

S P A R K

Strong, Prepared And Ready for Kindergarten

Lighting the way so all of Aurora's young children reach their full potential

The Collaboration brings together...

- Community Leaders – The Mayor and the City Government
- School Districts – East Aurora 131, West Aurora 129, Indian Prairie 204 and Oswego 308
- Early Childhood Programs and
- Community agencies serving

...to work collaboratively to build an early childhood system that will, ultimately, improve outcomes for Aurora's children.

Conceptual Framework

The mission of SPARK Aurora Early Childhood Collaboration is to empower our diverse families and children to attain full success in learning and life by ensuring all of Aurora's young children have equal access to exemplary Early Childhood Care and Education

Executive Committee - Guided by a Charter. Representation: Mayor, Fox Valley United Way, School Districts, Community Agencies, Child Care Programs, Head Start, Faith Base Program, Parent Liaison.
Strategically guides the direction of SPARK.

Parent Council has been incorporated into the SPARK overall structure to ensure that the Collaboration is better able to address the needs of families through the guidance of parent leaders that represent an "authentic parent voice."
Parent Liaison is chosen and appointed to the Executive Committee.

Focus Areas

Parent Engagement (Subcommittee)

Ensure all families are aware of the importance of early learning and connecting them with programs and services

Identify & Connect high needs children to early childhood services, i.e. Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Developmental Screening, Home Visitation, (HV) Preschool for All (PFA), Women Infant and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program, etc.

Program Improvement (Subcommittee)

Support quality improvement in early childhood education and care programs in Aurora by supporting program in their participation in the IL ExceleRate Program (aka Quality Rating Improvement System).

- Development of Leadership Seminar
- Mentoring
- Cohort Participation

Program Coordination (Subcommittee)

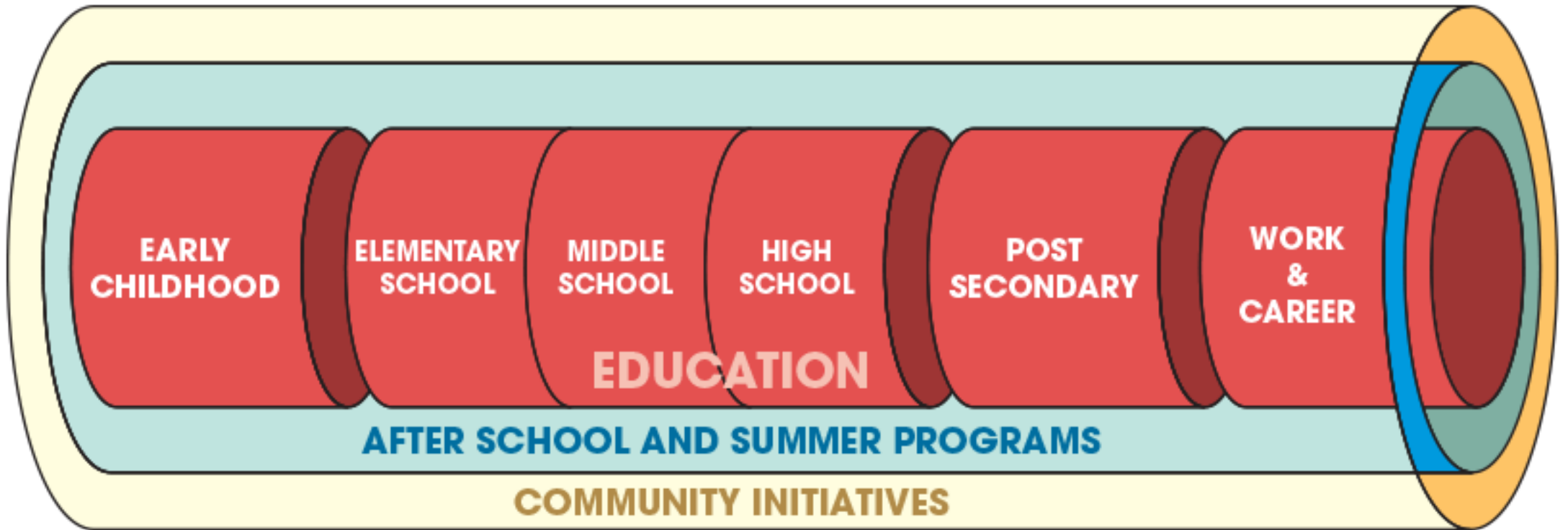
Coordinate efforts among the school districts' early childhood programs, Head Start, child care providers and other early learning programs to maximize both impact and efficiency.

Increase local agency cross-referral to maximize resources and supports for families through a deeper understanding of collective impact and community systems development.

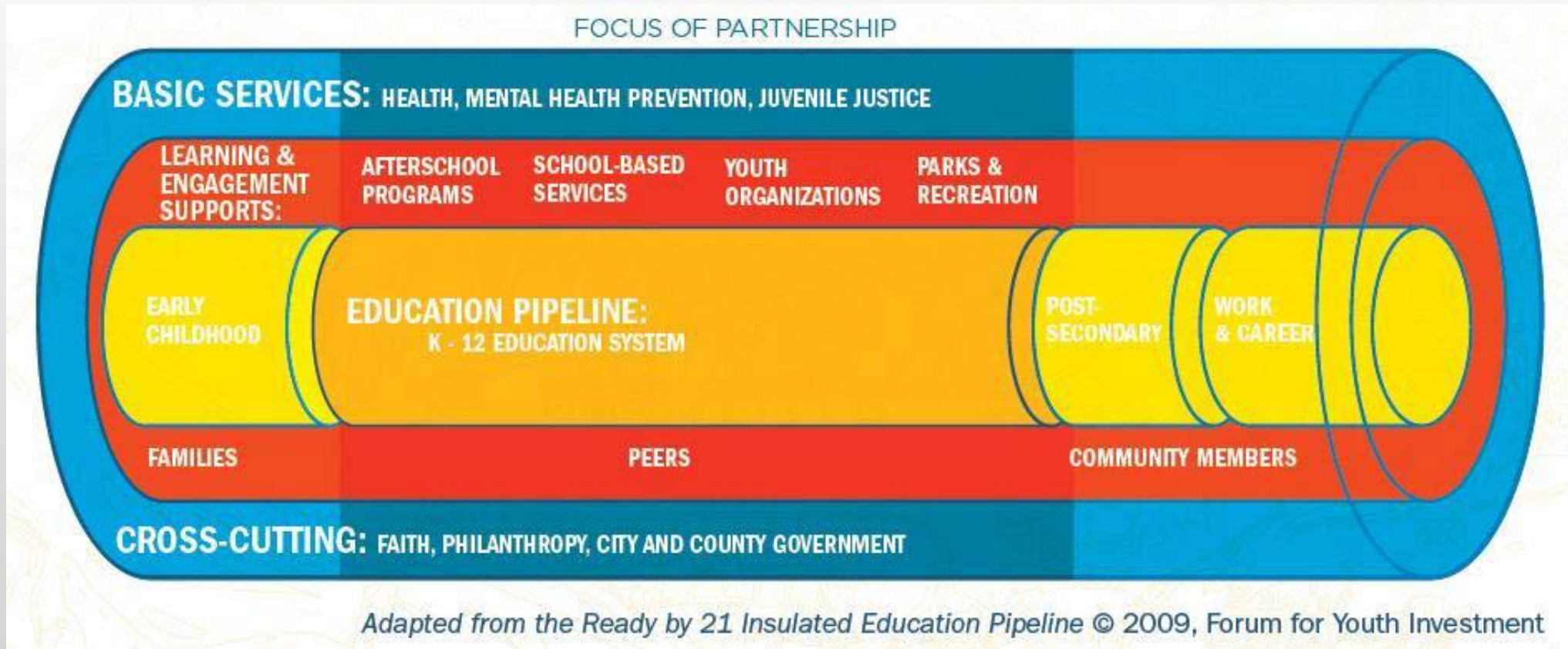
Strategies for Advancing a Pipeline

- ❖ Shared Agenda
- ❖ Shared Accountability – it's not just the school districts responsibility
- ❖ Multi-system or sector –working across numerous types of programs
- ❖ Frequent communication–around data/information on services and messaging
- ❖ Relationship-based approach to working together
- ❖ Engage in mutually reinforcing activities

Traditional Birth to Career Pipeline



How we envision a Birth to 5 Pipeline



...and including Family Engagement



The Birth through Third Grade Learning Hub
birth-third.net

A Vision of Seamless Learning Continuum

A coherent set of educational experiences and supports for students, families and the professionals and organizations that serve them that begins at birth and continues through college completion and beyond.

From a training facilitated by Jeanna Capito for SPARK



“Investments that bolster the parenting capacities of families are the most effective way to promote social mobility and foster equal opportunities.”

Professor James Heckman

Nobel Laureate in Economics

April 21st, 2015, Education Writers Association National Seminar

Coordination for Greater Impact

**So how do we advance a
Birth to 5 Pipeline in our community using a
Collaborative Approach?**

Children are the
Priority.

Change is the
Reality.

Collaboration is
the Strategy.”

-Judith Billings, Washington State
Superintendent



Shared Intake Initiative

The pilot started in 2014 through the Race to the Top Innovation Zone initiative. The Shared Intake Initiative identifies and connects the highest need children to high quality early learning and development programs, services and resources to provide families with one point of entry in seeking and applying for eligibility for various early childhood programs for their children.

Working with three pilot agencies, through a **Partnership Agreement**, the Shared Intake Coordinator works with parents one-on-one to help inform and assist them in determining the best early childhood program for their child (children).

Shared Intake Coordinator in Action

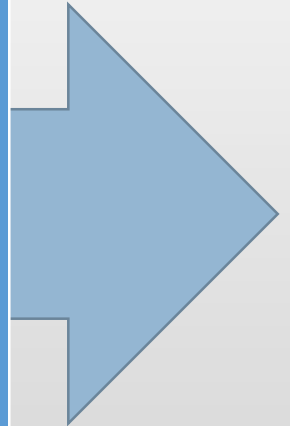
Shared Intake (SI) Coordinator will work closely with identified staff from each agency to develop and implement how the Shared Intake program will be facilitated in each of their program. The goal is to weave the SI program into each agency's existing programs and intake process.

Families are identified by agency staff to work with the SI Coordinator.

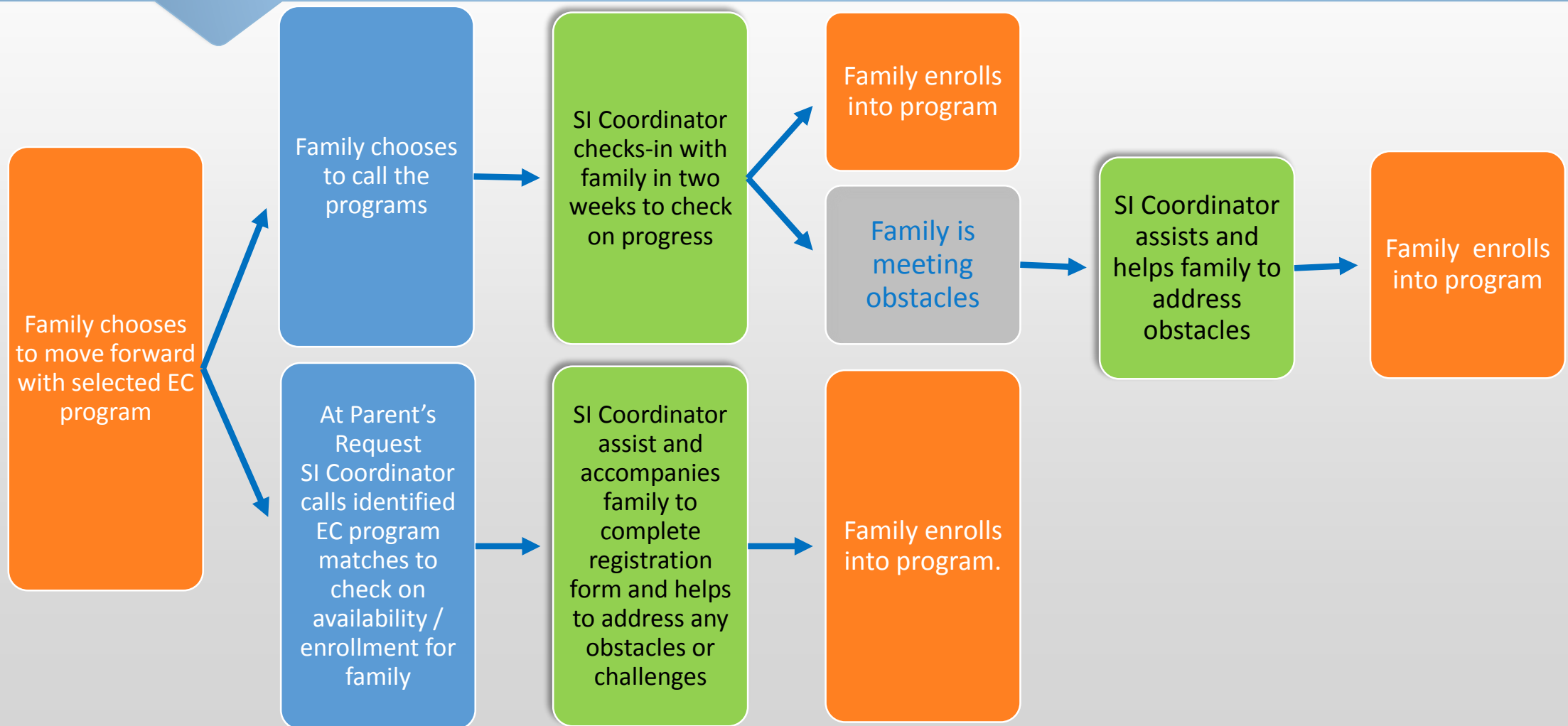
Shared Intake Coordinator meets with the identified families and introduces herself and the goal of the SI program, Early Childhood programs and resources.

SI Coordinator – completes SI form and if needed guide and complete an ASQ developmental screening questionnaire form.

SI Coordinator – reviews completed SI form and identifies EC programs and services that the child (ren) may be eligible for and re-connects with the family to share her recommendations.



Family Enrollment into Early Childhood Programs



Impact

The Shared Intake Coordinator has been integral in connecting the most at-risk families to early childhood resources and services and has been both a trusted support for families and programs.

Notable examples are:

- ❖ Enrolling a family from Afghanistan just two weeks after refugee resettlement with World Relief into a Preschool for All program.
- ❖ Working closely with the school district and refugee family to overcome language barriers and customs to successfully enroll three children into Preschool for All and Preschool Expansion Program.
- ❖ Have worked closely on two cases with DCFS foster care to enroll children into Preschool for All.
- ❖ Through developmental screenings, 4 children have been referred for further evaluations to Child Family Connections.

Play.Learn.Connect.

Bringing Early Childhood Information and Services
to Families Where They Live

Objective

The objective of the program is to change the model for typical community outreach by providing access to information and services for families of deep poverty working with trusted entities in specific neighborhoods.



The Approach

Using a community Geographic Information System (GIS) map, which pinpoints geographic locations of the following at-risk categories, SPARK will focus its efforts in four communities with the highest number of children in these categories:

- Children birth to 5 years old, in families living below 50% poverty levels, 100% of poverty level, and at 185% poverty levels;
- Linguistically isolated families where Spanish is their primary language.

What happens at **Play.Learn.Connect.** ?

PLAY

Parents and children will engage in a fun and interactive learning experience.

LEARN

Supporting parents in their role as their child's first teacher is key to ensuring that their child is successful in school and life.

CONNECT

Raising parents' awareness and connecting families to various supports in Aurora will be the key component of this initiative.

- SPARK's Shared Intake Initiative identifies and connects highest need children to quality early learning and development programs, services, and resources, providing families with one point of entry in seeking eligibility and applying for various early childhood programs.
- The Shared Intake Specialist works with parents one-on-one to help them complete a single application form and assists them in determining the best match for their child/children.
- Head Start, school districts, health departments, and local agencies are present at every event to connect with families and familiarizing them with their programs, enrolling when possible, and answering their questions.

Positive Change: Access & Equity

Play.Learn.Connect. will allow SPARK to deepen its connection and outreach into the most at-risk neighborhoods in the Aurora community.

Currently 44 % (8,354) of children birth to five live in families that are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Of this number more than half (4,554) are below the 100% FPL.

Connecting and building trust with families in these neighborhoods helps SPARK and its agency partners to identify the most at-risk and underserved children to ensure that they have access and opportunities to enroll and participate in home visitation, Head Start, Preschool for All, and Preschool Expansion programs.

Positive Change: Access, Equity and Awareness

This initiative will provide much needed developmental screenings and support parents through parent education with the goal of increasing their knowledge and confidence as their child's "first teacher."

The relationships established with trusted entities in the neighborhoods will raise awareness about the importance of early learning and will create local community ambassadors.



Contact Information

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Mission: The mission of SPARK Aurora Early Childhood Collaboration is to empower our diverse families and children to attain full success in learning and life by ensuring all Aurora's young children have equal access to exemplary Early Childhood Care and Education.

SPARK is an Education Initiative of Fox Valley United Way