



**Bridging the Transition  
through Collaboration:  
Strategies to Help Families Thrive**

**Sarah Collentine & Kelsey Nelson**

## Introductions

- Sarah Collentine, Associate Director of Early Childhood
- Kelsey Nelson, Kindergarten Teacher

## Session Agenda

- Overview of Christopher House
- Context of collaboration
- Alignment to State of Illinois Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee Report/Recommendations
- Internal collaboration timelines
  - Shared Activities
  - Shared Trainings
  - Shared Reflections
- Program Reflection and Transition Protocols

## 1906

Founded by  
Presbyterian  
Church of  
Evanston

## 1965

First  
Head Start  
Provider in  
Chicago



## 1990's

Uptown Site  
Opens



## 2002

Lori Baas, CEO

## 2007

Logan Square  
Site Opens



## 2008

Chicago Benchmarking  
Collaborative Launched

## 2013

Elementary  
School  
& Family  
Resource  
Center Opens  
in Belmont  
Cragin



## 2015

First million dollar gift -  
naming the James & Jean  
Stewart Campus

## 2016

Still  
growing...

Helping  
Families  
Thrive.



Christopher House is a family of schools working to close the opportunity gap for low-income children and their families from birth through high school.

## Christopher House Infant & Preschool

Prepares children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years old, for school, stimulates cognitive growth and develops emotional intelligence.

## Christopher House Elementary School

Builds educational continuity from preschool through elementary school and empowers achievement and perseverance in all students.

## Christopher House After School

Drives students to develop healthy behaviors, explore new opportunities, achieve academic excellence, and succeed in post-secondary education. For K-5 students we offer **After School** and for grades 6-12 we offer **Youth Leadership**.

## Christopher House Parent School

Offers education and support to help parents provide a safe, self-sufficient and nurturing home environment conducive to educational success.



## Christopher House Video

## Context of Collaboration

- Schools opened in 2013
- Team building/creation of shared Kinder Readiness Matrix
- Preschool and Kindergarten teacher meetings
- Trainings, conferences and International study tour on Reggio-Inspired approach

### Requires:

- Intentionality
- Prioritization by Leadership across schools
- Organization, planned collaboration with specific outcomes



# Alignment to State of Illinois Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee Report/Recommendations

- **Data**
  - Preschool teachers transmit data and critical information about individual students for kindergarten teachers to utilize during the beginning of the year
  - Based on the KIDS data, kindergarten teachers provide parents with resources to support those critical domains in the home
- **Classroom Practices**
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers create individualized goals for students with parents and families based on standards (CCSS or TSG)
  - Kindergarten teachers work with preschool teachers to develop a structure that is focused on social/emotional and play-based development as they transition into the kindergarten setting

# Alignment to State of Illinois Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee Report/Recommendations

- **Engagement**
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers welcome students and parents into kindergarten spaces prior to the start of school
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers work harder each year to increase collaboration time (joint unit plans/projects, trainings, etc.)
- **Professional Development**
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers find a joint PD to attend (2018-19: Reggio practices)
  - Future plans: teachers are working together to develop math plans that incorporate more play-based, critical thinking skills into the mathematics curriculum

## Timeline: August

- **Pre-service**
  - New teachers get to know expectations
  - Explore curriculum: TSG, Common Core SS, KIDS
  - Team building: teachers get to know each other
  - Attend training together: trauma informed practices, whole-child development
  - Reggio-inspired practices: how preschool is using these techniques and how kindergarten can continue those practices in their rooms
  - Future: what can we collaborate on?
  - Teachers give feedback about what types of PD the teachers would like
- **STEP**
  - Kindergarten teachers complete STEP assessment to determine individualized instruction
  - Kindergarten teachers compare STEP data from previous preschool classroom
  - This data is also used to provide feedback to preschool teachers on areas of need
    - Preschool teachers at Christopher House can focus on areas of need based on STEP data
    - Teachers can then incorporate more literacy skills into various parts of the day (drop off, morning meeting, small groups, etc.)

## Timeline: November

- **Fall observation**

- Preschool teachers visit kindergarten classrooms to learn about beginning of year expectations
  - Academic
  - Behavioral
  - Independent functioning
- After the visit, teachers can discuss ways to support exiting preschoolers based on the feedback from the teachers and visit
- Christopher House preschool students transition to the elementary school, making this feedback individualized and immediate



- **STEP Training**

- Kindergarten teacher gives STEP training to preschool teachers
- Preschool teachers will use this tool to determine areas of need based on each individualized student
- Using an assessment such as STEP is a great way for both preschool and kindergarten teachers to gain reliable data on specific skills

## Timeline: November

- **Morning Meeting**
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers meet to discuss ways to incorporate literacy and mathematics skills into morning meeting
  - These skills are directly related to KIDS domains, Common Core State Standards, and Teaching Strategies GOLD standards, making it relevant to ECE and kindergarten
  - Trainings like this can be developed based on school and classroom need
    - Find a time of day that preschool and kindergarten share (e.g. morning meeting, calendar/math, writing workshops, etc.)
- **Peer Observations**
  - Teachers from both preschool and kindergarten visit classrooms to find ways to support their students
    - Kindergarten teachers learn more play-based, Reggio strategies to learn in the classroom
    - Preschool teachers get a glimpse at kindergarten expectations; behavior, independent functioning, and academics
    - Teachers learn explicit ways to teach specific standards
- **KIDS**
  - What we'd like to do: kinder and preschool get together to review data

## Timeline: March-April

- **Preschool STEP done**
  - Allows teachers extra few months to review data and create individualized plans for students heading to kindergarten
  - Gives time for preschool and kindergarten teachers to meet and discuss strategies to support students who are struggling in specific areas
- **Peer Observation**
  - Same format as beginning of the year



## Timeline: May

- **Preschool Student Observations**
  - Kindergarten teachers get to visit preschool classrooms to observe incoming students
  - These observations will work along with the case study forms when teachers make decisions on placement
  
- **Diverse Learner Meetings**
  - Kindergarten teachers and case manager meet with families and teachers of any diverse Learners heading to kindergarten
  - Kindergarten teachers get a glimpse at IEP, which helps teachers plan and individualize room for the beginning of the year

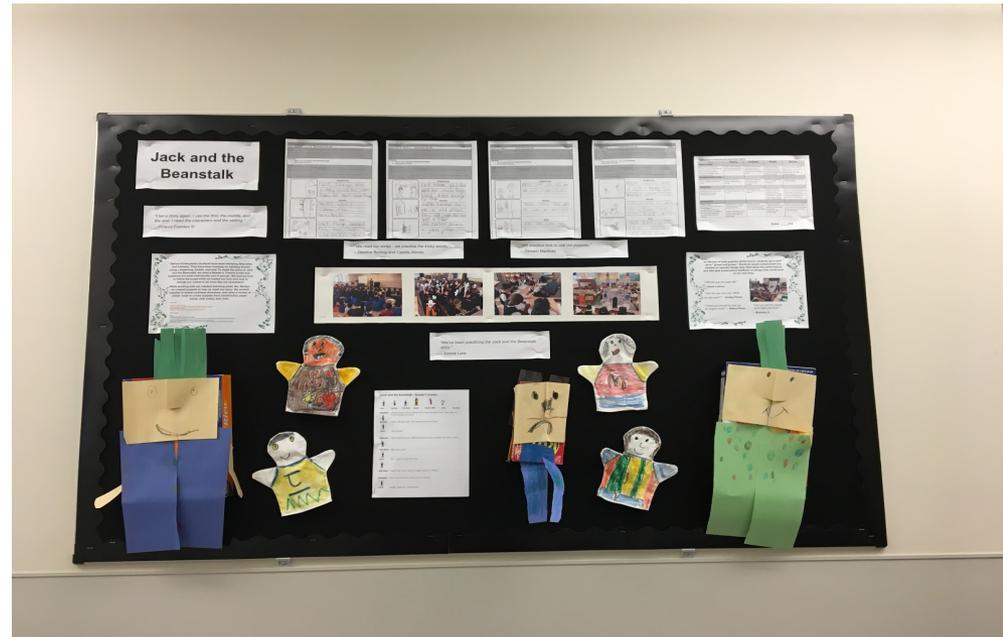


## Timeline: June

- **Case Study Forms**
  - **Contents:**
    - Teaching Strategies GOLD scores
    - Background of child and/or family
    - Individualized Education Program (transition plan)
  - Teachers meet informally to discuss these forms and ask/answer questions
  - Family Support Services are also present to answer questions about the family
- **Informal Meet the Teacher**
  - Kindergarten teachers hold a Meet the Teacher for incoming parents
  - Parents are given a "one-pager" that outlines what students
- **Over the Summer**
  - Preschool teachers support children learning about what kindergarten will be like, how it will be different (ie eating in the cafeteria, coming in new entrance without parent, etc)
  - Social stories are created for specific students based on need

## Christopher House Practices

- Data
  - Kindergarten readiness Matrix
  - KIDS alignment to TSG
  - STEP assessment
  - Diverse Learner supports
- Classroom Practices
  - Reggio Inspired principles
  - Play-based component and open-ended materials
  - Morning meeting



## Christopher House Practices

- Engagement
  - parent communication
  - family advocates/social workers
  - Parent policy council/parent advisory council
- Professional Development
  - joint PD several times each year, present at ECYD in-service

## Reflecting on current practices

- What are ways that your program/school is already aligning with the recommendations in the Kindergarten Advisory report?
  - Consider the 4 domains;
    - Data
    - Classroom Practices
    - Engagement
    - Professional Development
- Where is there room for growth/improvements?
- Discuss at your table/with those sitting near you

## Any Questions?



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