

A photograph of a woman with short brown hair and glasses, smiling warmly. She is surrounded by three young children: a boy on the left in an orange shirt holding a magnifying glass, a girl in the center in a pink shirt, and a boy on the right in a grey t-shirt with the word "RUN" on it. They are all smiling at the camera. The background is a blurred classroom setting.

# The Path Forward: Building an Early Childhood Ecosystem for Every Child

The Somerville Partnership for Young Children  
*Progress to Date*

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Somerville's early childhood education and care network is an integral part of what makes Somerville a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Somerville has built a strong infrastructure for early education and care. Access to quality prenatal through school entry programs are rooted in partnerships with a core group of child care providers. This collaboration forms a mixed-delivery system that meets the needs of children and families.



This report highlights Somerville's remarkable progress in supporting programs for young children that promote development and learning, and maps the road ahead as the City responds to the current public health crisis and the challenges families face as they get back to work.



Somerville's success and state leadership in early education rests upon coalition-building that emphasizes inter-agency cooperation and public/private partnerships. There is so much to celebrate. We also find ourselves in the midst of one of the most challenging times in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the financial stability of families in Somerville, and has highlighted many of the existing disparities in our early childhood system. The closure of all birth to school entry programs, in particular child care programs, has illuminated the economic fragility of this system that provides an essential service for working parents and educates our city's youngest learners. Families with children under the age of 5 depend deeply on these programs for their economic survival and healthy child development. Making sure our childcare programs can weather this economic storm so families have programs to come back to is essential.

This crisis highlights the need to double down on supporting our youngest children and sustaining the early education and care infrastructure in our city. In recent years, Somerville has proactively addressed many of the challenges the early education field faced, and, with continued investment, is well-positioned to not just rebound, but to come back stronger and plan for something even better.

***“We love living in Somerville, and see a future here. It really matters that our family feels supported, where the city plays a big role in keeping us united as a community. What we need is an affordable center that has family-friendly hours that allows us to do our best work knowing our kid is in really good hands!”***

— Family at local Somerville preschool program

**How we move forward will reveal the answer to this question:**

*What commitment can our city and community make, to our families and youngest residents, to continue making Somerville a great place to work, live, play and raise a family?*

**The sections of this report provide information on the early education systems in Somerville and the successes and highlights of those systems; this examination will help us answer the question above so we can chart a course for the future of this work.**

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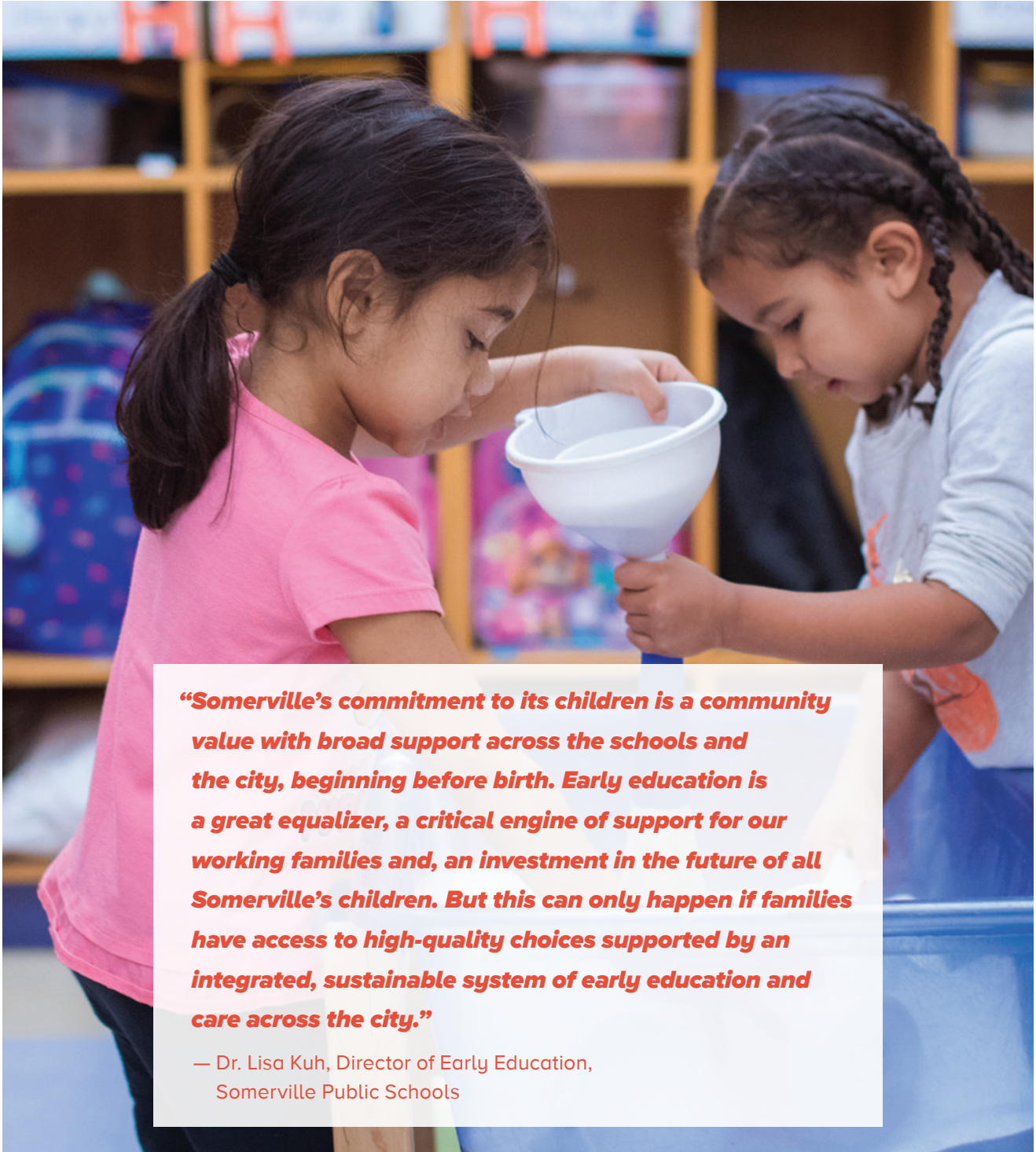
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## Milestones and Foundation of Early Childhood Infrastructure in Somerville



***“Somerville’s commitment to its children is a community value with broad support across the schools and the city, beginning before birth. Early education is a great equalizer, a critical engine of support for our working families and, an investment in the future of all Somerville’s children. But this can only happen if families have access to high-quality choices supported by an integrated, sustainable system of early education and care across the city.”***

— Dr. Lisa Kuh, Director of Early Education,  
Somerville Public Schools

## Early Milestones

Somerville was a vanguard in developing mixed-delivery models and community collaborations that, until recently, faced overwhelming funding barriers that precluded formalization and growth of the system. Somerville's commitment to building a stronger early childhood ecosystem attracted ongoing recognition and support, through a four-year partnership with the Harvard Graduate School of Education's *By All Means* initiative and through a series of grants, that built both capacity and innovative programming specifically focused on the prenatal–school entry years.

One milestone of note is the 2004 opening of the Capuano Early Childhood Center, which reflects the City's commitment to Somerville's young people. Since its opening, the City has made continued research-based investments that support early education, such as establishing the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative (the Family and Community Engagement Department in Somerville Public Schools), an Early Education Department in Somerville Public Schools, and creating a Director of Early Education position. Capuano houses the majority of Somerville Public Schools' Pre-K program, SMILE. In the past six years, SMILE classrooms have opened in other schools, including Argenziano, West Somerville Neighborhood School, Healey, and Winter Hill. SMILE has 232 spaces at present, enrolling almost half the 4-year olds in the city and draws an extensive waiting list each year.



While this progress is exciting, historically the SMILE program has not been representative of the diversity of our city, for a variety of reasons. The lottery for SMILE typically draws an “in the know” demographic that is wealthier and less diverse than the district and city. This fact illustrates a lack of information about and access to programs for many families, many of whom need a program that better suits their needs. The factors that discourage families with less resources from pursuing SMILE include the short length of school day (the SMILE program ends with the regular school day, and the extended day option has a cost for most families) as well as the annual calendar, which follows the 180 day school year of the school district. The creation of the SMILE program was an essential first step in increasing access to early education, but there was more work to be done.

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**From 2014–2020, the number of 4-year old children in high-quality programs (including Somerville Public Schools' SMILE program) has increased from 180 to 290, a 62% jump.**

**SMILE student access to a full-day program through Community Schools after school programming has increased from 7% to 45% over the past six years. Some Community Schools seats are available on a sliding scale basis, though it should be noted the cost for this 2:30–5:30pm program is a barrier for many families.**



## Building on a Strong Foundation

Participation in *By All Means* and the grants Somerville has been awarded have enabled Somerville to continuously push our early childhood systems further to better serve families and children. Former Massachusetts Education Secretary Paul Reville, who leads *By All Means* out of the Education Redesign Lab, is a long-time advocate of the community-linkage emphasis. Professor Reville describes the ideal program as involving the “large-scale expansion of community-school partnerships in order to provide holistic, integrated student supports (ISS) from cradle to career, including traditional wraparound services like health, mental health, nutrition, and family supports, as well as expanded access to opportunities such as early childhood education, and after school activities.”

In 2014, based on a deep history of early childhood collaborations, we began planning for an intentional mixed-delivery system starting with the “Maximizing Children’s Potential” report. Recommendations from this report launched the formalization of the mixed-delivery system. Key to this work was the role of The Somerville Family Learning Collaborative (SFLC)—SFLC has served as the point of entry for families into early childhood programs, and added a web-based presence in 2014 with the creation of the Somerville Hub. The system we have built from this early foundation is the reason that Somerville’s partnership approach has been cited by *By All Means* as one of the state’s best systems of early education and care.

*By All Means* and two strategic planning grants from the state’s Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) helped Somerville to refine and expand its system according to three elements that research identifies as key for the best early childhood systems. These are: (1) *quality*, and the staffing, support and resources that are required; (2) *wraparound services*, which include a range of health and wellness supports for families, and (3), *equity in access*, to make sure all of our residents can take advantage of our programs.

The Somerville Partnership for Young Children is a collaboration between Somerville Public Schools (including the Early Education Department and Somerville Family Learning Collaborative), Head Start, and participating Somerville early education programs focused on expanding access to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year olds in Somerville. SPYC also works closely with the Children’s Cabinet and City departments (SomerPromise, Health, Economic Development, and the Mayor’s Office) to connect the work to city goals and initiatives.

*The SPYC’s goal: To ensure that every Somerville child reaches their full potential and enters kindergarten ready to learn.*

Most recently, we were awarded the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative grant (CPPI). This enabled us to form the Somerville Partnership for Young Children (SPYC) in 2019, which focuses on access to high-quality preschool, complemented by vital wraparound services. The additional receipt of a significant Commonwealth Children’s Fund (CCF) grant is in recognition of Somerville’s role as an innovator of birth to age 3 (B–3) systems building in Massachusetts. Somerville’s B–3 systems have developed in parallel with the mixed-delivery system of preschool programming for 3- and 4-year olds. Somerville has offered an integrated and comprehensive system of family and community engagement and support for B–3 through the EEC’s Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Grant since 2008.

The CCF grant enabled the expansion of the B–3 systems and programs to offer more expansive wraparound services to families; more inclusive, multilingual programming; and more integrated data systems with local service providers. This expansion has allowed the B–3 programs to better identify and better support families furthest from opportunity so that parents or caregivers know the resource landscape and can advocate for their child. The CCF funding will also support the expansion of the Somerville Hub and other entry systems to become an integrated database of families seeking programming for their children.





***“The Commonwealth Children’s Fund believes that the important work of supporting young children (from birth to school entry) and their families happens at the local level through the creation of a cohesive, easily navigable system of supports. In Somerville, we found that the table was set to do just that with a strong, cross functional team working together on behalf of the city’s youngest residents. CCF has been privileged to support this team by helping to fund capacity to build and strengthen early childhood systems in Somerville. The CCF grant has been designed to provide both start-up and bridge funding for work that ultimately must be sustained by the city of Somerville. Just as Somerville fulfills its responsibility to educate its children in kindergarten and beyond, so must the city offer the same level of support to its 0–5 population.”***

— Lydia Magliozzi Icke and Melora Myslik Balson,  
Commonwealth Children’s Fund



***“Somerville Partnership for Young Children, Somerville’s mixed-delivery early education system, builds on a history of expert curriculum work and deep community relationships. SPYC blends quality, access, and wraparound supports in a way that recognizes the value of strong partnerships and can really make a difference for kids. Continuing to refine and scale SPYC can make high-quality early education a reality for all 3- and 4-year olds in Somerville—SPYC’s success is reflective of the goals of the CPPI grant and it is exciting to see what they have built in such a short time.”***

— Jocelyn Bowne, Director of Research and Preschool Expansion Grant Administration,  
Department of Early Education and Care



## Continuous Improvement of Our Systems

If we return to the access and diversity challenges of the SMILE program, Somerville is on the right track to address not only these disparities, but also increase opportunity along the entire birth-school entry system, through strategic, lasting investments. The growth of the B–3 (and actually *prenatal*–age 3 with the supports that exist in Somerville even before birth) system empowers parents and children early on with knowledge of our programs and provides essential early learning opportunities. SPYC enables the district to align quality, wraparound, and access initiatives with community preschool providers who can offer full day, full year programming for 3- and 4-year olds in Somerville.

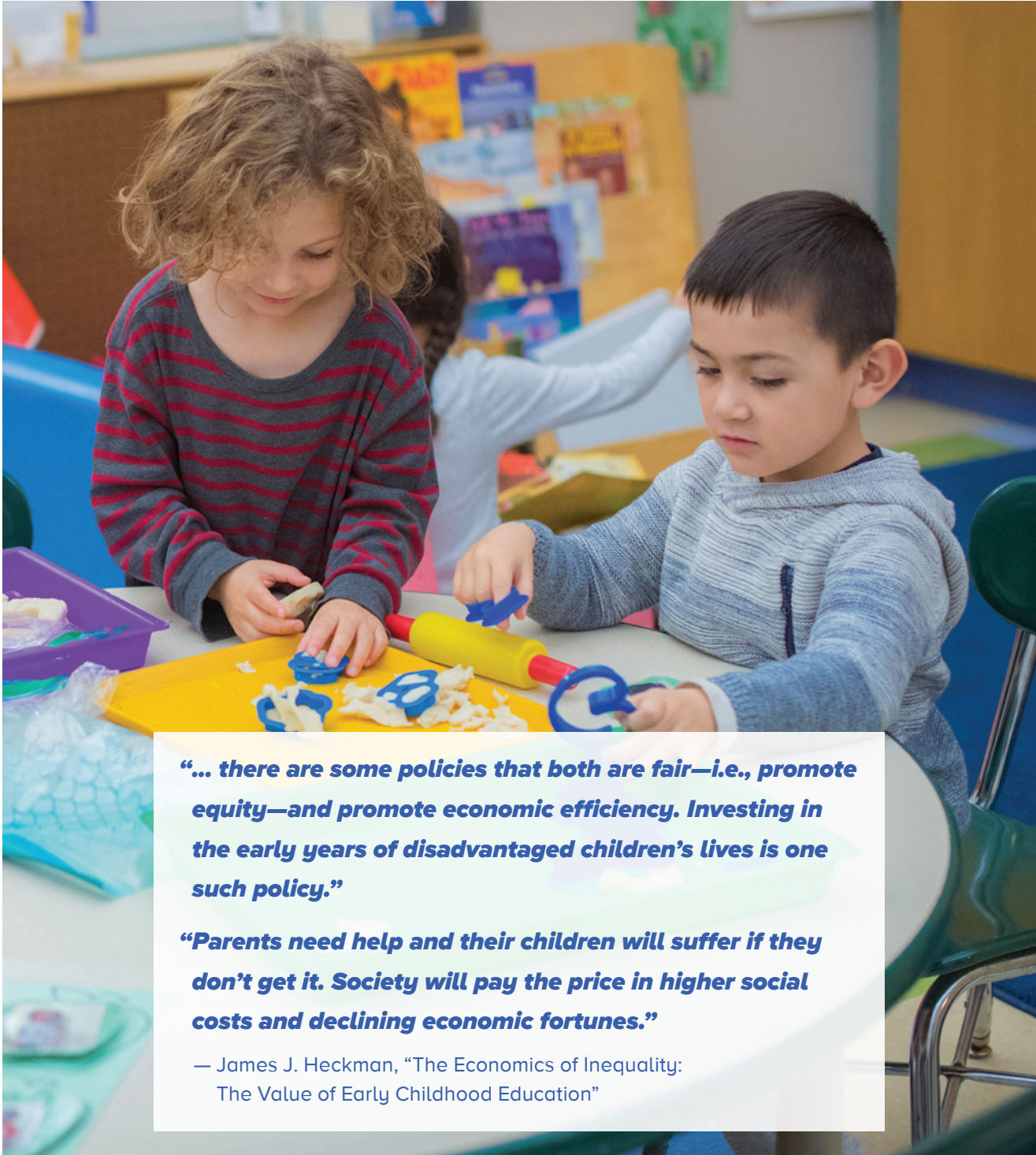
Somerville is working extremely hard to support the three areas of quality, wraparound, and access, and is leveraging a range of different resources to meet the challenge of implementing this approach at scale. Equity in access remains a large obstacle, a barrier that mirrors the socio-economic gaps in the city and the private-pay system of early education and child care that is the norm. Even in a progressive city like Somerville, the current public health crisis has exposed tremendous disparities in how families are able to respond to lost income and the closures of their child care programs. As the city gradually restarts from the pandemic, bold steps will be needed to close the access gaps—or the disparities, in both access for children and economic mobility for families, will grow.



***“Childcare is important to the economic life of Somerville, as it fits into both small business and workforce development. Our goal is to have a healthy workforce environment and a healthy business ecosystem. Childcare availability presents a challenge to job retention and worker productivity. The reality of working life for many people is real, as they can get fired or lose pay if they can’t report to work when required.”***

— Ben Sommer, *Economic Development Specialist*,  
Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and  
Community Development, City of Somerville

## The Early Childhood Infrastructure in Somerville: One Somerville, *Every* Child



***“... there are some policies that both are fair—i.e., promote equity—and promote economic efficiency. Investing in the early years of disadvantaged children’s lives is one such policy.”***

***“Parents need help and their children will suffer if they don’t get it. Society will pay the price in higher social costs and declining economic fortunes.”***

— James J. Heckman, “The Economics of Inequality:  
The Value of Early Childhood Education”

## Early Connections Build Lasting Bonds and Give Every Child A Strong Start

Here is what the system looks like. The prenatal–age 3 home visiting programs and playgroups provide parents and children with skills and education on developmental milestones, and connect families to community resources. These programs also build early and lasting connections to the city and schools. Families connect with SomerBaby or Parent Child+ and then may transition to playgroups. From those programs, families learn about SMILE and SPYC—they may enroll in one of our partner programs and may apply for tuition assistance. Once 3- and 4-year olds are in a preschool program, some then utilize much

needed speech services through the SPYC Speech and Language Pathologist who serves children directly in their programs. In this way, identification and connectivity are wrapped up together, with a focus on prevention and early screening. Early identification and continuity of high-quality programs positions children to have a strong start as they enter kindergarten. This proactive approach can reduce intensive special needs or behavioral interventions that, when they occur later in school life, can adversely impact a student’s experience. It also positively impacts peer learning experiences, and is fiscally prudent for a district. Pages 10–17 will provide a snapshot of the journey through this system.

# ONE Somerville EVERY child





## A Snapshot of our Early Childhood Ecosystem

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**SomerBaby  
Parent Supports**

## SomerBaby and Early Parent Supports

- **SomerBaby** is a free program that provides new parents with information and support when a baby is born. Each SomerBaby family receives a Welcome Baby Bag, a single home visit from a community liaison, a visiting nurse (if requested), information and support on breastfeeding, home safety information, and referrals to additional resources.

*Parent Supports that start early and last throughout the prenatal-school entry journey:*

- **Resources, Referrals & Transition Support:** All prenatal–3 programs help families get connected to other programs or services to support their child’s development and transitions, and the basic needs of the families they serve. All supports are offered in Somerville’s target languages.
- **Parent/Guardian Support Groups:** Discussions about parenting and opportunities for families to make connections, find resources and share ideas.
- **Parenting Education:** Workshops and forums on child development, mental and physical health, and equity and inclusion.
- **Family Engagement & Leadership Development:** Offer strategies and opportunities to help parents gain the skills to be advocates for their children.

• **Over 150 families served by SomerBaby over the course of a year**

• **Over 2,200 families referred to resources over the course of one year**

• **74 families served in parent support groups over the course of one year**

## A Snapshot of our Early Childhood Ecosystem

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**SomerBaby  
Parent Supports**

**Parent Child+  
Home Visiting  
Playgroups  
Early Intervention  
Head Start**



## Parent Child+ Home Visiting, Playgroups, Early Intervention, and Head Start

- **ASQ Developmental Screening Tool:** Helps families better understand developmental milestones and identify services children might need to support their development.
- **Parent Child+ Literacy Home Visiting Program:** A home visiting program offered to under-resourced families who may be challenged by poverty, language barriers and other obstacles to success in school. The program focuses on developing language, literacy and school readiness skills in order to prepare children to enter school “ready to learn.”
- **Multi-lingual Discover & Learn Playgroups:** Free playgroups provide a variety of experiences in a language-rich environment that support the development of children’s literacy, math, science, music, art and social-emotional skills.
- Deep partnerships with local early intervention providers and Community Action Agency Head Start programming.

• **Over 100 ASQs completed over the course of one year**

• **50 families and 14 Family Child Care Providers served over the course of one year**

• **546 Playgroup participants over the course of one year**

**A Snapshot of our Early  
Childhood Ecosystem**

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**SomerBaby  
Parent Supports**



**Parent Child+  
Home Visiting  
Playgroups  
Early Intervention  
Head Start**

**Somerville  
Partnership for  
Young Children**

## Somerville Partnership for Young Children

### Formal Partnerships with 8 Early Education Programs:

- CAAS Head Start
- Bigelow Cooperative
- Dandelion Montessori
- Elizabeth Peabody House
- Open Center for Children
- Pooh & Friends Learning Center
- Tree House Academy
- YMCA Preschool

### Working together on...

**Access:** Tuition Assistance Program for eligible Somerville families—currently funded by CPPI and CCF.

**Quality:** Intensive and consistent instructional coaching, director mentorship, strategic professional development, inclusive of all educators across the city.

**Wrap Around:** Itinerant speech and language services, mental health, parent education, bridge from Early Intervention.

Additionally, professional development support and convening is open to directors and teachers at all Somerville child care programs.

- **Formal Partnerships with 8 Early Education Programs**
- **50+ classrooms (public, centers, Head Start)**
- **100+ early education teachers across the city impacted**
- **360+ children at partner programs screened**
- **1 itinerant speech and language pathologist with a consistent caseload of 20+ children**



## A Snapshot of our Early Childhood Ecosystem

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**Entry into  
Somerville  
Public Schools**

**SomerBaby  
Parent Supports**



**Somerville  
Partnership for  
Young Children**

**Parent Child+  
Home Visiting  
Playgroups  
Early Intervention  
Head Start**

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## Entry into Somerville Public Schools

Children entering Somerville Public Schools from this ecosystem are prepared with aligned curriculum, individualized support services, and a foundation that can set them up to thrive throughout their schooling.

Through deliberate actions and planning, children are supported in their transition into Somerville Public Schools. For example, preschool teachers across the city are brought together with kindergarten teachers in Somerville Public Schools through “Teacher Talks” to communicate needs of individual children as they transition to kindergarten.

We must invite all children and families into this circle of coordinated, early support if we want to truly be “One Somerville, *Every Child*.”

## Our Systems Are Working: A Quick Look at the Data



***“Five years of data demonstrates significant improvement in kindergarten readiness in Somerville. The gains in children from high need programs shows that we are closing the opportunity gap and boosting the quality of programming.”***

— Lisa Kuh, Director of Early Education

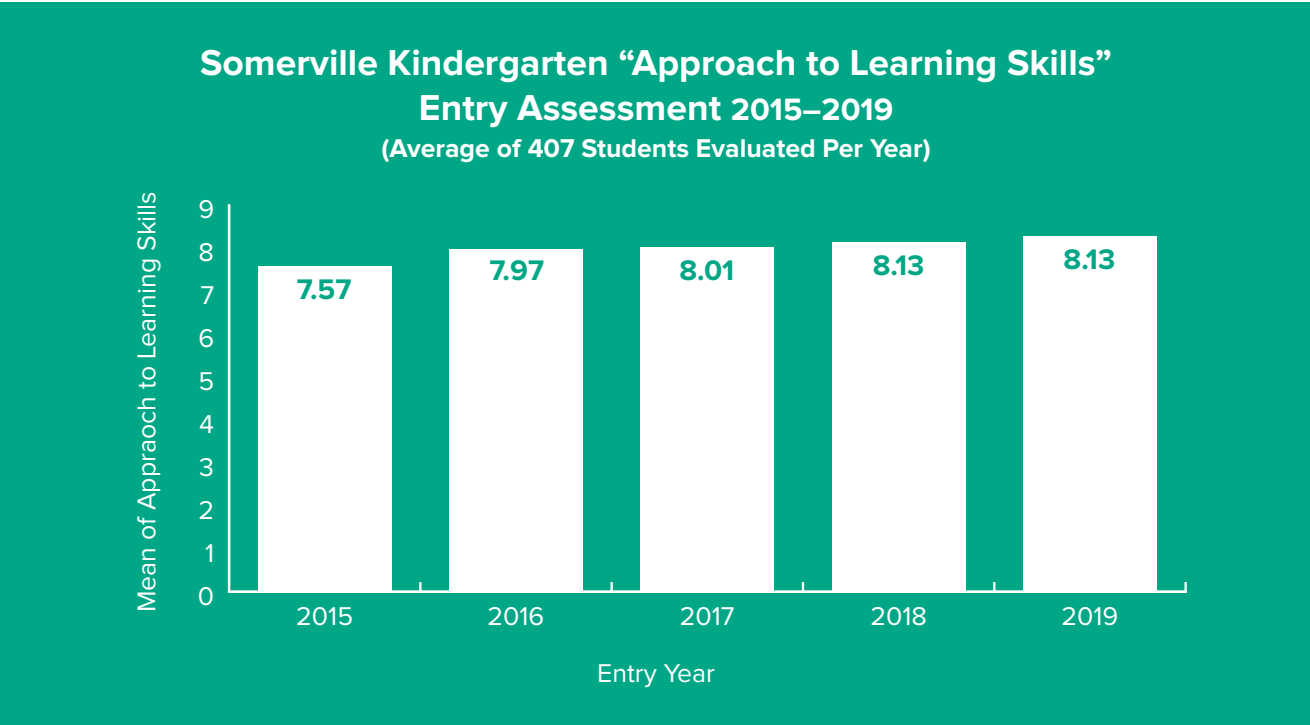


**Data Highlight #1: Approach to Learning Skills**

During the first weeks of the school year, all kindergarten students are screened with a “kindergarten readiness” assessment, the Kindergarten Entry Skills Inventory (KESI). One of the main reasons for gathering this data is for tracking the overall effectiveness of the City’s prenatal–school entry “pipeline.”

Somerville developed a Kindergarten readiness assessment, the Kindergarten Entry Skills Inventory (KESI) in 2015. Now with five years of data, we are able follow the entry skills of each cohort. The skills evaluated include literacy, motor skills, learning skills, social-emotional readiness, and math skills.

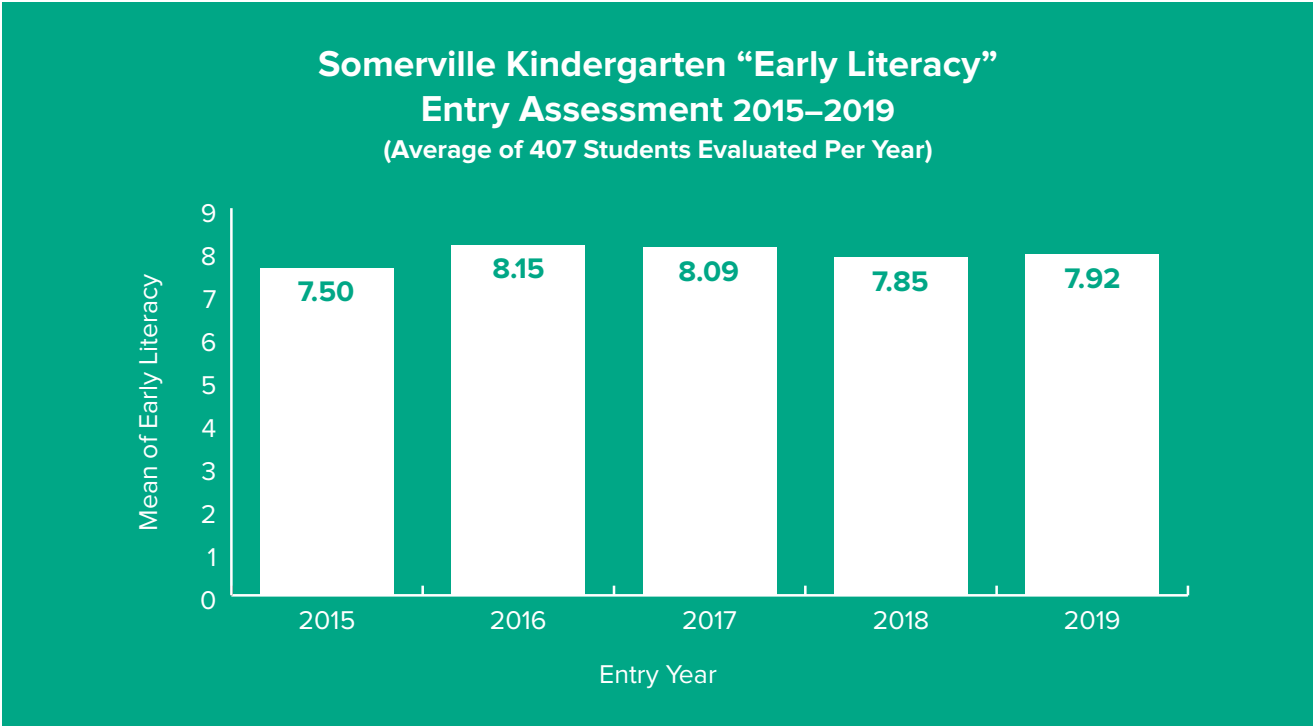
**Kindergarten entry skills increased in four skill areas measured.** The areas showing improvement include Pre-Reading/English (which increased from an average score of 7.6 in 2015 to 7.9 in 2019), Social-Emotional, Fine Motor and Approach to Learning Skills. Statistical analysis demonstrated that these improvements were significant in many cases.



The gains in Approach to Learning represent key readiness factors such as a child’s ability to follow directions, show persistence with a task, and curiosity as a learner.

**Data Highlight #2: Early Literacy**

Some of the largest (and statistically significant) increases in Early Literacy Skills are seen during the years of intensive focus on these skills across our prekindergarten programs, in years 2016 and 2017. These reading-preparation skills include letter recognition and naming, holding a pencil, recognizing own name in print and basic speech as it relates to a story.

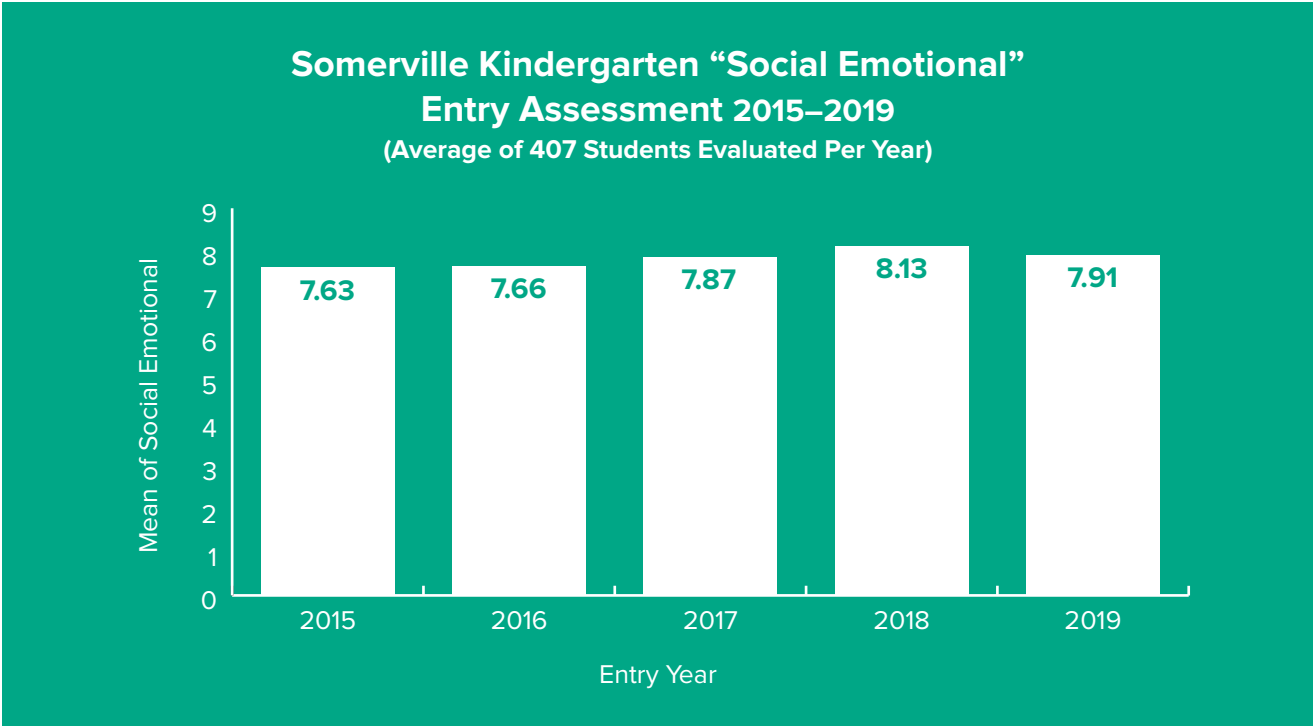


Attending a Preschool in Somerville significantly increases a child’s Early Literacy skills (6.0 vs. 7.9) boosting oral language and concept development, expressive and written language, drawing/writing, and phonological and phonemic awareness.

**Data Highlight #3: Social Emotional**

Social-Emotional skills include ability to use language to express needs and peer cooperation. Significant increases were reported in this area, as shown in the table below.

The improvements reflected in these gains show that teachers have changed their approaches to instruction, with emphasis on the whole child rather than sets of discrete skills. In addition, these content area gains are reflected in the overall gains in children’s approach to learning new skills.



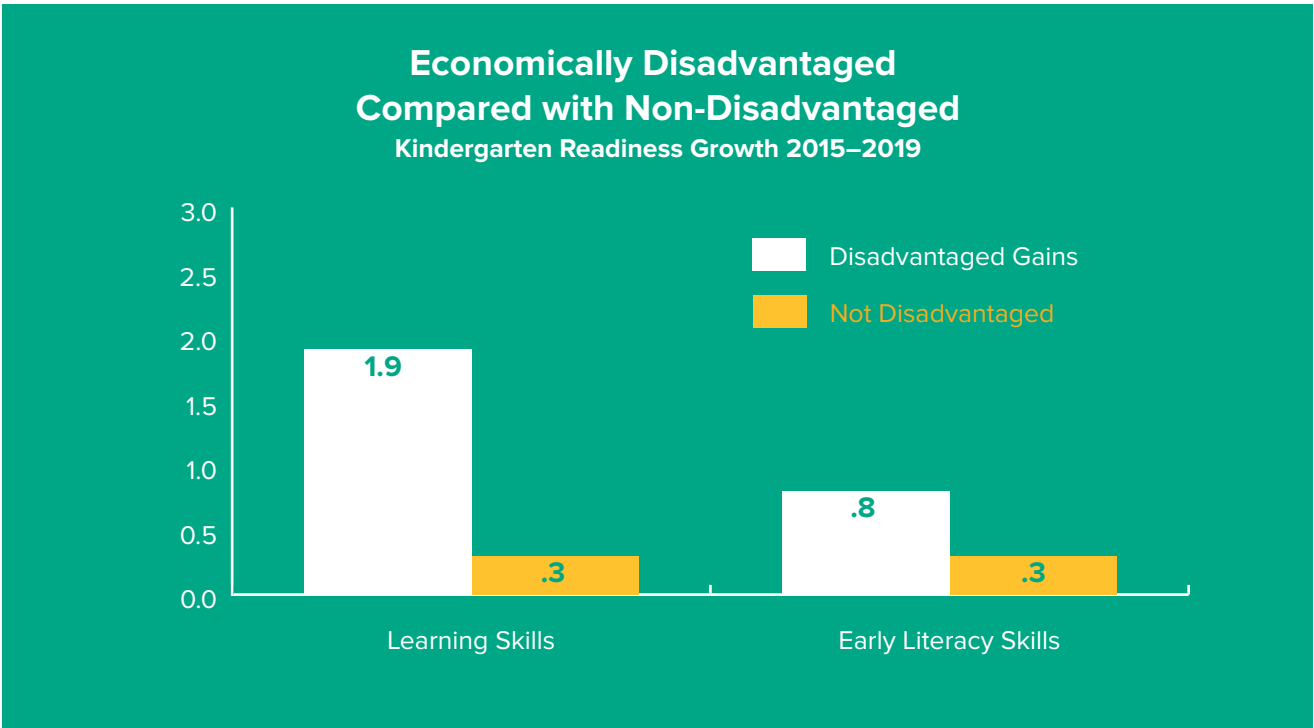
When children’s social emotional development is addressed as intentionally as academic skills, students ability to learn is positively impacted.

**Data Highlight #4:**  
**Student Growth in Head Start**

Head Start is a Federally-funded program for 3- and 4-year old children from families with incomes below the federal poverty line (In 2019, that income level was \$25,750 for a family of four). About 15% of Somerville 4-year olds are enrolled in Head Start, including those in partnership programs within our schools. The results for this group of children are excellent, with demonstrated gains in kindergarten readiness. This group still lags behind their non-Head Start peers in most readiness measures, results which align with national data as heightened risk factors associated with income disparities come into play. However, research shows that the kind of early interventions that

Somerville is promoting have the ability to overcome some of the risk factors associated with poverty. With continued focus on quality and access, we are on the right track to close opportunity gaps before they later become achievement gaps.

The KESI results show that in both the Early Literacy and Approach to Learning Pre-Reading/English skills and Learning Skills assessment areas (two important skill areas that help us define kindergarten readiness), Somerville students from Economically Disadvantaged households improved (by .6 and 1.9 points respectively) on the KESI scale from 2015 to 2019. Children from other, non-disadvantaged, programs improved also (by .4 on the KESI scale, in both areas) but less dramatically.



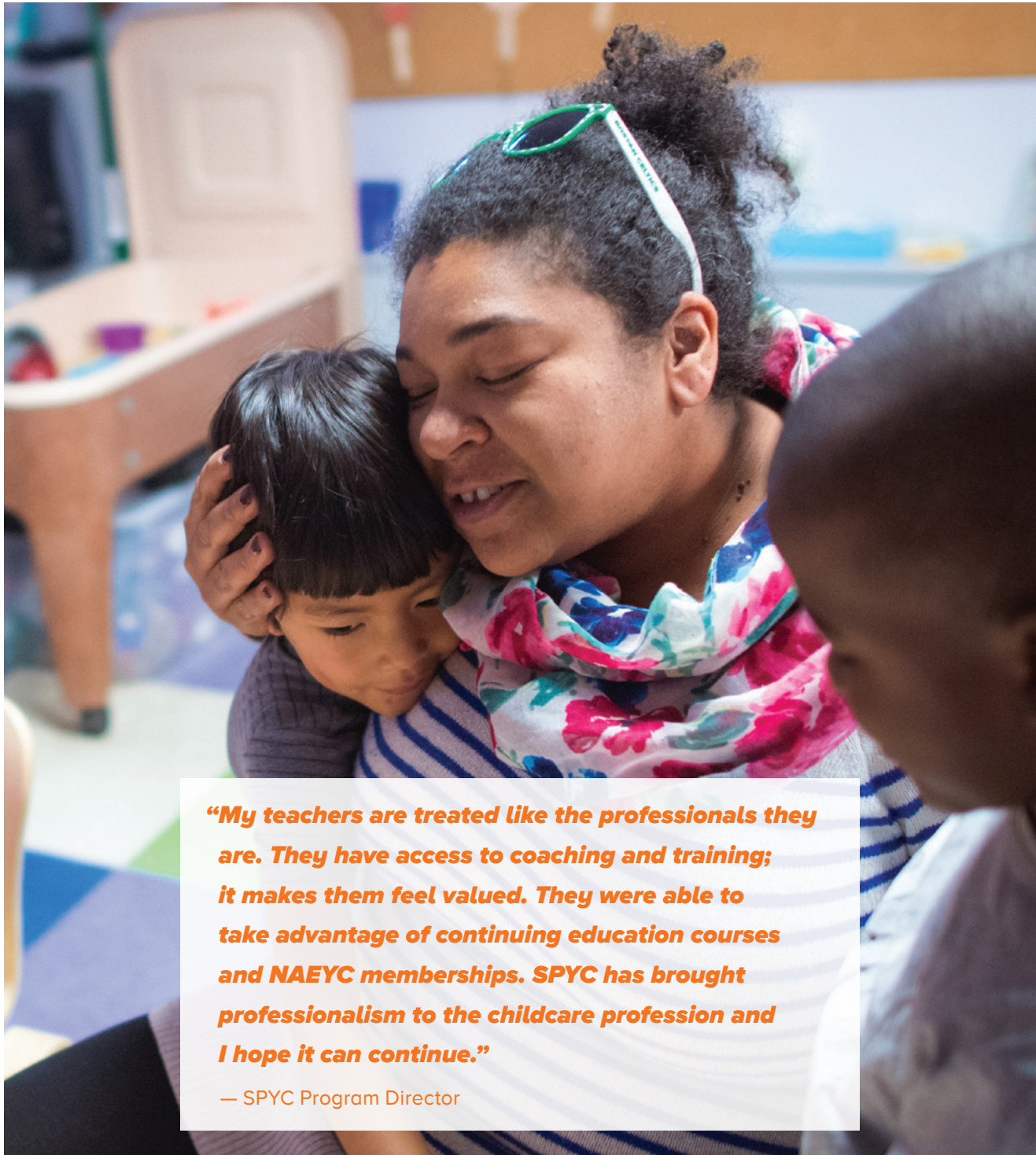
Children from economically disadvantaged households have historically not made strong gains in early literacy and overall learning skills. However, this opportunity gap is closing as teachers and programs benefit from intensive instructional coaching and professional development.







## Building the Network: A Closer Look at the Work



***“My teachers are treated like the professionals they are. They have access to coaching and training; it makes them feel valued. They were able to take advantage of continuing education courses and NAEYC memberships. SPYC has brought professionalism to the childcare profession and I hope it can continue.”***

— SPYC Program Director



## Intensive Support to Children, Families, and Programs

Along the prenatal-school entry continuum, we outlined in Section 2, Somerville has worked hard to ensure these programs are available to families and are high-quality to make them as impactful as possible for children. This means all programs have an aligned research-based instructional component where curriculum, related activities, and learning environments all support children's growth and development. Implementation is supported through collaboration and a common vision for child outcomes and practices that support independence, curiosity in learning, key skill building, and interesting and meaningful play experiences. The collaboration between the Somerville Public Schools Early Education Department, Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, and the Somerville Partnership for Young Children, with SomerPromise as a backbone organization, aligns playgroups, home visiting programs, and preschool.

In particular, Somerville has made huge strides in aligning quality among formal early education programs for 3- and 4-year olds. Somerville Public Schools (SPS) began a formal partnership with Head Start in 2015, one of the first Massachusetts school systems to do so as they opened a new preschool classroom for 18 children at the Healey School. This unprecedented alignment of resources eventually allowed 49 of the most high-need children in Somerville to access our schools and programs as SPYC brought two more classrooms to the Capuano Early Childhood Center.

Alignment between programs has grown since then in many ways, most significantly through the availability of instructional coaching to Head Start and programs across the city.

## Coaching Counts: Supporting Teacher Practice, Enriching Children's Experiences

Research shows that coaching is one of the most impactful practices when it comes to improving quality. Somerville's coaches support curriculum implementation and design professional development that boosts quality across sites. Professional development efforts target mathematical thinking, early literacy, and social emotional development and approaches to learning. SPYC expands the reach of alignment and quality work by providing instructional coaching to Head Start, our seven other formal partners preschool programs, and public school teachers. Teachers know they have much to learn from each other and that quality depends on a common vision for teaching and learning. The gains on the KESI are related to improvements in teacher practices made possible by coaching.

Somerville Partnership for Young Children classroom evaluations exceed national comparison groups in three important areas: *Emotional Support*, *Classroom Organization* and *Instructional Support*. This data, from 2019, was determined by an independent evaluator using the CLASS assessment tool. These results validate the investment that brought targeted resources to Somerville's partner centers. These investments include some physical improvements, child-friendly furnishings, as well as training for teaching staff and the center directors. Clearly, Somerville children attending these partner centers are benefitting from this ongoing support for curriculum and instructional strategies.

Throughout the public health crisis and shutdown period, professional learning opportunities and the systems of support that were already in place have given Somerville Public Schools and center-based teachers the confidence to launch remote learning opportunities. Teachers continued to work with instructional coaches to maintain alignment in curriculum and receive weekly support. Support for teachers means support for children—and we know that children need us more now than ever before.

- **3 coaches**
- **30+ classrooms**
- **70+ teachers**
- **550+ children**



## Serving a Population that Better Reflects Somerville's Diversity and Needs of Our Families

The prenatal–school entry pipeline of programs is enabling Somerville to advance our equity goals by serving a more diverse population of children. For the purpose of this report, we want to specifically highlight the newly developed SPYC Tuition Assistance Program. SPYC partner programs serve a population of children that cuts across all demographics in Somerville. All of our partners share a commitment to expanding access to their programs for families who may not be able to afford the tuition. They deeply believe that all children deserve an equal chance to learn in high-quality preschool environments.

With this goal in mind, SPYC used our CPPI grant funds to create a Tuition Assistance Program. Our Tuition Assistance Subcommittee identified the target population, created the Tuition Assistance application

and application process for families, and agreed on criteria for assessing eligibility to ensure we served priority families with our limited funds. One guiding light in developing the process was how to make it as easy as possible for families and eliminate barriers to entry. The subcommittee created a targeted and equitable system that is responsive to the needs of *Somerville* families.

The main pipeline for applications in the January 2020–April 2020 application cycle were referrals from SomerBaby, Parent Child+, and SFLC playgroups. Of the 20 families who applied within a few weeks, eight families came from Parent Child+ referrals, and tailored support from home visitors helped families complete and submit the application. The targeted outreach of those programs not only serves families and children prenatal–age 3, it also, as mentioned before, brings families into the Somerville fold and helps to guarantee continuity of care.





### **Tuition Assistance Changes Lives**

Families who received tuition assistance from SPYC reported dramatic improvements in their lives. For some families, it meant being able to access preschool programming when they previously could not afford it at all; for other families, it meant increasing the hours or days in a program to meet their needs. Children, being able to spend an additional day or two per week at the preschool, tell their parents they feel like “part of the group.” One child told her mom she had the “best day ever” attending a special evening event at her preschool, even after she had spent a full day there already!

Working parents who can only afford part-time care, or cannot afford formal care at all, must squeeze in work time when they can find it and patch together sources of informal care as best they can. With preschool time subsidized by the grant, one benefit noted is that working more didn’t come at the price of having less time with their child. When given this opportunity, parents reported that their quality of life and education soared and they “didn’t have to stress anymore.” One parent utilized that extra time to build their business, adding 4–5 more clients on that additional work day. Likewise, teachers see the benefits to the children, with improved speech and emotional health, an “amazing experience” to watch as the child responds to additional time in the school environment. One parent told us with additional time at school, the change in her child was “like night and day.”

**“Quality care, and being able to add another day at the center has meant so much to me, my daughter, and my work. The biggest change was that working more didn’t have to come at the price of having less time with her. With this opportunity, quality of life and education soars.”**

— Family receiving Tuition Assistance to attend SPYC partner preschool program

The current climate illuminates the importance of group care settings for young children. Having a community that is adjacent to the primary family unit supports children’s development and family stability. SPYC programs hear from families constantly about how much children miss their programs and that they can’t wait to go back. The system we have piloted has only scratched the surface of need in Somerville for assistance. Sustaining and scaling a Tuition Assistance Affordability Fund at the city level will enable more children to have this all important village in their early years—this village gives children the best chance for success in school and life, and is vital for the health of our community.

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### **Quick Tuition Assistance Data Points**

- **15 of the 20** families who applied this cycle are at or below 50% of the regional median income
- **8** Different Languages represented among those 20 families
- **7** children who applied are currently receiving Early Intervention services



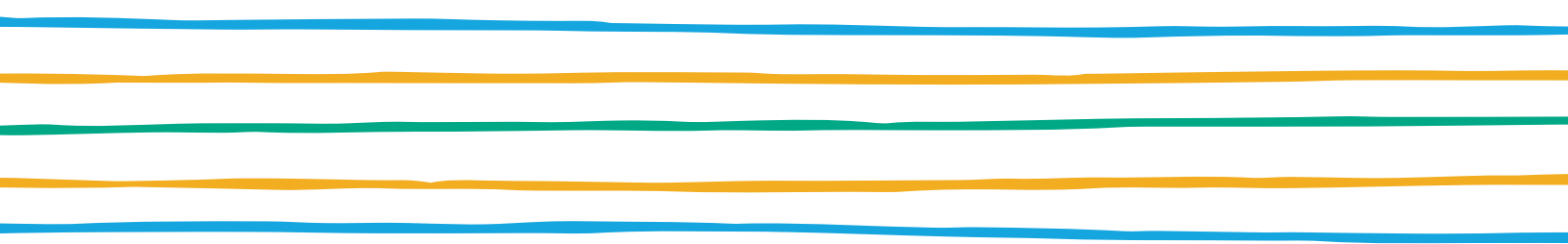
### Somerville's Early Childhood Future

The vision and support of early education in Somerville over the past eight years has been significant. This commitment has put our programs in a position of state leadership, able to attract significant grant funds from agencies and foundations that recognize Somerville's determination to make good on its promise to its youth. These grants have afforded infrastructure and systems-building, as well as a corps of key support personnel. However, the grant-funded and district-funded positions alone are not enough to sustain the prenatal–school entry work that has been established.


The City of Somerville is ready for a gradual adoption of crucial initiatives that will institutionalize the prenatal–school entry pipeline and collaborations that Somerville has worked so hard to

establish. This planning will offer families the kind of safety net that allows them to raise healthy, curious, confident children while maintaining work schedules that contribute to the economic well-being of families and, in turn, the city of Somerville.

If Somerville is to continue to thrive, we need to build on our success and accelerate this work. This will be especially true in the post-pandemic world, as workforce investment is at a premium. The data is clear: Somerville's investment in its children has seen clear pay-offs, with demonstrated improvements in Kindergarten readiness, and with the best results seen in those least advantaged. Protecting and growing this investment is the smartest policy for a family-centered, equity-driven, economic path forward.





A photograph of two young boys in a preschool setting. The boy in the foreground is smiling broadly, wearing a red and white striped shirt, and holding a yellow toy. The boy in the background is also smiling, wearing a dark blue shirt with "CALIFORNIA" and "OHV" visible. They are sitting at a wooden table with various toys, including a white toy car and orange blocks.

“We want our child to  
have every opportunity  
to develop and grow  
in these super-important  
years before they  
enter school.”

— Parent at local Somerville  
preschool program

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# ONE Somerville EVERY child

