

The child
is at the
center of
everything
we do.



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Every day, Early Childhood Resource Center serves hundreds of families and educators in numerous ways. Many accomplishments happen on otherwise ordinary days. A SPARK visit on a random Tuesday, for instance, can help a child strengthen a foundational skill that will later lead to school success.

One Tuesday at a time, Early Childhood Resource Center has quietly changed the lives of thousands of children throughout our six-county service area.

Whether we're guiding parents, helping them find child care, partnering with them to get their children ready for school, or training and coaching teachers, the child is at the center of everything we do.

Because every child deserves the opportunity to succeed.

This report highlights our work over the past fiscal year, from July 2021 through June 2022.

1,845
Children
served



10,000 Home
visits



14,162 Books distributed



22 Ohio
school
districts

School Readiness

It's a Tuesday. Chandra, a SPARK parent partner, is gathering the learning supplies she'll take with her to visit a family in Akron. Later this morning, little Xander will write out his name for the very first time. Mom will cry; Chandra will applaud. Xander will feel proud, and he'll write it again and again. In six months, the first time the kindergarten teacher asks, he'll use his pencil and confidently write his name.

SPARK is our kindergarten readiness program. Readiness is in the details: over time, and with lots of repetition, SPARK children develop and strengthen many different skills that they'll need to succeed in school. To really paint a picture of SPARK, it's important to show all the small triumphs: the successes that come one at a time, on random days, after months of encouragement and work. Those triumphs may seem little, but they certainly aren't minor. They're the building blocks of readiness. Here are a few:

· When Bryson started participating in SPARK, no one could understand what he was trying to say. He got so frustrated, he nearly stopped speaking altogether. After working with SPARK's speech pathologist, he's speaking much more clearly—and is far more confident.

· Ryleigh is no longer homeless, and she's not in foster care anymore, either. Her aunt is now raising her, and she's trying very hard to give Ryleigh a stable home for the first time ever. At every SPARK visit, Ryleigh's eager to try new tasks, and she never, ever gives up. She cannot wait for kindergarten to start, so she can carry her very own pink, sparkly backpack.

· Marcel was constantly in motion, and was having a hard time identifying letters, numbers, and shapes. Fast forward six months, and he knows the letters in his name and the numbers on his house, and he's staying engaged throughout an entire lesson. His mom helps him practice every single day. Both she and Marcel are very, very proud of how far he's come.



Tuesday: A day to jump

Mateo's mom was concerned that his big, high-energy personality might make getting ready for school a challenge.

But Maria, the family's SPARK parent partner, knew exactly what to do. She worked closely with Mateo's mom to create a learning plan that was just right for Mateo.

Every time Maria came for a SPARK visit, she brought lots of activities that used Mateo's energy and personality to help him learn. Maria would hide items throughout the room and ask Mateo to search for them. She would play music and count with Mateo as they danced and stretched. She would ask him to jump, jump, jump: jump to the letters of his name and jump to counted numbers.

By engaging his body and his brain, Mateo got ready for school.

He's still got a really big personality, but now that he's in school, Mateo has learned to sit and listen for longer periods of time. He's off to a great start!

Parent Engagement

It's a Tuesday. Charlie's just arrived at his Active Parenting Now class. This is week three, and he's getting to know the other dads. Gary, the instructor, is about to discuss keeping kids on track by offering choices instead of making demands: do you want to put on your PJs first, or read a story first? Two days from now, Charlie will use this strategy to get his stepsons to bed on time and with minimal fuss, for the first time in months.

Every time a parent is equipped to increase a child's resilience, the value of our parent engagement work becomes clear.

Parenting practices affect generations, for good or for bad. While the child is consistently our focus, we understand that by equipping parents with skills, tools, and strategies to parent (and co-parent) peacefully and positively, we benefit our entire community.

Tuesday: A day to learn about three-year-olds

As a single dad, Leland knows what he wants: to be the best possible parent. Early Childhood Resource Center has given him the tools to do that.

Parenting classes have taught Leland about the stages of child development and helped him understand what his three-year-old can—and can't—realistically be expected to do. He's learned a lot about compromise, and offering choices, and how to make Liam a confident kid.

Leland's a big fan of self-expression: he talks to Liam about his feelings. When Liam's having a hard time, they practice deep breathing together, or they count together slowly from one to 10. He encourages Liam to tell his preschool teacher if he's having a bad day or if he would like a moment to calm down.

As Leland's working on his parenting skills, he's also trying to get Liam ready for kindergarten. The SPARK program—and the family's parent partner, Libby—have been extremely helpful.

Leland is eager to dig into the school readiness work. He wants to understand Liam's strengths and challenges, and wants to know what specific things he can do to help Liam prepare. And Libby is specially trained to coach him.

When Liam struggles, Leland tells him to take his time, listen, and try. And when Liam succeeds, Leland immediately reinforces the victory by telling Liam he's done a good job.

Leland is amazed at Liam's progress in SPARK, and he's happy that he and his son are always learning together and bonding—with guidance and support from Early Childhood Resource Center.

338 Evidence-based parenting education classes, including 24/7 Dad, Doctor Dad, Active Parenting Now, First Five Years, and Parenting Wisely

1,098 Parent Cafés participants

125 Ohio Buckle Buckeye Car Seat Program families

514 Programs for fathers

3,055 Children visited the Inspiration Station



Leland and Liam



Professional Development & Child Care Referrals

It's a Tuesday. Haley, an early childhood specialist, is at a small child care center in Ravenna. She's explaining to Lisa, who teaches the toddlers, that if she puts the books on lower shelves and the toys in smaller bins, the kids will find them more easily and independently—and it'll be easier for Lisa to clean up, too. For the next ten minutes, Haley and Lisa will work together to make this corner of the classroom more organized and enticing. By this time next year, the child care center will have earned five stars for its high level of quality, partially because of the enhanced classroom environment.

Right in the classroom in real time, we're guiding and coaching teachers to motivate and challenge children, plan lessons with school readiness in mind, and engage parents in their children's learning.

And every time we help a family find high-quality child care so that parents can work, we're helping to cultivate the stability children need to grow into their best selves.

Tuesday: A day to celebrate a journey

Nova Chasser loves to talk about her joy. She's referring to Abby, a little girl Nova cares for at her family child care business in Trumbull County.

At one point, Nova was not thinking about joy, but about how she would live her life without legs. Several doctors told Nova that a circulation problem meant she might lose her legs. She understood that meant she would also lose the career she loved. Early Childhood Specialist MaryBeth helped her keep her livelihood. MaryBeth discovered that while Nova was addressing her medical condition, her Child Development Associate credential had expired. MaryBeth showed Nova that with a little additional training and an application, she could retain her credential.

Next, Nova's program became highly rated in Ohio's Step Up To Quality system, a process that had been interrupted due to her health challenges. While getting rated is a complicated process, MaryBeth supported Nova throughout.

Today, Nova's family child care center has five stars: that's the highest possible rating, awarded only to providers demonstrating comprehensively excellent practices that go far beyond basic licensing standards. In fact, in our six-county region, Nova is one of only 19 licensed family child care providers (out of 276) who have earned that coveted five-star rating.

Nova cares for six children in her home, including her joy: three-year-old Abby. Abby's been with Nova since she was six months old. Nova suspected Abby might be autistic, so MaryBeth connected Nova with lots of training on how to care for autistic children as they grow. She's learned a lot about how to help Abby—and how to teach the other children to interact with her. All the children in Nova's care have grown up with Abby. While Abby doesn't speak, the other children have learned that when she puts out her hand, she's communicating about what she wants or needs. And now communication with Abby is even easier, thanks to a tablet and sign language picture cards purchased with stabilization grant funding from the state of Ohio. MaryBeth helped Nova apply for the funding, and it has made all the difference.

Abby's name has been changed to protect privacy.

6,430 Coaching and technical assistance sessions provided to **651** child care programs

208 Educators attended Child Development Associate training

10,713 Educators attended **637** training classes

Helped **706** parents find high-quality child care

2021-2022 CONTRIBUTORS

MANY THANKS

We are deeply grateful to all those who share our vision and invest in our work.
We could not make these impacts without their support.

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BOOK DONORS We thank students from GlenOak, Hoover, and Perry high schools, who organized a book drive and donated more than 4,000 new and gently used children's books.



FALL FUNDRAISER It's a Tuesday. Many supporters of the Early Childhood Resource Center have gathered at the annual fall fundraising event to learn more about the SPARK program, enjoy dinner with friends, and bid on donated art pieces.



OUR MISSION

The mission of Early Childhood Resource Center is to promote the healthy development of young children by strengthening families, improving the quality of early learning experiences, increasing school and community readiness, and informing public policy.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Early Childhood Resource Center provides a welcoming atmosphere, inclusive of all people, that honors, respects, and celebrates everyone's unique perspective. We encourage diversity and the sharing of thoughts and ideas to create a learning environment that is responsive to the needs of all young children and those who educate and care for them.

Early Childhood Resource Center
is regionally located in three offices:

(Administrative Office)

1718 CLEVELAND AVENUE NORTHWEST
CANTON, OHIO 44703

37 N. HIGH STREET, SUITE D
AKRON, OHIO 44308

6414 MARKET STREET
BOARDMAN, OHIO 44512



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