



## Montcalm County

Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative

### Agenda

6/4/25

11:30am - 1:30pm

Meeting in Person at MAISD 621 New St Stanton

- I. Call to order:
- II. Welcome & Introductions:
- III. Public Comment:
- IV. June Agenda Approval:
- V. February Meeting Minutes Approval:
- VI. Director Report: Cari O'Connor
  - [Early Childhood Education: Power if Interactions](#)
- VII. New Business:
  - A. 2025-2026 GSRP Implementation Plan review\*
  - B. 2026-2031 Strategic Planning Activities
- VIII. Old Business:
  - A. Dolly Parton Imagination Library update: Mindy Train
  - B. Early On Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC): Cindy DeYoung
  - C. Talking is Teaching Update: Monique Cooper
- IX. Committee Reports:
  - A. Executive & Communication: Cari O'Connor
  - B. Early Care & Education: Mindy Train
  - C. Family Wellness: Karen Marsman
  - D. Family Leadership: Monique Cooper
- X. Roundtable Updates
- XI. Principals of Collaboration Survey
- XII. Adjournment

**Next Meeting Date *August 6th, 2025*, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm**

**Location 621 New St Stanton MI 48888**

*Advance health equities.*

*Early Childhood services meet high standards of quality.*

*Children prenatal to age five and their families thrive.*

Visit our website for the most updated calendar information at [www.GreatStartMontcalm.org](http://www.GreatStartMontcalm.org)



Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative  
Minutes  
2/5/25  
11:30am - 1:30pm

**I. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 11:37 am by Anita McIntyre

**II. Welcome & Introductions**

Present: Janel Boulis, Elizabeth Buskirk, Cindy DeYoung, Jamie Gorby, Jessica Higley, Liz Ingraham, Terri Legg, Flora Ma, Karen Marsman, Anita McIntyre, Lillie McNeil, Cari O'Connor, Alison Stout, Drew Train, Mindy Train, Lori Johnson

**III. Public Comment**

There was no public comment

**IV. February Agenda Approval**

A motion was made by Janel Boulis and supported by Elizabeth Buskrik to approve the agenda of February 5, 2025, as presented. Motion carried.

**V. December Meeting Minutes Approval**

A motion was made by Lillie McNeil and supported by Jessica Higley to approve the minutes of December 4, 2024, as presented. Motion carried.

**VI. Directors Report: Cari O'Connor**

**How Brains Are Built**

**Welcome to the newest member** of the MCGSC family: Cole Robert. He weighed in at 7lbs 15oz and 20 1/4 inches long!

**2024-2025 Preschool recruitment** continues, and applications are being processed and distributed as they come in for 2024-2025! We appreciate any help you can provide in helping us connect families to programs with openings! On March 1st, 2025, we will officially begin GSRP enrolment season for 2025-2026 school year. If you know of any families with 4-year-olds for next school year please encourage them to complete an application. We will once again be enrolling (confirming) GSRP placement starting March 1st, 2025, in order to be able to give families the answers for placement that they are in need of for planning for the 2025-2026 school year! Working with hold harmless number so anticipating at least 26 classrooms operating. Because we have hold harmless in place programs should be able to tell families of their placement options instead of waiting until July!

**Michigan Educator Workforce Initiative:** CDA, Bachelors, and potentially master's degree support is available to staff who are working in/at any level of Early Childhood and or education. Please have anyone that you are connected with email me directly if they would like to be considered for this pilot.

**National Childcare data released last week:** average cost of childcare in US is \$11,582 for one child.

**2-1-1 Day February 11th, 2025:** We really could use your help promoting 211. Access continues to come up as a priority in our local data sets. 211 can help families access a variety of service and supports! 2-1-1 social media and other marketing tools were sent out and can be resent if needed! Please support with activities specially on Feb 11th, 2025.

**MCGSC hosted Family Engagement Hub** Feedback Focus Group February 3rd.

**PREK for all Key Architects Mi LEAP Task Force:** MAISA Video Update: Spoke with MAISA this week. Video series draft has been create. Release is still targeted for February, but the delay occurred because MAISA will be working with PBIS in MI (possibly national) for release. This project is almost across the finish line! Thank you to all who supported this effort.

**Literacy Hub Transition:** Previously we received funding and used to support Talking is Teaching. This has changed and we are not anticipating receiving any support for Talking is Teaching from this work.

**Region 4 Regional Childcare Coalition:** Vibrant Futures & Right Place collaboration. Letter of Support provided. We will wait and see who ends up getting the grant to support our regional work in this area. More to come... Could be an opportunity for any MCGSC board member to participate.

**Shout outs, thank yous, & Recognition:**

- Greenville Area Community Foundation for their ongoing commitment to DPIL sustainable funding!
- Lions Club donation to DPIL!

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Highlight Presentation- Montcalm County 2-1-1: Terri Legg**

- i. <https://mi211.org/providers/portal>

### **B. EightCAP Support & Services: Lori Johnson**

- i. PowerPoint Presentation attached

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **A. Dolly Parton Imagination Library: Mindy Train**

- i. Current number enrolled YTD – 1,767
- ii. Total number of children served in 2024 - 2,122
- iii. Total number of books mailed in 2024 - 19,852
- iv. Total number of children that graduated from the program in 2024 – 346
- v. Donations since 12/4/24
  - 1. Danish Sisterhood Society
  - 2. Greenville Lions Club
  - 3. Stanton Women's Club

### **B. Early On Local Interagency Coordination Council (LICC): Cindy DeYoung**

- i. Updated report attached

### **C. Talking is Teaching: Mindy Train**

- i. There will be a soft launch for their new website on February 18. There will be no need to log in and find the items. There will be 2 sections one a parent side and the other a community partner. You will be able to find the posters, tip sheets, etc. easily.

- ii. If you have any feedback about the new website please let me know so I can let them know or I can give you their contact.

## **IX. Committee Reports**

### **A. Executive & Communications: Cari O'Connor**

- i. Billboards will be going up across the county
- ii. The video project that was worked on early fall, will be available to view the end of March. This project was part of other collaboratives and hoping to take this video nation wide.

### **B. Early Care & Education: Mindy Train**

- i. Will be doing a jumpstart to kindergarten event in 3 local districts during Kindergarten round-up. Will be showing parents resources that they can use with their child this summer to help them prepare for fall.
- ii. Snow Days story event is February 7<sup>th</sup> at The Flat River Community Library in Greenville.

### **C. Family Wellness: Karen Marsman**

- i. Is working on the baby shower which will be May 17 from 10-1 at the MACC. Registration will be out soon!
- ii. On March 7 we will be having Coffee, Cupcakes, and Cream for Breastfeeding Moms at the MACC which will be in a classroom. Children are more than welcome to come since there will be toys in the classroom. Please let families about this amazing opportunity for moms to get together so they can give each other tips and tricks. And there will be plenty of resources for any mommas who need advice from professionals! There are flyers in the back table.
- iii. We are asking feedback from families about the parenting magazine. Is it helping them, do they want anything different or have it shorter? Is it overwhelming?

### **D. Family Leadership: Mindy Train**

- i. Family Coalition February 10<sup>th</sup> will be about Getting Children to Eat.
- ii. Family coalition will be at the roller rink on March 10. This will be at Rainbow Gardens in Crystal. To celebrate Parenting Awareness Month.
- iii. Senator Gary Peters would love to hear any stories of successes in the school. You can even send any concerns or questions. If you want to see change it could be happening in other counties as well and it would possibly pass through or they will make a change. Senator Peters is really for education and if there needs to be a change he's willing to try!

## **X. Round Table Updates**

- A. United Way Montcalm – Ionia Counties – Is offering free tax services, call 2-1-1 to schedule an appointment. Can also do your taxes online for free at <https://www.myfreetaxes.org/>
- B. DHHS has gun locks available for free, funding available for those needing help with transportation related issues.
- C. Alpha Family Services – March 7<sup>th</sup> 9 am – 3 pm semi annual garage sale, March 15<sup>th</sup> Trivia Night fundraiser at Water Tower Grill [click here for more details](#)
- D. CASA – currently 36 kids and looking for volunteers
- E. EightCAP – JR applications, will be enrolling till 30 days before the last day of school

## **XI. Principles of Collaboration Survey**

### **A. Feedback about 2-1-1**

- i. Very helpful, great to hear the empathy drawing from the representative
- ii. Thank you, we refer all of our families
- iii. Great presentation, more presentations could be used ever for specific topics
- iv. Calls were valuable to listen to

### **B. Questions/Comments about EightCAP services**

- i. Happy to hear funding is available for some of the assistance programs, will definitely share the flyers with providers
- ii. Wonderful resources for families

### **C. Organizations in Montcalm County you would like more information on**

- i. Doula services, helping hands, flat river doulas

### **D. Other comments**

- i. Lunch is always appreciated, charcuterie board
- ii. Nacho bar
- iii. Baked potato bar
- iv. Soup and bread
- v. Hop Hog

## **XII. Adjournment**

- A. Adjourned at 1:20 pm

Minutes recorded by Mindy Train



**The GSRP 2025-2206 application is due May 15th.  
MAISD GSRP Implementation Plan for 2025-2026 school year:**

- Huntley's Clubhouse: 2 Extended Day classrooms serving 40 students.
- Tri County 4 Extended Day classrooms serving 80 students (4 start up grants as they are expanding from 16 to 20 per classroom)
- Natures Wonder: 1 Extended Day classroom serving 8 students.
- Head Start 2 school day classroom serving 40 students (2 start up grants as these are new classrooms for us)
- Central Montcalm 4 school day classrooms serving 80 students.
- Vestaburg 2 school day classrooms serving 40 students.
- Montabella 2 school day classrooms serving 40 students.
- Lakeview 2 school day classrooms serving 40 students.
- Greenville 7 Extended Day classrooms serving 140 students.
- CCC 2 school day classroom serving 32 students.



## **MCGSC Strategic Planning Activity June 2025**

**More Parent Engagement and Need Local Accessibility to Support is needed. Why do we think this is occurring? See Answer sheet as reference.**

**What activities might the MCGSC do to create positive outcomes?**

**Children in Montcalm County Lack Access to Local Resources for Healthy Early Childhood Development. Why do we think this is occurring? See Answer sheet as reference.**

**What activities might the MCGSC do to create positive outcomes?**

**Children are not Prepared for Kindergarten. Why do we think this is occurring?  
See Answer sheet as reference.**

**What activities might the MCGSC do to create positive outcomes?**



## **Summary of Family Coalition Root Cause Analysis Activity April 2025 & Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative Executive Committee May 2025**

### **MCGSC Executive Committee**

#### **More Parent Engagement and Need Local Accessibility to Support is needed. Why do we think this is occurring?**

- Trying to live – difficult to think of next steps.
- Lack of awareness of what's available.
- Comfortable behind a computer screen, not wanting to go to in person training/opportunities.
  - More convenient for virtual appointments.
  - Accept technology for everyday part of our lives.
- Once the child gets to school things will be fine, do not understand what is needed for the child prior; lack of understanding of child development.
- Substance misuse.
- Rising mental health issues with out mental health supports/ mental health provider desert.

#### **Children in Montcalm County Lack Access to Local Resources for Healthy Early Childhood Development. Why do we think this is occurring?**

- Affordability getting from point a to point b. Lack of reliable transportation.
- Lack of self-motivation to want a job/keep a job.
- Acceptance of generational poverty.
- Mental Health specific: Social workers are constantly changing, and it is difficult to keep track of resources.
- Only using the resources that are convenient to you within walking/driving distance (resources in your own small communities).
- Resources are not available for those in rural isolation.
- Awareness of the cost of items keeps things out of reach for families (childcare, food, vehicles, misc.)
- Childcare desert creates lack of job opportunities for parents.
- High ALICE population. People working but still having difficulty making ends meet.
- Lack of home visiting options; only qualifying options available yet so many more have needs.

#### **Children are not Prepared for Kindergarten. Why do we think this is occurring?**

- Childcare is expensive. Preschool options are limited in many rural areas.
- No 3-year-old spots/no options locally.
- Kindergarten is no longer developmentally appropriate.
- Lost play based focus for kindergarten.
- Mix messaging around kindergarten readiness.
- Increased need for social emotional issues /supports.
- Lack of knowledge among teachers about Developmentally appropriate practices.
- Disconnect between PreK and K12 interferes with k-12 readiness supports
- Lack of knowledge with parents in assisting their child with their homework, especially math



## **MCGSC Family Coalition**

### **More Parent Engagement and Need Local Accessibility to Supports**

- Coalition and Early On need to communicate. Especially for Family Coalition and that way people will know what is happening in the county.
- Evening meetups (think about working parents) would love more of them to happen. 5 votes
- Facebook events (Social Media & calendar resources) that are happening in Montcalm County 8 votes
- Share flyers at chambers, libraries, flo's, everywhere. 3 votes
- Have activities for older kids not just for preschool and under. 6 votes
- Share about Alpha Family Services and Maternal Infant Health Program. 3 votes.
- Spread the word about local resources. Many people don't know about the resources that are out there. 3 votes

### **Children in Montcalm County Lack Access to Local Resources for Healthy Early Childhood Development**

- Partner with local farmers (classes about growing crops, how to plant, cook, store) Could even involve 4-H. 10 votes
- Have a community garden even at a senior citizen home. 15 votes
- More local farmers for EBT. 1 vote
- Many places that don't know for families for summer bucks at farmer markets
- School & MCGSC connection: Let schools know about events and that way they can share with their families: looks like sending flyers to secretaries at the elementaries) 1 vote
- Farmers Market gears toward children. Families sign up and each family will sign up to grow a fruit or vegetable and let the kids run it. Parents will be around to help their child(ren) and guide them. Families will be able to teach each other on how to plant the item and give ideas for recipes as well. They will be teaching each other. 6 votes

### **Children are not Prepared for Kindergarten**

- A book/resource tool that helps parents prepare the child about Kindergarten that way they are ready and not behind. 5 votes
- Oriental Trading has so much stuff for learning materials! Even signing up for emails they will send you coupons or money and it will even make the items cheaper. 6 votes
- Possibly having the child wait to go to school till the age of 6 then starting them at the age of 5. Some children are not developmentally ready or are age appropriately to start kindergarten and sit in the classroom for such a long day.



#### OUR VISION:

**Children in Montcalm County have the opportunity to be healthy, eager, and prepared to succeed in school and life.**

**For more information about early childhood in Montcalm County or to provide feedback regarding this data, please go to:**  
[www.GreatStartMontcalm.org](http://www.GreatStartMontcalm.org)

**Visit us on Facebook:**  
[greatstartmontcalmcounty](https://www.facebook.com/greatstartmontcalmcounty)



**For more information you can contact the MCGSC at:**  
**(616) 225-6146**

# Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative

## Status of Young Children 2025

Dear Community Member,

The [Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative](http://www.GreatStartMontcalm.org) (MCGSC) is proud to support Early Childhood initiatives. We continue to drive conversations around the data that identifies the work we need to do to build a system that supports the wellbeing of all young children throughout Montcalm County. Please share our annual Status of Young Children report to grow the opportunities for conversations around the MCGSC vision. As partners in our community, we ask that you continue to advocate for young children and their families to be a priority. We know that the first five years of a child's life is a time of great opportunity! Research tells us that by age six, most of a child's brain is developed. This is a critical time for investments that stimulate brain development and build environments where young children thrive. In 2022, there were 697 births and a total of 2023 children birth to age eight living in Montcalm County. We must continue to make decisions that help families to raise healthy children prepared to succeed in school and life.

Parents and community leaders in Montcalm County who understand the vital importance of investing in young children continue to work together to implement the 2022-2025 MCGSC Strategic Plan. We invite you to join us in fighting for a **continued investment in research based, high quality early childhood supports**. Please contact us with any feedback at [www.GreatStartMontcalm.org](http://www.GreatStartMontcalm.org)

*Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative Members*



### WHAT THE DATA SHOWS US:

- In 2023, 18% of children ages birth to seventeen live in poverty. State of MI is 17%.
- 57% of students receive free or reduced school lunch assistance, a decrease from 2023 at 67%. State of MI is 50%.
- 31% of Montcalm County mothers who gave birth did not receive appropriate health care in 2022. The State of MI is 31%.
- Medicaid paid for 38% of Montcalm County births in 2022. State of MI is 39%.
- 66% of 19-to 35-month-old children in Montcalm County are up to date on their immunizations. The State average is 70%. Unfortunately, this number is trending in the wrong direction.
- 47% of children ages 0-4 participate in Women, Infants, & Children (WIC). State of MI is 42%. Data from the last five-plus years shows a decreasing enrollment trend despite being above the state average.
- In 2023, Montcalm County was lower than the state average in the number of children birth to five that were substantiated for child abuse and neglect. Montcalm County stands at a rate per 1,000 of 14, while the state average is at a rate per 1,000 of 15.8.
- 140 ages birth to two children were served through Early ON & Special Education services in 2023. This number has increased from 112 children in 2020. Children from birth to 5 years old receiving special education in Michigan and Montcalm County was at 5%.

Report Data Sources: Michigan Kids Count & MAISD EO



## MAISD Early On LICC Report: June 4, 2025

**REFER today for any infant or toddler you have concerns about! ANYONE can refer.**

**Go to: [www.1800Earlyon.org](http://www.1800Earlyon.org) or call 1-800-EarlyOn**

### Comparison Referral Data

	2017-18 Referrals	2018-19 Referrals	2019-20 Referrals	2020-21 Referrals	2021-22 Referrals	2022-2023 Referrals	2023-2024 Referrals	2024-2025 Referrals
July	16	30	35	20	28	9	23	21
August	27	40	33	16	26	38	28	28
September	24	13	25	24	30	27	18	30
October	17	24	19	32	24	19	27	26
November	12	17	12	11	34	33	21	25
December	8	17	21	18	14	20	18	23
January	15	22	35	30	32	26	33	32
February	29	35	34	23	28	23	32	28
March	26	26	25	25	38	29	28	33
April	31	34	14	31	26	28	28	24
May	17	32	10	22	24	27	27	17*
June	24	25	16	24	33	23	22	
<b>TOTAL</b>	229	315	279	266	337	302	305	

\*As of May 26, 2025

As of May 26, 2025 Montcalm Area ISD Early On has:

- 28 Children in Referral
- 149 Children enrolled and receiving Early On Services.
- 34 of 149 (22%) students receiving Early On are ALSO receiving special education services (Michigan Mandated Special Education MMSE).

Outreach and Early On Video: [Early On Video Link](#)



Montcalm Co. Playgroup  
Private group



MAISD Early On



Check us out on Social Media

Follow us on Social Media to learn how to make a referral and get information about your child's development.

- Need more developmental wheels, Early On pamphlets or other materials? Email Elizabeth Buskirk at [ebuskirk@maisd.com](mailto:ebuskirk@maisd.com)
- Interested in having an Early On staff member come speak to your organization? Email Cindy DeYoung at [cdeyoung@maisd.com](mailto:cdeyoung@maisd.com)

### Playgroup:

We completed a great year for the playgroups! We had an end of year celebration on May 22 with 29 kids attending at Veterans Park in Stanton. We had popcorn, cotton candy, face painting, bubbles and a bounce house. Fun was had by all!

Summer: See flyer below! We will have 2 groups per month for June, July, August and September.

Next year:

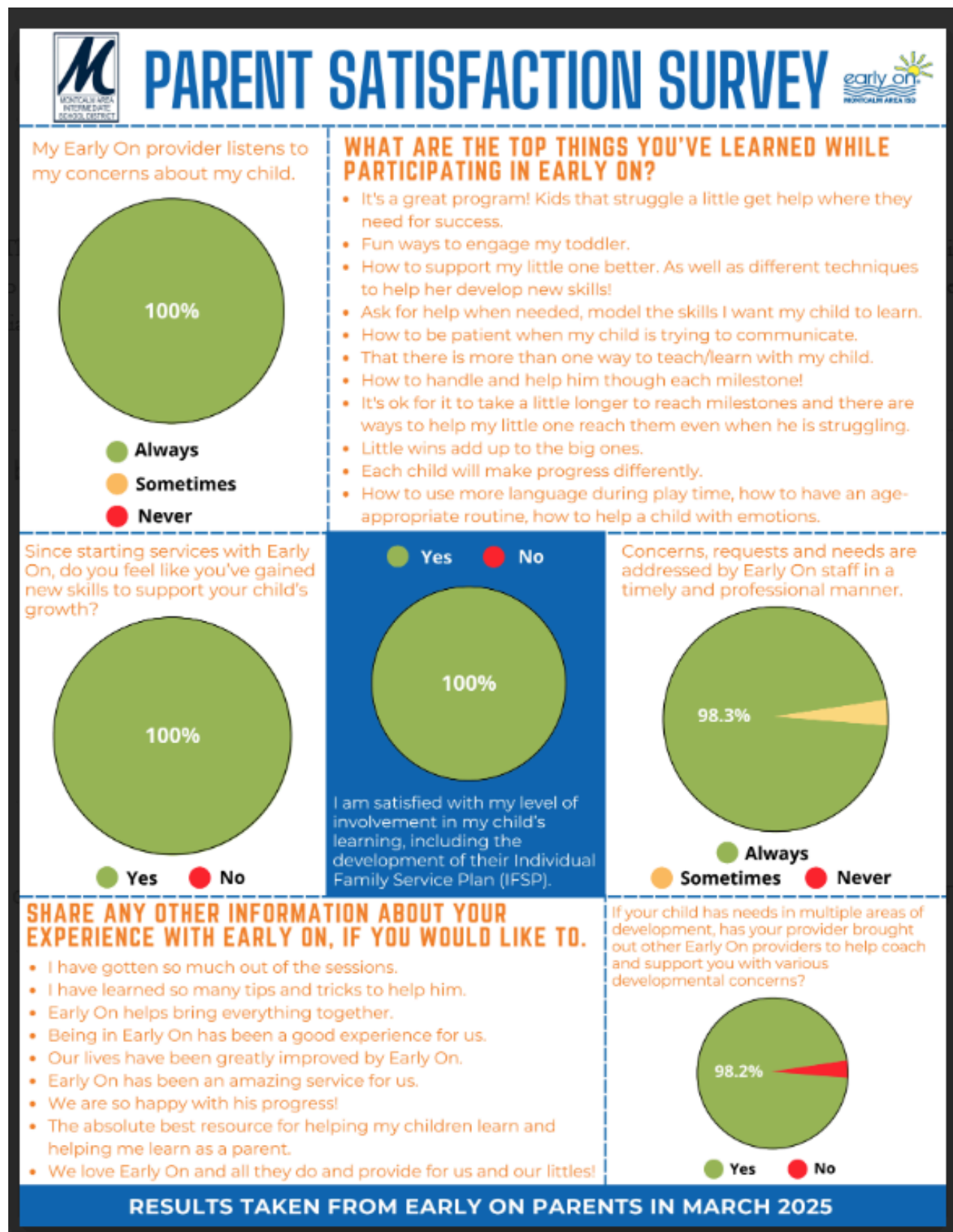
We will be moving locations in TriCounty and Greenville. Final details will be announced in August with playgroups to start in October. We are also joining with Head Start to provide playgroups together. More details to come.

### Professional Development:

Professional development for the 24-25 school focused on learning about and implementing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) practices in the birth to three populations and using data driven processes to make decisions regarding eligibility, instruction and service times. We purchased many mid-tech AAC devices as well as are utilizing core boards with many Early On families.

## Early On Parent Satisfaction Survey:

In March 2025, we surveyed parents and caregivers who participate in Early On. We received 59 responses with very positive reactions. Please see results below:





# Summer 2025 Playgroup

Any family with children from ages birth thru 4 years old living in Montcalm Area Intermediate School District is welcome to attend. Call (616) 225-6146 for more information.

## Highlights

- \*Try new activities with your child that will stimulate your child's development!
- \*Learn songs and read books (receive a copy of each book to keep)
- \*Interact with other parents and children!
- \*Learn strategies to use at home and have access to Early Childhood professionals to ask questions.



Tuesdays 5:30pm-6:30pm	Thursdays 10:30am-11:30am
<b>June 10</b>	<b>June 12</b>
Farm Visit 7212 Kendaville Rd Lakeview, MI 48850	Eureka Township & Touch a Truck 9322 SW Greenville Rd. Greenville, MI 48838
<b>July 8</b>	<b>July 10</b>
Greenville Splash Pad 213 N Franklin St. Greenville, MI (park next to Museum)	Veteran's Park Stanton 710 N State St. Stanton, MI 48888
<b>August 19</b>	<b>August 21</b>
Sidney Township Park 2823 S Derby Rd. Sidney, MI 48885	Ensley Park 518 E. Shaw St. Howard City, MI 49329
<b>September 16</b>	<b>September 18</b>
B&B Trees 1476 Condensery Rd. Sheridan, MI 48884	Danish Kingdom 900 E Kent Rd. Greenville, MI 48838