

# Collaboration Institute 2022 Year in Review



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Plan\*Act

illinois **action** for children

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# Hello

It has been said that systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place. As a state, as organizations, and as individuals, it is essential that we recognize the persistent problems that result in particular children—most often children of color—getting left behind. Acknowledging how systems were created, and continue to perpetuate inequities, is the first step in creating real and lasting systems change.

Only once we understand the issues we are facing are we then able to act. If we really want to improve outcomes for children and families, particularly those most marginalized, we must partner together across systems, plan strategically alongside those most impacted, and act with urgency and resolve.

Systems change work is not for the faint of heart. It is difficult work that requires fierce commitment and significant collaboration. It also requires individuals and organizations to prioritize the community's needs above their own. The Community Systems Statewide Supports team recognized this and intentionally created a framework that engages a diverse collaboration leadership team, rather than a single person. In addition, we were intentional about creating a program that empowers communities to continue this work long after the Collaboration Institute is over.

It has been a profound pleasure watching collaborations and their leadership teams rise to the occasion and tackle tough community issues in innovative ways. I am thankful to everyone who committed themselves so fully to the fourth cohort of the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute. Thank you for your time, your tenacity, and your unwavering support for strengthening the Illinois early childhood system. Together, we can change outcomes for children and families.

In Gratitude,

**Grace Araya**

Director, Community Systems Statewide Supports  
Illinois Action for Children



# What is the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute?

The Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) is a yearlong program of Illinois Action for Children's Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3) project that provides in-depth support for early childhood collaborations to strengthen their early childhood systems. Launched in January 2019, the project is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood.

The Collaboration Institute ensures that communities are working to help children aged birth-through-five—especially those from low-income families or families with multiple needs—enter kindergarten healthy, safe, ready to succeed, and eager to learn. Depending on a collaboration's capacity and readiness to engage in systems-change work, two tracks of targeted supports are offered: Coach-Guided and Process-Guided.

## Coach-Guided Track

Collaborations receive a minimum 24 hours of coaching and technical assistance in-person or over the phone.

## Process-Guided Track

Collaborations receive four trainings based on the Collaboration Institute framework along with monthly coaching, with a minimum of 24 hours of coaching for the year. The Collaboration Institute structure and supports are built upon the Community Systems Statewide Supports Framework which includes four core components.

1. **Community Assessment & Targeted Problem Identification**
2. **Systems Scan & Root Cause Analysis**
3. **Strategy Design**
4. **Implementation & Action Learning**

These components draw upon our experience with previous community systems development initiatives such as the Innovation Zones and the ABLe Change Framework developed by Drs. Pennie Foster-Fishman and Erin Watson at Michigan State University. Community systems work will be approached with the goal of equitable outcomes for all children and authentic engagement of families and community members in the process.



# This Year's Featured Participants

**1. Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition**

Serving: Riverdale (Chicago Community Area 54)

**2. DeKalb County Coordinated Intake Collaborative**

Serving: DeKalb County

**3. Early Childhood Alliance**

Serving: Niles Township and surrounding areas

**4. Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success**

Serving: The Plano area including parts of Kendall, DuPage county, Lisbon, Newark, Sandwich, Somonauk, and surrounding areas

**5. St. Charles Early Learning Partnership**

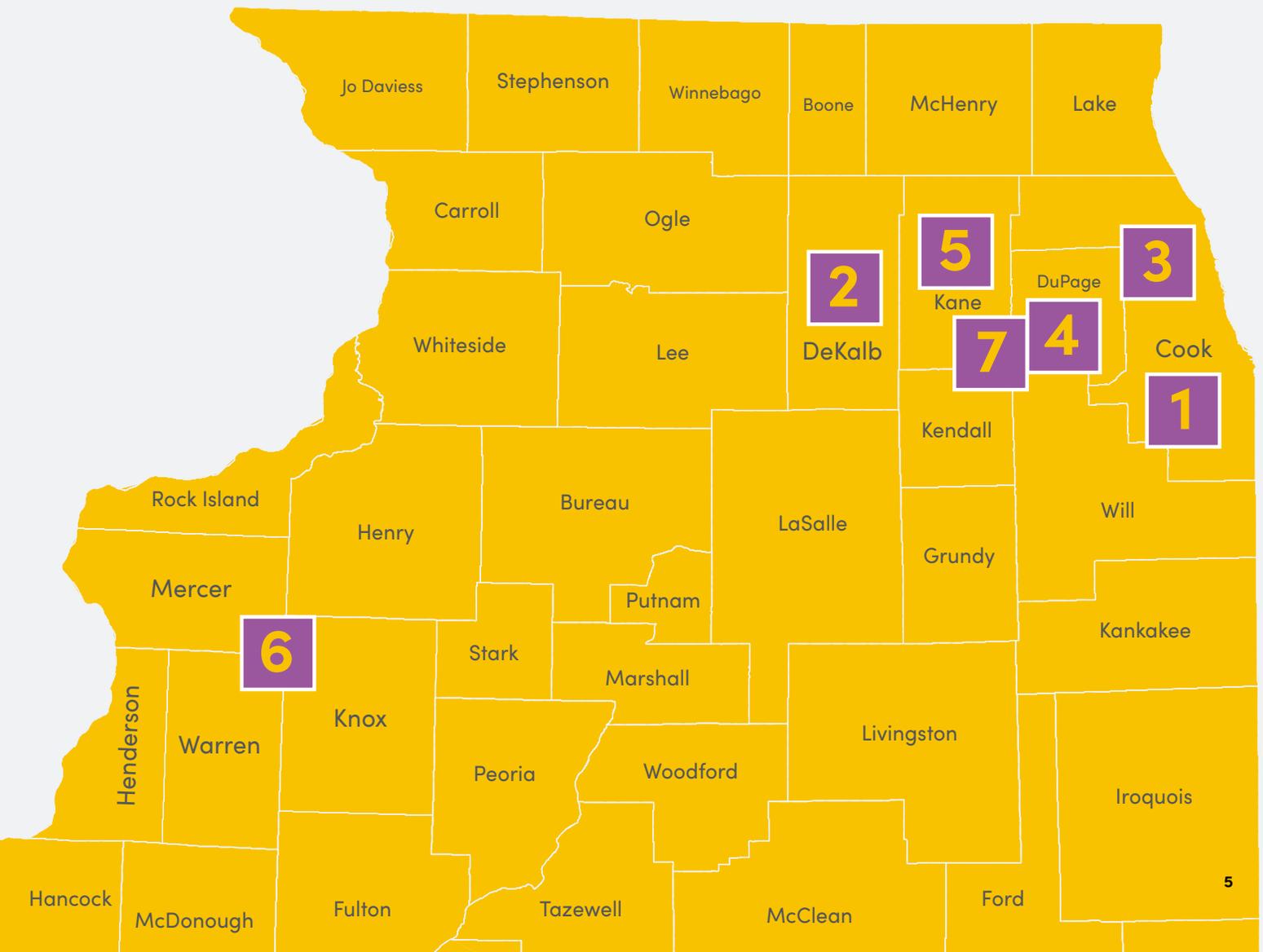
Serving: St. Charles CUSD 303 boundaries including the city of St. Charles, portions of West Chicago, South Elgin, Elburn, Wayne, Campton Whills, Wascoe, and unincorporated Kane County

**6. The Village Early Childhood Collaboration**

Serving: Henderson, Knox, Warren, and Mercer Counties

**7. WeGo Together for Kids**

Serving: West Chicago



# Featured Collaboration Strategy Profiles

Collaboration / Level of Support	Goal(s) for Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute	Community Systems Strategies and Approaches	Results
<p><b>Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Coach-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a governance structure and charter.</li> <li>• Develop a plan for a solid transition to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a detailed plan and created a subcommittee to help craft the governance structure and charter.</li> <li>• Sought feedback from Coalition members on governance components.</li> <li>• Drafted a plan to identify tasks to transition the Coalition to a new sponsor.</li> <li>• Engaged BPI leadership in the transition activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafted a governance structure and charter that is ready for adoption by the Coalition.</li> <li>• Successfully transitioned the Coalition to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor, Metropolitan Family Services—a trusted community partner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DeKalb County Coordinated Intake Collaborative</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Coach-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase capacity for systems change leadership and create system-level change that increases enrollment in early learning programs (home visiting).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched a comprehensive coordinated intake (CI) referral initiative to increase the number of families served by home visiting including an action/learning component.</li> <li>• Adapted to the loss of MIECHV funding/staffing for the DeKalb CI Collaborative by identifying options to continue the essential functions of a coordinated intake approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a new CI parent flyer, including a QR code that enabled parents to “self-refer.”</li> <li>• Learned together how to create yearlong goals and workplans.</li> <li>• Pivoted quickly to problem-solving about the funding/staffing loss, informing and engaging key stakeholders to assist.</li> <li>• Developed critical questions to guide the team forward through this challenge.</li> <li>• Began to identify viable answers to continue the essential CI functions long-term.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Childhood Alliance (Niles Township)</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Coach-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategies for increasing enrollment in early learning programs.</li> <li>• Develop a plan for parent and community engagement in the work of the collaborative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked with the Increasing Enrollment Task Force (IETF) to: 1. Create a purpose statement and operating agreements and 2. Develop a shared intake strategy.</li> <li>• Became familiar with parent engagement concepts for collaborations and frameworks for parent engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched a shared intake strategy with leaders from home visiting, Head Start, and Preschool for All programs.</li> <li>• Identified a definition and developed a set of belief statements to guide parent engagement.</li> <li>• Adopted a template to create a framework for parent engagement.</li> </ul>

## Featured Collaboration Strategy Profiles, continued

Collaboration / Level of Support	Goal(s) for Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute	Community Systems Strategies and Approaches	Results
<p><b>Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Process-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine areas of community need, conduct a root cause analysis, gather and analyze community data, and determine next steps, and develop a call to action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed Community Needs Assessment.</li> <li>Analyzed collected data.</li> <li>Engaged the community in determining a targeted problem.</li> <li>Completed a root cause analysis of the targeted problem.</li> <li>Created and distributed a discrete parent and provider surveys about the determined root causes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepened understanding of how to conduct a community needs assessment that focuses on gathering parent input.</li> </ul>
<p><b>St. Charles Early Learning Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Coach-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase capacity for systems change leadership, build an effective governance structure, and create system-level change that increases enrollment in early learning programs by assessing community needs/interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collected public data to further illuminate early learning issues, such as early intervention services.</li> <li>Examined these data sources to determine key themes/issues to share community-wide in a data-walk format.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepened understanding of the early learning challenges by analyzing Parent Surveys results and public data, synthesizing themes into a Data Walk presentation.</li> <li>Added 5 new Leadership Team members, including the D303 Director of Equity-Diversity and Inclusion, who is the Partnership's liaison to the school district.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Village Early Childhood Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Process-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the process guided track to address a community problem.</li> <li>Continue setting the collaboration's governance structures and protocols.</li> <li>Increase the number of collaboration partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contextualized quantitative data via a collaboration data walk.</li> <li>Drafted and released a Family and a Provider survey.</li> <li>Engaged members in the drafting process of its decision-making process.</li> <li>Combined meetings with the Local Inter-Agency Council (LIC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed collaboration's decision-making process.</li> <li>Identified childcare as a community need.</li> <li>Increased core and collaboration membership.</li> </ul>
<p><b>WeGo Together for Kids</b></p> <p><b>Support Track:</b> Process-Guided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a target problem statement.</li> <li>Engage in activities to better understand the contributing factors and root cause(s) to guide strategy development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted a community needs assessment and held a stakeholder meeting to obtain insights and feedback on the data to identify a target problem statement.</li> <li>Identified contributing factors to inform a root cause analysis of the target problem.</li> <li>Developed a focus group strategy and set of questions to obtain parental/guardian insights into the targeted problem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified a target problem statement.</li> <li>Completed a root cause analysis that led the group to focus on parent voice.</li> <li>Completed a focus group implementation plan</li> </ul>

# Altgeld Riverdale

## Community Overview

Altgeld–Riverdale is located on Chicago’s far south-east side. It is home to Chicago’s largest traditional public housing development, Altgeld Gardens. The population of Altgeld Gardens combined with that of four surrounding housing developments is about 7,500.

### Vision

The vision is that all children in Altgeld–Riverdale have high-quality, early learning experiences leading to success in school and life.

### Mission

The Coalition’s mission is to build a community-wide system to holistically support children’s development and build equitable educational opportunities that will ensure all children in Altgeld Riverdale are succeeding by 3rd grade. The Coalition works collaboratively with residents, parents, community organizations, and key institutions to maximize collective resources and develop new initiatives for/with families. The effort is designed build a community-wide system to holistically support children’s development and build equitable educational outcomes for children (prenatally to age 8) and their parents.

## Approach

The Altgeld–Riverdale Early Learning Coalition Participated in the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) to redesign and formalize its structure and governance practices to clarify member roles and responsibilities, decision-making protocols, and to increase the community role in leading the Coalition. Early on, the coaching team learned that BPI, the fiscal and administrative sponsor for the Coalition, would be transitioning out of its role.

With the support of their coaches, the Coalition’s team successfully involved a subcommittee of members and the full membership of the Coalition in a process to develop a governance charter. They also crafted a detailed plan to ensure a viable transition to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor–Metropolitan Family Services, a trusted community partner.



**“Creating a charter while also navigating the uncertain waters of transitioning to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor was a heavy lift for the Coalition team. However, grit and a deep commitment to the Coalition and the Altgeld–Riverdale community enabled this team not only to draft a charter that was guided by member and community voice but also to land the Coalition in a new relationship with a trusted community partner. We are inspired by this dedicated and insightful team.”**

– Coaches Carolyn Newberry Schwartz (left) and Ruby Flores (right)

## Altgeld Riverdale

### The Results

The Coalition team is very proud of its work to involve members in the development of a governance structure and charter. The Coalition is now poised to approve the charter that reflects the values and preferences of its members. The new charter includes refreshed vision and mission statements, core values and guiding principles, member roles and responsibilities, and a participatory decision-making process. These components constitute a solid set of agreements that increases the community role in the Coalition and clearly describes how the Coalition members will work together to achieve their mission.

This team also worked hard to ensure a solid transition to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor, Metropolitan Family Services. The work of this team over the past year on the charter and on transitioning to a new fiscal and administrative sponsor has helped to secure the future growth and success of the Coalition.

### The Team



Arthisa Hunter



Susannah Levine



Karen G. Foley, JPA



Todd Siegel



Ethiah Williams



Bridget Robinson



Erin Vanden Brook, JPA



Levory Wilder



Jamille Ayers



Lakisha Hanson



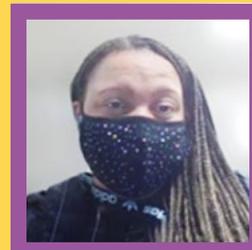
Danielle Roberson



La Tia Collins



Liquita Saulter



Shimera Thomas-Slater

# DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative

## Community Overview

The DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative was created in 2017. DeKalb County has a population of approximately 105,000 people with approximately 6,000 residents ages 0 to 5.

### Vision

All DeKalb County families have equitable access to what they need to build strong, successful families.

### Mission

iGrow DeKalb County Coordinated Intake is a collaboration of community partners dedicated to serving families who have young children (including expecting moms and dads) by connecting them to home visiting programs and community resources—giving all families the tools they need to raise their children and reach their goals.

## Approach

The DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative applied to be in the PPACI Cohort Four to expand upon their work during Cohort Three. Their goals focused the development of a comprehensive home visiting referral campaign to increase the number of referring partners and families served by home visiting in DeKalb County. They also planned to solidify their internal practices, governance, parent engagement, and self-sufficiency in preparation for “graduation” from Cohort 4.

The Team pursued these goals until December 2021 when they learned that they would be losing MIECHV funding as a result of the new IL Home Visiting 2020 Statewide Needs Assessment to HRSA, which the state uses to make MIECHV funding decisions.

From January through June, the team’s goal was to adapt to the loss of MIECHV funding/staffing for the DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative by exploring options (e.g., a “no wrong door” approach) to continue the essential functions of a coordinated approach. They wanted to involve stakeholders and key decision-makers to assure that all are heard and are part of the problem-solving.



**“Why was the DeKalb Leadership Team able to move forward and overcome, instead of falling apart and leaving no strategy in place when it lost funding? It is because they progressively laid a sustainable foundation during Cohorts 2 through 4. They built trust in each other, community relationships, a renewed vision/mission, and skills in planning and decision-making. They deepened their systems-change leadership and knowledge, creating foundational, transferable tools, and team capacity. What thoughtfulness, heart, and commitment! It has been a privilege to be your coach!”**

– Kim Zalent, Coach

## DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative

### The Results

As the DeKalb CI Collaborative began Cohort 4 they were within months of setting the kick-off event for their referral campaign, having created new materials, including a new parent flyer which used a QR code that enabled parents to “self-refer” to home visiting. The group also addressed their self-sufficiency goals.

The December news that the Collaborative would lose funding (and staffing) in six months hit the group hard. Nonetheless, they pivoted quickly, engaging their key stakeholders—ROE, the DeKalb County Collaborative for Young Children, and IL Birth to Five leaders. Then, the Team developed a framework outlining the essential functions of coordinated intake and critical questions to guide them as they considered options.

One emerging, promising option is to utilize a new ROE-sponsored IRIS community referral system as a central point for incoming home visiting referrals, as is being done elsewhere. The Team is also heartened the CI systems and materials, developed during Cohorts 2, 3, and 4, likely are transferable to whatever iteration of coordinated intake emerges in the coming months. The home visiting programs know that is “more important than ever” to collaborate—and they will draw on their deep reservoir of relationships, trust, a shared vision/mission, and solid collaborative practices/protocols.

### The Team



Rose Malloy



Earl Kloppmann



Jodi Thunder



Fanya Mojica



Amy Girardot



Samantha McDavid



Ann Marie Kuta

# The Early Childhood Alliance

## Community Overview

The Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) serves Niles Township, home to one of the most diverse populations in Illinois. Currently, the Township's population exhibits rates of poverty, foreign-born residents, Limited English Proficiency, unemployment, truancy, and teen births that exceed the state average. The Township is proud of the economic, linguistic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity of its community.

### Vision

All young children and their caregivers have healthy relationships, safe environments, and high-quality learning experiences in order to reach their full potential.

### Mission

To advocate for and coordinate comprehensive community-based supports for young children and their caregivers that promote equity and honor strengths and diversity.

## Approach

The ECA team worked with the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute to increase their members' understanding and skills in planning and facilitating meetings to support the development of a shared intake strategy by the newly formed Increasing Enrollment Task Force (IETF). The team also learned about the difference between systems change strategy and a program strategy and shared their learning with the IETF and the Steering Committee to inform the development of the shared intake strategy.

The ECA team also participated in training and utilized rich resource materials from the PPACI to identify a definition for parent engagement and a set of belief statements for their collaboration.



**"The ECA team is a thoughtful and pragmatic group that rolled with the ever-changing world of COVID and its impacts on staffing and program to launch a shared intake strategy and initiate work on a parent engagement framework. It was exciting to see the group facilitate agreements for unified messages and referral practices. I am eager to see what develops for Niles Township over the next couple of years as the ECA continues its work to build a robust early childhood community system!"**

*– Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Coach*

## The Early Childhood Alliance

### The Results

The ECA team fostered trust amongst program leaders overcoming a history of competition by developing a purpose statement and shared agreements for working together on increasing enrollment.

This enabled the IETF to launch a shared intake process that included a unified outreach message about home visiting programs, Head Start, and Preschool for All. The IETF agreed to use the ECA's phone number and website on communications materials and worked out a referral and reporting protocol. The ECA team anticipates that this effort will help them expand their reach to families whose children meet eligibility criteria and increase

enrollments in our home visiting programs, Head Start, and Preschool for All programs.

The ECA team is proud of the belief statements they developed around parent engagement and believe they will unify the collaboration's approach to involving parents in the ECA's work. Team members are eager to continue to work on the framework for parent engagement and believe that this will enable them to meaningfully engage parents in the work and decision-making activities of the ECA.

### The Team



Anna Granneman



Debbie Wiedeman



Rosa Mendez



Monique Hudson

# Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student

## Community Overview

Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success (PAASSS) serves the area of Plano, Illinois, as well as Sandwich, Newark, Lisbon, and parts of Yorkville.

### Mission

A community where all children and families are empowered to succeed in learning and life.

### Vision

PAASSS will strengthen the community by ensuring that all families in the Plano area are aware of and have equitable access to services and supports that empower them to raise children that are safe, healthy, eager to learn, and ready to succeed.

## Approach

After having participated in our inaugural cohort, PAASSS returned to the PPACI for Cohort 4 seeking support in our Process-Guided Track. They wanted to learn a step-by-step way to determine and address community needs while engaging the community throughout.



**“Laurel Mateyka, Dana Lowe, and Samantha Hoover are an exceptional group of women. Despite being extraordinarily busy, they were willing and able to dedicate time to the collaboration and to the PPACI. It was not at all easy, but I appreciated their dedication to the work, to each other, and to our collective coaching relationship. I feel lucky to have gotten to work alongside them this year!”**

*– Ruby Flores, Coach*

## Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success

### The Results

Despite staffing shortages and disrupted day-to-day operations due to COVID, the PAASSS team successfully engaged the community analyzing existing community data, arriving at a targeted problem, completing a root cause analysis, and beginning a system scan. However, what they are most proud of is the relationships that have grown between the three team members/collaboration partners and their respective organizations.

The next few months bring a lot of excitement. Plano School District 88 will fund 92 additional spots for preschoolers who do not qualify based on need and/or those on a waiting list. In order to focus on getting those classrooms off the ground, PAASSS has decided to temporarily suspend collaboration operations.

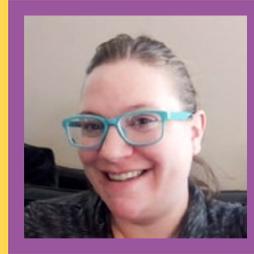
### The Team



Dana Lowe



Laurel Mateyka



Samantha Hoover

# St. Charles Early Learning Partnership

## Community Overview

The St. Charles Early Learning Partnership envisions a connected community that prepares every young child for success. Our mission is to bring together people, services, and resources to create a community-wide support system so that every child from birth to age eight in the St. Charles area is healthy, safe, eager to learn, and ready to succeed. We focus on children (prenatal to age 8) and their families within the St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 boundaries.

St Charles SD 303 is located in DuPage and Kane Counties (North-Central Illinois). According to 2019 census data, there are 4,397 children ages 5 years and under with 248 limited English-speaking households (159 of these Spanish-speaking) and 668 families living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. Only 31.2% of CUSD 303's kindergartners are considered ready in three developmental areas according to the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS).

## Approach

As the new Collaboration Institute year started and COVID numbers subsided, the Partnership Leadership Team was optimistic about its collaboration-building process. They planned to start off with a community gathering to share their vision and invite others to join in the effort.

As COVID infections and challenges mounted, the Partnership Leadership Team decided to lead with Data Walks as the centerpiece of their collaboration-building.

This pivotal decision allowed the team to capitalize on the huge response to the Partnership Parent/Caregiver Survey (800 responses) and demonstrated the team's value about parents' views across this large district, which includes 11 elementary schools.

Changing their approach meant that the team needed to dig into the survey results, collect public data and key demographics identifying the community's diversity, learn about data walks as a tool for gaining perspectives and activate stakeholders.

Finally, The Leadership Team problem-solved around their own capacity as COVID affected their institutional reserves and capacity.



**“The St. Charles Early Learning Partnership’s Leadership Team is fun, inspiring, committed, strategic, adaptable, and resilient. Beginning as a new team in Cohort 2, they have now rooted themselves in deep and broad knowledge about community systems change—using an equity and parent-engagement lens. Steadily and strategically, they have built relationships within key institutions and across this large community. Lead by an outstanding team and informed by upcoming community-wide Data Walks, this year will bring impactful changes for children and families, I’m sure. ¡Adelante!”**

– Kim Zalent, Coach

## St. Charles Early Learning Partnership

### The Results

As the Partnership Leadership Team reworked their plan, they realized that starting with data walks would create ongoing flexibility, because they could be done in small or large groups over time, using virtual or in-person formats.

As they learned more about data walks, the team recognized how this tool could help stakeholders “get on the same page” in the St. Charles area. Many stakeholders do not know that KIDS data shows that that 68.8% of entering K students are NOT ready for kindergarten in all 3 areas.

To prepare for action, the Data Walk highlights areas that workgroup(s) might dig into. One unifying issue is that across the community parents,

agencies, and other stakeholders struggle to locate, refer to, and utilize services. Also concerning are the circumstances of children (0-3). There are few referrals to home visiting, few developmental screenings, and no formal early learning programs (e.g., no Early Head Start).

The team is excited to roll-out the Data Walk presentation across the community—with the help of 5 new Leadership Team members and increased staff time allocated for the C303 Child and Family Educator Coordinator! The Partnership plans to apply for the Collaboration Institutes’ Cohort Five.

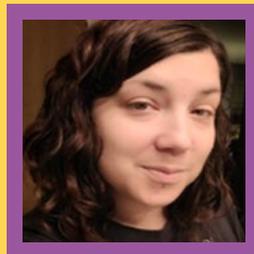
### The Team



Tricia Sabathne



Rosaura Realegeno



Brooke Radford-Knight



Nathan Jarot



Tracy Taylor



Kelly Stulgate



Kim Peterson



Ivette Montes De Oca



Liz Schaffer



Lexy Twidell

# The Village Early Childhood Collaboration

## Community Overview

The Village Early Childhood Collaboration (VECC) serves the counties of Knox, Warren, Henderson, and Mercer. The Regional Office of Education #33 that employs an Early Childhood Community Systems Coordinator works with a core team of stakeholders to ensure collaboration best practices. The core team works together in the coordination and facilitation of collaboration meetings, engaging community stakeholders, and supporting members in the development and implementation of work plans. Regional Office of Education #33 serves as the VECC's administrative home, backbone agency, and fiscal agent.

### Vision

An easily accessible, seamless, quality early childhood system that will support the success of families.

### Mission

Diverse Stakeholders coming together and collaboratively working to better the system for families.

## Approach

The Village Early Childhood Collaboration participated in the Partner Plan Act Institute (PPACI) Process-Guided track to continue formalizing their governance foundation, increase its presence in the region, and embed the use of data into their community systems change processes.

The team personally followed up with partners to invite them to attend collaboration meetings and merged meetings with the Local Inter-Agency Council. In addition, they engaged all members in discussions and surveys about their meeting structure and decision-making processes.

The Institute tools and coaching assisted the team in gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. The team examined existing early childhood data and held a data walk with stakeholders to analyze and make meaning of the data. They also collected quantitative data from families and providers via surveys they meticulously drafted. This data dive and community engagement helped them identify childcare as a community issue and determine its root causes.



**“The Village Early Childhood Education Collaboration could not have picked a better name. It reflects its members’ dedication to bringing local community partners together to better serve families. It’s apparent to anyone who works with the team that they care deeply about families in their communities. It was a pleasure to be your coach! Thank you to the team for trusting and using our community systems change process. Congratulations on a year of hard work and progress in the face of continued adversity throughout our communities and across the world!”**

*– Janet Vargas, Coach*

## The Village Early Childhood Collaboration

### The Results

The Village Education Collaboration continues to grow despite and in response to a pandemic that has affected us all. Their dedication to families and children fueled another year of hard work and results. They increased of the number and representation of participating collaboration partners, drafted a decision-making process and protocol, and began a collaborative process to engage the community in identifying and addressing the need for more childcare.

The team accomplished so much all while practicing and nurturing a culture of community systems thinking and collective action in their relatively young collaboration. We are excited to see the strategy that the collaboration chooses to execute to increase and align childcare resources in the four counties they serve.

### The Team



Rhonda Hillyer



Kim Stickell



Malia Owens



Emily Henry



Amy Gipe



Mary Reed



Lisa Medina-Foshay



Tara Case

# WeGo Together for Kids

## Community Overview

The WeGo Early Childhood Workgroup serves West Chicago. Located in DuPage County it is home to 25,614 people of whom 2,694 are children under 5 years. These children are predominantly Hispanic (68%). The rest of the children are White (24.7%), Asian (2.6%), Black (2.0%). Close to half of the children under five are living in families with incomes under the federal poverty level.

### Mission

The mission of We Go Together for Kids is to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of children and families through a collaborative, coordinated and comprehensive approach for West Chicago schools and the community.

### Vision

The vision of We Go Together for Kids is a vibrant and engaged community where children and families reach their full potential.

## Approach

Through training and coaching, the WeGo Early Childhood Workgroup conducted a community needs assessment to uncover program issues facing children prenatal to five and their families and to use the data to develop a target Problem statement.

The team identified contributing factors to the target problem statement and selected two for developing root cause analyses. Additionally, the workgroup learned about best practices for focus groups to conduct successful focus groups.



**“The WeGo Early Childhood Workgroup is a deeply thoughtful group that is committed to identifying ways to gather input from Latinx parents and guardians not engaged in the early learning system and to use their insights to develop strategies to increase enrollments. It was exciting to participate in the conversations of this group to address the equity issues facing Latinx families in West Chicago. I am looking forward to learning about the strategies they develop to lift parent voice.”**

*– Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Coach*

## WeGo Together for Kids

### The Results

The WeGo Early Childhood Workgroup held a successful stakeholder meeting that enabled them to gain insights into the data and develop a target problem statement. The group is very proud of the involvement of parents in their stakeholder meeting and have shaped their work to ensure they are placing parent voice at its center. Their target problem is: **Latinx children are not on track developmentally at kindergarten entry when compared to their White peers.**

#### The root causes the group chose to focus on are:

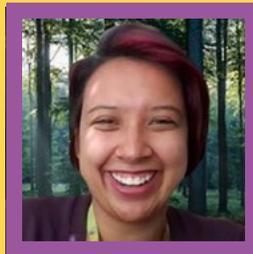
- Service providers and policy makers are not well-informed about the challenges Latinx families are facing in trying to optimally support their child's development.
- Latinx families lack meaningful voice to bring about changes in programs and services intended to support them.

The WeGo Early Childhood Workgroup developed a plan to conduct focus groups with Latinx parents/guardians who are not engaged in early childhood programs and services. They developed questions to gather insights into these families' aspirations and needs. Parents will facilitate the groups. The groups are planned for the fall.

### The Team



Emeli Solis



Kathy Niedorowski



Suzanne Baber



Rosa Garcia

# Meet the Team

From all of us at CS3, we thank you for your passion and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in Illinois!



**Choua Vue**  
*Senior Vice President of Policy, Research, and Community Impact*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Grace Araya**  
*Director of Community Systems Statewide Supports*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Kristina Rogers**  
*Program Manager*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Vanessa Lee**  
*Equity Strategy Coach*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Ruby Flores**  
*Lead Trainer/Coach*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Janet Vargas**  
*Trainer/Coach*  
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**Kristen Garcia**  
*Program Coordinator*  
Illinois Action for Children



**Carolyn Newberry Schwartz**  
*Consultant*



**Chris Foster**  
*Consultant*



**Hannah Miro**  
*Community Impact Data & Knowledge Manager*  
Illinois Action for Children

## Ongoing Support Offerings

As you continue on your community systems development journey with your early childhood community collaboration, please remember that Partner Plan Act still has supports to offer you. To learn more about these opportunities and to stay abreast of current trainings offered near you, check out [www.PartnerPlanAct.org](http://www.PartnerPlanAct.org) and make sure you sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter.

### On-Demand Consultation

Take advantage of this support when your early childhood community collaboration needs to tackle a specific, short-term issue. A consultant will be matched with your community based on the topic area requested. Up to 24 hours of consultation will be provided over the course of the fiscal year.

**On-Demand Consultation topics include:**

- **Collaboration Skills**
- **Governance**
- **Data**
- **Equity**
- **Systems Thinking**
- **Family Engagement**
- **Quality**
- **Enrollment**
- **Coordinated Intake**
- **Priority Populations**
- **Collaborative Developmental Screenings**
- **Birth-3rd Grade/PreK-Kindergarten Transitions**
- **Chronic Absenteeism**

### On-Demand Learning

Take your community systems development learning into your own hands. Through 2023, there will be at least 15 on-demand learning modules, covering various topics including data, systems-thinking, equity, and community engagement strategies.

**There are six courses available that are accessible through your WeConnect account:**

- **Early Childhood Collaboration Data**
- **Shared Intake for Early Childhood Collaborations**
- **Shared Intake for Early Childhood Collaborations**
- **Collaborative Developmental Screenings for Early Childhood Collaborations**
- **Early Childhood Collaboration Parent Engagement**
- **Effective Governance in Early Childhood Collaborations**

# Welcome to WeConnect

WeConnect is an online platform, a place to connect, find collaboration opportunities, ask questions, share ideas, and search for resources. Get ready to take your community systems development to a whole new level.

## Online access to:

### Online Communities

Connect with members of your collaboration and others.

### Discussions

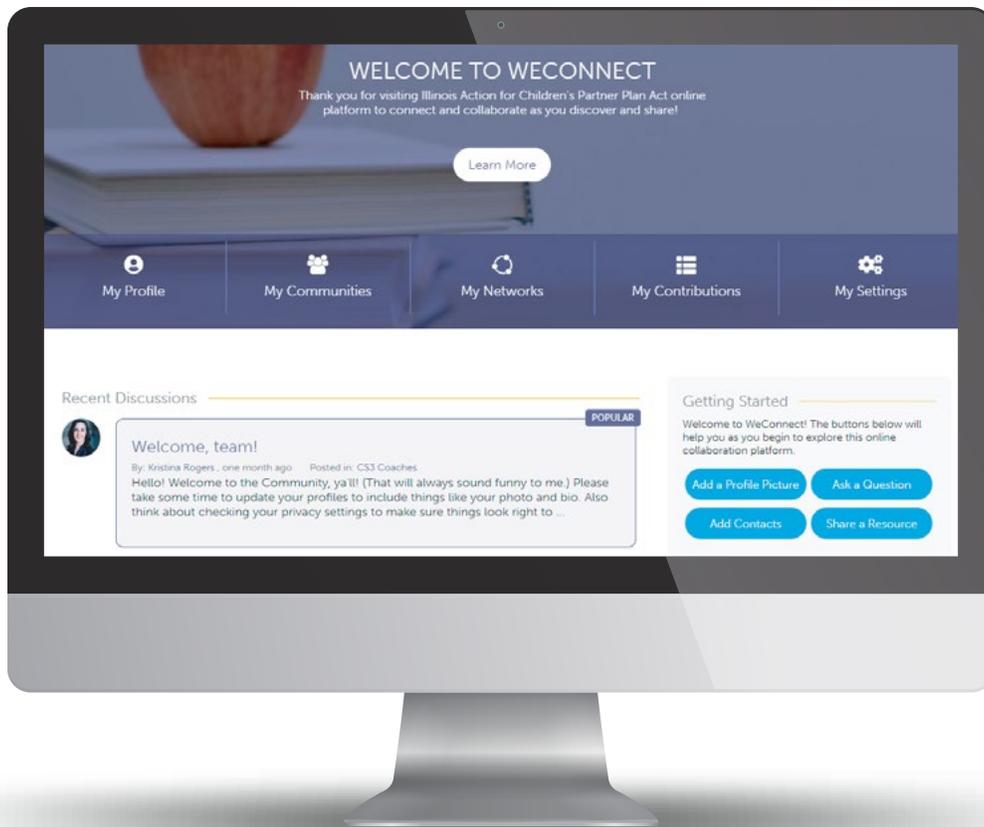
Ask questions and share your knowledge and ideas.

### Resource Libraries

Share your documents and find resources you need.

### Member Directory

Find and connect with other collaboration members.



Connect with WeConnect today. Sign in at: [weconnect.actforchildren.org](https://weconnect.actforchildren.org)



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**Thank you for the ongoing support:**



**Illinois  
State Board of  
Education**



**Governor's Office of  
Early Childhood Development**



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