



# Closing the Gap

## An Assessment of Indiana's Early Learning Opportunities

**Using the Closing the Gap report, community stakeholders, leaders and early care and education providers can equip themselves with the data needed to make informed and strategic choices to expand access to high-quality child care in their communities.**

### **Approach: Building Through Coalitions**

Early learning coalitions bring together stakeholders from across a community to support better outcomes for young children. Aligning early learning opportunities with pre-existing community priorities, this generational approach highlights efforts that can be done under the umbrella of a non-profit, government office or other entity either formally or informally.

These coalitions focus on building networks for early learning providers to improve quality and expand capacity to serve more children and their families. The long-term benefits to children, families and the community goes beyond the first five years and engrains itself into the community it benefits.

### **Questions to Consider:**



**What are the greatest and most immediate needs?**

Data from the Closing the Gap report can help local leaders prioritize their efforts to improve capacity, quality, affordability and choice.



**What local resources can be leveraged?**

Community organizations can offer their expertise, space, funding, etc. to support increasing access.

## Spotlight: Greene County

### **Biggest Challenge: Quality**

The Greene County Community Foundation has a newer coalition focused on helping their local providers move through the Paths to QUALITY™ (PTQ) system and connecting them to the resources and support they need to better serve their families. Currently, all five school systems in Greene County have a preschool program and the coalition has set out to create 18 new preschool seats. The coalition is also continuing to support booster sessions for an ongoing PTQ cohort that they've organized.



***“We’re starting to increase the recognition of how important child care is in relation to having a great quality of life in Greene County. One of our current priorities is helping providers navigate the PTQ system and better connect them to resources, which will allow them to better serve children and families.”***

*Emily Cook, Community Relations Coordinator, Greene County Community Foundation*

## Spotlight: Rush County

### **Biggest Challenge: Quality**

In 2018, the Rush County Community Foundation took a proactive stance on finding out what their community's areas of need were, and they set out to address those issues. At the root of each need was child care and the first five years. As a response to these needs, their First5 Early Learning Coalition has set out to create 15 infant and toddler seats in the county as well as help providers maintain PTQ Level 3 or obtain PTQ Level 4.



***“Our community has grown to prioritize and recognize the importance of the first five years. We’ve received support from the community looking to help families through donating, joining coalition meetings and asking what they could do to help.”***

*Jeri McCorkle, Director, First5 Early Learning Coalition*

## Spotlight: Henry County

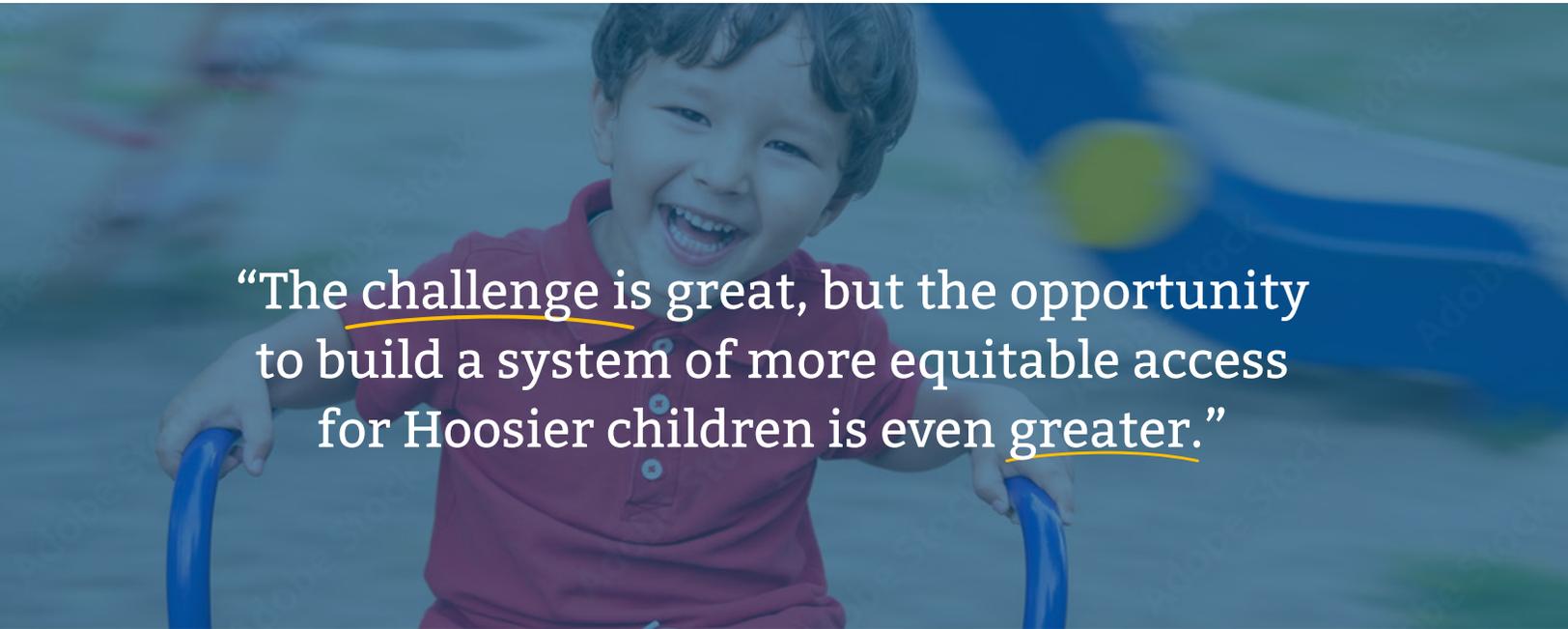
### **Biggest Challenge: Capacity**

The Henry County Child Care Network is in tune with the needs of their community and they've set out to remedy the need of child care, which also helps address countless other obstacles. Working with the business community to understand their needs, this coalition is adding 127 new child care seats across five providers in their county. These providers include a school corporation, registered ministry and licensed centers.



***“We looked to our community to see what priorities they needed help with. Access and affordability were high issues, so we worked with our partners and focused on putting them where the need is high.”***

*Liane Nickey, Executive Director, Henry County Child Care Network*



**“The challenge is great, but the opportunity to build a system of more equitable access for Hoosier children is even greater.”**

Early Learning Indiana’s methodology, the Early Learning Access Index, combines the elements of capacity, quality, affordability and choice to offer a more robust assessment of Hoosier families’ ability to access early learning opportunities that suit their needs. Scan the QR Code to learn more about the Closing the Gap report.

