



In Brief

This report combines research on early childhood development and best practice approaches to recommend 10 strategies to transform the child care landscape for Onondaga County's youngest children to ensure that "all our children are healthy and thriving and are successful in school and life."

Transforming the Early Childhood Landscape in Onondaga County to Promote School Readiness

Background

Long-standing challenges for Onondaga County include high school graduation rates below the national average and only 35% of 3rd-8th grade students who read at grade level - with large gaps by race, ethnicity, and income.

Transforming the Early Childhood Landscape in Onondaga County

In the fall of 2018, Child Care Solutions and the Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) convened stakeholder groups to better understand barriers and opportunities related to accessing high-quality child care. Stakeholder discussion forums included:

- Child care center directors
- Registered and licensed family child care home providers
- Onondaga Community College faculty
- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential students
- The ECA business council
- The Early Care and Learning Committee
- Early Childhood Alliance Onondaga partners
- Onondaga County Department of Social Services - Economic Security

In addition, ECA and Child Care Solutions conducted a county-wide parent survey as well as an early learning workforce survey.

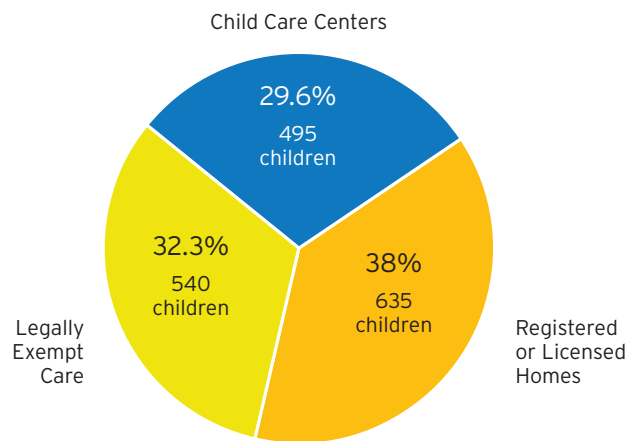
The top concerns that were expressed in both stakeholder discussions and through the surveys included: child care cost, child care quality, child care worker pay, child care staff turnover, access to higher education coursework (and the supports needed for completion, not just access), access to child care provider support for managing challenging child behavior, the impact of legally exempt care and illegal care on family child care home providers, and the impact of employee child care challenges on employers when

employees have difficulty accessing care or experience problems with their child care arrangements.

Child Care Solutions and the Early Childhood Alliance reviewed the research related to early childhood development in general and the neuroscience studies related to brain development during a child's earliest years.

Data reflecting the number of child care programs available, their capacity by children's age (e.g., infant and toddler classrooms, preschool classrooms, and pre-k classrooms), New York State child care licensing requirements, county subsidy data by child age and setting, as well as the ideas and challenges shared in multiple stakeholder discussions, informed cost modeling for an array of options that could be deployed to significantly invest in research-based strategies to promote better child outcomes (i.e., school readiness).

2019 Onondaga County Children Under Age 3 Care Paid for by a Child Care Subsidy



Source: Onondaga County Department of Social Services - Economic Security, 2018

The strategies represent bold thinking, are based on research, are designed as pilots (with expansion over 10 years for market-based strategies), and would be informed by evaluation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach since young children are in a variety of settings (e.g. centers, family child care homes, and legally exempt care). The use of legally exempt care among families whose child care is paid for through a subsidy is high.

Because the foundation for brain architecture guiding future child development is built during a child's earliest years, the strategies are focused on infants and toddlers as surgical strikes to set a strong foundation for future school success (both pre-k and K-12).

The investments aren't inexpensive, but they are based on a desire to move the needle in a significant manner, to impact the next generation so that it is possible within Onondaga County to close the achievement gap and help support every child to reach his or her full potential.

Recommendations

High-quality programs depend on high-quality staff. Staff need to have both education and competencies to promote age appropriate healthy development. They also need support to ensure that they can translate their knowledge

into practice. They need to be paid a rate comparable to their level of education and experience.

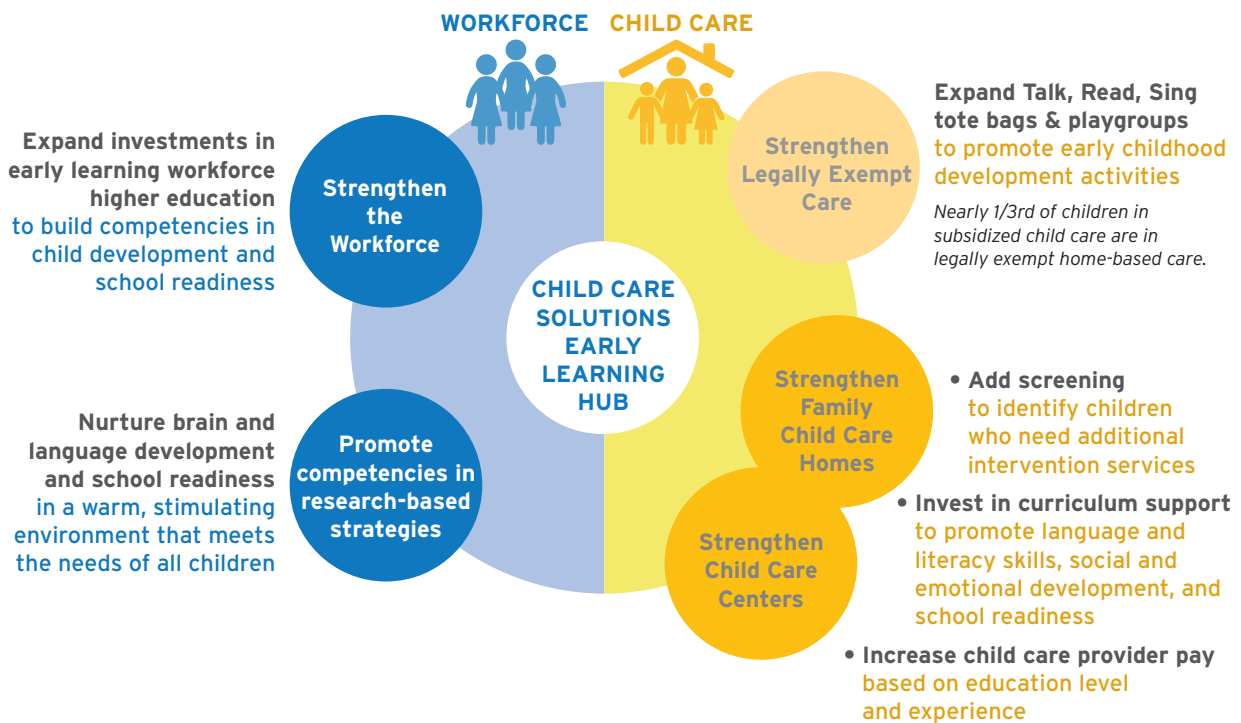
There are 10 strategies recommended for discussion and action. A full description of each strategy as well as related costs to implement each strategy are included in the full report. What is clear is that the current child care economic model, which is based on private pay parent fees, cannot support high-quality programs (with providers who have competencies in early childhood, who are paid based on their level of education and experience, and who are supported with an age appropriate curriculum and onsite coaching to best meet the needs of children).

There are no easy answers or guarantees. There is no magic wand. However, through strategic investments, it is possible to make a significant difference in the healthy development of children so that children start school ready to succeed - regardless of race, ethnicity, or income.

The 10 strategies that have been developed over the past 9 months are bold. And, bold thinking is the first step. The size of the impact that can change the life trajectory for the next generation will be up to county leadership and the citizens of Onondaga County. Both vision and action are needed for community transformation.

EARLY LEARNING IN ONONDAGA COUNTY

A Vision for School Readiness for All Children



TRANSFORMING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE IN ONONDAGA COUNTY TO PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS

10 Recommendations to Transform the Early Childhood Landscape in Onondaga County to Promote School Readiness					
	Type of Investment	Description			
#1	Infant and Toddler Comprehensive Quality Improvement Pilot (Centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant and toddler classrooms in centers with the highest % child care subsidy use • Compensation increases for directors, assistant directors, lead teachers and assistant teachers • Required participation in training in Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers and ongoing child assessments • Onsite coaching support to ensure high quality interactions with children • Assistant teachers must obtain a CDA with CLASS online supported by coaching • Enhancements - Family Support for Child Success Specialist and access to a mental health consultant and a business technical assistance specialist. • Help Me Grow Ages and Stages screening for all children. 	20 children \$390,698 Year 1 \$353,287 Year 3 3 year pilot, 1 center (1 infant & 1 toddler classroom)	124 children \$1 M Year 1 \$941,750 Year 3 3 year pilot, 5 centers (5 infant & 7 toddler classrooms)	236 children \$1.6 M Year 1 \$1.5 M Year 3 3 year pilot, 10 centers (10 infant & 13 toddler classrooms)
#2	Infant and Toddler Curriculum Support Pilot (Centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant and toddler classrooms in centers with the highest % child care subsidy use • Compensation increases for directors, assistant directors, lead teachers and assistant teachers • Required participation in training in Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers and ongoing child assessments • Onsite coaching support to ensure implementation of curriculum with fidelity • Assistant teachers must obtain a CDA with CLASS online supported by coaching 	20 children \$103,808 1st year, \$83,140 Year 3	124 children \$545,151 1st year \$478,021 Year 3	236 children \$981,879 1st year \$854,941 Year 3
#3	Infant and Toddler Curriculum Support Pilot (Family Child Care Homes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants and toddlers in registered or licensed home-based providers with high % child care subsidy use • Increased compensation for providers • Required training in Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers and ongoing child assessments • Onsite coaching to support curriculum implementation • One shared business technical assistance specialist to promote best business practices 	5 FCC homes \$183,670 Year 1	10 FCC homes \$220,803, Year 2	15 FCC homes \$314,600 Year 3
#4	Help Me Grow Ages and Stages Questionnaire Child Screening Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMG builds on existing resources to identify vulnerable children and connect families to services. • Ages and Stages Questionnaire - easy screening tool that parents can complete - can identify children who may need comprehensive screening for potential early intervention services for a disability or a developmental delay. 	\$70,950 Year 1	\$72,369 Year 2	\$73,816 Year 3
#5	Promoting Early Childhood Development in Home-based Child Care (Legally Exempt and FCC Homes)	Two programs to improve the quality of early learning in Home-based child care (legally exempt and registered FCCs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk, Read, Sing, Tote Bag expansion with playgroups • Parent-Child+ (PC+FCC Program) 	\$75,000 \$250,000	\$100,000 \$250,000	\$100,000 \$250,000
#6	Targeting Social-Emotional Development, Supporting Teachers to Best Handle Challenging Behavior	Use PEDALS model to provide early childhood classroom staff with training on how to effectively use evidence-based social and emotional curricula in preschool classrooms	Years 1 and 2: 20 classrooms Years 3 & 4: 20 additional classrooms	\$159,865 \$164,895	

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10 Recommendations to Transform the Early Childhood Landscape in Onondaga County to Promote School Readiness (continued)			
	Type of Investment	Description	
#7	Talent Development: Creating a Pipeline of High-Quality Child Care Providers	Three strategies to create a pipeline of high-quality child care providers:	
	Supports to Ensure Coursework Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Higher Education and Coursework; • Support for books and materials, and • Part-time child care for staff who need it for their children so that they can attend classes 	Year 1 \$75,000 Year 2 \$100,000 Year 3 \$100,000
	Increase Recruitment within the Current Workforce to Access Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and support 2 ECE Recruitment Navigators at Onondaga Community College and Child Care Solutions • Continue to reach out to local school districts with Career and Technical Education programs to expand the Early Childhood Career Advancement Ladder (ECCAL) initiative 	\$100,000 each year for 3 years
	Developing future workforce	Expand programs initiated by Alliance for Economic Inclusion (AEI) that provide a pathway for parents to further their education and training, gain work experience in child care settings, and obtain employment in child care centers or open their own family child care homes. Child Care Solutions works in partnership with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEACE, Inc. to support workforce development and employment in the child care field, and with • Partners in Learning to increase the number of trained, culturally and linguistically diverse practitioners in the child care field. 	\$350,000 each year for 3 years
#8	Facility and Quality Improvement Grants	Grants to meet physical improvement needs (e.g., health and safety) and to promote early learning activities (e.g., art supplies, play materials that align with early learning activities, children's books)	\$600,000 for physical needs and \$250,000 for quality learning activities each year for 3 years
#9	Enhance Web-based access to Community Resources for Child Care Providers and Parents	Two strategies to enhance web-based access to community resources for child care providers and parents:	
	Shared services for providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Online ECE Shared Services Resource Platform for licensed child care centers and both registered and licensed family child care homes. 	\$75,000 each year for 3 years
	Public message related to child care and early childhood development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to revised county web page about child care assistance tied to early childhood development to support parents' understanding that child care is a work support AND a setting that promotes the healthy development of young children 	Revise and update county messaging on county child care assistance web page
#10	Child Care Solutions Early Learning Hub (Operational Infrastructure)	The Early Learning Hub at Child Care Solutions provides the operational infrastructure to support strategy implementation. Depending upon strategies selected, new positions may be needed to help support implementation. Coaching positions have been estimated as part of each strategy. Additional positions to support project work, depending upon scope of strategies include: Quality Pilot Manager, Coaching Director, Manager of Compensation Initiatives, and Data Manager.	Coaching costs are built into each of the strategies. Overall administrative costs TBD based on strategies selected. Costs of external evaluation TBD based on selected strategies and scope.
	Provider training reimbursement	Child care center reimbursement for classroom staff training time or substitutes paid to enable classroom staff to participate in training	The appendix tables include options based on number of classrooms for strategies #1 and #2

Note: Additional detail about each strategy and related cost estimates are included in the Transforming the Early Childhood Landscape in Onondaga County to Promote School Readiness full report.