

**2018 – 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Promise Early Education Center**

Promise Early Education Center (Promise) is a premier early learning program in Central Maine dedicated to educating the whole child and preparing children for success in school and opportunities beyond. As the Head Start program for Androscoggin County, Promise offers a results-driven curriculum taught by degreed, licensed teachers and engages parents in their child’s learning through partnership and commitment. At Promise, we help all families put their children first. Last year, Promise served 347 children in Androscoggin County.

*Because every child has Promise.*

**Mission:** To educate, engage, and empower families, one child at a time.

**Vision:** Promise Early Education Center envisions a world where children have safe and supportive environments for learning and where the promise of high quality education positions children to be successful in school and beyond. By bringing early learning to the forefront of our collective consciousness and investing in children, families and communities, all people can achieve their full potential.

**What Are Head Start and Early Head Start**

The Administration of Children and Families, housed within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, oversees and administers all Head Start programs through the federal Office of Head Start. Head Start was founded in 1965 to promote “school readiness of children under 5 from low-income families through education, health, social, and other services.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Early Head Start was created in 1994 to support children under three and pregnant women through “early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers, their families, and pregnant women and their families.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

**Family Education, Services & Supports**

Promise’s goal is to meet each child’s individual needs and to offer support to the families who care for them. For all children enrolled in Promise programs, Promise provides:

*In addition to Head Start and Early Head Start programs, Promise offers early education, pre-K programs, and childcare to children and families who are not eligible for Head Start. Like Head Start programs, early education is available to children ages 6 weeks – 3 years, and pre-K is available to children ages 3 – 5. Full day, year round childcare is available on a limited basis for children ages 6 weeks – 5 years.*

* Early childhood education
* Free nutritious meals
* Health services
* Social services
* Services for children with special needs
* Parent and family involvement
* Literacy and language development

**Overview of Strategic Planning**

In October 2017, Promise embarked on a nine-month strategic planning process to identify strategic priorities and establish a plan to help Promise successfully navigate the next five years. The planning timeline was established largely in response to the timing of the federal Office of Head Start grant, which will be up for renewal in the fall of 2019. Mid-way through the planning process, it became apparent that Promise’s strategic plan would be oriented toward growth in terms of fully leveraging new partnership opportunities, expanding services to the extent possible, and expanding internal capacity.

Throughout the planning process, Promise staff provided critical insights about the factors that contribute to high quality early childhood education programming and demonstrated an interest, willingness, and passion for carrying out the work. Likewise, members of the Board of Directors, Policy Council, and Advisory Committees were ready to engage in discussions about trends likely to affect early childhood care and education in Androscoggin County as well as to share ideas about Promise’s top priorities moving forward and role in executing those priorities. Through interviews and focus groups with representatives of community organizations and businesses, Promise collected input from 42 individuals on key questions related to planning efforts. Attitudes and opinions about Promise among all interview and focus group participants were overwhelmingly positive both in terms of the quality of services and staff and ability to work as a partner with other organizations.

The following plan reflects the best path forward for Promise based on its strengths and opportunities as well as the demonstrated community need for high quality early childhood care and education in Androscoggin County.

**Goals:**

1. Maximize federally supported Head Start services for children in Androscoggin County.
2. Provide high quality early childhood education that results in children being developmentally ready for school.
3. Enhance family education, services, and supports.
4. Increase and enhance partnerships to build quality, capacity, and resources for children and families.
5. Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.
6. Continually upgrade facilities, and explore opportunities to expand sites in areas of greatest need.
7. Maintain, increase, and diversify funding sources.
8. Align and update governance and management structures to successfully implement the strategic plan.

**Goals with Detailed Objectives:**

1. **Maximize federally supported Head Start services for children in Androscoggin County.**
2. Successfully complete the current Androscoggin County federal Office of Head Start (OHS) grant, conduct required community assessment, and secure OHS grant for the upcoming period 2020-2024.
3. Implement annual recruitment plans to achieve full enrollment of 251 eligible children birth – age 5 in high quality Head Start and early learning experiences.
   1. Work with Policy Council to enhance and increase outreach and education about Head Start and Early Head Start in new Mainer communities.
   2. Leverage word of mouth with parents who have children in Promise programs.
   3. Maintain and expand connections to a network of referring agencies.
   4. Continue to create and enhance an array of communications tools and media outreach strategies.
4. Continually monitor waitlist to ensure full utilization of classrooms throughout the year.
5. Seek federal OHS special funding opportunities that align with community needs:
   1. Expansion of center-based Early Head Start services in order to serve more children.
   2. Increased Head Start duration at FDC (Family Development Center), Coburn, or other sites.
6. **Provide high quality early childhood education that results in children being developmentally ready for school.**

**OUTCOMES**

*All Programs*

* *More than 90% of Promise students meet or exceed developmental targets for school readiness after just one year in our program.*

*Percent of growth for children in attendance for a full academic year (Fall 2016-Spring 2017):*

*Head Start:*

* *Language development, 47%*
* *Literacy knowledge and skills, 65%*
* *Cognitive knowledge and skills, 57%*
* *Mathematics knowledge and skills, 111%*

*Early Head Start:*

* *Cognitive knowledge and skills, 23%*
* *Mathematics knowledge and skills, 100%*

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*As a Head Start program, Promise is complete inclusive, serving children with identified needs within integrated classrooms.*

1. Continue to implement research based curricula by offering:
   1. The play-based *Creative Curriculum* in Early Head Start, which features exploration and discovery as a way of learning and supports teachers in creating responsive routines and meaningful learning experiences for young children.
   2. The language and literacy rich *Opening the World of Learning* (OWL) curriculum and the mathematics focused *Building Blocks Math* in Head Start, which are sequenced to meet individual and group needs.
   3. *Partners for a Healthy Baby* in home based services for eligible families, including socialization opportunities twice per month.
   4. *I am Moving I am Learning* to ensure that children are physically active.
   5. *Second Step* to ensure that children have social and emotional support.
2. Provide healthy foods that meet children’s nutritional needs, and utilize meal times as educational experiences.
3. Ensure Promise educational curricula and services are culturally competent and relevant to the diverse populations within our community, including supports for English Language Learners (ELL) as needed.
4. Provide ongoing, intensive professional development intended to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of teaching staff through annual all staff in-service days and individualized coaching and education plans.
5. Continue a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) twice per year to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions and provide affirmative feedback and recommendations leading to improved child outcomes.
6. Provide a variety of supports to children with special needs including children with mental or behavioral health needs, speech or Occupational Therapy needs, and/or who have had adverse childhood experiences.
7. Continue to implement Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) for children with identified special needs.
8. On an ongoing basis, explore and adapt curriculum and practices to best ensure children are developmentally ready for school.
9. **Enhance family education, services, and supports.**
   1. Increase the number of family support staff specialists with social work or related degrees, and provide the Family Development Credential (FDC) program to staff with family service responsibilities.
   2. Increase onsite services with community providers such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Community Dental, Tri-County Mental Health, Food Bus, Pine Tree Legal, and others as identified by parents and as partnerships can be developed.
   3. Continue to offer the following:

*In 2017-2018 program year:*

*28* ***Early Head Start*** *families and 32* ***Head Start families*** *reported having emergency/crisis intervention needs.*

*AND*

*93% of families were referred and received services through community resources with help from Promise staff.*

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*Promise parents have a voice in developing program policies and activities to ensure services meet the needs of children and families.*

* + 1. Family assessments to identify needs and aspirations, beginning with initial home visits.
    2. Support to develop goals that speak to families’ “two generation” needs and aspirations, and direct supports or referrals that help families achieve those goals.
    3. Basic health screenings for children and recommendations for follow-up on identified needs.
    4. The *Nurturing Parenting Program* or other research based parent education, which helps parents navigate day-to-day parenting challenges.
    5. Coordination with case management programs to provide specialized supports to families with high needs.
    6. Language facilitation as needed.
    7. Parent committees at each Promise site to gain input on site operations and provide educational experiences.
    8. Annual, agency-wide events for entire families focusing on literacy, math and science, and other identified topics.

1. **Increase and enhance partnerships to build quality, capacity, and resources for families.** 
   1. Continue the collaborative provision of Pre-K services with Lewiston Public Schools and RSU 73/Spruce Mountain.

***Longley Child Outcomes – Dose & Duration Matter***

*The percent of children who meet or exceed developmental expectations was greatest in 2016 & 2017, after the dose and duration of programming was expanded to include a summer session.*

* 1. Explore expanded collaborations with additional Androscoggin County school districts.
  2. Maintain a close relationship with CDS, including referrals, placements in special purpose classrooms, and participation in processes for the redesign of local delivery of CDS services.
  3. Consider partnership opportunities with organizations such as Pine Tree Society, Tree Street Youth, and Sandcastle in order to:
     1. Increase special purpose classrooms for Head Start eligible children.
     2. Provide high quality early childhood education programming within others’ facilities serving areas of greatest need.
  4. Explore collaboration with the Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber and others on community planning for early childhood education.
  5. Explore potential to expand services by increasing non-Head Start eligible classroom slots.
  6. Offer training and consultation to other early childhood education providers including those looking to improve Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ) ratings.

1. **Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.**

*“Our first preference is for students to have field experiences. We would love to see how we can expand the placement slots at Promise.”*

*-Participant in Higher Education Focus Group*

* 1. Monitor wage and benefit marketability on an ongoing basis, and make adjustments as needed to remain competitive.
  2. Implement annual recruitment plan to ensure Promise is consistently and fully staffed.
     1. Maintain close relationships with colleges and universities with early childhood education and social work programs.
     2. Expand internship opportunities or other structured learning experiences at Promise.
  3. Promote retention by creating a workplace culture where staff has the support needed to perform job duties.
     1. Continue and enhance wellness activities to promote physical, emotional, and spiritual health for employees.
     2. Continue to find ways to support staff with spaces and tools for respite and recharge.
     3. Enhance and extend new employee onboarding for education and family service staff to a full year process including greater consistency and increased roles for supervisors, managers, and coaches.
     4. Increase the emphasis on and intensity of Reflective Supervision in order for staff to reflect on and learn from their own work and professional relationships.

1. **Continually upgrade facilities, and explore opportunities to expand sites in areas of greatest need.**
   1. Consolidate collaborative pre-K classrooms located in Lewiston Public Schools at the new Connors Elementary in fall 2019.
   2. Implement systematic assessments and resulting upgrades to spaces for parent-teacher meetings and the organization of storage at all sites.
   3. Implement facility upgrades at targeted locations:
      1. Shade structures at Hillview, FDC and Coburn.
      2. Teacher office at Coburn.
      3. Storage units at Hillview and FDC.
      4. Play structures at Coburn.
   4. Identify and test opportunities in downtown Lewiston for a significant renovation, expansion, or a new site to better serve Promise’s identified area of greatest need.
2. **Maintain, increase, and diversify funding sources.**
3. Secure the five year 2020-2024 federal OHS grant, and respond to OHS special funding opportunities.
4. Maintain 20% match (cash or in-kind) of OHS grant as required.
5. Continue to identify and utilize a range of:
   1. Categorical state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Education (DOE) funding sources.
   2. Funding sources in Androscoggin County including schools, municipalities and United Way.
6. Develop and implement:
   1. An ongoing menu of grants, sponsorships, and scholarship needs.
   2. Capacity for grants research and grant seeking to bring new sources of funds to support Promise programs and initiatives.
   3. New Promise annual fund with various types of fundraising outreach to individuals, businesses, service organizations, and others.
   4. Additional fundraising strategies, which may include special project drives, capital campaigns, planned giving, or others.
7. **Align and update governance and management structures to successfully implement the strategic plan.**
   1. Maintain a high functioning Board of Directors and Policy Council, and ensure membership reflects community diversity, strong parent involvement, and skillsets that meet OHS mandates.
   2. Evolve the current Associate Board into a broader “Friends of Promise” group in support of Promise’s mission and goals and to maintain and expand community connections.
   3. Maintain existing Board committees, and establish a new Development Committee to spearhead fundraising.
   4. Position Promise for growth by increasing the Executive Director’s focus on external relations, increasing capacity by adding a senior management position, and restructuring current management roles and responsibilities.
   5. Select and develop a core set of communications capabilities for continual use, and develop and implement annual communications plans.
   6. Continue to develop and implement annual work plans, and to conduct and monitor annual agency self-assessments.
   7. Implement an annual process to review strategic plan progress and achievement, and conduct an overall update at the mid-point in the plan period.

1. Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)