The Montana Early Learning Roadmap:
A Community Framework

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Our most important responsibility as state leaders is to ensure that the next generation has every opportunity to succeed and to reach their full potential. We know that when all children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn, it allows them to hit the ground running in their educational career.

We have made early childhood education a top priority in Montana because we know that early learning matters. We know that for too many families, quality childcare is too expensive, or just plain hard to find. We know that kids who participate in preschool are more likely to read at grade level, and to graduate from high school.

That's why we are so pleased to share the Early Learning Roadmap with communities throughout the state. Based on the great successes of Graduation Matters Montana – which has helped our state reach record-breaking high school graduation rates for two years in a row – this Roadmap outlines how communities are working together to expand early learning opportunities.

Thank you for your commitment to early childhood education and for joining our efforts to enhance and expand opportunities for all of Montana's children. It is the most important and exciting investment we can make.

Governor Steve Bullock

Superintendent Denise Juneau

The Montana Early Learning Roadmap: A Community Framework

About this Roadmap

Learning starts early[1]. Montana, along with many states in the nation, is embarking on a journey to ensure every child, regardless of zip code, has access to quality, affordable opportunities to learn and grow. For the past year, communities across the state have been expanding quality preschool through a federal grant jointly implemented by the Governor's Office, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Department of Health and Human Services[2].

The Montana Early Learning Roadmap describes how local school districts, preschool providers, Head Start programs, social service agencies and families are coming together to expand early learning opportunities in their community. It uses the Graduation Matters Montana (GMM) framework, which has helped local communities raise high school graduation rates, to illustrate how communities build teams, use data, reflect on effective and promising practices and communicate their work locally and statewide.

The Roadmap is designed for people who want to help their community come together to strengthen early learning opportunities.

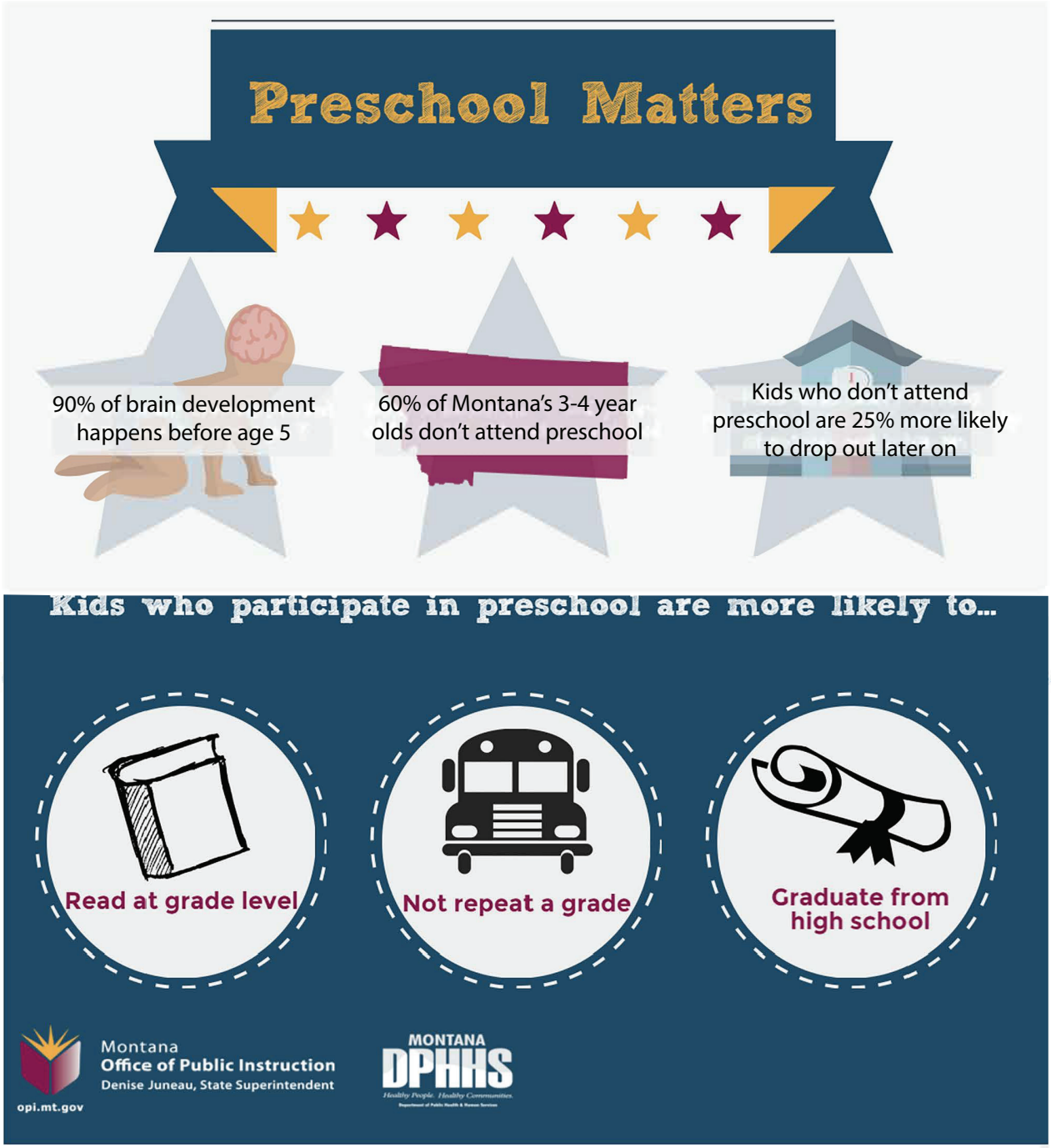
In Section One, the GMM framework of Team-Data-Practices-Communicate is introduced, and then in Section Two, we describe how Montana communities are using the framework to expand early learning opportunities, with specific examples from Montana communities. In Section Three, we highlight four Montana towns – Hardin, Crow Agency, Anaconda and Great Falls – that worked with OPI staff this past year to implement the framework. In the Appendix, we provide tools and resources for local communities to use in their work.

The Roadmap is designed for people who want to help their community come together to strengthen early learning opportunities. It is meant for childcare providers, educators, school board trustees, employers and stakeholders in related fields (health care, transportation, public safety, faith-based communities and private foundations) who know that early learning matters.

In addition, we hope the Roadmap is helpful to practitioners working in rural communities throughout the nation, as one-third of the nation's schools are in rural communities, and our challenges with limited infrastructure and scarce resources are shared.[3]

Who We Are

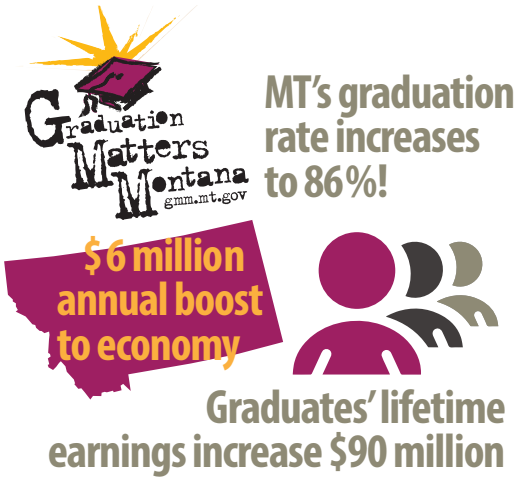
This publication is written by Deborah Halliday, Senior Policy Advisor to State Superintendent Denise Juneau, and Laurie Bishop, GMM Coach at the Office of Public Instruction. For the past year, we have travelled and worked with four Montana communities to explore the extent to which the GMM framework can be of service to communities trying to expand preschool opportunities. The Roadmap chronicles what we found.



The Montana Preschool Development Grant

Montana is one of 18 states to receive a federal preschool development grant. Montana was awarded $10 million a year for up to four years, starting in 2015, to serve 16 Montana communities. The Montana Preschool Development Grant (MPDG) supports states to: (1) Build or enhance preschool programs for the delivery of high-quality preschool services to children, and (2) Expand access to high-quality preschool programs in targeted communities. These sites will serve as models for preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families. The MPDG is jointly implemented by the Governor's Office, the Office of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Section One: The GMM Framework in Early Learning



Graduation Matters Montana (GMM) launched in 2010 as an initiative of State Superintendent Denise Juneau to increase the number of students who graduate from high school ready for their next steps in life. There are now 58 Montana communities that host a GMM initiative, comprised of local school-community-business partnerships, and the high school graduation rate is at an all-time high for two years running.

Guiding the work of local communities is the GMM framework of Team-Data-Practices-Communicate. A framework is a way to organize activities, plans and goals to allow people to see how it all fits together, and to discover how their work connects to the overarching goals. Frameworks also can act as a theory of change: "If we do this, we expect this to happen." It allows many people to communicate about what the work is, and helps a community adapt to changing opportunities and challenges.

The tagline of GMM is "Locally designed, locally implemented, based on what works in Montana" and the GMM framework has helped communities develop their local approach to the complex issue of dropout prevention. The GMM framework is also reiterative: local GMM teams revisit the core components of the framework as they advance their understanding of what's working and not working in their efforts.

The GMM Framework

Team	Data	Practices	Communicate
In each community, a team of school staff, students and community and business leaders works to increase the number of high school students who graduate.	The team looks at data – qualitative and quantitative – to better understand their community's unique strengths and challenges related to high school graduation.	The GMM team then reflects on what is already working in their community – both in the school and in the community – and what more can be done together.	The team communicates with families, through the media, and with local civic organizations to share innovative and exciting things happening to support students graduating from high school.

Collaboration and Collective Impact

Central to the GMM framework is an understanding that the challenges our communities face are complex, and require multiple perspectives and strategic partnerships. For instance, when a child does not come to school every day, it takes the support of the family, the school and the community to address the problem.

Throughout the country (and in other nations) communities are turning to an advanced form of collaboration called collective impact, which helps multiple stakeholders align their efforts more effectively.

A framework is a way to organize activities, plans and goals to allow people to see how it all fits together, and to discover how their work connects to the overarching goals.

"Once you build relationships and trust, it allows you to tap into resources you couldn't otherwise: we can have the impact we want, when we work together."

Ruth Uecker, Great Falls Elementary Assistant Superintendent

There are five conditions of collective impact:

- **Common Agenda**
- **Shared Measurement**
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities**
- **Continuous Communication**
- **Backbone Support**

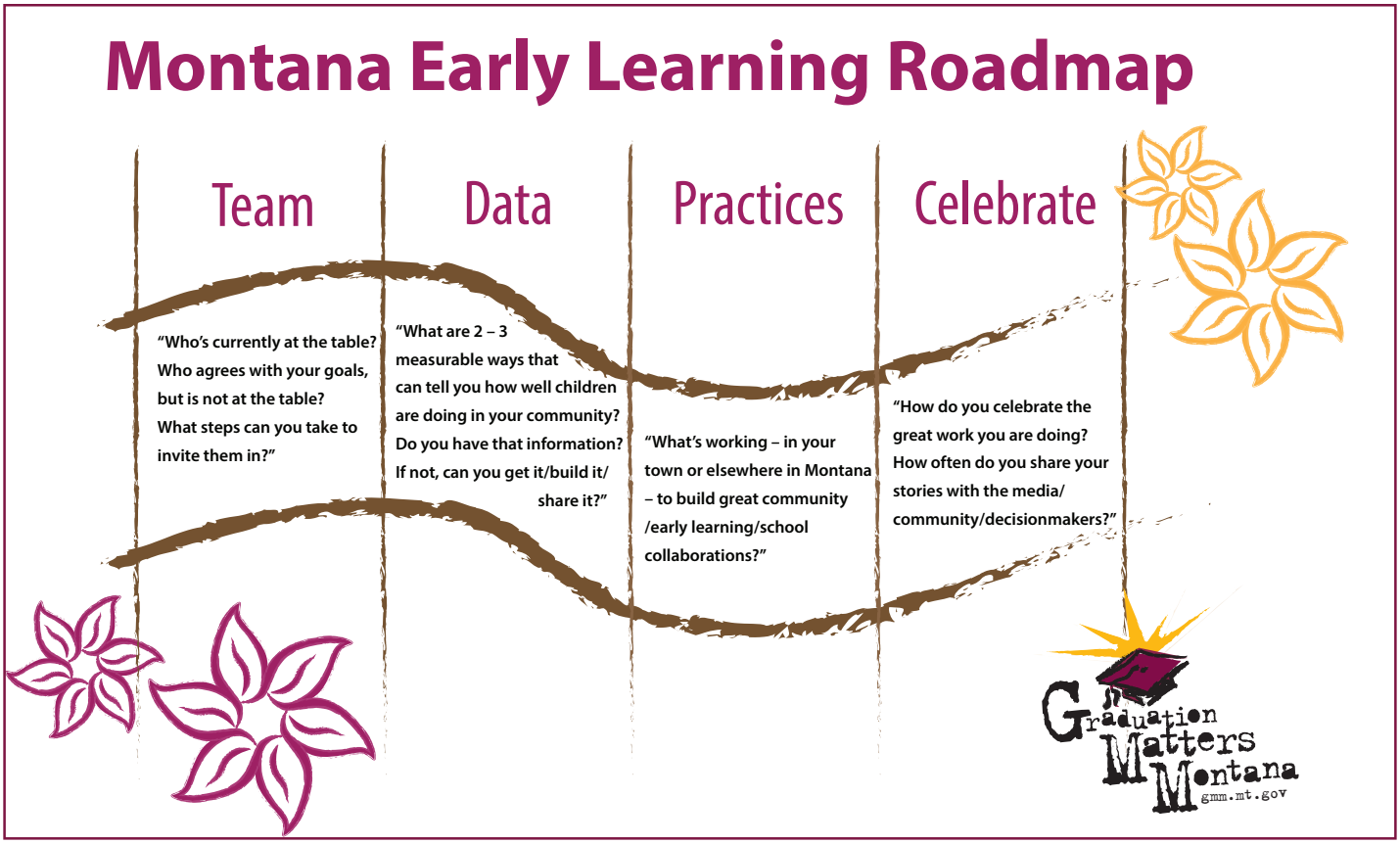
These five conditions help communities avoid working in "silos" – in isolation of one another's efforts. Graduation Matters Montana has been referred to as a "nested collected impact" initiative, which means that local communities across the state are working to break down those silos at the local level, with support from the Office of Public Instruction. (See Appendix B for how the GMM framework aligns with collective impact.)

Communities that collaborate to support young children and families quickly identify multiple, complex factors that contribute to readiness to learn. These include healthy supportive relationships with adults, good nutrition, a safe place to live, access to health care, and experiences that aid in brain development, language, and socio-emotional skills.

As communities begin to identify their unique strengths and gaps in these various factors, they begin to align their efforts. Common areas of collaboration in early childhood include how to fund or expand preschool, transitions to kindergarten, transportation, family outreach, facility space, professional development and early identification of special needs.

To what extent, we wondered, can the GMM framework support local communities that are expanding early learning opportunities and increasing kindergarten readiness through the Montana Preschool Development Grant? This past year, we worked with early education practitioners and stakeholders to adapt the GMM framework through a series of activities:

- Introducing the GMM framework to over 350 early learning practitioners, Montana foundations and national education policy experts in the summer of 2015;
- Engaging four communities that are implementing the MPDG to help further develop the Early Learning Roadmap. Teams agreed to include OPI staff throughout the year at local planning sessions and community meetings;
- Convening broad-based teams from each community for a day-long workshop on collective impact, provided by StriveTogether, to help create a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges of collaborative efforts in rural communities; and
- Developing a series of trainings on key components of the framework, which we continue to workshop with early learning practitioners to refine the work.



Section Two: The Framework in Action

This section describes how Montana communities are using the GMM framework of **Team-Data-Practices-Communicate** to support their efforts to expand early learning opportunities. It draws on the experiences of the four communities we worked with – Hardin, Crow Agency, Anaconda and Great Falls – as well as other Montana communities that are implementing the MPDG.

1. Build a Team

"Who's currently at the table? Who agrees with your goals, but is not at the table? What steps can you take to invite them in?"

Ensuring every child is prepared to transition into kindergarten is a task the entire community can participate in, from school-based, preschool and Head Start programs, to community organizations working directly with families. Here are some common team members:

- Preschool and childcare providers – private, home-based, Head Start, etc.
- Elementary school administrators and teachers
- Best Beginnings Councils and community task forces
- City-county health department
- Graduation Matters Montana teams
- Tribal government programs
- Parent centers
- Community foundations

> *"If you want to work on something that's going to shake things up, it's easier not to unless there are a lot of you and you're willing to work on it for a long time."*
>
> *Shonna Dillon*
> *Crow Agency Head Start*

Team - Community Examples

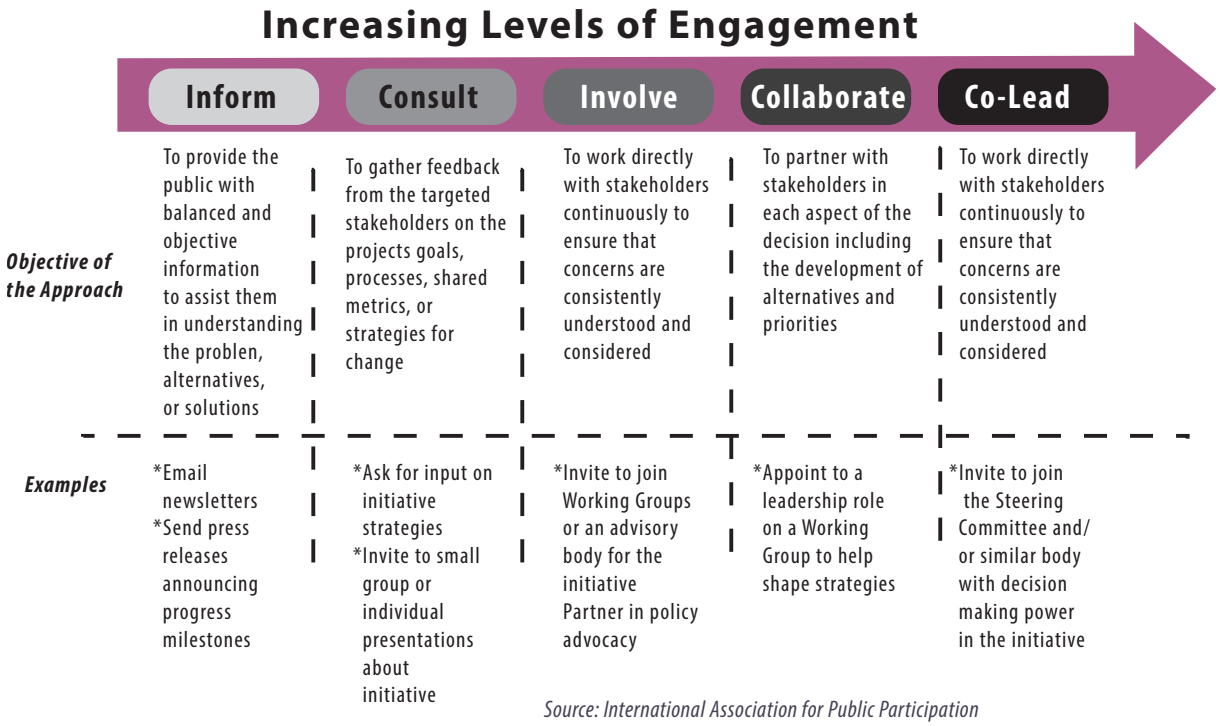
- The Big Horn County Best Beginnings Council (BBC) is a well-established local coalition, with staff support from the local health department. Through the MPDG, the BBC expanded an existing task force on kindergarten readiness, and increased coordination efforts with Crow Agency Head Start.
- In Anaconda, which has a strong school-community team through GMM, the community decided to convene preschool and elementary educators for a series of meetings to build a shared understanding of how they can work together. They then looked for an organization who can convene their "cradle to career" work: the Anaconda Community Foundation is stepping up to provide that service.

Start with where you are Many Montana communities have a Best Beginnings Council or other coalition that comes together to support children and youth. If you are not sure who to talk with, start there and see who is interested in talking with you about the work. Also, think about people you are in immediate contact with – coworkers, friends and family – who may have ideas of who you should invite into the conversation.

Expand the circle See Appendix C for a simple exercise you can do to identify people and organizations who may want to join your effort.

Clarify intent There are many levels of engagement, from purely information sharing to collaborating and co-leading. Make sure the people you convene are willing to move into active collaboration.

Decide who will convene Continuous communication – keeping people in the loop, sharing good news, maintaining momentum; and facilitation – making sure people come to meetings ready and willing to participate fully – are critical functions. Make sure to identify who will play that role. It may be that one organization agrees to help jumpstart the effort, and then another organization rises to sustain the effort.



Source: International Association for Public Participation

2. Use Data

"What are 2 – 3 measurable ways that can tell you how well children are doing in your community? Do you have that information? If not, can you get it/build it/share it?"

Once you've convened a team, you will want to look at data to develop a basic, shared understanding of early learning in your community, and how it compares to other like-sized communities and the state. Your team will want to use data to: (1) identify benchmarks to reflect on progress being made (and hopefully celebrate successes along the way); and (2) help move away from "shoot from the hip" assessments – anecdotal experiences – to a deeper understanding of the needs of the community.

Good sources of data:
Kids Count; Best Beginnings Councils; Head Start; public health departments; MPDG assessments; school districts.

Here are some common data markers that Montana communities are using or developing:

- The percentage of preschool-aged children who attend preschool programs, including in-home childcare
- The number of preschool and elementary students who have an Individualized Education Program or are identified as needing additional supports and services to learn and grow
- The percentage of kindergarteners who are "kindergarten ready" as defined by the local community
- The number of students who are not reading at grade-level by 3rd grade, an early indicator of high school graduation

Once you've gathered available data, be prepared to discuss with your team:

(1) What is the scope of our challenge to support every youth to be kindergarten ready?

(2) Which youth are most likely to not be ready for kindergarten? What do we understand are the reasons? If we don't know, how can we find out?

(3) What key insights do we have through looking at our data, and how can this influence our activities and efforts?

Data - Community Examples

- In Anaconda, the team identified a high number of children who are in need of supportive services when they enter kindergarten. They are focused on identifying student needs at younger ages so they will have less need for special services once they enter elementary school.
- In Great Falls, the team tracked the impact that preschool has on students entering kindergarten, in terms of math and reading, and have shown that students who attend preschool excel.[8]
- In Bozeman, the school district worked with community organizations to identify non-academic and academic indicators of success from early childhood to high school graduation through a "cradle to career" continuum. In the early childhood phase, they identified non-academic indicators such as access to health care and nutrition and the ability to form positive relationships; academic indicators include having developmentally appropriate communication and numeracy skills.
- In one community, three kindergarteners were identified as in need of intensive services - none of them had attended preschool. This information helped the team in two ways: (1) it provided a concrete example of the need for more students to have access to preschool; and (2) it provided a baseline for their goal of reducing the number of students who require additional intensive services.

3. Implement Practices

"What's working – in your town or elsewhere in Montana – to build great community/early learning/school collaborations?"

Most school districts and communities have programs or activities in place to support early learning, and there are likely many activities already happening, from library literacy efforts to health fairs and parent outreach activities. The key is to help connect these activities, as well as to explore what more can be done through increased community partnerships and practices. Common areas of shared activity in Montana include: how to fund or expand preschool, transitions to kindergarten, transportation, family outreach, shared facility space, shared professional development opportunities and early identification of special needs.

"By doing this work with the community, we were able to link our kindergarten readiness goals to the broader community's values and goals."

Nora Barney
Anaconda Elementary Principal

"You can dream big, but you have to start small and find the people who can do the work, with you."

Deb Huestis
Great Falls Family Connections

Practices - Community Examples

- The Libby Public Schools and Kootenai Valley Head Start collaboration includes sharing classroom space at the elementary school, sharing professional development opportunities, and hosting a transition day for four-year olds and their parents.
- Best Beginnings – Yellowstone County publishes an annual action plan that articulates their top priorities: strengthening quality and access to childcare; expanding quality parent support services; and establishing a resource referral system for families.
- In several communities, local businesses partner with schools and Head Start programs to provide back to school backpacks with kindergarten-ready activities for incoming kindergarten students. Head Start helps to identify incoming kindergarteners.
- In Hardin and Crow Agency, elementary schools are holding spring enrollments at the local Head Start to make it easier for parents to sign up their child.
- Several communities are sharing professional development and training opportunities to align practices in multiple sites, such as Conscious Discipline – a socio-emotional curriculum that is tailored to age-specific settings.
- Schools and community organizations are co-producing community events and family learning opportunities that tap existing social networks.
- The Great Falls school district invites foster grandparents to the elementary school once a month to join kindergartener's activities. They are encouraged to bring younger siblings to engage with the school.
- Big Horn County Best Beginnings Coalition members are coordinating to help identify families who may want to participate in parent support programs like Parents as Teachers.

A Focus on Kindergarten Transition

After a team comes together and looks at their data, they soon focus on specific practices they wish to impact. In the past year, the communities we worked with quickly settled on developing a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness and a well-coordinated kindergarten transition as a practice they wanted to improve. This makes a lot of sense – research consistently shows that transition activities can reduce the impact that differences of income, access to high-quality preschool opportunities, resources and social supports have on students' readiness to learn.

Local teams of elementary and preschool educators invited public health, tribal program staff and childcare providers to help develop kindergarten readiness transition tools and practices that reflect their shared values of academic and non-academic evidence of readiness.[9]

See Appendix D: Hardin Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Data Form for an example of this effort.

Teams offer the following key insights:

Get beyond the laundry list

Communities focused on improving kindergarten transition quickly moved from identifying all the "things they do" to developing a shared understanding of what kindergarten readiness transition in their community actually looks like. They asked themselves: "What skills are most critical to kindergarten success? What information do elementary schools need to best support students? How well do we currently do kindergarten transition? How do we know if we're doing it well?"

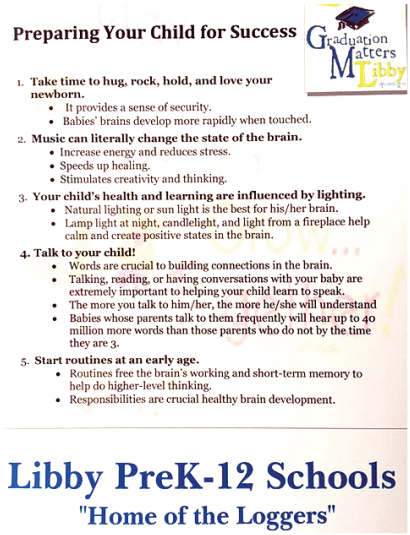
Identify a skilled facilitator

Delving in to existing practices, exploring differences of experience and opinion, building new ways of working across organizations - these can be complex conversations, but they must happen if we want to improve the experience of families and youth. Having someone facilitate these discussions can help to create a team environment in which people are bringing their best to the table. OPI staff provided much of this service in coordination with MPDG staff for the development of the Roadmap; oftentimes there are individuals in your community who can be asked to play this role.

4. Communicate/Celebrate

"How do you celebrate the great work you are doing? How often do you share your stories with the media/community/decision makers?"

Central to the effort to engage the community is to regularly communicate about what your team is doing, and how others can become involved. As with Graduation Matters Montana, the Roadmap is built on the belief that everyone has a role to play in helping early learning happen.



Local teams are communicating to:

- Build community awareness about the importance of early childhood learning experiences
- Build awareness of the availability of preschool/early learning opportunities
- Connect to more organizations in the community
- Offer ideas for families to engage their youth in fun educational activities

Communicate - Community Examples

- The Libby team partners with the Cabinet Peaks Medical Center to provide every newborn baby with a "Future Logger" (the school mascot) onesie and a magnet that has simple suggestions to help babies learn and grow, such as: talk to your child, and take time to hug, rock, hold and love your child.
- The school-community coalition Ready Families Ready Learners in Great Falls has a media campaign with billboards, placemats, and coffee cozies that spark ways to interact with young children by asking questions such as, "How many red things can you see?"

- The Great Falls team also developed a "Ready for Kindergarten Preschool Calendar" of activities that families can practice with young children that align with what they are learning in school. (See Appendix E.)
- The Early Childhood Coalition in Helena maintains a Facebook page where they post interesting research and community events.
- Hardin and Crow public schools partnered to invite local families, community members and tribal program staff to a community conversation about early childhood in Crow Agency. The gathering included dinner and time to talk with one another about their hopes and dreams for good education opportunities for local youth.
- The Anaconda School District developed radio public service announcements and television ads to recruit families to their new preschool spots. You can hear the radio spot on the OPI Preschool Matters webpage.
- The Kindergarten Readiness Center in Hardin added preschool and early learning specific information to a weekly radio spot with the Hardin Schools Superintendent.
- Check out OPI's Preschool Matters webpage for community flyers and other communication examples at *http://opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/EarlyChildhood/PreSchool.html*

Section Three: Four Montana communities share their frameworks

For the past year, OPI staff participated in four rural communities' efforts to implement the MPDG in order to explore how the GMM framework can help bring together people and programs that support early learning in a local, rural community. These communities are Hardin (pop. 3,730), Crow Agency (pop. 1,616), Anaconda (pop. 3,800) and Great Falls (pop. 59,638). In this section, we will provide an overview of each community's approach.

Hardin

Hardin is the seat of Big Horn County. While Hardin sits just outside the Crow Reservation border, Big Horn County encompasses most of the reservation and the Hardin School District covers an area that includes two reservation elementary schools in Crow Agency and Fort Smith.

The Hardin School District has a lengthy history of providing access to high quality early learning that pre-dates the MPDG. Initially partnering with Billings Head Start, the district eventually developed their own Kindergarten Readiness Center (KRC) utilizing various federal grants. Additionally, Hardin has benefited in the last several years from the Big Horn County Best Beginnings Council which structured their work into three priority areas, of which Kindergarten Readiness is one.

The work in Hardin this past year has included both more robust coordination efforts within the Best Beginnings Council and a breaking down of some of the barriers to coordination between the KRC and elementary schools. This culminated with a successful collaborative effort to create a Kindergarten Transition document with input from Pre-K and kindergarten staff and administrators and several community-based organizations.

Team	Data	Practices	Communicate
Early Learning Team: KRC Best Beginnings Parent Center Hardin Primary Families **Cradle to Career Team:** GM Hardin Big Horn Valley Health Center Early Learning Team	% Pre-K slots filled Kindergarten transition data to elementary schools	Established kindergarten transition; aligned with Montana Early learning Standards Established Parents as Teachers referrals for struggling Pre-K families KRC helped with family nights that happen at elementary school to reach younger kids	Set up a booth at athletic events to promote importance of early childhood education Pre-K and early childhood info is part of School Superintendent's weekly radio program

Crow Agency

Crow Agency is the governmental seat of the Crow Tribe, and houses many of the area's services and supports. The Hardin School District extends into Crow Agency, and so Crow Elementary is actually part of the Hardin School District. There is one MPDG site in Crow Elementary. The Crow Head Start is also a recipient of MPDG funds, and is managed by the Crow Tribe.

The Crow Task Force is a community-based coalition with leadership from several different tribal programs, such as domestic violence prevention and youth services. The Task Force meets regularly to share information and to coordinate efforts to support youth in the community. Task Force leadership is active in an effort to build a youth center to house the Crow Head Start and other youth-focused programming.

The focus of their work this past year has been to help bring together people from the Hardin School District, Crow Head Start and the Crow Task Force to explore how they can work together on common interests. Thus far, they have been discussing improved kindergarten transition, and increased referral and screening of youth at younger ages.

Team	Data	Practices	Communicate
Early Learning Team: Head Start Crow Elementary Hardin Primary Best Beginnings Families Tribal Health STEP **Cradle to Career Team:** GM Hardin GM Crow Agency Crow Task Force Youth Building Committee Parent Center Early Learning Team	Low % of Pre-K & kindergarten students identified for IEP % 4-year olds in Pre-K Tracking Head Start kids entering kindergarten Kindergarten transition data sent to elementary schools	Established kindergarten transition information to be shared between all Pre-K and kindergarten; aligned with Montana Early Learning Standards Established Spring kindergarten registration at Head Start Firmed up Pre-K IEP referral and kindergarten transition Head Start and KRC became MBI sites to connect with schools; conscious discipline.	Held community gathering Newspaper coverage

Anaconda

Anaconda is the municipal seat of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. Economic struggles and an aging population have resulted in a decline in the number of youth and the school district recently went from a Class A to Class B and downsized through building consolidation. Nevertheless, a strong Graduation Matters initiative set the stage with the early childhood community already at the table.

The MPDG includes classrooms at both the Head Start and Public School Pre-K, who are embarking on a new collaborative working process. The public schools provide support services to Head Start students who are flagged for intervention. In Anaconda Schools, up to 20 percent of K-3 students are on an IEP, which creates a clear call to look upstream towards opportunities for earlier intervention and informs the collaborative efforts of this year.

To focus the early learning conversation, the schools and Head Start joined with childcare providers, public health and early childhood organizations to begin exploring what kindergarten readiness means and how they can coordinate community efforts to assure well-timed supports and interventions. Additionally, the Anaconda Community Foundation joined in the Strive Together workshop in March and has offered to act as a backbone for an emerging Cradle to Career initiative.

Team	Data	Practices	Communicate
Early Learning Team: Anaconda School District Pre-K Head start Child Care Providers Public Health Best Beginnings **Cradle to Career Team:** GM Anaconda Anaconda Community Foundation Early Learning Team	High % of kindergarten students on IEP % kindergarten ready, TBD thru community informed goals and assessment tool	Increase 0-3 interventions and Pre-K utilization through strengthened communication between public and private sector and coordinated community awareness Shared goals and strategies for kindergarten readiness and transition activities	Pre-K PSA's on local radio and TV Newspaper coverage of Pre-K availability and community activities to support youth Flyers for Pre-K and Child-find activities

Great Falls

Great Falls is the largest of the communities we worked with this past year, and the variety of activities reflects the capacity and range of organizations that work on early learning and youth initiatives. The Great Falls coalition is called "Ready Families Ready Learners" and includes the school district, the district's Pre-K, childcare providers, the United Way and community organizations. Great Falls also has a very robust Graduation Matters Montana team, which sees early learning as critical to their goals of increased graduation and this natural "cradle to career" continuum has helped bring key community partners to the table.

The team has good access to data, such as the impact of preschool on students' learning, and has done an analysis that shows that only 25 percent of the community's preschool-aged children are being served by preschool programs. Much of their efforts are to connect to families who have children who are not in preschool, such as holding a community expo, and having elementary principals visit the day care providers that serve children who will enroll in the local kindergarten.

Team	Data	Practices	Communicate
GM Great Falls School District United Way Family Connections Benefis Health Child care providers	Tracking progress of students who have attended preschool to show impact of early learning Using data of unmet need to focus team efforts Benchmarking with Boehm assessments	School Readiness Expo titled "Talking is Teaching" held in February to connect families with supportive services and the importance of preschool School district invites foster grandparents each month Community literacy efforts include "Books for Babies," Summer Read 6, and community bookshelves	Marketing – coffee cups, billboards, radio ads, etc – to encourage parents to talk with their kids: "Talking is teaching" Families receive a calendar of activities to do with children at home that align with what they're learning in school

Conclusion

The Montana Early Learning Roadmap is a guide to how rural communities are forging new partnerships, are using data to inform their priority areas of focus, and are spreading the word in their local community that early learning matters. It uses as its framework the Graduation Matters Montana framework, which has helped the state realize record-breaking high school graduation rates.

Yet none of this work is possible without the people who work in their local community - day in and day out - to provide opportunities for every child to succeed, regardless of zip code. Childcare providers, educators, school board trustees, employers and stakeholders in related fields (such as health care, transportation public safety, faith-based communities and private foundations): we hope the Roadmap reflects your work, and we hope that your work, in turn, can inform and inspire other rural communities' efforts to expand early learning opportunities in their town.

Our Gratitude

This publication is made possible through funding from the National Governor's Association, which is a bipartisan organization committed to sharing best practices and exploring innovative policy solutions. We have also benefitted from consultation with leaders of the Funders for Montana's Children, StriveTogether, the Tamarack Institute and the Montana Preschool Development Grant.

We thank the early educator communities in Hardin, Crow Agency, Anaconda and Great Falls for welcoming us into their communities to learn alongside them how to do this work well. A special thank you to John Pepper, former CEO of Procter & Gamble, and Jeff Edmundson, Director of StriveTogether. These two gentlemen conspired to bring together our Graduation Matters Montana framework with efforts to expand preschool in the state, and as a result they jumpstarted the state's approach to a "cradle to career" continuum. (For more information on the "cradle to career continuum," see Appendix A.)

Endnotes

[1]So begins the Montana Preschool Program Guidelines. *Montana Preschool Program Guidelines: A Resource for Teaching Children Ages 3 through 5,* Montana Office of Public Instruction (2016): 2. *http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/EarlyChildhood/16PreSchoolGuidleines.pdf*

[2] "Preschool Development Grants," U.S. Department of Education, Last modified August 22, 2016. *http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html*

[3]Lauren Camera, "Rural Schools Improving Despite Continued Obstacles," *U.S. News*, August 1, 2016, *http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-08-01/rural-schools-improving-despite-continued-obstacles.*

[4]Paul Brest, "The Power of Theories of Change," *Stanford Social Innovation Review 8, no. 2 (2010), http://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_power_of_theories_of_change.*

[5] Albert Wat and Chrisianne Gaul, *Beyond the School Yard: Pre-K Collaborations with Community-Based Partners, The Pew Center on the States (2009): http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2009/beyondtheschoolyardpdf.pdf*

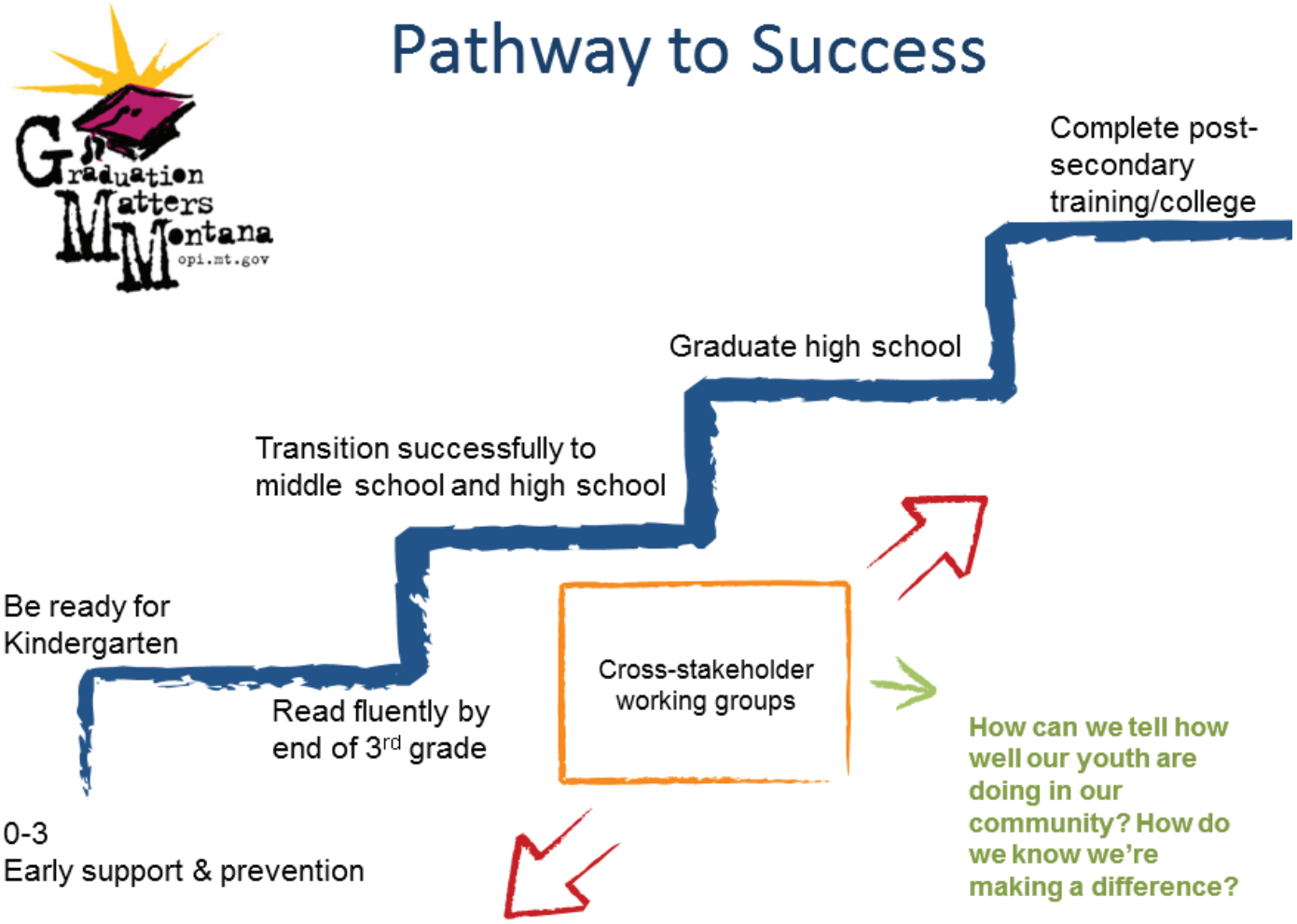
[6] John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review 9, no. 1 (2011), http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.*

[7] For more information on how the Great Falls School District collects and analyzes this data, please contact the Great Falls Elementary Assistant Superintendent, Ruth Uecker.

[8] Margaret Caspe et al., "Four Important Things to Know About the Transition to School," Harvard Family Research Project (2015), *http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/four-important-things-research-tells-us-about-the-transition-to-school.*

Appendix A: Cradle to Career Continuum

Overview: Communities throughout the nation are arraying their programs and services along a continuum that corresponds with the phases of a child's life in the hopes that they will then be able to better align their efforts to ensure every child has an opportunity to learn and grow. Through Graduation Matters Montana, communities are identifying specific data points they hope to impact in each of these phases of a child's life, such as ready for kindergarten and graduating from high school.



Source: Education Northwest

Appendix B: Collective Impact and the GMM Framework

There are five conditions of collective impact, which align with the Graduation Matters Montana Framework.

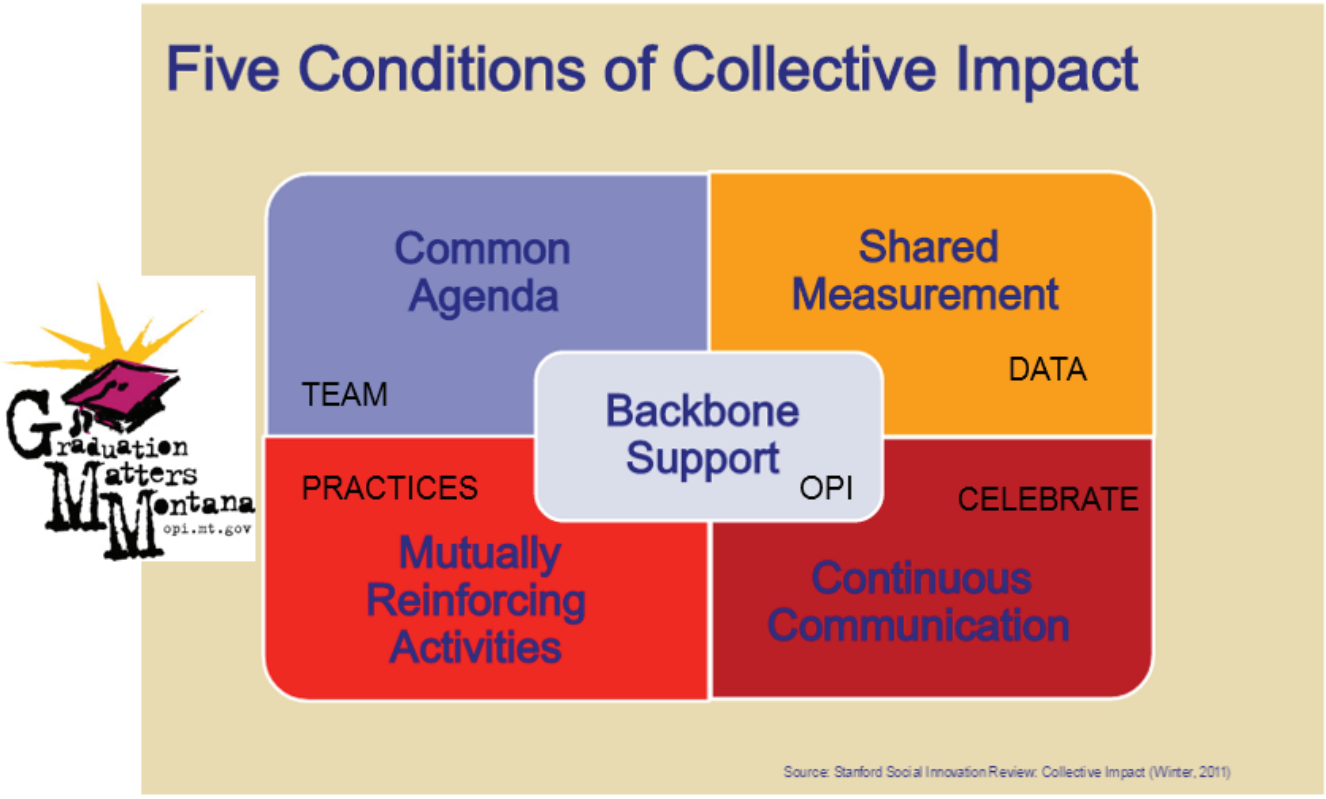
1. **Common Agenda** *All the members of the team know and agree to why they meet* In each **GMM** community, **a GMM TEAM** of school staff, students and community and business leaders comes together to increase the number of high school students who graduate.

2. **Shared Measurement** *Data is "at the center" of our team's work – it informs where we started, where we want to go and how far we've come.* The team looks at **DATA** – qualitative and quantitative – to better understand their community's unique strengths and challenges related to high school graduation.

3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities** *Each team member tries to align their organizational activities (projects, grant opportunities, events and celebrations) to support the efforts of the whole team's goals.* **GMM** teams implement **PRACTICES** that reflect what is already working in their community – both in the school and in the community – and what more can be done together.

4. **Continuous Communication** *All team members feel "kept in the loop" about the vision and progress of the work and everyone feels able to share that information with others*. The team **COMMUNICATES** with families, through the media, and with local civic organizations to share innovative and exciting things happening to support students graduating from high school.

5. **Backbone Support** *There is an organization that is clearly responsible and has the capacity to ensure that the team comes together and is productive in its efforts.* OPI provides backbone support for the statewide initiative, and local organizations – schools, United Ways, community foundations – provide local backbone support.

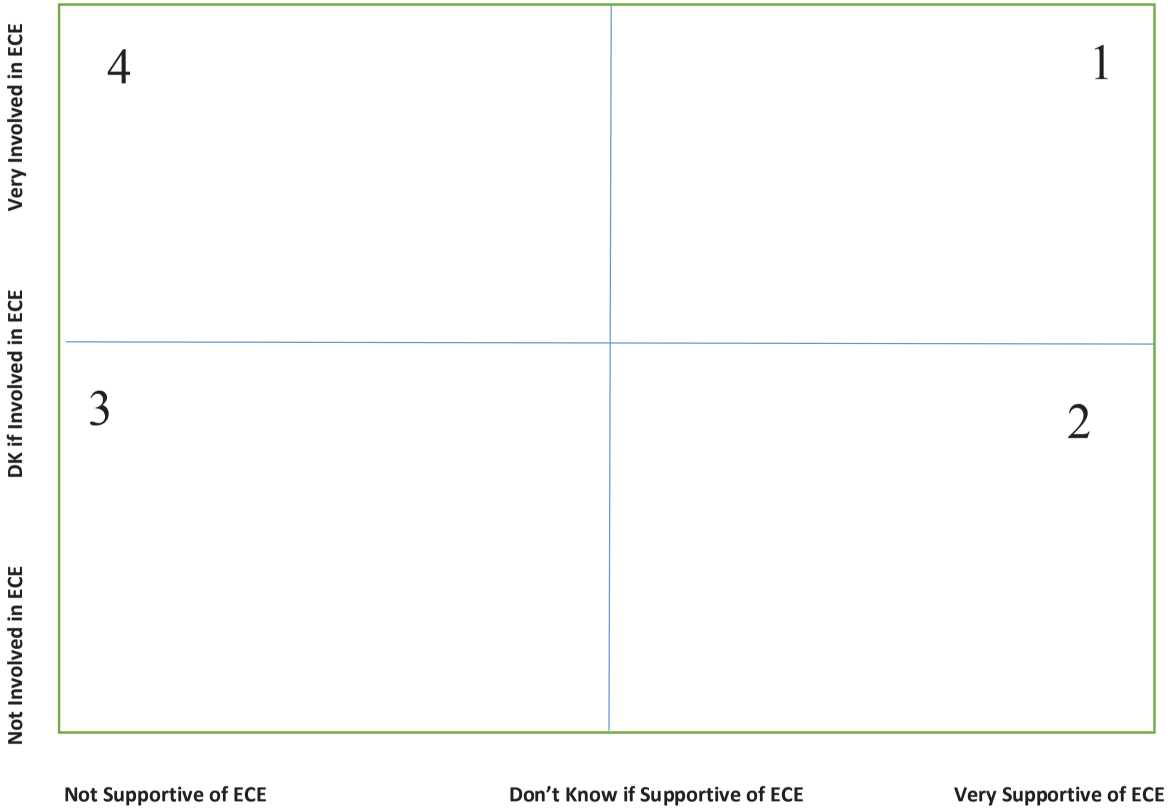


Who Cares?

The first step in the GMM framework is to build & strengthen your team. There are many ways to engage community in your work: for communication, program implementation/coordination, funding, etc. In groups, brainstorm current and potential community members/organizations in your community who care about children being ready for school. Then, map the relationships on the grid provided.

Potential Partners

1. School leadership
2. Striving Readers team
3. ECE community leaders
4. Best Beginnings Council or other ECE coalition
5. GMM team
6. Family advocacy group
7. Non-profit orgs that serve families & youth
8. Social services provider
9. Health care provider
10. Law enforcement
11. City or County leaders
12. Tribal leaders
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____



Appendix D: Hardin Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Data Form

The following form was developed this past year by a local team of elementary and preschool educators, public health, tribal program staff and day care providers to help develop a kindergarten readiness transition tools that reflects their shared values and sets students up for success in their new learning environment.

Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Data

Student's Name: _____ Gender: _____ DOB: _____

Teacher: _____ Days absent: _____ Days Tardy: _____

Glasses: _____ Hearing Problems _____ Special Education: _____ Speech: _____

Primary Language: _____

Literacy data:

Upper case recognized: _____/26 Lower case recognized: ____/26_ Sound recognition: _____ /26

Picture naming (how many picture cards can be named in one minute): _____

Writes first/last name (appropriate use of capitals and lower case letters): Yes No

Math data:

Rote Counting: _____ Numeral recognition: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 to 1 correspondence (How many objects can he/she accurately count): _____

Names shapes:

Social-Emotional development data:

	Not Yet	Emerging	Almost mastered	Fully mastered
Responds to and makes verbal greetings at appropriate times (good morning, hi, etc.)				
Cooperates with peers.				
Negotiates with peers to resolve conflicts (e.g., agrees to sharing or taking turns).				
Exhibits impulse control and self-regulation				
Follows classroom rules and routines when participating in activities				
Accepts guidance and directions				
Controls feelings of frustration, distress, and anxiety when challenged				
Resolves conflicts in socially acceptable ways (e.g. uses language or seeks adult)				

Communication and Language Data:

	Not Yet	Emerging	Almost mastered	Fully mastered
Follows two-step requests that are sequential, but not necessarily related (e.g., Please pick up the ball then get your coat).				
Engages in conversation (e.g., tells about a past event, asks how something works).				
Participates in songs, rhymes, games and stories that play with the sounds of language (e.g., claps out sounds or rhythms of words; creates own rhyming words in songs).				
Experiments with new vocabulary, uses more complex grammar and parts of speech (e.g., uses plural forms of nouns, uses different tenses, uses pronouns correctly).				
Uses 4 and 5 word sentences				
Is able to retell and sequence a story				

OVER

Intervention received: YES NO

If yes, in what domain(s): Social/Emotional Physical Communication Cognition Math Literacy

Strategies used for intervention(s) received.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Additional information:

Strengths: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Challenges: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments (Include relevant comments on things such as fine motor, gross motor, behavior problems, or any other areas)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activities to Practice with My Young Children

*These activities all support **language** and **social development.** Remember to **TALK** and **PLAY** with your children.

Month	English Language Arts	Math	Science and Social Studies	Gaining Independence
August-October	• **Ask** your child a question a day. (Use **WHO, WHAT or WHY** to start your question) o "What is your favorite color? Why?" • **Model active listening** and respond back to them with words such as, "I like blue too. My favorite color is green."	• **Count** anything and everything together. • **Count** as you: o put toys away o get out toys to play with o eat snacks o take steps • **Touch each object as you count it.**	• At the grocery store **observe** and **talk about fruits and vegetables.** o What **color** are they? o What **size** are they? Are they large or small? o How do they **grow**?	• Set a **routine** and make a **chart** to show the order in which you do things. (Ex: Bath, brush teeth, read, sleep)
October-December	• **Decorate** for the holidays or **find pictures** of holiday decorations in magazines or the newspaper (pumpkins, turkeys, trees) and talk about: o **colors** o **size** o **shapes**	• **Find** ten objects (toys, shoes, Fruit Loops). • **Count** forwards and **count** backwards, touching as you count. • **Sort** them by size, color or shapes.	• **Talk** about the weather. o What do you **observe** about the weather? o What do you **notice** about the weather? o What do you know about cold weather?	• When you leave the house, **ask,** "What will we need to take with us to the grocery store, grandma's house, park etc. so we are prepared?"

December-February	• Model and then play a "location" game. Have your child hide an object: ○ **above** ○ **below** ○ **under** ○ **behind** ○ **on top of** ○ **next to** ○ **beneath,** etc. another object.	• While doing laundry, practice **sorting** clothes by colors. • **Count** the number of objects in each pile. • **Compare.** Is it a big or small load of laundry?	• **Play** in the snow with your child. • **Make** a snowball or snowman. • **Talk** about how the cold feels.	• After looking at the weather **ask** your child: "What type of clothes should you wear today?" • Let them **pick out** appropriate clothes. • Let them **dress themselves.**
February-April	• **Look** for a different letter of the **alphabet** each day. (Example: "M" Day) ○ **Point** to it. ○ **Name it** –"That is an "M." (On McDonald's sign). ○ Have the child **repeat.**	• Math can be done aloud! **Make up** a simple word problems together. For example, if you have three apples and you eat one, how many do you have left? ○ It is ok to use fingers to count!	• **Go on a scavenger hunt** to find road signs. ○ What do you notice? ○ What **color** and **shape** are they? ○ What do they **tell** us to do?	• **Teach** your child to put on their coat, hats and gloves by themselves! (Or with as little assistance as possible to be successful.)
April-June	• **Visit** the local library. • **Attend** a story time. • **Check out** a book. • **Read** the book with your child.	• **Look** for a different **shape** each day. ○ Can you find a circle? What does it look like? ○ Can you find a square? What does it look like? • **Trace** the shape with your finger. • **Draw** the shape in sand or shaving cream.	• **Go on a nature walk.** ○ **Talk** about the colors of flowers and trees and grass. ○ **Name** objects you see as you walk. ○ **Look** for animals and insects.	• **Teach** your child to put on their own shoes. **Ask:** ○ Do they look right? ○ Do they feel right? • **Help them practice** tying their own shoes. • **Help them practice** buttoning and zipping coats or jackets.

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