



Fairfax County

# Neighborhood School Readiness Project

Building Community-Based Networks for Children's Success



## The Fairfax County Neighborhood School Readiness Project

The Fairfax County Neighborhood School Readiness Project works to establish, sustain, and increase collaborative partnerships that support children so they enter kindergarten ready to be successful in school and life. This work includes providing strategies for transition to kindergarten and life transitions.

Local Neighborhood School Readiness Project teams are an integral part of the work of the NSRP. Comprised of individuals who represent local government agencies, public schools, early childhood learning and development programs, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations and businesses, the teams address the distinct needs of young children and families within each neighborhood.

Using the Collective Impact approach, NSRP teams collaborate to energize, educate, and empower communities to support children's development to reach their full potential.

Within that framework, the teams:

- Coordinate the work of partners in support of school readiness efforts.
- Bring the voices of families to the conversations.
- Partner with families to grow school readiness opportunities in all communities.
- Foster quality and effective professional learning in all early childhood programs and services.

## Composition of a Neighborhood School Readiness Project Team

### Government

- Office for Children
- Neighborhood and Community Services
- Department of Family Services
- Libraries
- Health Department
- Department of Housing
- Community Services Bureau
- Fire and Police Departments

### Public Schools

- Local schools: principals; PreK, K and special education teachers; parent liaisons; social workers; nurses.
- Central office: resource teachers, parent engagement programs, Early Childhood Identification & Services.

### Community

- Opportunity Neighborhood partners
- Early childhood programs
- Faith-based organizations
- Family representatives
- Health services
- Literacy Council
- Local businesses
- Parent-child programs

## The Importance of the Neighborhood School Readiness Project

All children in Fairfax County deserve an equitable opportunity to enter kindergarten at their optimal developmental level. Research and experience in Fairfax County and in communities across the country have shown the value of a NSRP to support children entering kindergarten primed to achieve their full potential:

- Babies and young children learn and develop at rapid rates well before they reach kindergarten.
- When young children have access to high-quality early learning and development opportunities, they do better in school and life.
- Children who begin kindergarten with a strong social, emotional, and cognitive foundation are more likely to reach higher academic levels, less likely to drop out of school, more likely to earn higher incomes, and less likely to experience negative health factors.
- Each child's development is unique and is influenced by individual characteristics, family backgrounds, early learning opportunities, and community characteristics.

Fostering children's early success benefits not only individual children and families, but also contributes to the enduring well-being of the community and to Fairfax County's continued ability to thrive as an economic leader in the greater Washington metropolitan area.

NSRP teams also work toward fulfilling the county's commitment to develop the racially and socially equitable policies and practices outlined in [One Fairfax](#). A majority of schools represented on the teams are designated as Title I schools and support children's success in kindergarten and in life.

NSRP teams assist neighborhoods surrounding these schools to develop community-level partnerships to support families' access to resources that are available, high-quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate.

For the NSRP teams, the goals are Ready Child, Ready Families, Ready Early Childhood Professionals, Ready Schools, and Ready Communities.

- **Ready Children** have the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.
- **Ready Families** provide their children with secure and supportive environments; promote physical and mental health; and foster curiosity and a love of learning.
- **Ready Early Childhood Professionals** in the community and schools recognize, reinforce, and extend children and families' strengths; are responsive to cultural values and individual differences; promote equity; and support families as respected partners in promoting children's optimal development.
- **Ready Schools** know, welcome and appreciate children and families' thoughts, aspirations and unique journey to kindergarten and provide a high-quality learning environment for all children.
- **Ready Communities**, including families, businesses, faith-based organizations, early childhood professionals, community groups, libraries, schools, government, and others work together to make their community a place where every child thrives.



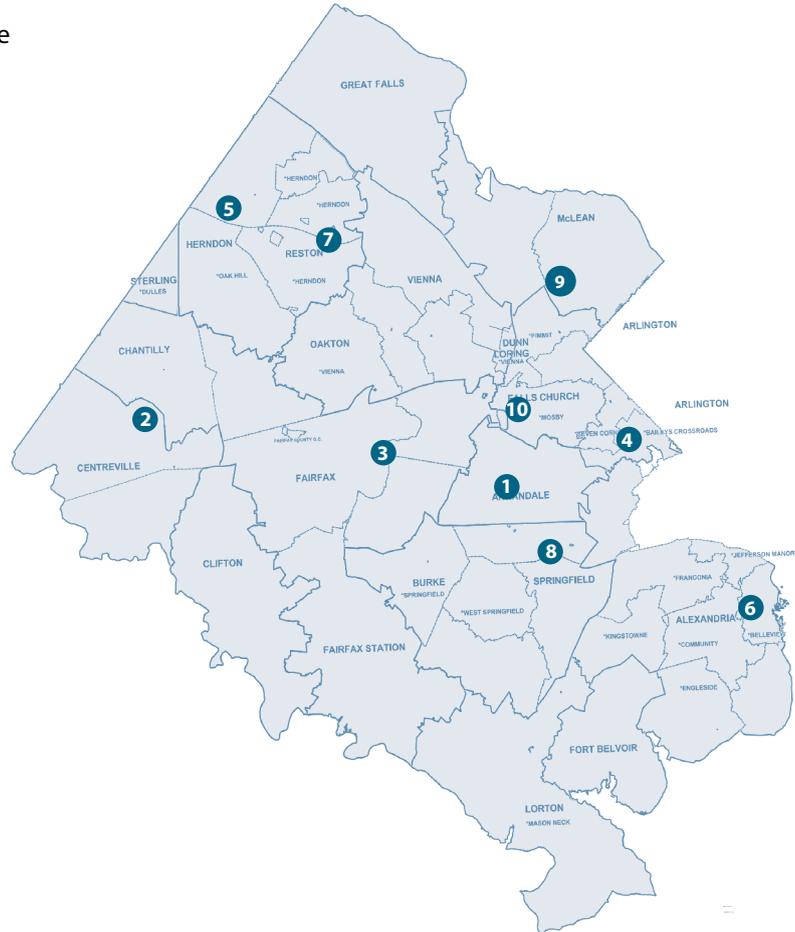
## A History of the Teams

The NSRP has sustained a presence in Fairfax County since 2006. The project began in that year at four elementary schools and their local neighborhoods: Annandale Terrace, Freedom Hill, Hollin Meadows, and Lake Anne.

With increased school and community interest and support, the work has expanded to 32 schools in 10 communities across 10 NSRP teams. In the 2020-21 school year, NSRP teams were functioning in:

1. **Annandale**  
(Annandale Terrace, Braddock)
2. **Centreville**  
(Centre Ridge, London Towne)
3. **Fairfax**  
(Bonnie Brae, Daniel's Run, Providence)
4. **Falls Church**  
(Bailey's Lower Elementary, Beech Tree, Belvedere, Sleepy Hollow)
5. **Herndon**  
(Clearview, Herndon, Hutchison)
6. **Mount Vernon**  
(Hybla Valley, Mt. Vernon Woods, Riverside, Woodlawn, Woodley Hills)
7. **Reston**  
(Dogwood, Forest Edge, Hunter Woods, Lake Anne)
8. **Springfield**  
(Crestwood, Garfield, Lynbrook)
9. **Tysons**  
(Freedom Hill, Timber Lane, Westgate)
10. **West Falls Church**  
(Mason Crest, Westlawn, Woodburn)

In response to increasing awareness of and encouragement for the collaborative work of the NSRP teams, discussions about adding teams continue.



## Achieving success

Team members are critical to the success of the teams. Members are recruited or selected based on their work and their ability to integrate school readiness into their daily responsibilities. They have critical and unique knowledge about local resources that others on their team can benefit from knowing. Each NSRP team seeks to have a balance of representatives from various facets of the community it serves. A background in early childhood development is helpful but not essential.

NSRP teams are led by facilitators who have a strong background in team building and early child development and are knowledgeable about county resources and priorities.



Teams achieve their work through large and small team meetings and team activities or projects. Meetings happen virtually or at central locations in the community—in elementary schools, the library, an early childhood program, or a community room. NSRP members participate on teams throughout the year through meetings, dialogues, information sharing, learning experiences, events, and activities. Team members communicate as needed between meetings via email, a virtual platform, phone, or in-person.

Examples of Successful Team Projects and Initiatives:

- Distributing Fairfax County School Readiness Resources including *Helping Your Child Love to Learn* and *Stepping into Kindergarten: A School Readiness Guide for Parents* in multiple languages.
- Sharing kindergarten registration and orientation dates and materials.
- Producing *A Closer Look at Kindergarten Readiness* (YouTube) 6:17 and *A Closer Look at Kindergarten Readiness*. [Abbreviated] (YouTube) 1:01. Fairfax County Office for Children. Annandale NSRP Team. 2018.



- Creating and distributing Fairfax County Public Schools Kindergarten Registration flyers
- Coordinating joint, multi-school kindergarten registration events
- Collaborating with the Health Department and Fairfax County Public Schools to ensure that children are immunized and registered for kindergarten before the first day of school

- Collaborating with Fairfax County Public Library system to hold literacy and math fairs featuring early learning experiences that families and children can do together
- Organizing information sessions for parents about early learning and development opportunities in the community
- Coordinating recruitment for PreK parent-child programs
- Organizing Neighborhood and Community Services' Neighborhood Tours



## Moving Forward

### As NSRP teams move into the future:

- Many meetings will be held virtually rather than in-person.
- Teams will develop closer relationships and stronger partnerships in their community and with Opportunity Neighborhood (ON) partners.
- Teams will focus more explicitly on promoting equitable and effective coordination of school readiness supports and services in neighborhoods throughout Fairfax County.
- Members will continue to meet in small groups to discuss issues and develop action plans to resolve challenges in their communities related to the school readiness of young children.
- Larger team meetings will be held annually or semi-annually to foster relationship building and collaboration.

NSRP team members collaborate to build relationships that seek to serve children, families, schools, early childhood professionals, and the community. Team members share information and best practices, identify team school readiness goals, and develop and implement action plans to support school readiness that are specific to their community and maximize the assets of the NSRP team.





## Neighborhood School Readiness Project Resources:

- Fairfax County Government. (2017). *One Fairfax Policy*.
- Fairfax County Government. (2017). *Fairfax County Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan: Birth to Eight*.
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. (2020). *Advancing Local Early Childhood Systems in Virginia: Next Steps for Local, Regional, and State Stakeholders*.
- Fairfax County Government. *One Fairfax* (fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax).
- Fairfax County Government. *Office for Children* (fairfaxcounty.gov/OFC).
- Fairfax County. Neighborhood and Community Services. *Opportunity Neighborhood*. (fairfaxcounty.gov/NCS search: Opportunity Neighborhood).
- Fairfax County. Neighborhood and Community Services. *Our Collective Impact Approach*. (fairfaxcounty.gov/NCS search: Collective Impact Approach).
- Fairfax County Office for Children. *School Readiness*. (fairfaxcounty.gov/office-for-children/school-readiness).
- Fairfax County Public Schools. *Early Childhood*. (fcps.edu/academics/early-childhood-education).
- *Helping Your Child Love to Learn*. Fairfax Futures. Fairfax County Office for Children (fairfaxcounty.gov/office-for-children/helping-your-child-love-to-learn).
- *Stepping into Kindergarten: A School Readiness Guide for Parents*. Fairfax County Office for Children (fairfaxcounty.gov/office-for-children/school-readiness/stepping-into-kindergarten).
- *A Closer Look at Kindergarten Readiness*. (YouTube) 6:17. A Closer Look at Kindergarten Readiness. [Abbreviated] (YouTube) 1:01. Fairfax County Office for Children. 2018.



*One Fairfax Policy*



*Fairfax County  
Equitable School  
Readiness Strategic  
Plan: Birth to Eight.*



*Advancing Local Early  
Childhood Systems in  
Virginia: Next Steps for  
Local, Regional, and  
State Stakeholders*



*A Closer Look at  
Kindergarten Readiness*

Fairfax County

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A Fairfax County, VA  
Publication. May 2021

