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About the Early Learning Alliance Network

The Early Learning Alliance Network is a not-for-profit, 501C-3 organization focused on developing networks that can support the educators, families, and other caregivers of children ages 0-8. The Early Learning Alliance Network envisions a community that is empowered with information and resources to engage in and support high quality early learning. This community will exist through transparency, networking, learning, and a commitment to all young children. As a result of our work, systems of learning connect to ensure that all families and children and educators have access to what they need to thrive.

The Early Learning Alliance Network has three standing priority areas: transitions to K-12 schools, data collection to help all stakeholders, and the empowerment of educators, families, and other stakeholders to better serve young children through their individual contributions. As an organization we are founded on the belief that there are resources in existence to support high quality learning for our children both in and out of formal learning communities; our job is to empower, engage, and ignite access and understanding of those resources and supports so that all young children have countless opportunities to thrive. If those resources do not exist, our job is to develop, network, and innovate to make those resources accessible for all children.

Early Learning Alliance Network Leadership

Dr. Jody Britten has been a classroom teacher, special educator, educational leader, professor, assessment coordinator, author, advocate, consultant, speaker, advisor, and researcher in education. Jody has been engaged with public and private schools around curriculum, creativity, learning environments, systemic change, student advocacy, assessment, and accessibility since a very young age. Jody's most recent work has positioned her as a thought leader in 21st Century skills, digital learning, and developing educational systems that impact student engagement. Jody co-authored several guiding documents on the implementation and assessment of critical non-academic skills throughout Canada and the United States. Having trained school leaders and teachers from preK-20 on six continents, Jody has made courageous contributions to education worldwide. Under the Obama administration she served as one of the chief architects to the Future Ready Schools framework and the Future Ready Schools assessment system that has impacted more than 20 million students and 2 million educators in the United States. She has co-authored the research foundations and classroom strategies for the International Society for Technology in Education 2017 learning standards for students used in over 27 countries. In addition, Jody has continuously supported the Center for Applied Special Technologies and the Universal Design Implementation and Research Network. With a rich history in Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, Dr. Britten continuously seeks opportunities for all children to thrive. As a community advocate, Jody founded the Early Learning Alliance Network to support children, families, and educators using a framework for community empowerment. Her work in early childhood has supported more than 19,000 young children as she continues innovating to provide supports and resources for young children and their families, educators, and caregivers. Jody's quiet and purposeful advocacy for children and education has enabled her to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and educational

leaders, the skills and awareness of parents, and the lives of children globally. Jody serves as the CEO for ELAN.

Early Learning Alliance Network Team

The Early Learning Alliance Network is led by a dynamic team of professionals. The following provides an overview of the expertise we hold on our team.

Sara Mills Henderson has been a consultant with Deloitte focused on data and systems change. Sara is a recognized community leader who has mastered the craft of networking and connecting with local early learning providers and other stakeholders. Sara is a graduate of the Citizens Academy, a former board member for her local school district's foundation, and an advocate for parents and children. Sara has been with the ELAN team since we started as the Networking and Outreach Coordinator and Data Acquisition Leader. Sara currently resides in Indiana.

Cheyenne Land Requiz has a strong background in early childhood education and has worked as a preschool teacher, program director, curriculum designer, and instructional consultant in early learning. As the former owner of her own program, Cheyenne has a unique understanding of the role of program directors. Cheyenne joined the ELAN team as the Instructional Support Specialist and Special Assistant to the CEO. Cheyenne contributes creativity, knowledge, passion, and expertise to our team. Cheyenne currently resides in Illinois.

Peg Rideout has been a special educator with a focus on early childhood for her entire career. As a professional, serving families throughout Hamilton County, Indiana, for over thirty years, Peg has joined the ELAN team to continue her advocacy. Peg is a certified IN*SOURCE parent support advocate and works directly with our preschools to support families living through the early intervention process. Peg currently resides in Indiana and Florida.

Amanda Comage-Trower has been an early childhood educator since the age of seventeen. She is an author, advocate, and trainer for model preschool education. She works to directly support young children with Autism and is continually advocating for developmentally appropriate practices in ABA and other specialized supports. Amanda serves as our Advisor for Parent and Family Education. Amanda currently resides in Arizona.

David Kanter is a recognized thought leader and program designer for STEM and STEAM, especially for informal settings. David has previously been an instructional leader at EdMentum, the NYC SciLab, and more. David joined our team in 2019 as a STEM/STEAM advisor and works closely with our CEO to develop partnerships and revenue streams that support our work. David currently resides in Washington, D.C.

Joe Tocasik has worked in social media, marketing, and journalism for over ten years. He supports ELAN by ensuring that we utilize data to inform our outreach efforts, assisting in

managing press contacts, and developing outreach plans and programs for our organization. Joe currently resides in Indiana.

Opportunity

The greater Hamilton County and Northeast Marion County areas are the home to over 26,000 children under the age of five. The capacity of our communities to thrive depends in part on our ability to provide quality early childhood learning experiences for those young children. In order to develop and design solutions that directly benefit our early learning community, we must have data points that address our unique needs, opportunities, and challenges.

Process and Respondents

The Early Learning Alliance Network developed the Early Learning Providers Survey in 2018 and updated the Survey in October of 2019. The 2019 survey link was distributed to 386 email addresses for known early learning providers, 57 of those emails were returned, leaving 326 of those surveys successfully delivered. Overall only 32 providers completed the survey; however, those 32 providers account for 4,192 children under the age of six providing insight into the early childhood education of over 16% of the population of young children in our community. Average enrollment across responding programs was 123 children. Less than 10% of respondents are concerned about maintaining licensure.

Location Data

Seventy-four percent of responding programs do not accept CCDF (childcare development fund) or On My PreK funds. The responding programs that *do accept* CCDF or On My Way PreK funds were located in Indianapolis, Fishers, McCordsville, Noblesville and Tipton. The programs that *do accept* CCDF or On My Way PreK funds serve children from Fishers, Indianapolis, Noblesville, Carmel, and Westfield.

Eighty percent of responding programs have had a wait list in the last 12 months. Of the 20% of programs that *did not* have a wait list, the majority were located in Indianapolis (60%), Noblesville (30%), and Fishers, (10%).

What is the city associated with the physical address of your program?	Percent of Responding Programs	Where do the children in your program currently live?	Percent of Responding Programs that Serve Children from this City
Indianapolis	29%	Indianapolis	60%
Noblesville	17%	Noblesville	69%
Fishers	29%	Fishers	75%

Arcadia	0%	Arcadia	9%
Cicero	3%	Cicero	14%
Carmel	14%	Carmel	75%
Fortville	0%	Fortville	29%
Lapel	0%	Lapel	6%
McCordsville	3%	McCordsville	34%
Pendleton	0%	Pendleton	14%
Sheridan	3%	Sheridan	12%
Tipton	3%	Tipton	6%
Westfield	9%	Westfield	46%
Zionsville	0%	Zionsville	9%

Responding programs were most likely to have a staff ranging from 16-25 individuals. Responding programs indicated that parents/families are most often requesting care for children ages 2.5-4 years old. The responding programs demonstrated a cross section of available programs. The following provides an overview of responding program offerings.

Type of Program Offered	Percentage of Responding Programs
Preschool program	97%
Pre-Kindergarten program	83%
3 day per week option	71%
2 day per week option	63%
5 day per week option	63%
Part day program (lunch provided or brought from home)	54%
Before care (at least one hour before your program start times)	51%
4 day per week option	51%
After care (at least one hour after your program start times)	49%
Full day care (8am-5pm)	43%
Private kindergarten	40%

Typical school day care (8/9am-3pm)	31%
Traditional daycare program	31%
1 day per week option	29%
Transitional kindergarten (typically for kids turning five in late summer months or early Fall/Winter)	20%
Part day program (no lunch provided or allowed to be brought from home)	17%
In home care	6%
Drop off care/play (parents leave child when needed)	0%

Responding providers worked with all ages from newborn through age six. The following provides an overview of how many of responding providers provide care/education for each age group.

Age Group	Percentage of responding providers that offer care/education for age group
Newborns	29%
Under 1	37%
1-1.5	49%
1.5-2	69%
2-2.5	77%
2.5-3	80%
3	97%
4	100%
5	94%
6	54%

Findings

The following provides an overview of data collected through the ELAN's Early Learning Providers Survey. Analysis was completed using JMP and SPSS statistical analysis software; cross tabulations were completed whenever possible to identify any overall trends in needs and

services. Analysis was cross-checked and conclusions are based on the final data analysis presented in this report.

“We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.” Stacia Tauscher

Early Learning Program Directors

The most critical pain points for early learning programs directors included paying staff competitively (69%), finding quality staff (49%), and providing benefits to staff (49%). Providers noted that they are experiencing several successes as programs, including (1) having strong family and school connections, (2) full enrollment in programs, and (3) fantastic teams of individuals providing care and education.

The top concerns of programs directors include (1) managing increased participation in their programs (41%), (2) funding to improve programs (44%), and (3) inability to meet study needs (31%). Programs that are concerned with declining participation in their programs were most often located in Fishers (38%), Indianapolis (25%), Noblesville (25%), and Carmel/Sheridan/Westfield (12%).

Current issues facing staff at responding early learning/care programs included financial stress, professionalism, and general wellbeing. Locating quality staff was an issue for programs in Indianapolis, Fishers, Noblesville, Westfield, and Carmel. Staff turnover was commonly noted as a staff issue for all programs (regardless of location).

41% of program directors noted that the financial concerns of families, managing enrollment, and their own need for training in the area of marketing (their programs) are among the top concerns facing their programs.

The top three priorities for professional development as they relate to instruction include supporting social-emotional growth (61%), supporting the mental health of children (57%), integrating outdoor learning spaces (46%), and helping adults understand the importance of play (40%).

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults.” F. Douglas

Observations of Children whom Providers Serve

The Early Learning Providers Survey asked respondents to consider the needs of children they serve as well as strengths of those same children. In terms of needs/deficits, 77% of responding programs noted behavioral issues, with 69% noting social emotional skills, 37% reporting the presence of special needs (hearing, vision, speech, etc.), and 34% reporting issues with either development delays/possible disabilities and capacity for independence. Strengths of children being served focused on love of learning, capacity to develop skills, and academic readiness.

“Since the jobs that our preschoolers will do probably don’t exist yet, our priority is to teach them the skills to adapt and inquire and question and cooperate...life skills. So much more useful than rigid concepts such as the alphabet.” Caroline Bellouse

Observations of the Parents/Families/Caretakers of Children whom Providers Serve

The Early Learning Providers Survey asked respondents to consider the needs of the parents/families/caretakers of the children they serve as well as strengths of those same caretakers.

Area of Need	Percentage of Programs identify this as an area of need for parents/families/caretakers
Competing priorities (i.e., commitments, job responsibilities, distractions, etc.)	71%
Lack of understanding of child development	51%
Financial stress	43%
Competitive nature	26%
Mental health needs	17%
None	6%

Strengths of parents/families/caretakers of the children being served (as noted by respondents) most commonly focused on commitment to their child’s academics, presence in their child’s education, and persistence to address financial issues. It is important to note that several respondents noted that they are seeing an increase in the number of parents who truly want their children to learn through play (however there seems to be some confusion among parents who see play as a competing priority to academics).

“Every day, in 100 small ways our children ask, ‘Do you hear me? Do you see me? Do I matter?’ Their behavior often reflects our response.” L. Knost

Understanding the Impact of the Early Learning Alliance Network

The Early Learning Providers Survey asked respondents to identify Early Learning Alliance Network events that they have participated in, and further asked respondents to report out their overall satisfaction with those events.

Seventy-five percent of responding programs have participated in Early Learning Alliance Network events. Of those, 100% have participated in both networking events and preschool fairs. Ninety-five of programs that participated in all of the Early Learning Alliance Network events have had a waitlist in the last 12 months. In addition, 95% of responding programs that participated in all of the Early Learning Alliance Network events *do not accept* CCDF or On My Way PreK funds.

One hundred percent of responding programs have had their expectations met or exceeded when participating in an Early Learning Alliance Network event. When asked how the Early Learning Alliance Network could improve their support, the following were the most frequent comments:

- The Early Learning Alliance Network serves as our biggest advocate (Hamilton and Marion county).
- The Early Learning Alliance Network serves as our biggest connection to state and local policy changes.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network serves as our best opportunity to engage with other professionals in early learning.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network is our strongest advocate for young children.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network serves as our best resource for professional development on learning, play, and, and critical skills.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network could improve by collaborating with all county school districts more often.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network could improve by providing more guidance on how programs can engage and be part of the events and activities.
- The Early Learning Alliance Network could improve by providing more guidance on leveled professional development and how state programs connect.

The needs of early learning professionals focused on assistance in accessing quality and ongoing training, accessing funding to support innovation, and accessing early intervention supports in a timely manner.

The Early Learning Alliance Network's strategic program areas for 2020 are as follows:

1. Develop an innovation fund for early learning;
2. Fund professional learning opportunities focused on learning science;
3. Expand collaboration opportunities with all school districts;
4. Develop a targeted marketing and communication plan to further outreach; and,
5. Further develop partnerships to allow access to timely and low-cost professional development.