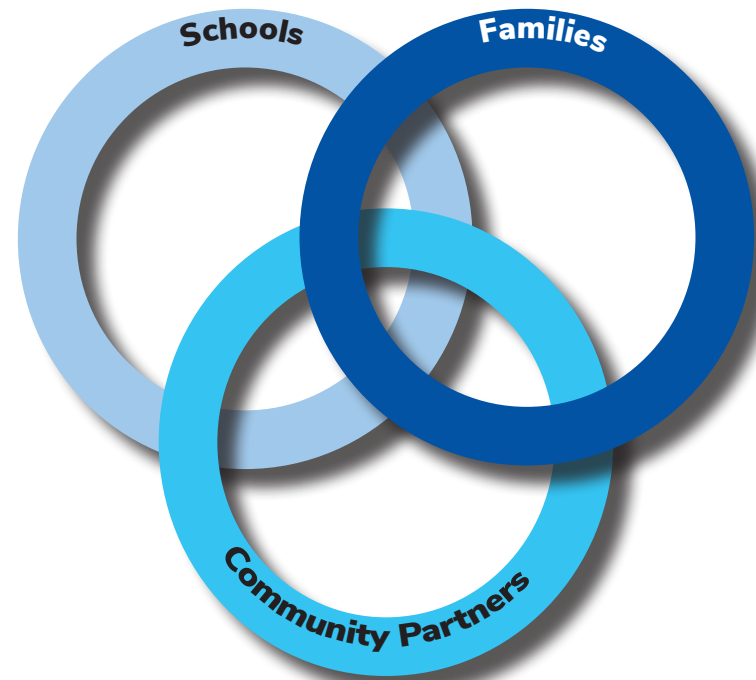


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Organizational Definition

Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAAF) is a collaboration of community advocates who believe in and actively promote early education.

Our Vision

Framingham is a welcoming community for families and professionals that provides comprehensive resources and support for the healthy growth and development of our children.

Our Mission

ECAAF is dedicated to promoting and supporting the healthy growth and development of young children from prenatal to age six by strengthening families and advocating for high quality learning experiences.

What We Do (Core Functions)

- **Services and Supports for Families & Young Children**

- Universal and targeted outreach
- Family Education (PLGT, PC+, Baby Talk)
- Transition Support



- **Community Partnerships**

- Family Education (use of FPL space, referrals to our programs from partners)
- Building Community Capacity
- Professional Development (PC+ HBCC Model)



- **Family Engagement**

- Continuum of Family and Community Engagement
- Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness



- **Resources & Referrals**

- Resource Guide for Early Childhood
- Linkages to Comprehensive Services
- Access to resources and services through a variety of outlets



Introduction

The Strategic Plan will continue to build upon the collaborative nature of the ECAF structure and support the program priorities outlined by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), Framingham Public Schools (FPS), Framingham Public Library (FPL), and beyond. We follow the core values of the Framingham Public Schools Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Engagement ensuring environments are unimpeded by bias or discrimination, where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomed, included, encouraged, and can succeed and flourish. We recognize additional needs remain unmet or underfunded in order to fully address all the challenges facing our early childhood community. What we do know is families and community partners have embraced the program opportunities that they otherwise would not have been exposed to without the EEC grant and FPS/City of Framingham support. It was loudly expressed through the needs assessment and ongoing work of the ECAF Leadership Council that we still need to fine tune our communication highway, build upon the strong partnerships, increase family voice, and further develop new collaborations to ensure communication that will ensure equity for and benefit all families seeking education, peer networks, and essential resources.

When the Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham comes together it is strong, however, caution of returning to silos is warranted. The ECAF engages with community partners to build and support a home for early education where young families have easily accessible places in the community to interact, their children have a safe environment to play together, parents have a place to talk together offering peer to peer support, as well as access to information to strengthen parenting and leadership skills. ECAF's expertise continues to focus on the early family and community engagement work to ensure all children and families are supported on their parenting journey so they are ready to learn as they enter school, and all community partners and early educators share a common language when parents stop at different destinations. Success is almost always guaranteed on the parenting journey and early learning path when we strengthen partnerships and build trusting relationships right from the start with families, community partners, and educators! As you read through the Strategic Plan goals, you will see how our four core functions are supported and addressed by the ECAF and its Leadership Council (the governance body).

ECAF Core Functions

Services &
Supports for
Families & Young
Children



Community
Partnerships



Family
Engagement



Resources &
Referrals



Overarching Goals

Measuring Our Success

1

Awareness & Access

To increase knowledge of and accessibility to high-quality early education and care programs and services for families with young children (prenatal up to age six).

2

Family Education & Engagement

To promote family education, engagement and literacy.

3

Community Partnerships

To facilitate collaboration and community planning between local early education and care partners and other community stakeholders.

4

Transition Support

To provide support and information to families with children transitioning between and among early education and care settings, home and school.

5

Facilitation of Quality Early Education

To support early education and care programs across the public and private sectors in delivering high quality services by facilitating access to consumer education, technical assistance, and training that scaffolds high quality programming.

Resource Guide For Early Childhood

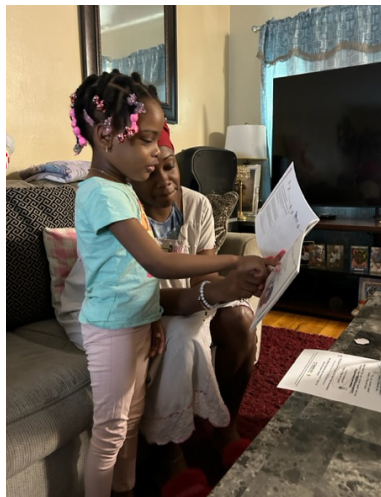
- Choosing Child Care
- Child Care Programs & Preschools
- Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten
- Helpful Community Resources

Guia de Recursos para a Primeira Infância

- Escolha da Creche
- Programas de Creche & Pré-escolas
- Preparando Seu Filho para o Kindergarten
- Recursos úteis da comunidade

Guía de Recursos para la Infancia Temprana

- Eligiendo Guardería
- Programas de Guardería & Preescolar
- Preparando a Su Niño para Jardín de Infancia
- Recursos Comunitarios Útiles



1

Goal 1: Awareness & Access

To increase knowledge of and accessibility to high-quality early education and care programs/services for families with young children (prenatal-age 8).

Objectives

1

Maximize Outreach - Identify partners* and untapped resources to maximize outreach efforts in order to increase referrals to the ParentChild+ and family education programs. *see Appendix B

Action Steps

- Continue to disseminate updated marketing materials on an ongoing basis to different audiences (family, community partners/leaders, popular employers, local government officials and representatives).
- Build awareness of the online “Google Referral Form” and follow up with partners on the referral process to provide feedback as to its functionality and to track the number of referrals per quarter.
- Utilize community brokers and family ambassadors to expand outreach networks and obtain up to 5 new referrals via word of mouth per quarter.
- Integrate cross referral system within district and outside partners, such as the FPS Welcome Center, Resource Room, & Wrap Around Services, by meeting with managers and the determining needs.

2

Expand Communication - To expand ECAF reach through communication pathways between families and ECAF partners by utilizing inclusive approaches for disseminating information.

Action Steps

- Continue to disseminate information through the following platforms: listserv, ECAF and other partner websites, Facebook, Twitter, What’s App, e-newsletter, local ACCESS TV, YouTube, ZOOM, Google Meet, ECAF’s Resource Guide for Early Childhood, community news outlets, and bulletin boards.
- Add 1 new communication pathway per year.

3

Recruit Volunteers/Partners - Continue to identify and recruit volunteers (community leaders/brokers) to assist with creative outreach efforts that include translation/interpretation of outreach/program educational materials, as well as facilitation of family education and support groups.

Action Step

- Identify 1 new volunteer/ partner per year to assist with creative outreach efforts and program support.

4

Recruit Participant Families - Continue to recruit families for “Play, Learn, and Grow Together” groups and ParentChild+ Home Visitation program through a variety of outreach methods as stated above.

Action Steps

- Reassess outreach materials and pathways for recruiting participant families annually.
- Expand outreach strategies to include: word of mouth, community partners, scattered sites throughout the community, social media, What’s App, early childhood family and center-based programs, housing authority, and postings in local businesses and community centers.

5

Recruit & Train Staff - Continue to recruit early learning specialists prepared to meet the diverse needs of the ParentChild+ participants and groups to decrease barriers for engagement in the program as needed.

Action Steps

- Utilize recruitment vehicles including: FPS TalentEd, ParentChild+ statewide network, social media, past participants, sharing announcements with partners, job search/ recruitment programs, and family, alumni, and retiree networks as ELS openings arise.
- Ensure new staff receive the mandatory 16-hour national ParentChild+ training upon onboarding, along with ongoing professional development at weekly team meetings, 1:1 supervision, annual ParentChild+ conference, FPS/partner professional development opportunities.

2

Goal 2: Family Education & Engagement

To promote family education, engagement and literacy.

Objectives

1

Ensure Program Accessibility - Ensure flexible and accessible schedules and locations for programming that meet the needs of families.

Action Steps

- Ensure sufficient staffing levels to provide flexible schedules for programming.
- Maintain community partnerships to retain existing program locations including both branches of the Framingham Public Library.
- Work with community partners to diversify program locations by offering family education groups in one new location each year (ex. Pelham, FHA, Family Resource Center, Mothers Helping Mothers, faith based partners, other community partner spaces).
- Provide online presence for accessing learning on the ECAF website and other social media outlets, in addition to assessing alternative methods to reinforce learning at home via recorded presentations of VISM materials and completing the ASQ online.

2

Support Language/Cultural Diversity - Increase capacity to support diverse language needs and ensure cultural intentionality.

Action Step

- Continue to recruit multilingual staff, families and council members to facilitate program activities, participate on council, and collaborate on initiatives.

3

Enhance Anti-bias Practices - Assess and enhance anti-bias / anti-racist curriculum and materials in the ParentChild+, PLGT Groups, and partner programs.

Action Steps

- Utilize ECAF Leadership/Steering Committee, national and statewide ParentChild+, and EEC CFCE members to create a common tool (checklist) with the key elements that assess anti-bias/anti-racist best practices when developing curriculum and ordering materials.
- ECAF team will review and assess program curriculum and materials at weekly team meetings and complete the ParentChild+ evaluation annually.

4

Create Collaborative Calendar - Design a seamless, comprehensive and collaborative family education activity calendar with community partners to list monthly and/or annual activities.

Action Steps

- Create an Action Team to collect community partners activity calendars by the end of 2023.
- Identify platform(s) on which a shared calendar will be maintained as a “one stop shop” for information.
- Identify who will be responsible for maintaining calendar to ensure continued accuracy, including technology support needed for design, maintenance, and on-going sustainability; project work by Action Team, volunteer, city, and/or intern.

2

Goal 2: Family Education & Engagement

To promote family education, engagement and literacy.

Objectives

5

Promote SEL/ASQ Awareness - Build awareness and integrate principles of child development and social emotional learning through ECAF programming for families, educators, and community partners.

Action Steps

- Add a new Family Education component to the e-newsletter that highlights the ASQ beyond completing the questionnaire, offering information that engages families in a meaningful way with content pertaining to children's development along with a pre-recorded program monthly, bi monthly, or quarterly depending on human capacity.
- Utilize ASQ & ASQ SE tools to support learning about child development on an ongoing basis available to families through a variety of means (ECAF online portal, in person or remote family meetings).
- Design an ASQ informational handout to accompany the ECAF program menu to families, educators, and community partners.

6

Equalize School Readiness - Increase accessible opportunities right from the start, for all families with children birth-5 years old, so all children enter school on equal footing.

Action Step

- Continue to offer the ECAF menu of services and supports that include: the signature "Play, Learn and Grow Together" groups; resources & referrals; and ParentChild+ in home family education to those families not attending an early education program prior to entering Kindergarten.

7

Sustain Remote Presence - Maintain an online presence to prevent barriers in early education by taking a proactive approach to offering virtual and hybrid services/programs with intention to increase remote support to families.

Action Steps

- Assess and maintain a menu of virtual and hybrid services / programs on the ECAF website and other platforms. (ZOOM, Google Meet, What's App, Facetime, Facebook Live, Framingham ACCESS TV/Streaming, YouTube).
- Ongoing early learning specialist and group facilitator technology training and professional development as needed.
- Ensure staff have updated technology (chromebook/laptop) and have sufficient bandwidth in order to carry out this action item.



3

Goal 3: Community Partnerships

To facilitate collaboration and community planning between local early education and care partners and other community stakeholders.

Objectives

1 Elevate Early Childhood Community Voice - Continue to build upon and nurture the Leadership Council* membership that ensures community and family engagement in developing an early childhood community vision. * See Appendix A

Action Steps

- Maintain community partner membership in, and recruit additional community partners and families to, the ECAF Leadership Council, which serves as the governing body of ECAF as per the bylaws.
- Maintain the Steering Committee as an advisory subgroup within the Leadership Council and reevaluate the bylaws and governing structure every 5 years.
- Host quarterly Leadership Council meetings as an opportunity for collaborative conversations, networking, resource sharing, topical presentations, and EEC messaging reinforcement.
- Work on developing a birth to 5 community wide early childhood initiative “Framingham First Five Years” with the local government and community stakeholders from families and community brokers to city officials, schools, library, community organizations.

2 Share Comprehensive Resources - Ensure partner knowledge of resources for the following: dental, vision, preventative and sick care; mental wellness; education; employment; recreation/fitness/ nutrition; technology; Mass 211, Child Care Resources waitlist; Kindergarten registration; food security; etc.

Action Step

- Distribute the hard copy and link to the Resource Guide for Early Childhood annually and as requested and available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

3 Ensure Resource Dissemination - Ensure partners are disseminating and exchanging ECAF and partner information for comprehensive services.

Action Step

- Check in with partners to ensure they are disseminating information to families and their networks (Resource Guide for Early Childhood, ECAF Information Packet, Online Access / Website, Referral Form) by developing a simple survey to be completed at the Leadership Council meetings and/or online twice a year.

4 Coordinate Referral Hubs - Ensure access to screening hubs and make appropriate referrals.

Action Steps

- Provide screening tools to community partners, such as ECAF Ages and Stages Parent Questionnaire (ASQ), as well as referrals to Early Intervention and special education at FPS and BLOCKS.
- Provide access to ECAF Ages and Stages Parent Questionnaire (ASQ) to families enrolling in PEL online and in person.

5 Sustain Skills During Summer - Explore cross-community partnerships with organizations including Early Intervention, YMCA, PEL, BLOCKS, out of school time/summer scene, early education programs, faith based partners, FPS Multilingual Department, and Framingham Public Library for summer learning opportunities to sustain skills over the summer.

Action Steps

- Create an Action Team to assess summer learning programs available in the community by developing a visual schedule of all summer learning opportunities and to assess gaps.
- Pursue filling the gaps by providing additional summer programs by ECAF and its partners to ensure equity for all young children and families. Seek additional funds to address this need.

4

Goal 4: Transition Support

To provide support and information to families with children transitioning among early education and care settings (home and school).

Objectives

1

Streamline Family Navigation Tools - Identify, develop and customize educational materials to assist families and community partners in navigating pathways to align with EEC/DESE/DPH/EI/SPED to reinforce the common voice outlined in the [Strengthening Partnerships Framework](#).

Action Steps

- Research existing roadmaps of cradle to career pathways to identify common language applied to transition points.
- Add family friendly maps and information to the Resource Guide for Early Childhood and website in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The roadmaps will identify transition points that include pre- and post-natal education and care, infant/toddler education and care, early intervention, special education, preschool, kindergarten through graduation.

2

Sustain ECAF in FPS Early Ed Vision - Establish ECAF, the stepping stone to early learning, as an integral part of the FPS Early Education vision by increasing communication and collaboration efforts across district and community early education partners.

Action Steps

- Continue to obtain contact information for children and their younger siblings without prior pre K experience from the FPS Welcome Center (registrations), FPS incoming K registration list, Seven Hills/Child Care Resources (CCR) waitlist & PEL.
- Create an additional ECAF space for outreach with storytime / playgroups/family education opportunities in the FPS Early Childhood Education "Renovation" Plan.
- Exchange cross-referrals between ECAF and PEL, including PEL applicants found ineligible, on waitlist, and those enrolled for 1/2 days, along with younger siblings.
- Schedule regular check-ins with staff at the FPS Welcome Center, BLOCKs, PEL, and Wraparound services.

3

Update Communication for Equity - Collaborate with community partners on ensuring information outlets contain comprehensive, diverse and equitable content and identify any gaps in wraparound services, basic needs, physical and mental wellness, and education.

Action Steps

- Create a tool for partners to self assess the diversity and equity of the information outlets and written materials produced by their agencies annually.
- Assess Resource Guide for Early Childhood and ECAF website annually and update as changes are needed.



5

Goal 5: Facilitation of Quality Early Education

To support early education and care programs across the public and private sectors in delivering high quality services by facilitating access to consumer education, technical assistance, and training that scaffolds high quality programming.

Objectives

1

Amplify Public Awareness - Broaden connections to enlarge the early childhood base of support that increases public awareness and advocates on behalf of ECAF program initiatives.

Action Step

- Educate government officials, school administrators, staff, families, and community brokers on the mission of the ECAF/CFCE to ensure equitable access for all families of young children through the use of presentations, handouts, flyers, email, website, social media, focus groups throughout the year and at community meetings and special events.

2

Boost Family Engagement - Increase authentic family engagement and active participation in ECAF based on the guidance from the Strengthening Partnerships Framework and Strengthening Families Assessment.

Action Steps

- Continue to build the Family Action Team to contribute to ECAF operations such as gaining input from family surveys and listening sessions to design a program menu inclusive of family interests and support activities. (i.e families design group space bulletin boards; provide outreach in the role of community broker / family ambassador; create and share social media communications; co-facilitate bilingual groups; train to become a group leader, in addition to Steering Committee and the ECAF Leadership Council involvement).
- Advertise volunteer and employment opportunities (i.e. on social media outlets, newsletter, school PTO, library, word of mouth, local community businesses, alumni network, and partners).
- Sustain library space and further enhance partnership with library to secure access for all families and partners.

3

Facilitate Collaborative Conversations - Develop Affinity Groups for the early childhood council members, Directors Collaborative, community partners, families to address anti-racist and anti-bias practices that create systemic change in the early childhood/ family education community.

Action Steps

- Assess ECAF Leadership Council and Directors Collaborative members interest in participating and survey for best times and days of week to offer a children's book literature review group.
- Seek out a facilitator for the Early Childhood Affinity group(s) (ie. Metrowest Nonprofit Network, FSU, FPS, Mass Bay, EEC, ECAF, FPS Equity, Diversity, and Community Engagement, Free Spirit Publisher, Scholastic Representatives).

4

Support Home-Based Educators - Outreach to include Home-Based Child Care (HBCC) educators, children, and their families in the larger early education and care community of learning and to promote quality best practices.

Action Steps

- Build trusting relationships with HBCCs through partners and word of mouth to increase their networking and support opportunities.
- Provide general support to HBCCs through ECAF and partners' family child care systems (SMOC, Child Development and Education), to support quality programming and family engagement prior to entering the schools.
- Raise awareness of and participation in the ParentChild+ Home-Based Child Care Model (funding dependent).

Sources for Strategic Plan Input

The Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAF) Strategic Plan has been updated for 2023 through 2028. The following factors were used to develop this plan:

1. Review of the most recent ECAF Needs Assessment and Framingham Department of Public Health Community Needs Assessment (Appendix E)
2. Identification of the Strategic Plan Priorities based on community partner input
3. Determination of the new and ongoing Strategic Plan Goals and Priority Actions (2023-2028)
4. Inclusion of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and models of best practice to broaden family and community engagement

In addition the ECAF leadership team considered input from the Council member survey, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, Framingham Public Schools, Framingham Department of Public Health, and Framingham Public Library Needs Assessments and Strategic Plans, and the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement EEC and FPS mission, vision, goals, and required priorities.

A special thank you to the work group who contributed their time, energy, input, and dedication to the creation of this document!

Summary of CFCE Priorities

The ECAF Strategic Plan supports the priority goals and ensures access to:

- Early learning opportunities for families with young children birth to age six
- School readiness activities
- Early childhood resources and referral information
- Family support and education
- The internationally recognized, evidenced-based ParentChild+ Home Visitation Program
- Professional development for early childhood educators
- Community advocacy of early childhood issues
- Transition supports from home to school, early intervention, preschool, kindergarten, special education, and out-of-school time
- Family engagement and leadership opportunities

Appendix A

A Leadership Council Purpose

ECAF shall work to ensure local coordination and maximize local participation in early education and care services and programs to best serve children and their families by building upon the array of existing services in their community, identifying local gaps in services, and assessing the accessibility and affordability of local early education and care services.

ECAF continuously seeks to expand access to quality parenting support, child care, early childhood education, literacy and other educational opportunities for families residing in Framingham. Our primary goal is to assist families starting prenatally through age eight in gaining access to those community services which support and strengthen their family's innate abilities and to ensure their educational and economic success. ECAF is committed to assisting all Framingham families, especially those who may experience linguistic differences, special needs, economic challenges, race, gender or cultural differences.

The purpose of the ECAF Leadership Council is to further the goals and objectives of the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Grant in the community context. The ECAF council shall work to ensure local coordination and maximize local participation in early education and care services and programs, to best serve children and their families in the city of Framingham by building upon and linking the array of existing services in the community, identifying local gaps in services, and using measures to monitor and improve the delivery of CFCE required services.

The Leadership Council provides an opportunity for active participation of families to inform policies and planning as consumers of CFCE services and to develop leadership skills as their child's primary teacher and advocate. This Strategic Plan Provides focus and guidance for the Leadership Council work.

See Appendix C - Bylaws

Appendix B

List of Current Community Partners

- Framingham Public Library
- Framingham Public Schools
- Framingham Parents & Caregivers
- Early Intervention (Criterion & Mentor South Bay)
- WIC (Women, Infants, & Children)
- Framingham State University (FSU)
- SMOC (South Middlesex Opportunity Council)
- Pelham Lifelong Learning Center
- MAAEYC (MA Association for the Education of Young Children)
- Early Childhood Education Centers and Family Child Care Systems
- Latino Health Insurance Program
- Edward M Kennedy Community Health Center
- Brazilian American Center (BRACE)
- Hoops and Homework
- MA Department of Children and Families
- MA Department Transitional Assistance
- Title 1
- Interfaith clergy
- The City of Framingham (Dept. of Public Health, Dept. of Parks and Recreation, etc.)
- MetroWest Medical Center Pediatric Clinic
- MetroWest YMCA
- Chamber of Commerce
- Framingham Resource Center (Wayside)
- Framingham Housing Authority
- Federation for Children with Special Needs
- Enable Inc Mental Health Consultation
- Child Care Resources (EEC Waitlist)
- Healthy Families
- Head Start
- Danforth Art
- Framingham ACCESS TV
- Faith-based Organizations
- Mathworks
- Taly Foundation
- MW Health Foundation
- Food pantries (Daniel's Table, United Way, etc.)
- Healthcare providers (pediatricians, mental health providers, psychiatrists, dentists, etc.)
- Downtown Framingham businesses
- Community brokers, realtors, gyms, etc.

Appendix C

ECAF By-Laws

ARTICLE I - NAME

Section 1: Name

The name of this organization is the Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAF).

Section 2: Definition

Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAF) is a collaboration of community advocates who believe in and actively promote early education.

Section 3: Administrative and Funding Agents

ECAF is a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Program funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and administered by the lead agency, the Framingham Public Schools (FPS).

ARTICLE II – VISION AND MISSION

Section 1: The vision of ECAF states that Framingham is a welcoming community for families and professionals that provide comprehensive resources and support for the healthy growth and development of our children.

Section 2: The mission of ECAF is dedicated to promoting and supporting the healthy growth and development of young children from prenatal to age eight by strengthening families and advocating for high quality learning experiences.

The ECAF fulfills its mission by ensuring access to:

- early learning experiences for children prenatal to age eight
- school readiness activities
- early childhood resources and information
- family support and education
- professional development for early childhood educators
- community advocacy of early childhood issues
- transition supports from home to school, early intervention, preschool, kindergarten, special education, and out-of -school time
- family engagement and leadership opportunities

ARTICLE III – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Section 1

Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAF) adheres to the following Guiding Principles:

- We believe in strengthening families.
- We believe in family engagement through active listening
- We believe in honoring the experiences and knowledge of all types of families.
- We believe that family is the most central and enduring influence in a child's life.
- We believe in recognizing, respecting, and appreciating the diversity of cultures, languages, and abilities of all children and families.
- We believe in healthy development that includes: physical health, oral health, brain building, and social-emotional health right from the start.
- We believe our strength comes from community collaboration, coordination of service delivery, and communication.

Appendix C

ECAF By-Laws

- We believe in giving a voice to our partners through shared leadership and authentic collaboration.
- We believe our organization's goals are achieved through the building of alliances at the state, regional, and community level.
- We believe by uniting together we are stronger and are more equipped to access resources that create a seamless delivery system of care that works on behalf of all children and families.
- We believe our work is based on the foundation laid through research, data, and outcomes.
- We believe families are best supported with strong public policy and services promoting economic stability, self-sufficiency, and strong and resilient relationships.

ARTICLE IV – PURPOSE, GOALS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1: Purpose

ECAF shall work to ensure local coordination and maximize local participation in early education and care services and programs to best serve children and their families by building upon the array of existing services in their community, identifying local gaps in services, and assessing the accessibility and affordability of local early education and care services.

ECAF continuously seeks to expand access to quality parenting support, child care, early childhood education, literacy and other educational opportunities for families residing in Framingham. Our primary goal is to assist families starting prenatally through age eight in gaining access to those community services which support and strengthen their family's innate abilities and to ensure their educational and economic success. ECAF is committed to assisting all Framingham families, especially those who may experience linguistic differences, special needs, economic challenges, race, gender or cultural differences.

Section 2: Goals

1. To increase knowledge of and accessibility to high-quality early education and care programs and services for families with children prenatal through age eight
2. To promote family education, engagement and literacy
3. To facilitate collaboration and community planning between local early education and care partners and other community stakeholders
4. To provide support and information to families with children transitioning between and among early education and care settings, home and school
5. To support early education and care programs across the public and private sectors in delivering high quality services by facilitating access to consumer education, technical assistance, and training that scaffolds high quality programming

Section 3: Responsibilities and Authority

1. To function in a manner that reflects the purpose as stated above
2. To ensure that programmatic elements of the CFCE grant reflect the goals and priorities delineated by the EEC and funds are used in accordance with all applicable laws and all the requirements of the EEC's CFCE Request For Proposals (RFP)
3. To ensure that required services of the grant are provided or planned for
4. To implement EEC policies in collaboration with FPS
5. To develop, review and approve proposals, budgets, amendments, and other relevant information pertaining to the grant
6. To review and evaluate progress toward achieving its mission and goals regularly

Appendix C

ECAF By-Laws

7. To plan and coordinate resources at the community level to support healthy child development, promote school readiness and maximize resources in accordance with CFCE program goals, priorities and required services
8. To leverage EEC's investment through this grant to secure other sources of funding, services and/or in-kind support
9. To delegate some of its responsibilities according to these by-laws to an action team or Executive Committee

ARTICLE V - ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Section 1: The Organizational Structure of Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAF) will be a shared leadership and decision-making model based on collaboration and consensus building facilitated by the ECAF Leadership Council.

The ECAF Leadership Council consists of community partners who are involved with early childhood education, care, and support in Framingham and who contribute to setting ECAF priorities and goals through information sharing, program activities, and advocacy. The Leadership Council will elect officers for the Steering Committee whose purpose is to provide a clear direction, expediency to deal with immediate situations, and oversight to the organization. The ECAF Leadership Council meets two to four times a year.

The ECAF Leadership Steering Committee, hereafter referred to as the Steering Committee, is made up of four executive officers (chair, co-chair, treasurer, secretary), Action Team Leaders, Representatives-At-Large (families, government representative, private sector representative, and early education expert), and liaison from the lead agency. The Steering Committee is responsible for adopting clear goals that provide a focus for the ECAF and that align with the organization's vision and mission. The Steering Committee meets eight to nine times a year.

The ECAF Action Teams are task focused and are responsible for setting goals based on the organization's priorities. Action Teams are facilitated by an Action Team Leader. The Action Teams meet based on the team's goals and objectives.

The ECAF Program Administration, led by the lead agency, is responsible for grant administration and implementing program activities

ARTICLE VI – ECAF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Membership is open to individuals whether residing in or out of Framingham and/or representatives of organizations serving Framingham, who are invested in the welfare, care and education of the children in the Framingham community. ECAF does not discriminate based on race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, veteran's status or any other status protected by law. Membership includes a diverse, community wide group of dedicated parents, guardians or other primary caregivers, service educators and community representatives.

Section 2: An individual who meets the above qualifications can be considered for Leadership Council membership by contacting the ECAF Program Coordinator or other members of the Leadership Council. Membership of interested individuals will be forwarded to the Leadership Council for consideration and approval.

Section 3: A good faith effort will be made to publicize the opportunity for Leadership Council membership.

Section 4: Leadership Council members shall have the following powers and privileges:

1. Eligibility for election as officers
2. Opportunity to serve on action teams
3. Voting powers for Leadership Council members
4. Approval process for the annual goals and objectives

Appendix C

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Section 5: Membership may be renewed annually. Renewal is accomplished by notifying the ECAF Program Coordinator on or before the date of the end of the year Leadership Council meeting. A “Commitment Letter” is signed by members annually, stating their contribution to the organization.

Section 6: The Leadership Council shall have at least one member who represents each of the following constituencies with the understanding that a member may serve more than one constituency representatives:

1. Public school early childhood education program
2. FPS, lead agency
3. Head Start
4. Two providers from early childhood care and education programs
5. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agency
6. Four parents of young children who are Framingham residents and/or consumers of early childhood care and educational services
7. A parent or individual of an organization representing those with special needs
8. Representatives of the programs operated by CFCE such as a provider from a ParentChild+ Home Program
9. Early Intervention
10. Regional Child Care Resource & Referral Agency
11. Mental Health Consultation Grant Program
12. Additional members may also include: Children’s Librarian, Museums, City/Town Official, Senior Citizen, and representatives from Higher Education, Children with Disabilities, Social Service Agency, Medical Community, Faith-based organization, and others
13. Members of the community from diverse backgrounds who are culturally, linguistically, educationally, racially, and economically representative of those individuals residing in the area

Section 8: If a Leadership Council member cannot continue active participation on the Leadership Council, s/he will submit copies of a letter of resignation, electronically or by US mail, to the Leadership Council and the ECAF Program Coordinator.

ARTICLE VII – STEERING COMMITTEE

Section 1: The Steering Committee consists of four executive officers (chair, co-chair, treasurer, secretary), Action Team Leaders, Representatives-At-Large (families, government representative, private sector representative, and early education expert), and liaison from the lead agency.

Section 2: The Steering Committee is responsible for adopting clear goals that provide a focus for the ECAF and that align with the organization’s vision and mission.

Section 3: All Steering Committee members must be members of the Leadership Council.

Section 4: The Steering Committee will hold meetings on site or via a teleconference. Officers may call a special meeting for the purposes of expediency in special circumstances.

Section 5: The Steering Committee will comply with guidelines, procedures and/or regulations that are developed by the Leadership Council and the laws of the Commonwealth.

Section 6: Steering Committee will report to the Leadership Council and provide updates at meetings and via electronic mail correspondences

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ECAF By-Laws

ARTICLE VIII – ACTION TEAMS

Section 1: The Leadership Council will have the authority to constitute Action Teams that further the vision and mission of the ECAF.

Section 2: Membership on Action Teams will be open to all Leadership Council members and community volunteers. The ECAF Action Team Volunteers attend regular Action Team meetings and contribute their time and talents to successfully achieving all Action Team goals.

Section 3: Action Team Leaders are designated to facilitate Action Team meetings and are responsible for reporting to the Steering Committee on Action Team Work. Action Team Leaders are responsible for volunteer recruitment and the status of action plans. The Action Team Leaders must attend Leadership Council and Steering Committee meetings.

Section 4: Action Teams will comply with guidelines, procedures and/or regulations that are developed by the Leadership Council and the laws of the Commonwealth.

Section 5: The Action Teams will provide a summary report of activities to the Steering Committee and Leadership Council. The Steering Committee and/or Leadership Council will then decide whether the Action Team has met its goals and if further work is needed by the Action Team.

ARTICLE IX – REPRESENTATIVES-AT-LARGE

Section 1: The Representatives-At-Large may include families, government officials, private sector representatives, and early childhood experts.

Section 2: Representatives-At-Large act in an advisory capacity in their area of expertise.

Section 3: Representatives-At-Large attend all Steering Committee meetings.

ARTICLE X - LEAD AGENCY LIAISON

Section 1: The Lead Agency Liaison is a representative from the lead agency.

Section 2: The Lead Agency Liaison acts as the link between the Lead Agency and the Steering Committee and communicates ECAF and Lead Agency business.

Section 3: The Lead Agency Liaison attends all Steering Committee and Leadership Council meetings.

ARTICLE XI – STEERING COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Section 1: The Steering Committee Officers or executive officers include the Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers will be elected members from the Leadership Council. (See Article XI & XII)

Section 2: The officers will serve for a term of one year. Except as otherwise provided by law, officers will hold office until the last regular meeting of the Leadership Council or until their respective successors are chosen and qualified. Officers can hold a seat for unlimited consecutive terms.

Section 3: The Chair will be the chief officer of the Leadership Council and will preside at all Leadership Council and Steering Committee meetings.

Section 4: The Co-Chair will assume all of the powers and responsibilities of the Chair in the event that the Chair is unable to perform his/her duties.

Section 5: The Secretary will be responsible for taking, preserving and reporting the minutes of all Leadership Council and Steering Committee meetings; keeping a list of Leadership Council and Steering Committee membership and attendance; and preparing correspondence pertaining to

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general Leadership Council activities. Communications from the Secretary may be distributed to members electronically or by US mail.

Section 6: The Treasurer will be responsible for any funds resulting from fund-raising efforts of the Leadership Council. S/he will keep full and accurate books of the Leadership Council. S/he will work with the ECAF Grants Administrator to compile accurate and timely fiscal reports on all ECAF grants and/or initiatives. All expenditures must be approved by the treasurer and/or Lead Agency.

Section 7: All officers will be Leadership Council members and should be an active Leadership Council member for at least one year.

Section 8: The Leadership Council will appoint officers to fill vacancies within sixty days.

ARTICLE XII – NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

Section 1: The ECAF Coordinator will accept nominations for officers at least 14 days prior to the Annual meeting (see Article X, Section 1) to develop a slate of candidates.

Section 2: All nominees for election will be submitted to the ECAF Program Coordinator.

Section 3: A list of nominees containing the names, addresses, area of interest, and affiliations will be distributed by the ECAF Coordinator in writing to the Leadership Council members at least seven days prior to the balloting.

Section 4: There will be an opportunity for nominations from the floor at the Annual meeting on the day of the election.

ARTICLE XIII– VOTING FOR OFFICERS

Section 1: All members of the Leadership Council will be eligible to vote for officers.

Section 2: All Leadership Council members will be given notice in writing of the time, place, and method of election of the officers at least seven days prior to all elections.

Section 3: There will be no fee charged for voting eligibility.

Section 4: Election of officers will be held at the Leadership Council's Annual meeting. If unable to attend Annual meeting, votes will be accepted via e-mail no later than noon the day of the Annual meeting.

ARTICLE XIV – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEETINGS

Section 1: At least four Leadership Council meetings, which include the Annual meeting, will be held each year. The Annual meeting is generally held at the end of the year. Additional meetings may be called as needed.

Section 2: At least seven days written notice will be given for any regular meeting slating date, time, and location. In the case of a special meeting, a seven day notice will be provided when possible unless conditions warrant otherwise.

Section 3: A quorum is necessary for the Leadership Council to conduct its business. A quorum will consist of eight members of the Leadership Council.

Section 4: Minutes of Leadership Council, Steering Committee, Action Teams, and/or Executive Officer meetings, including votes, will be sent to Leadership Council members at least seven days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

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ARTICLE XV - AMENDMENTS TO THESE BY-LAWS

Section 1: Notice and copy of proposed amendments to these By-Laws must be delivered at least seven days prior to the Leadership Council meeting on which they will be voted.

Section 2: The By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of the Leadership Council members either at a Leadership Council meeting or through electronic mail.

ARTICLE XVI – DISPUTES

Section 1: The Leadership Council will be responsible for resolving disputes pertinent to all actions and decisions by officers.

ARTICLE XVII – PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

Section 1: All parliamentary business not covered by these By-Laws will be governed by Robert's Rules of Order – Revised.

ARTICLE XVIII – CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Section 1: The Leadership Council and Action Teams will abide by such procedures as the Commonwealth determines necessary to comply with the laws relative to conflict of interest.

Section 2: Leadership Council members must abstain from participating in the discussion of or voting on any matter that presents a conflict of interest or creates the appearance that a Leadership Council member is acting with bias or favoritism, such as voting to award funds to oneself, one's spouse, or a member of one's immediate family or taking an action that affects one's financial interest or that of a spouse, immediate family member, business partner, or an organization in which one serves as an officer, director, or trustee.

Appendix D

Strengthening Partnerships: A Family Engagement Roadmap to Develop a Common Language

Strengthening Partnerships Framework

Remembering the Elements of Practice

1. Building Positive Relationships
2. Promoting Family Well Being
3. Promoting Pathways for Partnerships with Families
4. Supporting Child and Youth Development, Learning, Health, and Well-being
5. Transitions and Family Engagement (types: everyday, child, youth, family, systems, unexpected)
6. Strengthening Capacity for Family Engagement (staffing training & PD, resource development, evaluation strategies)
7. Culturally Responsive Practices (equity)

The 5 Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle 1: Each family is unique and all families represent diverse structures. Family engagement includes genuine efforts to understand each family's beliefs, values, priorities, goals and aspirations. Families and practitioners make joint decisions and share responsibility in a successful partnership. This principle encourages fundamental practices that include but are not limited to: 1) Recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of each family; 2) Keeping families' and youth voices and perspectives at the center; and 3) Planning and implementing activities with families and youth and not for families and youth.

Guiding Principle 2: Diversity is expressed and experienced at multiple levels such as (but not limited to) race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, family structures, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and educational level. Acknowledging and accepting the need to engage all families is essential for successful engagement of diverse families and includes recognizing the strengths that come from their diverse backgrounds. This principle encourages fundamental practices that include but are not limited to: 1) Recognizing and respecting the individuality of each family including the strengths it possesses, needs it has, and barriers it faces; 2) Acknowledging the diversity within and across families within an organization, health care setting, school and/or community; and 3) Approaching diversity from a strengths-based perspective.

Guiding Principle 3: Building a respectful, trusting, and reciprocal relationship is a shared responsibility of families, practitioners, organizations, and systems. This positive relationship has the individual family's strengths and assets at its center. This principle encourages fundamental practices that include but are not limited to: 1) Embracing the philosophy that building positive, goal-oriented relationships is a two way process between everyone involved; 2) Recognizing and respecting diversity within and across families, striving to establish a positive relationship with all families; and 3) Acknowledging that for some families, due to prior experiences, trust may need to be rebuilt and dedicating the time needed to re-establish that trusting relationship.

Guiding Principle 4: Families are their child's first and best advocate. This premier role puts families in a unique position to nurture their children's growth and development and to help practitioners become knowledgeable about their child. This principle encourages fundamental practices that include but are not limited to: 1) Recognizing families as the best champions of their child's success in all domains of health and development; 2) Honoring and drawing on families' wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise; and 3) Engaging families in all decisions made with regards to their child.

Guiding Principle 5: Equity is the eradication of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantage. Family engagement must be equitable. Equitable family engagement comprises intentional and meaningful engagement activities and systems for all families or groups of families irrespective of families' level of or approach to engagement. Providing equity-based opportunities for family engagement can help family members become effective advocates for their children. This principle encourages fundamental practices that include but are not limited to: 1) Reflecting on and addressing inequities as well as implicit and explicit bias within individuals and organizations, policies and systems when engaging with families; 2) Integrating cultural and linguistic responsive practices include but are not limited to: to translation, interpretation and partnership with cultural brokers; Valuing opportunities to engage with all families to learn more about them, their experiences, culture, and goals; and 3) Recognizing the need to build and rebuild trust with families who experience inequities and bias.

Appendix E

Community Needs Assessment (Framingham Dept. of Public Health)

Background & Purpose

In the summer of 2021, the Framingham Department of Public Health (FDPH) received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. Through the State Opioid Response, Prevention in Early Childhood (SOR-PEC) grant FDPH is responsible for leading an assessment and implementation of prevention interventions directed at early childhood with the long-term intention of preventing future substance misuse and other behavioral health issues.

While substance use generally begins during the adolescent years, early childhood is a time of rapid growth and development and “there are known biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors that contribute to the risk that begin accumulating as early as the prenatal period.” [i]Examples of childhood risk factors for future substance use can include parent substance misuse, parent mental health, family poverty, stress, adverse childhood experiences (ACE), lack of school readiness, and unstructured learning environments. [ii]Pandemic-related stressors have only exacerbated these risk factors since the onset of COVID; the community members that we have engaged with have truly been strained and stretched over the past two years. Therefore, early interventions to build up child and family resiliencies during this time is critical for ensuring that children grow up to be healthy, productive and thriving adults.

In order to begin our Needs Assessment, we convened the Framingham Early Childhood Workgroup in November 2021. Through this initial meeting, we were able to enlist partners in developing our data tools, connecting us to other individuals in their organizations and community to interview and also assist in monitoring the data collection process. Even though our grant is focused on substance misuse prevention, there were only 9 references to substance misuse being a top challenge that families are facing. This demonstrates something larger happening in our community. This is indicating a systems-level change with the necessity of safe and stable housing and affordable childcare as well as addressing mental health among parents/caregivers and children.

Needs Assessment Overview

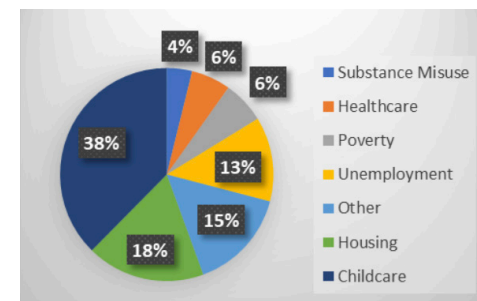
From January–March 2022, FDPH conducted a community assessment of the strengths, resources, needs, and gaps that exist for children and families, specifically those aged 0 to 7. During this process we completed the following:

- 14 Community Engagement Sessions and Key Stakeholder Interviews
- 194 surveys to parents, caregivers and local service providers in English (n=125), Portuguese (n=61) and Spanish (n=8). The surveying process included polling 28 Council Members at the Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham Meeting in January 2022, in addition to surveying community partners and the school district.

Through careful analysis of these data collection methods, we have coded the interviews into recurring themes and combined these with the survey and polling results.

Top Challenges Facing Framingham Community Members

The following graph indicates the top challenges from the survey that providers, educators and families reported that they are struggling with. These include not having access to affordable childcare (38%), concerns of safe and stable housing (18%), and unemployment (13%). There were many comments supporting these themes throughout the interviews and surveys as well, including 34 out of 54 comments (63%) related to affordable childcare.



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Community Needs Assessment (Framingham Dept. of Public Health)

Some specific comments that were shared related to these challenges include:

Affordable, Available, and Reliable Childcare:

- “During a global pandemic families must work, especially families that aren’t documented and work is often late nights or long hours of the day and there isn’t really childcare. People who were doing home daycare might not be an option with COVID.”
- “Lack of affordable and accessible childcare can result from not being able to pay for childcare, but also can stem from not having access to childcare at certain times of the day, as well as lack of knowledge of what is available due to language barriers, cultural barriers, etc.”
- “My entire salary went to pay for daycare costs. All of it.”
- “We need affordable after school care options and programming on nights and weekends.”
- “We are having trouble finding infant childcare, even months in advance.”

Housing:

- “Lack of affordable housing. Everyone is being pushed out of Framingham because we cannot afford these crazy rent amounts.”
- “The housing market is expensive which makes it difficult for families. In result they live with relatives making the struggle that much worse.”

Unemployment:

- “Covid caused us to be unemployed for a while and just getting back in our feet”
- “I need employment that pays enough to pay for childcare and that allows the flexibility for pickup/drop off for my kids.”

Mental Health:

Concerns related to mental health were not asked in our survey process. The providers that we interviewed, however, were extremely concerned about the mental health of children, parents, and caregivers: “We have been hearing from parents that with the pandemic they are experiencing increased challenges with their kids around behavior and mental health.”

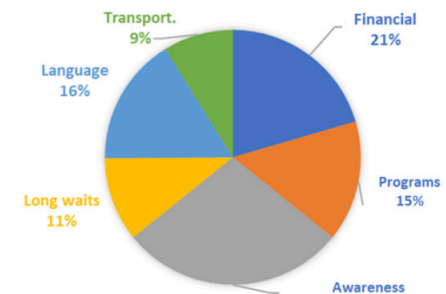
Discussion: These challenges are consistent with what is being discussed within clinical and educational organizations throughout the city. Childcare, mental health, housing, and unemployment are serious struggles in the city, and unemployment challenges are particularly difficult among the Brazilian Portuguese community. For the purposes of the rapid timeline and limited resources of our grant, we will focus on addressing barriers and gaps in resources related to childcare and childhood development among a specific priority population and how we can work with families to navigate these supports.

Recognizing the importance that each of these intervening variables (protective and risk factors) play in childhood development and preventing substance misuse, we hope that future efforts and grants will use this preliminary data to address issues related to unemployment, housing, and parental mental health in the City of Framingham. Once we can do this, we believe that we can ease the economic and systemic challenges for the future.

Greatest Barriers in Obtaining Support for Families in Framingham

The barriers that providers, educators, and families report as hindering accessing access to support programs within Framingham include:

- Lack of awareness about programs (28%)
- Financial barriers (21%)
- Language barriers (16%)



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Community Needs Assessment (Framingham Dept. of Public Health)

Some specific comments that were shared related to these barriers include:

Service Awareness & Access Points:

- “I wish we had more services like this...Once you can get people to the table, with those kinds of services that don’t ask for identifiable things, sometimes that’s the access point. You can then make relationships with them, then encourage them to engage with other services that they need.”
- “I’ve heard from many in the community that navigating the systems is confusing and there is a lack of awareness of not just what is available but related issues like who is eligible, how to access it, etc. Long waits for some services is also an issue.”

Language:

- “The greatest barrier I have seen relates to language barriers but expands to being more of a cultural barrier”
- “Many of the families speak another language which is difficult to talk to anyone, fill out forms, or ask for help”

Community Engagement and Trust:

Concerns related to community trust in available services were not asked in our survey process. Many of the comments, however, indicated that trust was a significant concern for many. One specific comment indicating this shared the following:

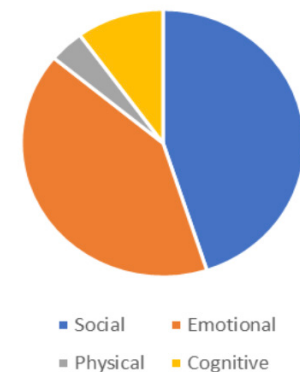
- “I know it’s something that’s part of the mission and that the school district has gotten better with, but I believe that based on just the culture, that families don’t always necessarily feel like their voices are heard. And that they’re active participants in their child’s success. I think the efforts around family engagement, I think, is something that we can improve on and do better with. When there’s no trust, even if there are a bunch of resources like we have (such as) wraparound services, there’s plenty of resources even within the district and in the community. But if the family doesn’t have a sense of trust with the folks doing the work, then it’s meaningless. It doesn’t matter if the resources exist, they don’t want to access it because they don’t trust you. I think that family engagement is super important to help just build relationships where folks will learn more and be more open to the resources that exist and involve them in the leadership and involve them in the decision-making of everything that happens with their students.”

Discussion: Barriers of service awareness, access, language, and community engagement and trust are most significant in preventing children and Framingham parents from utilizing important services. There have been many recommendations for each of these, especially improving family engagement efforts. Building trust is truly vital in assisting families to have that access or entry point into necessary programs, services, and resources that they require. Practices across the community, provider and policy-levels can be developed to build supportive youth environments, care for our most vulnerable communities, and implement community driven, culturally, and linguistically responsive and evidence-based services.^[iii]

Top Concerns for Child Development

We asked providers and educators what developmental areas are most concerning for the children that they are serving (physical, cognitive, social or emotional). As shown, social (45%) and emotional (41%) needs account for the highest developmental sectors. This clear and prioritized concern demonstrates the importance for us to address these developmental needs as a community. The following comments provide further understanding:

- “In the beginning when we started opening and everyone was coming back, the children were having a hard time interacting with one another, sharing with one another and being nice to each other. Those social skills went out the window. It took a solid month and a half to get them back into the groove of things and the rules and being nice to one another.”



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Community Needs Assessment (Framingham Dept. of Public Health)

- “We often can see when a child is physically distressed and can check in on cognitive and social functioning, but emotional wellbeing is something that should be constantly spoken about and addressed with children so that they understand the importance of it from an early age.”
- “For the current years, the social and emotional aspect has been tough because (at least in the families and population I work with) they’re a lot more isolated. There are limited support systems, so it’s mostly just getting the interactions from the primary parent. Where [parents] are also dealing with their own mental health issues recently, they’re not providing the most interactions to the young kids. There are a lot of attachment concerns. A lot of social cues and engagements are decreasing. So more social, emotional than anything.”

Discussion: The developmental concerns shared by Framingham providers and educators are consistent with other local and state data. Quarantining and social isolation have stripped many of the opportunities that children have for social and emotional development, the result of which can be lasting, lifelong impacts on their development if not addressed. The act of simply playing has been shown across numerous studies to have a wealth of positive impacts for children, including brain development in social-emotional skills, learning, relationship-building, and positive coping skills.^[iv]

Additionally, as children are still living under the effects and aftermath of COVID-19, utilizing a trauma-informed care approach to the services they utilize can directly address many of the ACEs that they have been exposed to.^[v] Creating more opportunities and environments for accessible play and trauma-informed care is an important next step for the youth priority population.

Population(s) of Focus

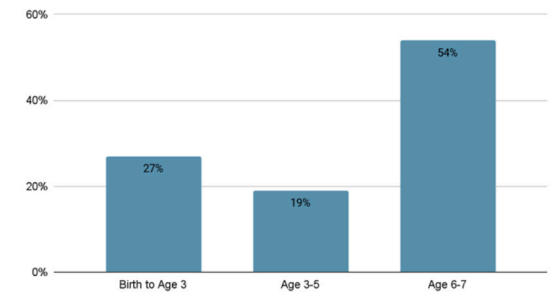
Using our responses, we created three age categories (0-3 infant/toddler, 3-5 preschool and 6-7 early grade school) to determine our priority population of focus. We asked providers, educators, parents, and caregivers how they feel resources and services are distributed in Framingham among these groups. Their responses indicated that the MOST services and resources are available for children ages 6-7 years (54% respondents). Supporting comments shared the following:

- “This age range typically is where more opportunities open up due to their involvement in the school system.”
- “They attend public schools so therefore they have the resources at their hands.”
- “Some are able to attend a preschool and some aren’t due to cost.”
- “For the ages 3-5, that’s a tough age because when you’re 5-7 years old you’re in school and if you’re in school, at least you have the support of school all day. A lot of times you also have an afterschool program.”

Discussion: Perceptions related to service and resource “availability” and “accessibility” are essential to understand, because they can vary considerably and with different practical implications. Resources and services may exist in the community but may not be usable for families due to geographical location, cost, child ages served, quality, or lack of awareness.^[vi] Despite this complexity, our responses show the importance of addressing the lack of resources and supports for children aged 0 to 5, our target population.

Vision for Early Childhood Among Providers and Educators

In conclusion to our provider and educator interviews and surveys, we discovered that there is a shared vision for more collaboration among many of these groups. There were 22 references to this throughout our conversations.



Appendix E

Community Needs Assessment (Framingham Dept. of Public Health)

“Getting providers to come together is a challenge. I wish there were more of that. We used to have a director’s group for preschool that I don’t think is active anymore. But that was cool...getting all of the providers doing the same thing, together to network and support one another. If we could just get them to come together, then we wouldn’t have to go knocking on everyone’s door. And you know if you think about it too, it also links with early intervention, with integrated preschools, if the pediatricians were more versed in these things and could see them more clearly. Then they could help the families access three things. They could be the hub!”

In addition to this shared vision, we also asked respondents who else we should speak with. It was overwhelmingly recommended that we should “first and foremost speak with parents to see what their needs are.” Also, to get local churches involved and all “those that are willing to make a difference all around.”

Prevention in Early Childhood in Framingham: Considerations for Actions

After compiling and analyzing available data, key discussions, and stakeholder input, there is a strong consensus that efforts should be focused on improving education, development, and mental health services and resources for children aged 0 to 5 and their families. The following strategies are recommended and will be referred back to the planning group to develop action steps for implementation:

- Create and/or expand existing structures (i.e. coalition) among educators, service providers and families in early childhood to collaborate and share services and resources
- Increase mental health and social-emotional supports for children and families
- Actively engage families where they are to increase awareness, access, and trust for supports and services
- Support coordination of Early Education initiatives in the City (ECAAF & PEL) in their efforts to be culturally sensitive to families with young children

[i] NIDA. 2021, August 3. Introduction. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/principles-substance-abuse-prevention-early-childhood/introduction> on 2022, March 15

[ii] NIDA. 2020, June 17. Chapter 2: Risk and Protective Factors. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/principles-substance-abuse-prevention-early-childhood/chapter-2-risk-protective-factors> on 2022, March 15

[iii] Jacqueline, S. 2020, September 16. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children, Youth, and Families - A “Spotlight On” Policy Brief. Judge Baker Children’s Center. Retrieved from: https://jbcc.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/impact_of_the_covid-19_pandemic_on_children_youth_and_families_2.pdf

[iv] Yogman, M., Garner, A., Hutchinson, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, & COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA (2018). The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children. Pediatrics, 142(3), e20182058. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2058>

[v] Menschner, C. and Maul, A. 2016, April. Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation. RWJ Foundation. Retrieved from: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/childrens_mental_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf

[vi] Thomson, D., Cantrell, E., Guerra, G., Gooze, R., & Tout, K. 2020. Conceptualizing and Measuring Access to Early Care and Education. OPRE Report #2020-106. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.