



CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMUNITY PLAN (CYCP) REPORT CARD



ALEXANDRIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS ENSURING EVERY CHILD SUCCEEDS TODAY AND TOMORROW

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 7

This issue reports the progress made on increasing participation in early care and education between April 2021 - October 2023

CYCP GOAL

All Children, Youth, and Families are Physically Safe & Healthy

ALEXANDRIA SPOTLIGHT

This Report Card celebrates the incredible work that [Kids' First Years \(KFY\)](#) has accomplished to build an equitable and accessible early care and education (ECE) system in Alexandria! KFY is the coordinating body of ECE partners and is the collective voice of Alexandria's ECE system. The work is carried out by a collective of individuals and organizations working collaboratively to create a system that removes barriers and ensures all children and families have equitable access to high quality ECE supports and services.

Since the CYCP 2025 was approved by City Council in 2021, KFY:

- officially and became its own 501(c)(3) organization;
- served as the [Ready Region Capital Area](#) local coordinator to implement VA's new unified measurement and improvement system;
- began the design of a Family Council;
- written monthly articles for [The Zebra](#);
- engaged stakeholders in a strategic planning process;
- kicked off ALX Preschool;
- hosted monthly [Connect & Play events and quarterly Community Baby Showers](#);
- launched [The Basics Insights](#), a free text messaging program;
- continues to train and coach teaching staff and administrators through its [Quality Collaborative](#);
- and so much more.

You can read more about KFY's efforts to build an ECE system that is [aligned, accessible, high-quality, comprehensive, and equitable](#) in their [Common Agenda](#) and [Annual Reports](#)!

2022-23 BACKBONE STAFF

- Michelle Smith Howard
- Maria McDonald
- Dr. Kim Sopko
- Tomashia Cornitcher
- Milagro Yanes Benitez
- Muriel Tapia

2022-23 WORK GROUP MEMBERS

- Laura Basu
- Kara Blankner
- Dr. Poornima Chandra
- Robin Crawley
- Ellen Kennedy Folts*
- Kate Garvey
- Chrishonna Greene
- Emily Griffey*
- J. Glenn Hopkins
- Michelle Smith Howard*
- Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt*
- Abbie Lieberman*
- Dr. Tammy Mann*
- Barbara McLaughlin
- Lori Morris*
- Barbara Paylson*
- Nanci Pedulla
- Giselle Pelaez
- Jane Richardson
- Maritza Rosa
- Fadi Saadeh
- Carmen Sanders*
- Dr. Christine Schull
- Diane Smalley
- Dr. Bweikia Foster Steen
- Heidi Haggerty Wagner
- Brandi Yee

*KFY Board of Directors



RESULT

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

WHY THIS MATTERS

Our brains never develop more rapidly than in the first five years of life, and the quality of care and learning that happens during that time can have a significant impact on success, health, and happiness for the rest of our lives ([Smithsonian Institution, 2022](#)). When young children have the opportunity to attend high-quality early care and education (ECE), they are given a strong start in life. Studies, such as one by [Harvard](#) (2017), have shown how high-quality ECE programs can prepare children to develop the social and emotional skills they need to build and maintain strong relationships, do well in school, graduate high school, have a lifelong enthusiasm for reading and learning, and ultimately leads to improved long-term outcomes and economic prospects.

Research from the [National Head Start Association](#) further shows that providing children a high-quality early learning experience reduces the need for future educational interventions and social services. Additionally, it lowers criminal justice costs, increases productivity among families, and ensures better health outcomes later in life with lower rates of diabetes and heart disease ([Society for Research in Childhood Development, 2013](#)). ECE also plays a significant role in reducing educational inequalities and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Despite these benefits, however, access to early learning programs is complicated. Unlike K-12 education, early learning is not a cohesive system or a continuous program, but a collection of offerings that range in quality. Well-resourced families are able to pay for high quality care and education to ensure their children's optimal development. Families with limited resources are not. The result: too many kids enter school behind, and kids who enter behind tend to stay behind ([Smithsonian Institution](#)).

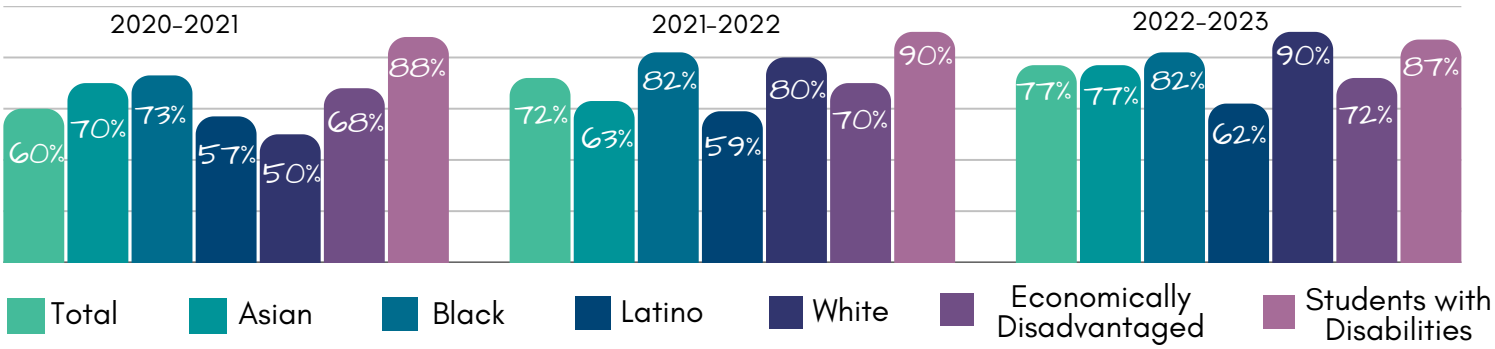
Investing in ECE is not just an investment in the future of individual children, but also in the future of society as a whole, as it paves the way for a more educated, skilled, and equitable community.



HOW WE ARE DOING

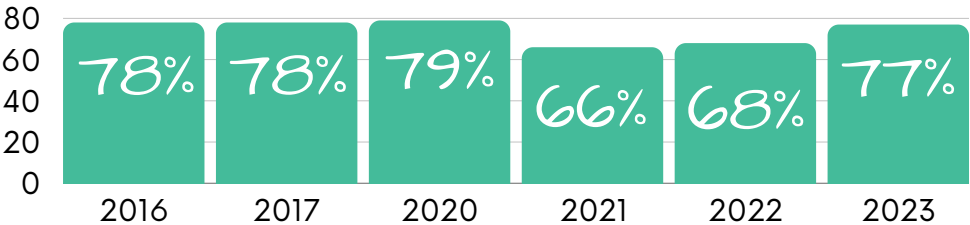
Kindergarten Students with a Pre-K Experience

Source: Equity for All 2025 Dashboard



Kindergarten Students with Fall PALS-K scores at or above Kindergarten readiness benchmark

Data Source: Equity for All 2025 Dashboard



STRATEGIES

- #1. Foster a coordinated system of equitable access, capacity, enrollment, and funding
- #2. Establish meaningful partnerships and channels of information sharing with families to support families as their child’s first teacher
- #3. Develop and coordinate professional learning opportunities for all early care and education providers to ensure equitable high-quality, culturally responsive learning experiences for young children
- #4. Promote our collective early care and education vision through collaborative strategic planning, data-driven decision making, sustainable funding, and policy

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

Progress with increasing participation in early care and education:



CHAMPION



PARTNERS

- [Alexandria City Public Schools](#)
- [Alexandria Library](#)
- Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation
- [Campagna Center](#)
- [Center for Alexandria’s Children](#)
- [Child & Family Network Centers](#)
- [Community Health, Inova](#)
- [Creative Play School](#)
- [DCHS, City of Alexandria](#)
- [George Mason University](#)
- [Hopkins House](#)
- [Neighborhood Health](#)
- [Northern Virginia Community College Alexandria](#)
- [Northern Virginia Family Service](#)

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?



TO IMPROVE ACCESS, KIDS’ FIRST YEARS HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF:

- Completing a preschool space audit for program continuity and expansion opportunities
- Creating an annual preschool delivery strategy and optimizing funding streams supporting it
- Refining the enrollment processes to enable families to have a more transparent understanding of their eligibility for various programs
- Developing a coordinated enrollment process with one point of entry



TO ESTABLISH FAMILY CONNECTIONS, KIDS’ FIRST YEARS HAS FULLY IMPLEMENTED:

- The Basics Awareness Campaign
- Forging connections among health and education providers in order to identify specific ways KFY can support comprehensive health care

...AND HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF:

- Developing stronger feedback mechanisms for families to engage with providers
- Strengthening transitions between pre-K and grades K-3
- Promoting parent and family engagement in education around child development by supporting efforts to establish universal developmental screening for families who have children ages 0-5

TO IMPROVE SYSTEM ALIGNMENT, KIDS’ FIRST YEARS HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF:



- Developing a data system and data sharing agreements with key partners to capture how children are being served by and benefiting from the early care and education system
- Implementing a longitudinal data tracking system to track children as they move through the early care and education system
- Understanding the gaps and opportunities related to existing funding streams and capacity

TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES, KIDS’ FIRST YEARS HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF:



- Increasing the number of childcare centers, preschools, and family childcare homes that are accredited and/or participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Developing a professional learning continuum that is based on provider professional goals

...AND, DCHS – EARLY CHILDHOOD HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF:

- Developing a system for ongoing Infant Mental Health consultation by providing professional development and training opportunities
- Developing a system to evaluate the impact of Infant Mental Health services

HOW MUCH HAVE WE DONE?



ACCESS

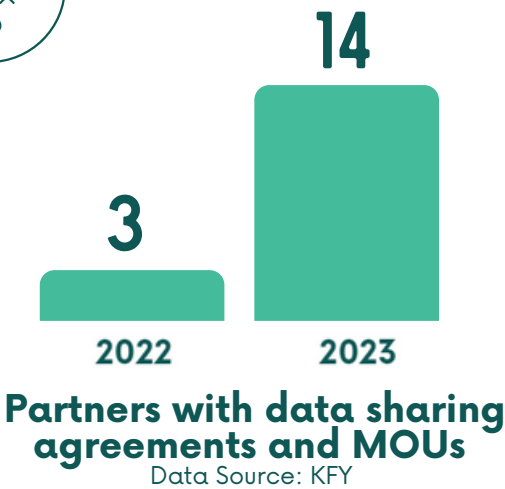
THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING DEDICATED TO EARLY CARE & EDUCATION IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA'S BUDGET HAS INCREASED BY **21%**



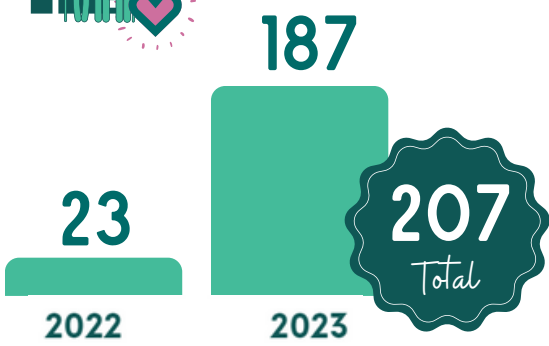
ECE in City Budget
Data Source: Approved Operating Budget, Alexandria City Council



SYSTEM ALIGNMENT



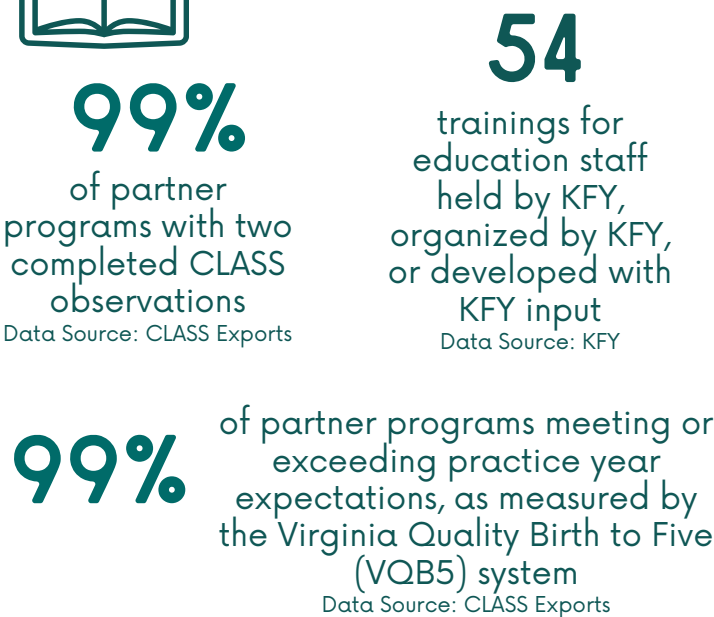
FAMILY CONNECTIONS



Families who joined the Basics Insights during the fiscal year
Data Source: The Basic Insights, Subscriber Data



QUALITY



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?



COLLECTIVE IMPACT

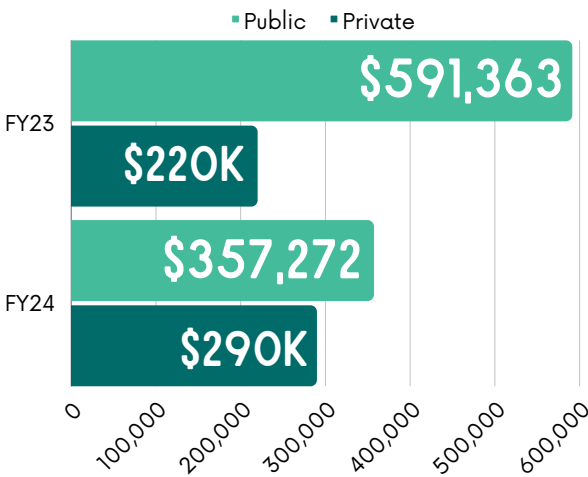
In the spirit of continuous learning, KFY asks its members annually to reflect on how the development and implementation of the early care and education collective impact initiative is progressing.

AMONG THE KFY MEMBERS:

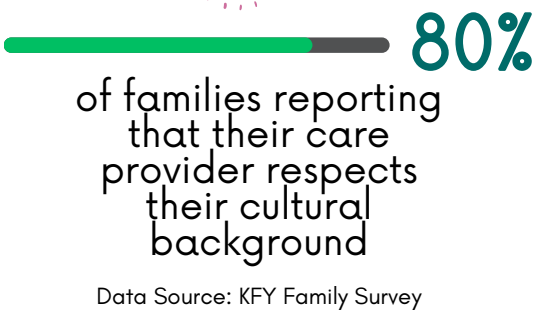


SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

public-private partnership supporting the collective efforts:



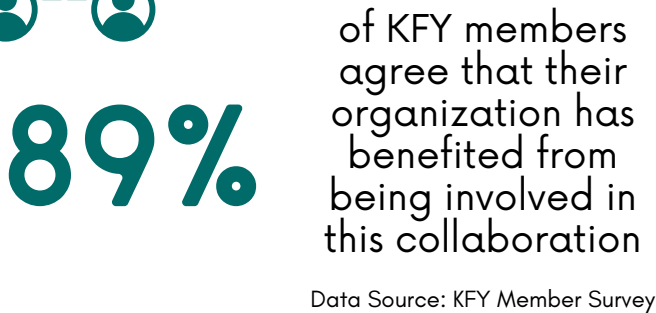
FAMILY CONNECTIONS



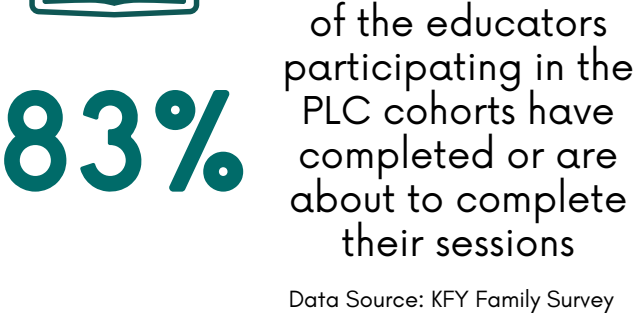
IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?



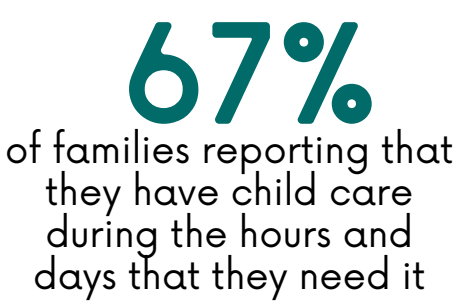
COLLECTIVE IMPACT



QUALITY



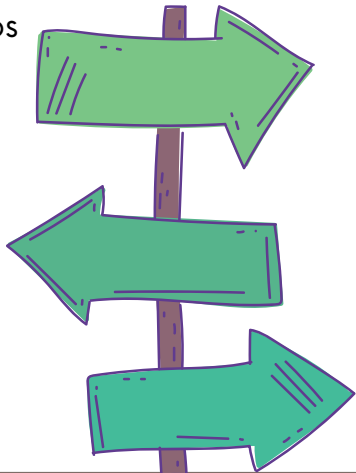
FAMILY CONNECTIONS



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FROM NOW UNTIL 2025, KFY WILL CONTINUE TO:

- Build relationships through collaborative public and private partnerships to ensure sustainability of our local systems and structures.
- Engage families in informing the design of early childhood systems, policies, and services.
- Strengthen quality of programs to ensure high-impact learning experiences and outcomes for children.
- Increase access by championing equitable early childhood opportunities through exploration and implementation of coordinated enrollment strategies.



RESOURCES

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

Child Care Assistance programs provide funding to enhance the quality, affordability and availability of child care for Alexandria families. Find out if you are eligible and apply for child care assistance at the [Virginia Common Help website](#).

TANF CHILDCARE

If a parent or legal guardian is receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), they may may be eligible for child care assistance. There is no fee for this program. For more information or to apply for this service, call **703.746.5437 (KIDS)**.

TRANSITIONAL CHILD CARE

If a parent or legal guardian has received TANF within the last twelve months, they may be eligible to receive assistance with child care, depending on income, to support their employment. For more information or to apply for this service, call **703.746.5437 (KIDS)**.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Families may be eligible for a child care subsidy for children aged 0-13 if both parents are working, going to school or participating in training. Families pay a single fee based on their income directly to the provider of care. The remainder of the cost of care is paid by DCHS. To be screened for this program, contact the Early Childhood Division at **703.746.5437 (KIDS)**.

VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE (VPI)

Quality pre-K child care programming through the Alexandria City Public School System and community partners is available at no cost to eligible families. Children engage in enriching educational experiences, explore learning materials and new ideas, and build their skills as they prepare to enter kindergarten. See a [list of VPI pre-school programs](#) or call **703-746-KIDS**.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

The [Parent infant Education Program](#) (PIE) serves families with children birth - 3 years old when there are concerns about the child’s development.

The **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Program** (IDD) serves children and youth aged 6 -22 years old who have a diagnosed intellectual or developmental disability. Call **703.746.KIDS**.

CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

See a brochure about getting help paying for child care. [English](#)| [Spanish](#)| [Amharic](#)| [Arabic](#)

CHILD CARE INFORMATION SERVICE

Use the [Child Care Checklist](#) when visiting a provider and check the provider's blue registration permit or state license to ensure that their registration is valid and that they have space for your child. The City of Alexandria does not specifically endorse any provider.

APPROVED FAMILY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Licensed child care programs-- including before and after-school programs and summer camps-- and the results of recent inspections can be found at [www.dss.virginia.gov](#). You may also contact the Fairfax Regional Licensing Office at **703.934.1505**.

Address and Phone: Child Care Assistance Office **703.746.5437** | 4850 Mark Center Drive, 6th floor, Alexandria, VA 22311

OTHER CHILD CARE RESOURCES:

[Tips on Choosing Child Care & Checklist](#)
[Choosing Quality Child Care](#)
[Types of Child Care](#)
[Child Care Resource and Referral](#)

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Kids’ First Years [Resource Library](#)
[Find a Provider](#) using Kids’ First Years’ webpage
[Food Assistance](#)
[Statewide Availability of the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)
[Utility Assistance](#)

ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY

Check out the Alexandria Library’s [offerings for children and their families](#) - they have everything from events and story times to reading lists for babies, toddlers, and kids of all ages and stages!



The Basics Insights text messaging program helps parents and caregivers incorporate early childhood learning into everyday routines. Each week, until your child turns three, caregivers will receive two science-based messages with a fact and suggested activity linked to one of the principles.

[Sign Up Today!](#)

THE BASICS ARE FIVE SIMPLE, POWERFUL WAYS THAT CARING ADULTS CAN HELP YOUNG CHILDREN THRIVE.



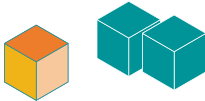
MAXIMIZE LOVE & MANAGE STRESS
to stay emotionally present for your child. Your support strengthens their emotional health and self-control skills.



EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT & PLAY
to encourage curiosity, discovery, and a healthy body.



TALK, SING, & POINT
to boost your child’s language development and knowledge of the world.



COUNT, GROUP, & COMPARE
to help your child make sense of the numbers and categories all around them.



READ & DISCUSS STORIES
to build your child’s knowledge, reasoning, and early literacy skills.