**Evanston Cradle To Career**

1. **Describe the systems change effort being proposed.**

The vision of Evanston Cradle to Career is that, “By the age of 23 all Evanston young adults will be on the path to leading happy, healthy, productive and satisfying lives.”

Open Studio Project (OSP) is partnering with Learning Bridge, Childcare Network of Evanston and Reba Early Learning Center to help make that dream a reality. OSP will provide its unique, art-based social and emotional learning curriculum (SEL) to 4 and 5 year-olds who are clients of the collaborating organizations. The goal is to enhance services that are already being provided and to help children develop social and emotional skills that enable them to succeed in kindergarten. Because family engagement is a critical component of school readiness, OSP will provide therapeutic art classes to parents to complement their children’s participation in the program. Teachers will have the opportunity to observe SEL and trauma informed training in order to support and perpetuate the benefits of this initiative.

We believe by involving children, parents and teachers we can make a systemic impact on an entire learning cycle and:

* Reduce red tape and institutional barriers by providing a new program to a group of low-income families who are already affiliated with an Evanston nonprofit.
* Share Information with children, teachers and parents about how social and emotional learning can be achieved through creativity.
* Help children, parents and teachers to develop a common creative language.
* Make an equitable investment in the community by increasing the impact of four existing Evanston social service programs.

The OSP Process

The OSP process is a creative journey that combines writing and reflection with art in various mediums. Self-expression takes precedence over technique, and the art that is produced is not evaluated. Students experience creativity without the distraction of anticipated judgement. They are encouraged to analyze how their art impacts or expresses their own emotional landscape. All classes follow this format:

* **Stating an Intention.** Artists document their feelings in the moment.
* **Making Art.** Techniques in a variety of mediums are introduced.
* **Witnessing.** Artists describe and reflect on their work.
* **Summarizing.** Artists choose whether to share feelings with the group. To promote a sense of safety, commentary from others about the work is not allowed.

The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

Social and emotional learning (SEL) takes as a premise that a child’s well-being depends on emotional health. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, it is the process through which children acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

* Manage emotions
* Achieve goals
* Show empathy
* Establish and maintain positive relationships
* Make responsible decisions

These traits reflect or encompass the following skills that have been identified by the National Education Goals Panel as important for kindergarten readiness.

* Physical well-being and motor development
* Social and emotional development
* Approaches to learning
* Language development
* Cognition and general knowledge

A variety of research validates the benefits of SEL:

* A meta-analysis by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an international leader in SEL education and research based in Chicago, shows that when students are taught SEL skills, they can realize up to a 15 percent increase on standardized achievement tests.
* A 2015 study of six widely used programs, indicates that, on average, a dollar invested in SEL programming creates $11 in positive long-range impacts such as reduced juvenile crime, higher income levels and improved physical and mental health. [To see study click here.](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-benefit-cost-analysis/article/economic-value-of-social-and-emotional-learning/D9A12352A7CF1B39E9A2B7EA4C68F150)
* A 2017 meta-analysis of 82 programs identified improvements in attitudes, behavior, and academic performance with reductions in conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use as a result of SEL training. [To see study click here](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12864).
* Early intervention of social-emotional learning skills has been associated with “key young adult positive outcomes across multiple domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance abuse and mental health. *Jones, Damon, Greenberg, Mark, Crowley, Max (2015, October 9) Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competencies and Future Wellness. Retrieved from ajph.aphapublications.org*

Open Studio is the first art-based organization in Illinois to develop a SEL curriculum that includes a creative methodology. The course meets both SEL and visual arts goals for all students, including those with communication disorders, autism and special needs. Learning through art is especially valuable for children who may have difficulty communicating feelings verbally. Very young children who may not be learning SEL skills in the home can also benefit greatly.

Coupling art and SEL education is a natural alignment. While the activities are fun, the goals are therapeutic. Children are encouraged to express themselves freely. There is no right or wrong way to complete a project. Creativity is the only guiding principal. The OSP curriculum highlights and strengthens the following SEL competencies through art:

* Confidence in creative abilities – self-awareness
* Joy in creative expression – self-awareness
* Emotional understanding and stress management – self-awareness and self-management
* Control of impulses and full engagement – self-management
* Respect for others and their work – social awareness and relationship skills
* Problem solving – decision-making

Lessons are sequenced to teach skills in order, beginning with self-awareness and management and progressing toward social awareness and relationship building.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Children typically learn SEL behavior traits from role models in the family. The 4 and 5-year-olds who will participate in this program are from low-income households. Parents and caregivers struggling to provide for their families, and keep hunger and homelessness at bay, may not have the luxury of spending quality time with their children. If the family is caught in a generational cycle of poverty, parents may not have had appropriate SEL role models in their own lives. Without examples to draw on, it is difficult to understand how and when to provide this training to children.

The goal of parent-only therapeutic art classes is to give participants the opportunity to express challenging emotions through creativity and to build self-esteem. Parent-child classes will provide a venue for developing skills to interact with children in ways that are productive, loving and fun. A trauma informed instructor and the SEL art facilitator will guide the sessions to help participants develop confidence in themselves and their parenting skills.

We believe this early intervention for children from economically and socially stressed families will have an ongoing positive impact. Children that would have entered kindergarten at a disadvantage to more affluent students, will have acquired the tools they need for success. They will also have developed an appreciation for their own creative ability and for the value of art in life and education.

1. **What challenge is this effort addressing? What is the change you seek to accomplish?**

This program addresses the challenge of ensuring that all Evanston children receive the necessary preparation to succeed in kindergarten and from there into elementary, junior high and high school.

The children who are served by the three partner organizations are from low-income, economically and socially stressed households. In 2017 Illinois Report Card states that there was a 27 percent achievement gap between non-low income and low-income students at Evanston Township High School. This program represents an early opportunity to reduce the disparity. It is also a chance for children and parents, who might not otherwise be exposed to art, to experience the fulfillment of creativity and aesthetic expression. Children who learn SEL skills early will incorporate this behavior into their lives and may become parents who are equipped to pass along these behavior patterns to their own families.

1. **How does this effort advance equity in our community? How does this effort ensure access and break down barriers in Evanston?**

Ensuring children from diverse demographic sectors of the community are prepared to enter kindergarten, puts all young people on a more equal footing as they begin their academic careers.

The District 65 Early Childhood Task Force released a report that includes the following recommendations for improve kindergarten readiness:

* Better integrate early childhood programs into the district’s organizational structure
* Build partnerships with other early childhood providers and community stakeholders
* Strengthen relationships with parents and families

These are issues that are directly addressed by the OSP classes and the SEL curriculum. The SEL Art curriculum complements District 65’s priorities and the work of bringing SEL learning into all classrooms.

As an arts and social service organization, OSP’s goal is to eliminate social and economic barriers to creative expression. The vision is to make art a limitless resource that extends beyond those who have the funds and time to pursue art for pleasure.

1. **Who are the partners? What are their roles? What resources, experience, and/or expertise do these partners bring to Evanston and to this effort? Attach MOU’s and/or other agreements.**

Reba Early Learning Center (RELC)

Reba Early Learning Center is a small, single site, non-profit preschool. It was founded in 1966 as Reba Place Day Nursery. During the mid-nineties Reba Place Day Nursery became incorporated. RELC is committed to the principles and values within the Evanston community.

Reba Early Learning Center develops a love for learning in preschool children ages 2-5. It offers a safe and caring setting that respects each child. It is a community based organization dedicated to providing high quality care, education, and support for children and families of diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.﻿ Diversity is embraced through the implementation of a culturally relevant anti-bias curriculum.

Learning Bridge

The Learning Bridge’s mission is to help children from all socioeconomic backgrounds gain the skills they need to succeed in school, while fostering the shared community values of cooperation and respect for one another. Learning Bridge is a community-based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to strengthen families by providing high quality, affordable full-day preschool and early education for children.

The Learning Bridge curricula draws upon research-based, developmentally-appropriate, and culturally relevant material from childhood learning philosophers including Piaget, Montessori, Bank Street, Vygotsky and Erikson.

* Play and exploration are used to introduce basic reading, math, science and language concepts.
* A holistic approach emphasizes educating the whole child — emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually.
* Each child learns at his or her own pace to allow developmental stages to unfold naturally.

Childcare Network of Evanston (CNE)

Since 1970, CNE has been linking local families to high quality early education, child care, and other community resources to help promote school readiness and family stability. CNE believes that every child deserves to enter kindergarten with the skills and supports they need to succeed and strives every day towards that goal.

As a Head Start/Early Head Start grantee, CNE is funded to serve 172 children with its team of Parent Educators, Family Child Care Homes, Early Head Start Classrooms, and Head Start Classrooms. In addition, CNE is the administrator of a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education to provide no-cost preschool services to 118 children at local early childhood centers, as well as a grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program to provide child care subsidies to approximately 100 children. As a supplement to these services, CNE also has a Scholarship Program to help families afford high quality care, and CNE's Learning Together Program brings mental health services and support programs to children in local early childhood centers.

1. **How will the work be implemented and accomplished? What is the timetable?**

**Suggested Timeline and Implementation for the Kindergarten Ready Initiative**

**with Partners: Open Studio Project, Learning Bridge Early Learning Center (LBEEC), Childcare Network of Evanston (CNE), and Reba Early Learning Center (RELC)**

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| **Date** | **Activity** |
| 10-11/2018 | Meeting with SEL Consultant: Social Emotional Learning Art Curriculum |
|  | Trauma Informed Facilitator and Staff Training |
| 11/2018 | Social Emotional Learning Art Team Meetings |
| 1/7–4/9, 2019 | LBEEC: Social Emotional Learning Art Curriculum. 12 SESS./3 GRP. |
| Winter–Spring, 2019 | LBEEC: Caregivers: Connecting to the Creative Process. 6 SESS./2 GRP. |
| Spring 2019 | LBEEC: Child & Caregiver Art & Adventure, 2 SESS./2 GRP. |
| April 2019 | Gallery 901 Exhibit Kindergarten Ready at Open Studio Project |
| 4/16–7/2, 2019 | RELC: Social Emotional Learning Art Curriculum. 12 SESS./2 GRP. |
| Spring–Summer, 2019  | RELC: Caregivers: Connecting to the Creative Process. 6 SESS./1 GRP.  |
|  | Child and Caregiver Art & Adventure. 2 SESS./2 GRP. |
| 9/9–11/25/2019 | CNE: Social Emotional Learning Art Curriculum. 12 SESS./2 GRP. |
| Fall 2019  | CNE: Caregivers: Connecting to the Creative Process. 6 SESS./2 GRP. |
|   | CNE: Child and Caregiver Art & Adventure, 2 SESS./2 GRP. |
| 11/2019 | Gallery 901 Exhibit Kindergarten Read at Open Studio Project |

1. **How will the impact of this effort be measured? What is the relationship between this and the bold goal of increasing kindergarten readiness?**

The SEL art curriculum includes a pre and post assessment for each child participant. The teachers will complete the assessment as well as an overall evaluation. In addition, participants in the adult therapeutic art classes will be asked to complete an overall evaluation of the program. The facilitators will also complete an evaluation.

1. **How will this work be sustained after the funding period?**

Partner teachers will be trained to implement the program. The Curriculum can be purchased at a reasonable cos