The Children and Youth Master Plan adopted by the City of Alexandria in 2014 calls for the development of an “early care and education system that prepares children to succeed in life and in school.” The Early Care and Education Workgroup (ECEW), a cross-sector workgroup made up of leaders from across ACPS, City agencies, funders and the non-profit community, and convened by ACT for Alexandria, was asked to take on this challenge. The goal of the workgroup is to build a system that is high quality, culturally and financially accessible, and comprehensive (including health, education, socio-emotional, family and community support). Finally, the system should be equitable, that is, it should help eliminate disparities in life opportunities for children and families.

Undertaking a “collective impact” approach to developing the system, the ECEW organized itself in late 2015 around a common agenda, a framework and set of strategies for ensuring that every child in Alexandria has a strong start in life and in school. Collective impact “occurs when organizations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligning their efforts, and using common measures of success”*. Successful collective impact initiatives embrace a culture of continuous learning, develop an awareness of the context, conditions and circumstances that surround the work, strive to understand what is working and what is not, and seek opportunities for improvement.

This baseline report, which is the first in what the ECEW plans to make an annual series, illustrates the group’s commitment to that approach. There are four key areas in which the ECEW will evaluate progress over time:

1. Understanding our community context...
   - Demographics in Alexandria today and trends over time
   - Socio-economic conditions and other economic factors
   - Magnitude of needs amongst the ECE population

2. How we’ll work together differently...
   - Alexandria’s ECE system has a shared vision for change and is working together towards that vision
   - There is dedicated staff that provides leadership, support, and project management
   - Alexandria’s ECE system is building off of each other’s work
   - No one is afraid to speak up honestly and openly
   - Alexandria’s ECE system constantly reflects on how to do things better, learning from the past
   - Alexandria has dedicated resources to support its early care & education work
   - Alexandria is responsive to the values and beliefs of the children and families it serves

3. So that we’ll have a better system...
   - Families
     - Better access and ability to navigate
     - More engagement in child’s care
   - Providers
     - More connections and referrals among providers
     - Better competency to serve diverse needs
   - Community
     - More capacity to serve needs equitably across the whole city
     - More funding and more braided funding
     - Increased community support for early care and education

4. Which will lead to better outcomes for our children.
   - Health
     - More prenatal care
     - Healthier birth-weights
     - More medical homes
     - More immunizations
     - Healthier BMIs
   - Academic
     - More diagnosed developmental delays
     - More Pre-K experience
     - More kindergarten readiness in reading and math
     - More 3rd grade proficiency in reading and math
   - Socio-emotional
     - More kindergarten readiness in socio-emotional domains
     - Better self-regulation
     - Better knowledge of self

Some of the short and long-term priorities of the ECEW are already being implemented, while others are still in the planning stages. This report is intended to share progress to date, as well as capture some initial data about the contextual factors that shape and influence the work. This report also includes baseline data on some of the ultimate outcomes for children that we hope this work will positively impact. This data does not yet capture trends, and in some cases there is not yet data available on indicators that are vital to the work. But in the spirit of continuous learning, the group will always seek to identify the most accurate and reliable data and work as partners within the ECEW to do so.

There is much work to do, but also much exciting progress over the last year.

ABOUT THE COMMON AGENDA

Achieving the outcomes for children that the ECEW is working towards will require action on several fronts simultaneously, in alignment with the implementation of the broader Children & Youth Master Plan. Below is an illustration of the various priorities outlined in the Early Care and Education Common Agenda:
**PROGRESS IN YEAR ONE**

**Priority Projects of the Common Agenda**

- **BACKBONE**: Hired a Project Manager to coordinate priority projects of the Common Agenda. The Project Manager is supported by the membership of the ECEW, an active group of leaders from across sectors who make decisions and discuss progress, and set priorities for creating an aligned system.

- **GLASS DOORS**: Programs that provide publicly funded preschool are working together to develop a single, streamlined process that will help families figure out what programs they are eligible for and learn how to enroll. The new screening tool and process will be piloted at participating programs later this year.

- **SEAMLESS SUPPORT**: This effort to connect health and early education providers will help deliver coordinated and comprehensive care to children from prenatal to three years old. A survey of providers serving this population helped identify challenges in this area, and the results were shared at ACT’s IMPACT Forum on Early Care & Education in October. A group of project champions across the health and early care and education sectors are currently working to build on the results of the survey and community input to identify priorities for building stronger connections.

- **DATA STEWARDSHIP**: The ECEW is working to identify and share data that will help illustrate progress, trends and gaps in the system. Data collection and analysis will help guide project priorities and workplans. This report is an example of how the ECEW is using data to understand community context and articulate expected short and long-term outcomes.

- **COMMUNITY & FUNDER MOBILIZATION**: The ECEW is continuously pursuing opportunities to identify resources and mobilize the community in support of a strong early care and education system. For example, over 120 people attended the ACT for Alexandria: Early Care and Education Forum in October. Members of the ECEW have given presentations on the Common Agenda to the Youth Services Coordinating Council, ACPS principals and early childhood teachers, and the City Council and ACPS School Board at a joint work session in June.

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**Spotlight on QUALITY: THE QUALITY COLLABORATIVE**

The Quality Collaborative is a shared professional development pilot involving all of the publicly funded early childhood programs in the city. The Quality Collaborative completed year one of a three-year pilot centered around the research-based University of Virginia (UVA) CLASS model focused on improving the quality of teacher-child interactions.

The project, now in year two, features three levels of professional development activities that include teachers at all of the city’s publicly funded preschool classrooms working collaboratively across programs:

- **One-on-one “My Teaching Partner” Coaching**
  - 20 teachers in year one, 8 year two

- **Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) course**
  - 45 teachers year one, 35 year two

- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**
  - New for 2016-17: 33 teachers in small groups of six to seven teachers from across programs

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**QUALITY COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

- The Child & Family Network Centers
- ALIVE! - rooted in community
- Alexandria City Public Schools
- The Campagna Center
- Creative Play School
- THE BRUHN-MORRIS FAMILY FOUNDATION
- CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA
**Understanding Our Community Context:**

The following data points describe Alexandria from a population-level, citywide perspective. These provide important context for the work, but are not indicators the Common Agenda seeks to influence directly. Whenever available, the ECEW will report data specifically for the city’s young children (i.e., those 0-8).

**Demographics**

- **Total Population of Alexandria and Percentage Growth Rate from Previous Year**
  - **159,571**
  - (3% growth from 2014 to 2015) (Cooper Center, UVA, 2015)

- **Number of Children Ages 0-5 Living in Alexandria and Percentage Growth Rate from Previous Year**
  - **12,972**
  - Age 5 or under (1.6% growth from 2013 to 2014) (VA Department of Health, 2014)

- **Percent of Children Under 9 from a Minority Racial Population**
  - **34%**
  - (VA Department of Health, 2015)

- **Percent of ACPS Grades K-3 Requiring Special Education Services**
  - **10.7%**
  - Of all students K-12 (VA Department of Education, 2014)

- **Percent of Kindergarteners who Qualify for ELL Support in Alexandria**
  - **34.8%**
  - (VA Department of Education, 2014)

- **Percentage of Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Formal Education**
  - **10.3%**
  - (KIDS COUNT, 2014)

- **Percent of Births to Teenage Mothers**
  - **9.7 per 1000**
  - (VA Biennial report card, 2013)

**Poverty, Health and Socioeconomics**

- **Children Living Below 200% of the Poverty Line**
  - **34.4%**

- **Children Living Below the Poverty Line**
  - **15.8%**

- **Percent of Uninsured Children in Alexandria**
  - **6%** of all children (County Health Rankings, 2016)

- **13.9% Low Income Children without Health Insurance** (KIDS COUNT, 2014)

- **Median Household Income in City of Alexandria vs. Statewide Family Income for VA**
  - **City of Alexandria**
    - **$87,319**
    - (VA Biennial report card, 2013)
  - **State of Virginia**
    - **$64,792**
    - (Source: US County and State Quick Facts, 2014)
  - **Poverty Line, Family of Four**
    - **$23,850**
    - (Source: US Census Bureau, 2014)
  - **200% Federal Poverty Level, Family of Four**
    - **$47,700**
    - (Source: US Census Bureau, 2014)

**Implications**

While the median household income for the City of Alexandria is high relative to the rest of the state, the number of children living in poverty in the city is sizable and has been growing. The number of ACPS students eligible for free and reduced meals, a common indicator of economic disadvantage, is nearly 60%. Families in Alexandria are also linguistically and culturally diverse: 31% of residents speak a language other than English at home and students enrolled in Alexandria City Public Schools represent 134 countries of birth and 113 native languages. These data suggest the need in the city is significant and varied, but also that there are significant resources to build upon.
Over time, we will examine the progress we are making towards our ultimate outcomes for children. Below are some potential indicators and available baseline data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prenatal-Age 3</th>
<th>Age 4-5</th>
<th>Age 6-8</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of pregnant mothers receiving adequate prenatal care</td>
<td>70.3% (KIDS COUNT, 2013)</td>
<td>Number and percent of children that have a pre-K experience before entering kindergarten</td>
<td>76% (representing the 2016-17 Kindergarten class) (ACPS)</td>
<td>Percent of children at or above proficiency in 3rd grade reading</td>
<td>Total: 75% of all students (2015-16) Black – 66% Hispanic – 65% Asian – 85% White – 91% ELL students- 67% Econ.Disadv.- 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of babies born at a low birth weight</td>
<td>7% (County Health Ratings; 2016) 69.9 per 1000 (KIDS COUNT, 2014)</td>
<td>Number and percent of children meeting fall reading expectations according to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)</td>
<td>82% of all students (2015-16) Asian students 87% Black students 86% Hispanic students 64% White students 96% ELL students 62% *</td>
<td>Percent of children at or above proficiency in 3rd grade math</td>
<td>Total: 69% of all students (2015-16) Black – 64% Hispanic – 54 % Asian – 76% White – 89% ELL students – 57% Econ. Disadv – 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of target children with a primary healthcare provider</td>
<td>Some program level data exists but not system-wide</td>
<td>Number and percent of children meeting fall math expectations according to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)</td>
<td>ACPS has been piloting the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Assessment led by UVA’s Curry School of Education expanding the assessment of children at kindergarten entry to include the school readiness domains of math, social skills, and self-regulation. These will be combined with the above PALS literacy results to produce a more comprehensive view of the whole child.</td>
<td>Number and percent of children who self-regulate their emotions, behavior, manage feelings, and follow limits and expectations.</td>
<td>ACPS does not currently measure/collect this data, although it is included in the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan, so may be collected in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of HFA target children who are up-to-date on recommended immunizations</td>
<td>Some program data level exists but not system-wide</td>
<td>Number and percent of children meeting social emotional expectations according to the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)</td>
<td>See above. Data for the pilot of both math and social emotional assessments are not yet publicly available but are anticipated to be available for the 2017-18 school year.</td>
<td>Number of students grades K-3 with BMI in the healthy range</td>
<td>65% of Kindergarten students in 2014-15 had BMI scores in the healthy range (Alexandria School Health Advisory Board/ACPS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of children with possible developmental delays referred to early intervention services</td>
<td>Some program data level exists but not system-wide</td>
<td>Number and percent of children with age-appropriate fine motor skills</td>
<td>(No data source available)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The PALS system does not report results broken out for Economically Disadvantaged
Over time, we will examine our progress towards developing a system that is aligned, comprehensive, accessible, equitable, and high quality. In order to track progress towards creating a better system, over the coming year, we will identify and pilot the collection of a set of outcomes related to families, providers, and the capacity of the system to capture progress over time. Below are some things we have learned from a baseline level, and we will be working to identify potential outcomes to explore.

What we know: There are nearly 13,000 children under the age of six in Alexandria and that population is growing. 38% of incoming kindergartners (546 students) in 2014-15 reported attending a publicly funded preschool program.

Potential outcomes in this area:
- Families will have increased knowledge of what early care and education (ECE) resources are available
- Families will be better able to access and navigate ECE resources

The ECEW will be exploring ways to understand the impact of this work on families potentially through surveys and focus groups as resources and capacity allow.

What we know: Alexandria has more than 80 providers serving families with children prenatal to 8 years old.

Last year (2015-16), Alexandria provided publicly funded early education to children from low-income families in a number of ways:
- 527 Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) slots allocated, 396 filled
- 34 ‘Scholarships for 4s’ (plus 23 partial year scholarships) for four-year-olds
- 41 children received local child care subsidies
- 674 children received state child care subsidies
- 309 children were served by Alexandria Head Start
- 176 children aged 0-3 were served by Early Head Start

[Note: *Some children participating in VPI community-based programs also receive scholarships or child care subsidies to offset tuition or wrap-around service costs.]

Potential outcomes in this area to explore:
- Increase in connections and referrals amongst providers
- Providers will have stronger competencies as it comes to serving diverse needs

What we know: Over the coming year, we will be working to better understand capacity challenges and areas of service gaps.

Potential outcomes in this area to explore:
- Alexandria’s children will have equitable access to Alexandria’s high quality early childhood settings
- There are increasingly more public resources supporting Alexandria’s ECE system
- There is increased community support for ECE

(Source: ACPS Office of Early Childhood; Alexandria Early Childhood Division, Department of Human Services

*Subsidies available to parents (of children up to age 13) who are working, going to school or participating in training. Families pay a single fee, based on their income, directly to care providers; the rest of the cost of care is paid by the Alexandria Department of Human Services)
ABOUT THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORK GROUP

Our VISION mirrors that of Alexandria’s Children & Youth Master Plan:

All of Alexandria’s children and youth succeed today and tomorrow

The specific ECEW MISSION is to ensure that:

Every child in Alexandria has a strong start in life and in school

In order to realize this mission, we are building an early care and education system that is:

- **Aligned**: The system enables smooth transitions for children & families
- **Accessible**: The system is geographically, culturally, linguistically, and financially accessible
- **High-quality**: The system meets the highest standards of quality
- **Comprehensive**: The system includes health, education, socio-emotional, family, and community supports
- **Equitable**: The system helps eliminate disparities in life opportunities

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Members of the Early Care & Education Work Group (ECEW)

Debbie Bowers, Public Health Nurse Manager, Alexandria Health Department
Lisa Carter, Executive Director, Child and Family Network Centers
Diane Charles, Executive Director, ALIVE!
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager, City of Alexandria
Alvin Crawley, Superintendent, Alexandria City Public Schools
Robin Crawley, Acting Chief, Early Childhood Division, City of Alexandria
Ellen Kennedy Folts, Executive Director, Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation
Kate Garvey, Director, Department of Community & Human Services, City of Alexandria
Stephen Haering, Director, Alexandria Health Department
J. Glenn Hopkins, President & CEO, Hopkins House
Tammy Mann, CEO, Campagna Center, & Chair, Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission
Sean McEnearney, Past Chair, Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission
Lori Morris, President, Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation
Terri Moxing, Chief Academic Officer, Alexandria City Public Schools
Clint Page, Chief Accountability Officer, Alexandria City Public Schools
Lisa Pichota, Director of Elementary School Instruction, Alexandria City Public Schools
Jane Richardson, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, Alexandria City Public Schools
Cynthia Skinner, Project Manager, Alexandria Early Care & Education Initiative
Diane Smalley, Director, Creative Play School
Michelle Smith-Howard, Citywide Early Childhood Programs Coordinator, ACPS
Deborah Warren, Director, Center for Children & Families
Brandi Yee, Chief Program Officer, ACT for Alexandria

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Roles & Responsibilities

- Actively participate and prepare for monthly meetings
- Co-create the ECEW’s common agenda
- Help determine strategic priorities
- Help design, implement, or oversee specific projects
- Disseminate information and share perspectives from the member’s organization
- Be a champion of early care & education in the community