



Ready Start Washington Parish
Early Childhood Network
Blueprint

VISION:

All children, birth to age five, residing in the Ready Start Washington Parish Early Childhood Network will enter kindergarten ready for success.

MISSION:

The mission of the Ready Start Washington Parish Network is to promote and develop educational and economic opportunities by providing quality developmentally appropriate early childhood care and education for children from infancy to age five so that each child enters kindergarten ready for success.

January 2026 (Last updated December 19, 2025)

Introduction

Our network is an equal partnership of ten entities. Our membership includes eight early learning centers, Head Start and the Washington Parish Public School System. Our network supports families with young children by providing quality early childhood educational experiences and services. Since 90% of brain development occurs before age five, it is critically important that the needs of our youngest learners be addressed prior to entering kindergarten.

All four-year old children have the opportunity to attend pre-kindergarten at no cost. We also serve children from birth to three children through our partnerships with privately owned early learning centers. However, public funding for birth to three seats has been significantly reduced. Delays in the approval of CCAP applications have also been a hardship for families. This has caused a disheartening reduction in the number of children served.

Every child deserves access to a high quality early childhood education. Access should not be denied based on a child's zip code and economic circumstance. According to data provided by the LDOE, the needs of at-risk birth to three-year-old children in the network's rural areas remain critical. We are currently working to eliminate childcare deserts but eligible families are often unable to enroll in quality early childhood education programs. Due to distance, lack of transportation, economic hardships and a lack of providers, these families are denied access to services they desperately need. Additionally, our data indicates that 26.2% of these children have special needs including significant developmental delays and have been classified as "at risk for academic difficulties."

We also must address the academic quality of our programs. Our schools and early learning centers have high scores in providing loving and caring environments for our youngest learners. However, instructional strategies scores as measured by **CLASS** have decreased. Kindergarten readiness skills, particularly literacy, as determined by **DIBELS 8th** beginning of year testing, need significant improvement. Lack of language and literacy development is critical in our network and is significantly affecting kindergarten readiness. Improving literacy and language skills through better instruction is essential. More children than ever before are in need of special education services related to language development deficits.

2025 Network Performance Scores based on the network **CLASS** scores in instructional strategies and engaged support for learning domains for toddlers and prekindergarten students.

4.84 Proficient in prekindergarten instructional strategies (state 4.32)

4.69 Proficient in birth to three engaged support for learning (state 4.60)

Overall Washington Network Performance score 5.86 (state 5.54)

Although our overall network score improved from 5.85 to 5.86, our instructional strategies scores

decreased from 4.75 to 4.69.

Engaged support for learning decreased from 4.85 to 4.84.

Funding is needed for targeted on site coaching and workforce development/stabilization.

Beginning of the year pre-kindergarten **TSGOLD fall 2025** checkpoint data for language and literacy and demonstrates significant deficits.

- **50% cannot comprehend spoken language**
- **45% cannot speak clearly**
- **66% cannot identify letter-sound correspondences**
- **58% cannot interact during reading experiences, book conversations, and text reflections.**
- **70% cannot count**
- **71% cannot identify basic shapes**
- **43% cannot identify and name letters, even the letters in their names.**

Recognizing that parents/caregivers are a child's first teachers, expanding services for families so that they are engaged and empowered in the education of their children is essential. Critical workforce shortages and teacher turnover are another major challenge in a small rural parish lacking in businesses and industry.

The majority of our families live below the poverty level, often in single parent homes. The cycle of poverty in this parish can end in a generation, if we are committed to quality early childhood education.

Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Quality early childhood care and education will be available throughout the parish meeting the critical need for services, particularly in the rural high poverty areas of the district. Public/private partnerships and diverse delivery will be in place eliminating childcare deserts and waitlists.

Strategies: Continue to raise public awareness of the importance of early education and its effect on child development, particularly literacy and numeracy through informational campaigns targeting families with young children. Hold community meetings to discuss funding needs and opportunities within the community.

Resources:

- As a network, we have a shared vision and commitment to providing the children of our district with quality early childhood educational experiences and supporting their families in choosing the program that best meets their needs. Our network has an advisory board with a clear vision to guide strategic planning as well as bylaws to provide structure.
- We have a significant number of community leaders who have been involved in supporting our network, as well as new potential members who have expressed their support.
- Our network is primarily rural, with the majority of families living at or below the poverty level. However, we are in contact with community leaders who understand the critical need for early childhood education and are working on several proposals including new partnerships with the faith based and medical communities.

Progress to Date:

- We are working with Regina Coeli Head Start and our private childcare partners to develop strategies to meet the need for services in the eastern portion of the parish.
- We are sharing risk assessment data with network partners, elected representatives, business leaders, and the community as a whole.
- We have built a diverse advisory board and fundraising committee of community leaders to support our mission.
- The Washington Parish School System and Eager Scholars Early Learning Center with the support of all network partners, have provided seats for at-risk three year old children at Wesley Ray Elementary School in Angie using combined resources and grant funding
- Through the use of preschool development grant funding (PDG and B-3) more children than ever before have access to high quality early childhood programs providing families much needed support and resources. Over 180 children aged from birth to three are enrolled. Many of these students were infants and three new infant classrooms were opened.
- We have trained three administrators in the implementation of the Ages and Stages Developmental questionnaire and all center owner/directors.

- We hold child development screenings to identify at risk three-year-old children twice a year. We have trained three administrators in the implementation of the Ages and Stages Developmental questionnaire
- We have successfully collaborated with Northshore Technical College, LSU and our learning centers to offer a pilot Early Childhood dual enrollment program and paid internships for high school students this summer.
- We are developing community awareness and support for quality early childhood education. We have a website exclusively devoted to early childhood care and education. We are promoting the website and increasing its functionality, as well purchasing additional advertising in a variety of formats such as billboards, newspapers and on social media.

Needed:

- Funding is needed to implement and sustain these programs. Many classrooms have closed, particularly infant classrooms.
- Continue public private partnerships in the Thomas and Angie communities; provide quality childcare and education services to at- risk children from birth to three and after-school care to school aged children. We have been forced to close our three year old classroom at Wesley Ray due to lack of funding.
- Create new public/private partnerships that support the opening of additional early learning centers adjacent to rural public high schools. These sites would provide childcare for young mothers who are in high school as well as other children in the community desperately needing services.

Performance Metrics:

- In Thomas, we will continue to provide quality childcare and education services to at-risk children from birth to three (40) and after-school care to school aged children. (20 families) by the beginning of 2025-2026 school year.
- Funding will be secured that will provide three-year-old children with early child education and special education services in Angie through grants and/or a public private partnership with an early learning center.
- These projects will increase the number of at-risk infants to three-year old children receiving quality educational services by at least 100% in this portion of the network.
- At least 150 additional children are enrolled in quality early learning centers by 2029 when early care learning centers located on public high school campuses are operational.

Goal 2: Improve academic instruction through targeted professional development focused on language and literacy at all birth to five sites. In order to ensure kindergarten readiness as well as address the critical shortage of teachers at all levels it is essential that teachers receive the support they need to be effective educators.

Kindergarten entry scores have fallen throughout the district and increasingly large numbers of children require interventions and support services in the year they enter public school prekindergarten and kindergarten. Due to ongoing teacher turnover and expansion of early learning sites, professional development will be provided to all centers and schools as a means of maintaining and increasing the level of proficiency at all sites. A vigorous mentorship program at the site and district level will be established. This program will support newly hired teachers as well as teachers who are struggling and at risk for exiting the profession. We will establish an early childhood teacher education program at the high school level. This program will include dual enrollment college credits and paid internships.

Strategies: The network will focus on the importance of kindergarten readiness skills and the effect on student achievement. Targeted social media posts, parental resources, community and family outreach at schools, early learning centers, and Head Start will help to achieve this goal.

Resources:

- Using Birth to Five funding we have provided targeted coaching and professional development through Teaching Strategies, Frog Street and Teachstone to improve effective implementation of the curriculum and assessment. We have also focused on improving instructional strategies at all sites.
- We forged partnerships to promote early childhood teacher education opportunities for high school students and piloted a successful program in partnership with Northshore Technical College and LSU. Many of the graduates from this pilot have continued to remain in the early childhood workforce as they pursue degrees from universities and colleges.
- Classrooms at all sites are using high quality curricula and assessments.

Progress to Date:

- We have collaborated with Northshore Technical College, LSU and our learning centers to offer three Early Childhood dual enrollment courses and paid internships for high school students. High School students have completed CDA certification training while working as interns in network centers.
- New teachers have received on-site coaching from the Washington Parish School System as well as group coaching sessions on the **GOLD** assessment, ***The Creative Curriculum***, ***Frog Street*** and ***CLASS***.
- Network teachers, assistant teachers, paraprofessionals and coaches have attended group professional development events focusing on the improvement of instructional strategies.

- Principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches, Head Start coaches, and childcare center owner-directors completed CLASS assessment training and became reliable observers.

Needed:

- In order to improve language and literacy skills as measured by DIBELS 8th and the kindergarten numeracy assessment, funding is needed to provide effective, targeted support from on-site mentors in all classrooms.
- Continue to provide professional development in effective instructional strategies as measured by the CLASS assessment tool.
- Dual enrollment opportunities for high school students need to be available to meet the workforce demand for qualified teachers.
- Provide teachers with a high level of district/network support at all levels, to improve job performance and increase their desire to remain in the workforce.

Performance Metrics:

- The percentage of children prepared to enter kindergarten ready to read should increase by at least **15%** as measured by the beginning of year DIBELS 8th literacy screener and the DRDP.
- By May 2028, instructional strategies will be highly proficient or excellent at all network sites as measured by local and third party CLASS observations.
- By June 2028, an early childhood dual enrollment program and paid internships at early learning centers will be available to high school students.

Goal 3: Conduct intentional outreach and support for families at every level of the educational process and ensure that families have the support they need to access all available resources.

Strategies: Provide child development information and resources to families with young children through community outreach at churches, businesses, schools and early learning centers.

Resources:

- We have trained teachers in all pre-kindergarten classrooms to assist parents in administering the Ages and Stages developmental assessment. We expanded the implementation of the Ages and Stages questionnaire at all sites and provided supporting professional development in 2025-2026.

Progress to date:

- We have trained staff members as Early Childhood Guides.
- We have created a detailed sustainable family engagement plan.
- We have created a family advisory board.

- We have held one major community event to engage families in the early education process and determine their needs as well as address obstacles to early education access.
- We created informational materials for families to effectively promote family understanding of developmental milestones and the importance of language and literacy.
- We have developed a network website that provides families with links to a variety of resources as well as enrollment information for all sites. We have created monthly early childhood education social media blog posts to encourage family involvement and newsletters.

Performance Metrics:

- Support and resources will be provided to families through informational campaigns and at enrollment events. Access to quality early education programs and supporting resources will increase enrollment at all sites in 2027-2028.
- At the site level, parents will meet with administrators and teachers frequently to discuss their child's growth and development.
- Improve family engagement in the network through targeted events designed to inform families. Events will be held throughout the network. These events will support families in all aspects of the early care and educational process from mental and physical health, to choosing a center that meets their needs, to activities families can do at home to support their child's growth and development.
- Increased family involvement and teacher/parent partnerships will support children's growth and development and improve kindergarten readiness.
- The Washington Parish School System provides families with special education services and other community resources. Three-year-old children at our eleven network early learning sites and Head Start receive developmental screenings. Children aged four and older receive services at the district schools. We work closely with Early Steps to coordinate services to children from birth to two.

Needed:

- Funding will be needed to sustain and expand these programs.

Goal 4: Ready Start Washington will secure sustainable funding from non-profit organizations and local businesses to meet the childcare needs of young families by May 2028.

Strategies: Frequent informational meetings with community leaders including elected representatives, faith based organizations, businesses and other organizations particularly non-profits will be scheduled several times a year.

Resources:

- As a network, we have a shared vision and commitment to providing our children with quality early childhood educational experiences and supporting their families in choosing the program that best meets their needs.
- We have a governance structure and by-laws that supports our mission. Our community leaders understand the critical need for early childhood education and are working on several proposals including establishing new partnerships with the faith based and medical communities. We are sharing risk assessment data with network partners, elected representatives, business leaders, and the community as a whole.
- We have built a diverse advisory board and fundraising committee of community leaders to support our mission.

Progress to Date:

- The network has expanded early care and education services to two remote areas that had previously been childcare deserts. Families now have access to quality early childhood programs. Birth to three year olds in the Pine/Thomas community and three year olds at Wesley Ray Elementary School in Angie are currently attending programs through public/private partnerships. Children with special needs are encouraged to enroll and receive services throughout the school day.
- We have met with local community leaders and elected officials to establish a more viable network presence. In the process of conducting focus groups to address network workforce issues, we have engaged with diverse stakeholders throughout the parish.
- We have collaborated with non-profits and attended regional network meetings promoting the importance of early education and seeking financial support

Performance Metrics:

- By January 2027, we are able to demonstrate the critical need for early care and education, particularly in the rural areas of the parish, in a way that builds support for our mission locally and outside the community.
- We will secure sustainable funding for the future by establishing and strengthening relationships with the business community and non-profit organizations that share our vision.

Needed:

- Sustainable local funding and additional grants will be needed to sustain these programs.