Executive Summary

NH Child

September 2018
Implementing NH ChILD:  
A Comprehensive Approach to Professional Learning  
to Reach All New Haven Early Childhood Educators

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Haven Children’s Learning District (NH ChILD) envisions a city where all children have access to high quality early learning experiences. In order to turn this vision into reality for the 14,800 children ages 0-8 living in New Haven, NH ChILD is working to increase the number of spaces in high quality programs while simultaneously improving the quality of early learning experiences in existing programs. The essential components of NH ChILD’s quality improvement strategy include the development of sustained cycles of professional learning and coaching (in-service training), aligned with pre-service training and support, that are all anchored in a shared vision for quality.

NH ChILD is committed to galvanizing the early childhood educator community around locally adopted principles for quality to set a city-wide vision for what early learning experiences should look like. In order for quality improvement efforts to take hold and be sustained, this common vision for quality must be coupled with ongoing cycles of professional learning which unite the diverse community of early childhood providers. Along with the expertise and knowledge of the NH ChILD Advisory Board and Leadership Team, which includes representatives from Bank Street Education Center and Friends Center for Children, NH ChILD understands the essential elements of high-quality strategies for professional learning and therefore has developed a plan that addresses the following:

- Establishes the appropriate conditions for learning: is ongoing, supportive, strengths-based, and collaborative.
- Provides the time and space for all early childhood educators to:
  - Explore new practices
  - Recognize how one’s attitudes, values, and beliefs with respect to culture, race, and equity might impact one’s work
  - Learn from new perspectives
  - Share ideas and ideologies
- Focuses on a commitment to the whole child, developmentally meaningful practice, and a pedagogical approach rooted in the Principles of Ideal Learning
- Acknowledges the importance of a personalized plan for professional learning that includes developmental goals, strategic objectives, and associated information/metrics to put individual educators on the path of continuous improvement
- Recognizes that professional learning cannot be sustained without strong leadership and reflective supervision, which requires its own set of supports to foster and develop

The following paper outlines NH ChILD’s beliefs, commitments, and plan for action with respect to NH ChILD’s citywide efforts for in-service professional learning. We outline the personnel, budget, strategic partnerships, and philosophy behind the idea to launch a NH Child Leadership Support Model, NH ChILD Coaching Model, and NH ChILD Professional Learning Communities. The paper also includes some initial research and ideas regarding a strategy for developing cost-effective, innovative, and high quality opportunities for pre-service training. While the ideas in this paper will continue to be refined over the months ahead, we are confident that they lay the foundation for an effective, strategic, and sustainable approach to improving the quality of early learning experiences for all young children living in New Haven.
Implementing NH ChILD: A Comprehensive Approach to Professional Learning to Reach All New Haven Early Childhood Educators

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

NH ChILD has engaged early childhood educators (program administrators, teachers, and caregivers) in a survey to gather information about the current professional learning landscape for early childhood educators throughout the city and solicit input on some ideas NH ChILD might consider implementing (Appendix C). Below is a summary of some of the information NH ChILD received as part of this survey (full summary of the survey results can be found as Appendix D):

45% of respondents work in a child care center, 35% work in a public school or Head Start program, and 20% work as family child care providers.

- **28%** of respondents indicated they do not have access to opportunities to help them develop the skills or knowledge most needed to do their jobs better.
- **Time** and **location** were the two biggest barriers to accessing the professional learning opportunities respondents believe they need to improve their work.
  - 77% of educators indicated “there is no time in my day for professional learning opportunities” as a significant or somewhat significant barrier.
  - 80% indicated “the professional learning opportunities I need access to are not offered anywhere near me” as a significant or somewhat significant barrier.
- **One in four respondents** listed coaching and/or mentorship as the most helpful support in terms of the development of a personalized growth plan and reaching their goals. However, only **38%** of respondents indicated they have access to coaching or mentoring support.
- The most common form of professional learning opportunity respondents have access to are classes, lectures, or workshops (92%) followed by online courses (71%).
- **Less than 50%** of respondents indicated they’ve had access to professional learning opportunities that relate to Adverse Childhood Experiences or Trauma Informed Care in the past year.
- **9%** of respondents indicated they do not have a team or professional learning community that supports their learning.28

The data gathered via this survey have led to the development of a series of beliefs, commitments, and actions NH ChILD plans to implement to increase support and improve the quality of early childhood educator practice throughout New Haven.
NH ChILD’S PLEDGE

NH ChILD BELIEVES

Based on the research cited above, feedback gathered through stakeholder conversations and surveys, and what we’ve experienced as professionals, NH ChILD believes that all early childhood educators working in New Haven have a right to the following opportunities and experiences as they relate to their individual growth and professional learning:

1. Clarity of vision and an understanding of what quality early care and education look like in practice.
2. A designated mentor who is knowledgeable about early childhood education and the Principles of Ideal Learning and who is invested in her/his personal and professional growth.
3. Access to ongoing cycles of professional learning with job-embedded support to advance professional growth connected to the Principles of Ideal Learning:
   a. Dedicated time to meet with colleagues to engage in professional learning, such as to review student development and work, share best practices, or collaborate on an inquiry question.
   b. Opportunities for personalized support and feedback including in-class or in-home observations and coaching from their mentor or another early childhood expert supervisor or coach.
4. Access to continuing education and college courses with financial support, if needed, to strengthen practice and support career advancement.

It is important to note that NH ChILD’s beliefs as they relate to professional learning are intended as a support and resource to educators and not to add burden, requirements, or additional expectations to an already overworked and underpaid workforce. NH ChILD also acknowledges that in order to make these beliefs a reality we must support programs and educators in providing the adequate time, space, and funding for this learning to take place in a fair, meaningful, and sustainable way.
NH ChILD COMMITS

To translate NH ChILD’s beliefs about professional learning and support into actions, NH ChILD commits to the following in the next three to five years:

1. Every early childhood educator and leader in New Haven will be able to explain and provide an example of what the locally adapted version of the Principles of Ideal Learning looks like in practice.
2. Every early childhood educator (teacher, caregiver, and administrator/leader) in New Haven will have a designated mentor who is knowledgeable about early childhood education and the NH ChILD version of the Principles of Ideal Learning and who is invested in her/his personal and professional growth.
3. Every early childhood educator in New Haven will have had the opportunity to opt into at least one cycle of professional learning that includes attendance at professional development workshop(s) with up to four visits of follow-up job-embedded support connected to at least one of the locally adapted Principles of Ideal Learning. The skills the coaching sessions focus on will be collaboratively identified by the individual educator and the NH ChILD coach with input from the educator’s program administrator if applicable.
4. Every early childhood educator (teachers, assistant teachers, home care providers, paraprofessionals, program administrators, etc.) in New Haven will know how to access required and desired opportunities for high-quality higher education coursework that align with the locally adapted Principles of Ideal Learning. This includes support in identifying financial and other resources.
5. NH ChILD will explore how structures and policies that influence the early childhood landscape in New Haven can be leveraged to sustain the work it will do related to professional learning and ensure all children ages 0-8 have access to ideal early learning experiences.

NH ChILD ACTS

To deliver on these commitments, NH ChILD has developed the following ideas for implementation to build on the existing strengths of New Haven based early childhood educators and ultimately improve the quality of early learning experiences for all children in New Haven ages 0-8. These components work together to create a comprehensive system for support and all rely on the development of a core of NH ChILD coaches who would be responsible for collaborating with educators and also working as mentors, ambassadors, teachers, coaches, and leaders of ideal learning in New Haven.
NH ChILD Professional Learning

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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction to NH ChILD’s mission and vision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Collaborate &amp; develop a locally adapted version of the Principles of Ideal Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recruit educators to participate in professional learning opportunities</td>
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<td>02</td>
<td>NH ChILD Professional Learning Communities</td>
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<td>• Deep investigation of one topic or practice over a sustained period of time</td>
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<td>• Provide specialized supports to individual teachers</td>
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<td>• Gradual release to teachers who emerge as leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Principles of Ideal Learning Resource Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Articles, videos, etc. that “explain” the Principles of Ideal Learning in action</td>
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<td>• Promote the adoption of the principles for high quality early learning experiences</td>
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<td>• Coaches would become responsible in years 2 and 3</td>
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NH ChILD Leadership Support Model

Leaders—program/school administrators and principals—play a critical role and may benefit from more formalized leadership development opportunities.

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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Leadership Certificate</td>
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<td>Bank Street’s Early Childhood Leadership Advanced Certificate Program is an intensive 10-month, 24-credit program designed to support the development of current and aspiring early childhood directors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>PK-3 Leadership Program</td>
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<td>An executive style program for central office leaders, private preschool leaders, and school and teacher leaders to help support early childhood educators in understanding the developmental, curricular, and assessment needs along the Pre-K-3 continuum.</td>
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**MAKING IT HAPPEN**

**SUSTAINING THE WORK**

It is also essential that NH ChILD examines the systems and structures that influence the early childhood landscape in New Haven and identifies opportunities for sustaining its work with respect to professional learning and ensuring that all New Haven children ages 0-8 have access to high quality early learning experiences. Whenever possible, NH ChILD will seek to align its work to satisfy existing mandates and policies to avoid duplication. NH ChILD will not compromise its goals or commitment to its vision for quality, however we will aim to align existing and emerging policies and mandates with our vision to further coherence. During the first two years of implementation, NH ChILD will assess which existing systems, structures, and policies can be leveraged and what new systems, structures, and policies need to be created to better facilitate and sustain practices aligned to the Principles of Ideal Learning across classrooms, programs, and homes. This might include working with community and policy leaders in New Haven and at the state level as well as early childhood leaders and program administrators at the individual site level to incentivize, spread, and sustain practices aligned to the Principles of Ideal Learning across sites.

To properly analyze and assess the current landscape and develop recommendations related to the sustainability of its work, NH ChILD should budget $10,000 per year for the first two years of implementation. As part of its research, NH ChILD will identify possible public funding streams to sustain its professional learning agenda post-year 3 of implementation.

**ESTIMATE OF COST**

To implement the professional learning supports outlined, NH ChILD anticipates the following costs associated with each plank of the plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Costs for Professional Learning Supports</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plank</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>NH ChILD / Principles of Ideal Learning Orientation Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>NH ChILD Coaching Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>NH ChILD Professional Learning Communities (10 PLCs / year with 10 participants each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principles of Ideal Learning Resource Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>NH ChILD Leadership Support Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability Analysis and Recommendations</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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NH CHILD Professional Learning Timeline

- Launch NH CHILD Orientation Sessions for all early childhood educators (program administrators, teachers, assistant teachers, caregivers, etc.) / Develop locally adapted version of Principles of Ideal Learning
- NH CHILD Orientation Sessions continue
- Launch NH CHILD Coaching Model
- NH CHILD Coaching continues
- Launch NH CHILD Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- NH CHILD PLCs continue
- Launch NH CHILD Leadership Support Model
- NH CHILD Leadership Support continues
- Develop and Continuously Update Principles of Ideal Learning Resource Bank
- Sustainability Analysis and Recommendations

Fall 2018  Spring 2018  Fall 2019  Spring 2019  Fall 2020  Spring 2020  Fall 2021  Spring 2021
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Alison Wunder-Stahl, All Our Kin

Participants from a focus Group at Elm City Communities

The Bank Street Education Center is an arm of Bank Street College of Education that partners with schools, school systems, higher ed organizations, and communities to advance practice and policy in the field of education at scale. It works closely with leaders and educators to offer strategic guidance and implementation services ranging from in-depth collaborative district reviews and analysis of curricula, practices, and resources, to professional learning experiences and ongoing coaching.