



**READY START
NATCHITOCHE'S (RSN)
Blueprint**

Early Investment

The most rapid period of development in life happens in children’s earliest years. It is critically important for parents, family members, teachers, and the community to unite and support young children and families.

- 70% of the brain is developed by age 1; 80% of brain development occurs by age 3, and 90% of brain development occurs by age 5.
- 43.8% of Natchitoches Parish children are living in households below 200% of poverty, (<https://www.natchitochesla.gov/content/2022-city-goals-and-objectives>)

Research studies show the first 2,000 days of a child's life set the foundation for language development and social-emotional skills. Quality early childhood education prepares children to be ready to learn on the first day of Kindergarten.

We are committed to ensuring that children are healthy and ready for kindergarten by sustaining a collaborative, supportive network that actively engages with various community partners.

Current Status

Natchitoches Parish Early Childhood Network has 19 Early Childhood sites, 6 public schools, 9 private pay Type III childcare centers, and 4 Head/Early Head Start sites. According to 2020 - 2021 Early Childhood Network Summary Data, Natchitoches Parish Early Childhood sites are serving nearly all economically disadvantaged four-year-olds (85%). Unfortunately, Natchitoches Parish Early Childhood sites are not offering the same level or scale of affordable care for families of young children infant-3. As of 2022 The network is serving approximately 21% economically disadvantaged infants to three-year-olds.

Natchitoches Parish Early Childhood educators are adhering to best practice:

- 100% of educators are using a tier 1 curriculum and quality assessment tool
- 100% of Public PreK teachers are certified
- 70% of educators have an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate or higher.

Data obtained from the Early Childhood Network Summary – 2021-2022

Additionally, educators must receive a minimum of two CLASS® observations per academic year. CLASS® is a research-based tool that measures the quality of adult-child interactions. Natchitoches Early Childhood Network’s overall CLASS domains have improved incrementally each year.

Natchitoches Overall CLASS Performance Rating	Current # of sites that scored Proficient (4.5) - Excellent (7)	%
Public PreK	6 of 6	100%
Type III Childcare Centers	8 of 9	89%
Head Start	4 of 4	100%

Data obtained from LDOE 2022 Site Performance Data

Natchitoches CLASS Performance Rating Target Domains	Current # of sites that scored Proficient (4.5) - Excellent (7)
Instructional Support	44%
Emotional Learning Support	67%

Data obtained from LDOE 2022 Site Performance Data

While wages are low across the board, there are also persistent inequities in teachers' compensation and benefits within the system itself. Despite the increase in education, training, assessment, and other requirements for all Natchitoches Parish Early Childhood educators, individuals in childcare settings are rewarded significantly less than educators in Head Start/ Early Head Start and public-school settings. Low wages lead to high teacher turnover. High teacher turnover harms students' achievement, discourages educators, and undermines efforts to recruit a highly qualified workforce.

Vision: By working together as a community, our children will grow, learn, and reach their full potential.

Mission: Ensure our community understands and supports a system of high-quality and sustainable early childhood education to develop a foundation for life-long learning.

GOALS:

1. Increase community awareness about the importance of high-quality early childhood care and education by the end of the 2023 - 2024 academic year.
2. Increase birth - 3-year-old seats from 29% to 59% by 2024-2025 school year to ensure families have easy access to affordable, high-quality childcare and education.
3. Achieve and maintain retention rates among birth- 4-year-old childcare professionals of at least 90% or higher by 2023-2024.
4. By the end of the 2024-2025 school year, **60%** of Early Childhood educators will receive Proficient higher in Instructional Support domain and **80%** of Early Childhood educators will receive Proficient or higher in Engaged Support for Learning domain.

Goal 1: Increase community awareness about the importance of high-quality early childhood care and education by the end of the 2023 - 2024 academic year.

Strategies:

- Hire Emergent Methods to turn Goal 1 into a SMART goal. Scope of Work:
 - Developing and administering a survey that measures perceptions of early childhood education in Natchitoches Parish
 - Drafting a comprehensive report of survey findings
 - Crafting a clear, targeted, and multi-faceted communications campaign, including a communications toolkit, to increase community awareness
- Continue to use intentional digital marketing strategies
- Continue to develop and disseminate resources, data, relevant and pertinent early childhood information to local businesses, churches, social service agencies, hospitals, banks, clinics, law enforcement, court, legal personnel, civic organizations, and etc.
- RSN, Program Partners, Early Childhood Community Outreach Coordinator and Liaison continue to meet with individuals/groups to create new knowledge, understanding, and support of the EC Network and early childhood development.

Resources:

- Existing: Support: Early Childhood Community Outreach Coordinator and Liaison, Ready Start Network members, Early Childhood Website, Social Media Webpage, Emergent Method, Poole Media, and Early Childhood LDOE
- Existing: Partnership with KTBS 2022-2023 has demonstrated an increase in community

awareness and enrollment of students.

Performance Metrics:

- Website and social media traffic increase
- Smart Goal that measures perceptions of early childhood education in Natchitoches Parish
- Receive a 90% family satisfaction rating based on LDOE annual survey results.

Goal 2: Increase birth - 3-year-old seats from 29% TO 59% by 2024-2025 school year to ensure families have easy access to affordable, high-quality child care and education

Strategies:

- Continue to find innovative ways to assist parents with childcare costs in an effort to serve more birth-3-year-old children. Leverage existing and secure new funds.
- Continue to collaborate with all program partners.
- Use data from needs assessment to make informed decisions.
- Place a birth - 2 year old program in target Natchitoches Parish “desert” childcare region.

Resources:

- Existing: Online registration management system (School Mint). Continue to collaborate and/or develop partnership agreement with key stakeholders (RSN, LDOE, program and community partners)
- Needed: Secure funds from philanthropic foundations

Performance Metrics:

- Increased birth-3-year-old Child Count enrollment
- Secure funds for more birth - 3-year-olds seats
- 90 - 100% parent/family satisfactory ratings based on survey results

Goal 3: Achieve and maintain retention rates among birth- 4-year-old child care professionals of at least 90% or higher by 2023-2024.

Strategies

- Continue to offer career ladder and performance incentives to key providers and/or mentor leaders.
- Continue to equip teachers with the resources needed to provide high-quality instruction.
- Continue to equip child care directors to effectively support teachers.

Resources:

- Existing: Training, venue, collaboration with key stakeholders (RSN, LDOE, program and community partners, NSU Resource and Referral, and Orchard Foundation, etc.)
- Needed:
 - An ongoing review process of incentives to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. Current data reflects current incentive initiatives are not yielding desired results.
 - Increase partnership with local workforce development programs such as Ben D.

Johnson Education Center, that focus on certification for Early Childhood

Performance Metrics:

- Lowered teacher turnover rate
- Increase in teacher satisfaction rate, based on teacher survey data
- All birth to-3-year-old teachers have an Ancillary Certificate or higher

Goal 4: By the end of the 2024-2025 school year, 60% of Early Childhood educators will receive Proficient higher in Instructional Support domain and 80% of Early Childhood educators will receive Proficient or higher in Engaged Support for Learning domain.

Strategies

- Early Childhood coach to strategically assist directors with new and low performing educators.
- Program partner coaches will collaborate
- Full-time instructional coach to assist CIR/UIR schools, struggling, and/or new teachers
- Continue to provide ongoing training, professional development, and technical assistance to educators, directors, administrators, and coaches that focus on Instructional Support and Engage Support for Learning Domain.

Resources

- Existing: Orchard Foundation, ongoing training/professional development, and two Head Start coaches. Partnership with Northwestern State University Child & Family Network Resource and Referral Agency.
- Needed: Funding for additional instructional coach for Early Childhood sites

Performance Metrics

- Increased early childhood performance scores in Instructional Support & Engaged Support for Learning

