

Flint Early Childhood Collaborative Newsletter

An Update on Our Response to COVID-19 | March 22, 2021

**Flint
Early Childhood
Collaborative**



Welcome!

It is hard to believe that it has been one year since our first school closure due to increased cases of COVID-19 in Michigan. Despite the challenges and uncertainties of the past year, our partners have remained focused on providing high-quality early learning experiences and social supports for Flint children and families. In our first quarterly newsletter, we are proud to share a few of the innovative efforts undertaken by FECC and our partners to keep Flint kids and families safe, healthy, and learning throughout the pandemic. As we prepare for our "New Normal," we look forward to our continued partnership supporting Flint kids and families in achieving their full potential.

Ja'Nel Jamerson

*Educare Flint and Flint Early
Childhood Collaborative*





Keeping Kids Connected Through New iPad Initiative at Educare Flint & Cummings Great Expectations

High-Quality Teaching

The abrupt closure of schools in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic propelled students, teachers, and families across the country into a new context of hybrid learning. The same is true of Educare Flint and Cummings Great Expectations, which currently offer in-person and virtual learning options. The same is true of Educare Flint and Cummings Great Expectations, which currently offer in-person and virtual learning options. With a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation, FECC supplied iPads for Educare Flint and Cummings to achieve 1:1 device-to-student ratios with all students enrolled in virtual programming and the 4-year-old preschool program. The initiative aims to ensure that students participating in the virtual program have barrier-free access to the high-quality teaching offered by Educare Flint and Cummings and that preschoolers remain on track for kindergarten during times when they cannot access in-person learning.

Educare School Director, Jodi Ramos discussed the need for the devices,

explaining that they are used for several reasons.

"The iPads are being used to support students that are enrolled in virtual classrooms with accessing educational content planned by their teachers and to also provide families with tools to continue educational goals beyond virtual lessons and to communicate questions and needs with staff. They will also be used by children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2021 to ensure they develop the technological skills to prepare them for success beyond preschool."

Lead Teacher, Mariah Darden explains how the devices will enhance teaching in the classroom both virtually and in-person. "The iPads offer applications that will only further the children's learning. Virtually they will be able to participate and keep track of their assignments and materials on their own device. Feeling a sense of ownership and control is a great thing

during these times as well for families and children who may look to that stability in uncertain times like these.

These iPads can continue to be a tool for in-person learning as well as students continue to learn and gain independence in using technology that will be beneficial in the future."

Early Childhood Specialist, Christi Law, shares how the iPads are bridging the gap. "I think what's really exciting is bridging that gap between school and home, with the parents being the first teacher. With being virtual, we are really relying on the parents to be their teachers. So, we are bridging that gap with the iPads. Having that link in the home is really still bringing in that continuity. When we return to the classroom, we will use them to have access to answer questions, read, looking up questions with the technology. The talk-to-text feature will help be accessible to all levels of kiddos. They are pretty amazing tools."

Parent Ambassadors Launch School-Based "Markets" to Address Food Insecurity Amid the Pandemic

Intensive Family Engagement

With unprecedented numbers of people out of work and limited supplies in local grocery stores, the COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent need among families for nutritious foods and personal protective equipment (PPE). FECC partners with the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD) to host the Parent Ambassador Initiative, which engages parents as leaders, partners, and advocates in removing barriers to student and family success. In response to the need, Parent Ambassadors at Educare Flint and Cummings Great

Expectations developed school-based "markets" to provide free resources to families and staff in need. The EduShare Market at Educare Flint and Great Expectations Market at Cummings Great Expectations operates in partnership with the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, Flint Fresh, and the Flint Urban Health and Safety Corps (AmeriCorps) with support from the Children's Foundation of Michigan, A.G. Bishop Charitable Trust, and C.S. Mott Foundation.

Two parents from Educare Flint and Cummings Great Expectations serve as AmeriCorps service members, overseeing the markets' operations and evaluation, including coordinating monthly nutrition education activities. To this end, the What's Cookin' family recipe book was created by Parent Ambassadors to provide creative methods of integrating items from the school markets into daily meals. In total, more than 1,000 meals have been distributed at Educare Flint and Cummings Great Expectations since the launch of the markets in November 2020.

If you are interested in learning more about our school-based markets or would like to donate, please visit our websites [EduShare Market](#) and [Great Expectations Market](#).

Click Here To Download The What's Cookin' Family Recipe Book



 **191**
FAMILIES SERVED

1,657
POUNDS OF MEAT & FRESH PRODUCE DISTRIBUTED 

 **1,020**
MEALS DISTRIBUTED

430
FAMILIES & COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED IN NUTRITION EDUCATION ACTIVITIES 

 **3,851**
SHELF-STABLE FOOD ITEMS DISTRIBUTED

1,284
HOME, PPE, & HYGIENE ITEMS DISTRIBUTED 

Virtual Conference Supports Home-Based ECE Providers

Enhanced Professional Development

Closures of public schools and publicly-funded early childhood programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic created an increased demand for home-based early childhood education providers, especially for essential workers. Recognizing the critical importance of home-based child care providers in keeping Flint kids learning, healthy, and safe, FECC and the Child Care Network (CCN) hosted the first annual Home-Based Providers Conference in January, 2021. In total, more than 88 providers participated in the one-day conference, which featured two keynote speakers. The first, Mimi Brown encouraged participants to “Amp Up Your Success; Live Life Loud”. The second speaker, Debbie Mays discussed “Modern Day Miss Tizzy”. Additional workshops were offered through 6 break-out sessions that ranged in topics from tax consequences of COVID-19 to scaffolding activities for mixed-aged groups.

Home-based child care providers have unique needs that delineate them from center-based childcare providers.

Annette Sobocinski, CCN Executive Director, explained, “Our conference was especially directed toward the needs the home providers have. We aim to be a resource to help childcare providers feel supported and connected with other providers, and to provide continuous quality of care to the childcare providers. This past conference was very successful. The participants all felt the love, and that someone out there sees them and values them as a form of care. One provider texted our staff and said, ‘I am inspired to achieve a 5-star quality rating.’ This was a testimony of advancement of quality.”

The conference was sponsored through a grant provided by the C.S. Mott Foundation and was offered at no cost to providers, who also received MiRegistry Training credits for their participation. As we advance, FECC and CCN will engage home-based providers through a support group to identify additional local needs and opportunities.

Virtual Home Provider Conference

provided by CCN in partnership with FECC

When: January 23, 2021 | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM



4.68 out of 5.

Average Rating of Conference
from Feedback Surveys



88 providers engaged



615 approximate children served by providers



6 break-out sessions



Keynote Speaker - Mimi Brown:
Amp Up Your Success; Live Life L.O.U.D.



Keynote Speaker - Debbie Mays:
Modern Day Miss Tizzy



Early Childhood Stakeholders Launch Multi-Year Advocacy Agenda for Genesee County

Research & Advocacy

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened Michigan's early childhood education sector's stability, particularly for private childcare centers. FECC co-convoked a coalition of early childhood stakeholders with Childcare Network, the Flint & Genesee Literacy Network, and the Great Start Collaborative to develop shared priorities and advocacy efforts for early childhood advocates in Genesee County. Representatives from more than twenty agencies collaborated to create a 2021-2023 policy agenda that aims to (1) reduce barriers to early education and care, (2) give children a healthy start, and (3) ensure that race, income, or zip code does not determine a child's destiny. [View our policy agenda here.](#)

FECC has prioritized the following issues in the state's 2022 budget:

1. Adjust Child Development and Care Subsidy entry eligibility from 150% to 185% of the federal poverty level to allow more working families access to affordable childcare options; and
2. Build the supply of high-quality childcare programs in communities where shortages exist, including in rural communities, by using Child Development and Care Subsidy grants and contracts to stabilize ECE programs.

The Governor's 2022 budget recommendation includes a significant investment in Michigan's early childhood infrastructure. For Michigan's childcare subsidy program, the Governor recommends a \$300 million investment of recently enacted federal childcare and state general funds to:

1. Increase income eligibility for the state child subsidy program from 150% to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (from \$39,300 to \$52,400 for a family of four) from April 2021 to September 2022. An estimated 150,000 additional children will be made eligible for the subsidy under this change. Then, for FY 2023 (October 2022-September 2023) eligibility decreases to 160% FPL (\$41,920).
2. Cover the family co-pay contributions for the child care subsidy program from April 2021 through September 2022.
3. Raise the child care subsidy reimbursement rates by 10% for child care providers from April 2021 to September 2023.
4. Determine childcare provider payments on enrollment rather than attendance (shift toward contracts) from April 2021 to December 2021, stabilizing provider revenue.

FECC is proud to partner with state and local stakeholders to advocate for policies and practices that build the supply of high-quality programs and increase families' access to such programs. Using our shared policy agenda, FECC will co-convocate the Genesee Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy Committee quarterly to identify policy barriers and elevate priorities that will allow programs to increase their quality levels and increase families' access to evidence-based programs. If you are interested in learning more about the Genesee Early Childhood Leadership & Advocacy Committee or would like to get involved, please contact [Chakara Wheeler at cwheeler@cfgf.org](mailto:Chakara.Wheeler@cfgf.org).





Addressing Barriers to ECE Access Through Unified Enrollment

Coordinated Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic reemphasized what was known long before the pandemic, which is Flint's families face significant barriers when they try to enroll their children in early childhood programs, despite current efforts to coordinate intake and outreach efforts among providers. Findings from our [2019 Feasibility Study](#) determined that enrollment processes and program options are unclear for families, enrollment data is not informative or transparent for providers, and current technology is outdated. A new countywide enrollment system would provide a single application, timeline, and placement process to all of the publicly funded programs currently offered by GISD and GCCARD.

The development of a unified enrollment system would significantly increase families' access to high-quality options by creating clear and direct ways to enroll all eligible children. Additionally, a unified enrollment system would give stakeholders and providers the ability to see where access is limited and where service gaps exist while also providing data that informs system-level strategies for early childhood programming within the county.

FECC's vision for unified enrollment focuses on two clear principles. First, all families deserve equitable access to publicly funded early care and education programs. Second, all publicly funded programs in the Genesee County Quality Preschool Partnership (GCQPP) are committed to operating on a level playing field governed by a shared set of guidelines and principles. These principles are demonstrated through our design values, which include:

1 Include All Programs in The System

- All program types participate in the design process.
- Application must allow families to rank programs in order of preference.
- A shared set of enrollment policies must be agreed upon by all participating programs.
- Access to high-level data dashboards should be available to all system level users and partners.
- Application data, demand reports and third-party evaluations must be used by all participants and the greater community to strategically plan for program needs.

2 The System (and all components) Must Be Simple And Family-Friendly

- Application platform must allow families to search individual program profiles and use formulated application fields that adjust based on the applicant's program eligibility.
- Families must have ability to update their application during the enrollment window and option to be informed of all application changes via email, text and form letters.
- All application materials and outreach support must be available multiple formats and languages.
- One-on-one support must continue to be available to families who may need it.

3 Program Information Should Be Accessible and Unbiased in its Presentation

- All program materials must present all options available to families.
- Materials must provide eligibility requirements and details on seat availability.
- Information must explain the differences in program offerings and the benefits each program can or cannot offer families (IE: Bus tokens or stipends for transportation costs).
- Families who do not qualify for publicly -funded preschool seats also need information on options.

4 Stakeholders Must Be Engaged in all Levels of System Development

- Every stage of the design and implementation must involve stakeholders as value-added partners.
- For families, partners and the community at large, the design process must provide a feeling of ownership and investment.
- It is vital that all stakeholders and families understand what problems unified enrollment can solve and which issues cannot be addressed by the system.

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OUR PARTNERS

