



Cicero Innovation Zone 2015

Building a Pipeline to Parents, Partners, and Systems

In 2014, according to Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, 9,648 children birth through age five resided in the Cicero community. Of those children, 62 percent lived in families with an income below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The Cicero community is one of eleven Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Innovation Zones in Illinois, selected based on the level of concentrated need, presence of providers with a demonstrated interest in quality improvement, a history of collaboration and strong local support to strengthen early childhood systems and kindergarten readiness.

The Cicero Innovation Zone (IZ) serves families and birth-to-three-year-old children who live in poverty, deep poverty or who are linguistically isolated with little to no exposure to early learning and development programs. Often, several factors contribute to the lack of early learning experience including fear, anxiety or a lack of peer support since many families are unfamiliar with the benefits of early learning or the opportunities available within the community. The Cicero IZ is working iteratively to remove these barriers from linguistically isolated families and create a culture of support and encouragement by building a pipeline of partners and human service agencies serving linguistically isolated families to help increase their enrollment in formal early learning programs.

The Cicero IZ is channeling efforts throughout the community by leveraging early childhood education program partnerships, developing a Parent Ambassador program and hosting "pop-up preschools" to reach families in need. Community partners in these efforts include Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) and All Our Kids Network (AOK) and others.

TRANSITION INTO FORMAL

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

To ensure that families are participating in early learning programs, a peer-to-peer pipeline guides families through the early learning process with ease and quickness, relieving fear and anxiety. For parents to feel comfortable enrolling their children in formal early learning programs, the Cicero IZ developed "pop-up preschools" where families can witness first-hand what early learning looks like and learn how to enroll. The pop-up preschools serve as a platform for enrolling children into formal early learning programs by connecting participants with MIECHV coordinated intake and the AOK referral network through several early learning partners. Coordinated intake also is available at popup preschools to support families and enrollment with onsite referrals.

The Cicero IZ pop-up preschool has grown significantly since the first one, and has had more 256 unique families participating. What started with a small group of families and children grew into hundreds of participants over the five different sessions. Through the pop-up preschools, the team continues to reach households with children and assess children's development and education needs.

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

TO SERVICES

The initial efforts to establish a peer-to-peer pipeline began with identifying isolated populations and recruiting, training and engaging Parent Ambassadors. To promote enrollment in early education programs and attendance at pop-up preschool events, the Parent Ambassadors reached out to linguistically isolated families at community events and activities. The Cicero IZ



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strives to reach the linguistically isolated families where they are, so the Cicero IZ team mapped the high-need areas and strategically divided these regions among the Parent Ambassadors for door-to-door canvassing. From July to August 2015, Parent Ambassadors spoke to almost 200 parents and attended 14 community events. Currently, the Parent Ambassadors are establishing a presence by being available during specific times each week at the local library and WIC offices. One Parent Ambassador visits a WIC office on a weekly basis for two hours, and speaks with an average of 20 parents during each visit.

The attendance roster from pop-up preschools also provides valuable data, such as the dates and locations of participation, the reasons behind multiple pop-up preschool visits (i.e. waiting lists) and how the parent got connected to the pop-up preschool. The data is important in developing a more distinct process of referring and tracking families, or creating a formal link between pop-up preschool participants and early learning programs.

ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION ZONES

Illinois Action for Children supports each Innovation Zone in planning and implementing activities, while the Illinois Education Research Council will evaluate the success of the strategies chosen by each Zone. The Innovation Zone model uses action learning cycles, an iterative process, to quickly learn and adapt strategies for immediate use in each community. The federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant and local philanthropies provide funding.

www.actforchildren.org/for-providers/innovation-zones/

Escuelita Móvil 

- Programa pre-escolar GRATUITO para niños de 3 a 5 años 
- Actividades educacionales 
- 90 minutos de educación pre-escolar 
- Información sobre programas de aprendizaje temprano

Programas de Aprendizaje Temprano
Carrera a la Cima-Reto de Aprendizaje Temprano
Zonas de Innovación
Primeros Pasos

La Escuelita Móvil le ofrece la oportunidad a los residentes de Cicero a que participen en un ambiente pre-escolar.
Para más información llame a Nancy Vazquez-Caban al 708-652-9000

The Cicero IZ compiled a list of program/slot openings with available services and program requirements, updated monthly, to ensure successful referrals and avoid enrollment waiting lists. Having team members onsite to share program information and answer questions allows for informed decision making and immediate referrals, which helps speed up the transition process and connect more families to early childhood and development programs. By aligning systems and sharing up-to-date information about program services and availability through these channels, the Cicero IZ is strengthening the referral processes and relationships within the community.

