Public School-Early Childhood Education Program Partnerships in Fall 2020

Schools face many requirements and mandates related to facilities, educator licensing, special education, Title I, nutrition, etc. While meeting those requirements are possible in a traditional school setting, virtual instruction and home environment settings can make many of these requirements/services more difficult to meet/deliver. To maximize high-quality, safe, and in-person learning experiences, schools can look to community-based early education and school-age care programs to offer support. **Community early education/child care programs may be able to offer the space, staff, and ability to share resources that would allow for safer, smaller, and consistent groups of children to receive more opportunities for in-person instruction.** This document provides a sampling of ideas and suggested support to meet the needs of your community, and should be used in conjunction with the DPI Education Forward guidance document.

Space	• **Use available community early care and/or school-age care program SPACE to allow students to be physically present in safe, consistent, out-of-home settings five days per week, while also reducing transitions, supporting families, and keeping group sizes small.** 　○ Request space in community programs for classrooms or cohorts of children to attend on their remote instruction days if your district is planning on implementing a rotating schedule 　○ Request space in community programs to move entire classrooms off-site, full time to allow for fewer students within elementary school buildings 　○ Request space in community programs to move cohorts of children off-site, full time to allow for a rotating in-person teaching schedule or to implement half-day instruction 　○ Utilize space in community programs for multi-grade or multi-subject instruction in order to maintain the smallest group size with minimum adult interactions 　○ Look to community 4K or summer school models of learning/instruction
Staff	• **Use community early care and/or school-age care program STAFF to allow students to be physically present in out-of-home settings five days per week while also ensuring that children are safe during times when direct instruction is not occurring.** 　○ Partner with community early care and/or school-age care programs and use their available staff to supervise virtual instruction that will be provided by a DPI licensed teacher 　○ Staff from community sites may be available to supervise the same groups of children during virtual learning time as they do during wraparound care
Shared Resources	• **Partner with community early care and school-age care programs to share resources around:** 　○ Transportation 　○ School-age appropriate materials and/or equipment 　○ Food 　○ PPE and sanitization products

Why partner with community early care/child care and school-age care programs?

- Many community early care and school-age care staff members have been caring for children during the pandemic and have experience using new, heightened health and safety best practices around COVID-19
- The environment is already set up with children in mind.
- These programs know and understand the community and the children within it.
- Some children have already attended these programs and are familiar with the space and staff.
- Utilizing space and/or staff from community sites represents an aligned educational system for the children enrolled in your school
- Many community programs have remained open during the pandemic and have already worked through the process of altering their programming and space in response. They can offer some learned experience around strategies that keep group sizes small, children safe, and families at work.

Let us help you! The Department of Children and Families has taken some steps to make partnerships easier by:

- Identifying a single point of contact at local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies who is ready to support school districts by:
  - Gathering information from community programs to identify those who have space, staff, and/or shared resources available
  - Supporting or navigating conversations between the two sectors
  - Offering information about the regulation and/or quality rating history of the community programs that would like to collaborate
- Being willing to work with collaborating community sites to offer free professional development opportunities and resources related to serving children with English as a Second Language, working with children with special needs, and more
- Creating a list of questions to consider during a collaborative discussion with early care programs sites (Critical Conversations between schools and child care programs)