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MCH Innovations Database Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance

SPARK Kindergarten Readiness Program

SPARK is a **voluntary, in-home kindergarten readiness program** that helps parents get their children ready to succeed in school. Families receive services from a caring professional, at no cost, once or twice a month for an hour. A SPARK kit containing a new book, activity card, and supplies is left with the family to continue working together on what they learned. SPARK also identifies and addresses early delays that might prevent readiness and serves as a connection to local schools to ease families' transitions into the school environment.



Location

Ohio



Topic Area

Family/Youth Engagement,
Health Equity



Setting

Rural, Urban, and Suburban,
home-based



Population Focus

Families



NPM

NPM 6: Developmental
Screening; NPM 13.2:
Preventive Dental Visit -
Child/Adolescent



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Contact Information

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Section 1: Practice Summary

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) is a parent-focused kindergarten readiness program for families of three- and four-year-old children. The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) operates and manages SPARK programs in Stark and Summit counties, while independently funded SPARK programs have been replicated in those and seven other Ohio counties. The program serves communities with high rates of economic disadvantage and racial disparities in academic achievement. Participation is voluntary and free for families.

According to Groundwork Ohio, only 40% (or 2 out of 5) of Ohio's children enter kindergarten ready to learn. (groundworkohio.org/equityreport) The remaining 60% start school without the fundamental skills they'll need to succeed. And when a child starts school already behind, there is little chance that child will ever catch up to their peers. Research indicates that children who are ready to meet kindergarten expectations when they start school are far more likely to complete high school, find employment, and become positive, productive contributors to society. Children who aren't ready typically get increasingly further behind, making success improbable. SPARK sets out to provide children the foundation for school and life success.

The program gets three- and four-year-old children ready for school by strengthening each child's math, early literacy, and fine and gross motor skills, and social-emotional development. SPARK's curriculum is based on state standards.

Each SPARK family is assigned a specially trained home visitor, known as a *parent partner*, who visits the home one to two times a month to conduct lessons and activities. Using results from assessments conducted during intake, the parent partner and parent collaborate to create a learning plan tailored to the individual child's needs. That learning plan is revisited every nine weeks to ensure progress and to tailor the program to the individual child's needs.

At every visit, the family receives a book, activities, and supplies to keep the learning going. SPARK's main goal is to cultivate parent engagement, because when a parent is engaged in a child's learning, it has a lifelong positive effect. The parent partner's job is not to teach the child, but rather to model strategies that help the parent to become the child's learning advocate. The lessons and materials given to SPARK families consistently reinforce this message.

If a child is experiencing learning challenges, those challenges must be addressed before the child will be ready for school. Toward that end, SPARK's responsive services process identifies developmental delays, specialized learning needs, and social-emotional issues and facilitates access to services and interventions. This ensures the child can begin school ready and excited to learn.



CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

SPARK’s core components are evaluation, the four-year-old program, parent partner professional development, the responsive services process, educational continuity, oversight and monitoring, external communication, and the three-year old program, as detailed below.

Core Components & Practice Activities		
Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Evaluation	<p>Every SPARK site is required to have an implementation evaluation, a fidelity evaluation, and an outcome evaluation.</p> <p>The ECRC is responsible for conducting implementation, fidelity, and comprehensive outcome evaluation for SPARK sites.</p> <p>For new SPARK sites, independent third-party evaluation of outcomes is required during the first two years of implementation. For participation to count in evaluation results, the child must have a “minimum dosage” of eight to 12 SPARK visits.</p>	<p>All three types of evaluation rely on systematic data collection and analysis to ensure the data can inform program improvements.</p> <p>Implementation evaluation addresses how well the SPARK intervention was implemented. It shows not only whether something happened, but also assesses why it did or did not occur. As such, implementation evaluation gauges how well or poorly an intended intervention was brought to fruition.</p> <p>Fidelity evaluation assesses how closely the intervention adhered to program standards. SPARK sites are required to enter data regularly into the database and inform the SPARK team about program changes or additions that might affect evaluation. Sites are encouraged to examine their own evaluation data regularly to inform program operations.</p> <p>After two years of successful implementation, a site may choose to continue with comprehensive outcome evaluation services. This often includes analysis of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) scores and longitudinal data. Alternatively, the site may choose only the mandatory fidelity, implementation, and outcome measures, and analysis of screening scores.</p> <p>In addition to data collected specifically for evaluation purposes, sites must enter additional child and family data into the program database to allow real-time monitoring of services provided. Some of this data is also used for evaluation. For this</p>



		<p>reason, the evaluation team is given access to the database. In order to foster consistent outcomes, pertinent data are reviewed every two months to ensure fidelity in implementation.</p>
<p>Four-Year-Old Program</p>	<p>Intake visits are scheduled for completion of paperwork and consent forms and for administration of screenings.</p> <p>Lesson visits begin after intake visits. After the final lesson visit, post-participation screeners are administered.</p> <p>Monthly responsive services team meetings are held, as are bimonthly team meetings with supervisors.</p>	<p>Each participating family receives 14 developmentally appropriate books, along with learning supplies and activity cards. Parents receive readiness support, guidance, and resources.</p> <p>Screeners: the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) screen for developmental delays, following the recommended implementation sequences. The ASQ-3 measures communication, gross and fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social skills. The ASQ:SE-2 measures self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptive behaviors, autonomy, affect, and interactions with people.</p> <p>The Preschool Early Numeracy Skills (PENS) screening tool identifies a child's understanding of early numeracy skills (counting, numerical relations, arithmetic operations, and numerical knowledge). The Get Ready to Read (GRTR) screening tool pinpoints a child's knowledge of early literacy skills (print awareness, letter knowledge, letter-sound identification, phonological awareness, and rhyming). Both screeners are administered before the family begins participating in the program and after program participation is complete.</p> <p>The Parenting Interactions with Children: Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO) is a reliable, user-friendly assessment that guides observation of parents' teaching skills. Pre-assessment observation takes place from the first paperwork visit to the end of the second lesson visit. Post-assessment observation is completed after the second lesson.</p> <p>As families finish participating in SPARK, parent partners further support children's transitions into school by providing families timely kindergarten registration information and encouraging them to take advantage of</p>



		<p>opportunities to tour the school and meet school personnel.</p>
<p>Parent Partner Professional Development</p>	<p>Parent partners are trained on all required forms, protocols, and procedures; prescribed lessons and learning plans; home visiting procedures; mandated reporting; basic safety measures; and administration and scoring of the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE2 developmental screenings, approved skill-based instruments (PENS and GRTR), and PICCOLO.</p> <p>After initial training, each parent partner has 12 or more additional training hours. Each site’s fidelity check requires verification of training hours and peer review based on a shadow visit.</p> <p>Every year, SPARK brings all sites together for one day of training focused on trending concerns or director recommendations.</p>	<p>Initial parent partner training is provided over the course of five sessions:</p> <p>Session 1: Program history, conducting lessons, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Session 2: Creating relationships with families in a culturally relevant manner, safety, recruitment.</p> <p>Session 3: Administering and scoring screeners, navigating the online file storage system.</p> <p>Session 4: The database: entering data, policies and procedures, lesson kits.</p> <p>Session 5: Site procedures, payroll, travel, materials.</p> <p>After training, new parent partners are accompanied on initial visits by a supervisor or seasoned staff member.</p>
<p>Responsive Services Process</p>	<p>Individual learning challenges that prevent school readiness are addressed via the responsive services process.</p>	<p>The responsive services team meets with the parent partners monthly. The team includes a child psychologist, a speech-language pathologist, behavioral health professionals, an early childhood specialist, and school-based personnel.</p> <p>For each child, the team discusses intake information, screening results, parent partner observations, interventions received, and progress made. A plan of action is devised, and progress is revisited monthly.</p> <p>Often, when a concern is raised, the team conclude that “watchful waiting” is indicated. Similar to the way this concept is employed in medical situations, this is an approach in which time is allowed to pass before intervention or therapy may be warranted. During the waiting period, the parent partner remains vigilant about the concern and actively looks for clues that intervention may be required. When challenges require immediate action, suggested interventions may include</p>



		<p>providing activities individually tailored to the child’s needs, behavioral health appointments, speech therapy, helping a parent enroll the child in preschool, or referral to the school district (if a disability is suspected).</p> <p>Every effort is made to capitalize on existing community resources to efficiently provide specialized services. The team helps parent partners link families to needed services and makes a plan for appropriate follow-up.</p>
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<p>Educational Continuity</p>	<p>SPARK works directly with administrators, principals, and teachers to ensure schools are ready to receive all children, regardless of developmental levels and learning needs.</p> <p>Components focus on providing a seamless transition into school for children and families by institutionalizing school outreach activities and practices known to advance family engagement and student achievement.</p>	<p>By improving communication between early childhood providers, families, and schools, valuable information about children is uniformly transferred prior to kindergarten entry. Transition forms can include information on developmental progress, individualized therapies, and assessments, and may include the child’s profile information from the SPARK database.</p> <p>Parent partners help families complete kindergarten registration forms and actively encourage families to participate in classroom visits, open house events, and other outreach activities offered for incoming kindergarteners and their families.</p>
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<p>Oversight & Monitoring</p>	<p>Ongoing oversight and monitoring include program coordination, parent partner recruitment, and supervision.</p> <p>Monitoring is conducted to ensure fidelity to the program model, an understanding of and commitment to evaluation, and close work with other team members.</p>	<p>A site supervisor oversees and ensures ongoing coordination, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. This requires regularly scheduled meetings with team members, including those who oversee parent partners, assessments and screenings, evaluation, communication, and educational continuity. The site supervisor establishes an implementation timeline and focuses on sustainability. Support and supervision of all parent partners is necessary. Supervisory responsibilities include facilitating ongoing professional development for parent partners; fostering a team approach that includes children, families, early childhood providers, and parent partners; organizing and leading regularly scheduled meetings with parent partners and recruiters; and monitoring site data.</p>
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External Communication	External communications include all public relations, marketing, special events, and activities for the SPARK program, including but not limited to periodic newsletters for parents and the community; website development and maintenance; display and promotional materials for community events, meetings, and recruitment events; local media and funder relations; written materials for recruitment; social media management; and general informational efforts.	
Three-Year-Old Program (optional, but highly recommended)	The three-year-old program offers children a sound foundation for the skills they will go on to strengthen as four-year-old SPARK children. Participation offers the greatest opportunity to address any barriers to readiness long before kindergarten begins.	The full-year three-year-old program includes developmental screenings, learning plans, follow-up assessments and screenings (ASQ-3, ASQ:SE 2, health and trauma screenings, PENS, GRTR, and PICCOLO), and responsive services/individual therapies as needed; parent partners work closely with children and families during monthly home visits and provide developmentally appropriate books, supplies, and activity cards.

HEALTH EQUITY

SPARK works with low-income families who live in under-resourced communities.

Data show that the average Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) scores of most SPARK children are higher than those of non-SPARK children in the same classrooms. However, evaluation results showed that African-American boys had much lower KRA scores than other SPARK children. SPARK developed strategies to meet the needs of these boys, including increasing the frequency of visits and incorporating innovative engagement techniques.

- Increasing once-a-month visits to twice-monthly significantly improved performance:
 - The percentage of boys scoring Above Average on the GRTR increased 14.4% (from 2.3% to 16.7%) following intervention. More boys receiving twice-monthly visits scored in the Above Average range, with 17.1% at pre-test and 46.1% at post-test: that's a 29% increase.
 - Boys receiving twice-monthly visits were more likely to score Above Average on the PENS post-test relative to once-monthly children (2.3% increased to 19.0% at post-test for once monthly, and 5.3% increased to 34.2% at post-test for twice-monthly).
 - SPARK children who engaged with staff two times per month also had higher average KRA scores than SPARK children who engaged with staff only one time per month.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation is a crucial part of SPARK. Every year, an independent evaluation team from Kent State University analyzes the program's effectiveness using a quasi-experimental research design. Evaluation data is systematically collected while a family is participating in SPARK, to paint a picture of each individual child's



progress. Aggregated evaluation results show trends in performance and aid in monitoring of continued program effectiveness in every SPARK community. Two research designs are used. First, the pre- and post-participation assessment scores of SPARK children are compared using a non-experimental design. These measures include the Get Ready to Read (GRTR) and Preschool Early Numeracy Skills (PENS) instruments. Data are collected by parent partners during intake visits and then again following program completion. Second, post-intervention kindergarten readiness scores on Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) are compared between SPARK and non-SPARK (comparison) children using a quasi-experimental approach. KRA scores are collected by school personnel in each school district and entered into the Ohio Department of Education's data system. KRA scores are provided directly to the independent evaluators by each district. An independent evaluation team from Kent State University compares KRA scores of SPARK children with the scores of non-SPARK children in the same classrooms. Every year since 2005, SPARK children have outperformed their non-SPARK peers to a statistically significant degree. The results further show that the program is highly effective in all settings: urban, rural, and suburban.

The GRTR is administered at program entry and again when the child completes the program, to assess skills in print awareness, letter knowledge, letter-sound relationships, phonological awareness, and rhyming. Initial results inform the individual child's learning plan. Pre- and post-participation scores are compared to gauge growth. Average or above average scores can predict a child's level of school readiness.

The PENS is also administered at program entry and again when the child completes the program, to assesses skills in counting, one-to-one correspondence, number knowledge, set and numeral comparison, number order, story problems, and number combinations. Pre- and post-participation scores are compared to gauge growth. Initial results inform the individual child's learning plan.

The aggregated results are examined annually to analyze effectiveness of lesson plans. Children who score below average at intake are given the PENS and or GRTR again midway through the program to check progress and inform needed revisions to learning plans. The goal is for 80% of children to score average or above average upon program completion, as the scores on these screeners are predictive of kindergarten readiness.

Preliminary results from the 2021-22 school year indicate that SPARK children made gains during program participation, as evidenced by their scores on the GRTR and PENS:

- GRTR: Prior to participating, 32.9% of children scored below average, 45% scored in the average range, and 22.1% scored above average. After participating, 16.1% of children scored in the below average range, 48.9% scored in the average range, and 35% of children scored above average.
- PENS: Prior to participating, 49.2% scored below average, 31.5% scored in the average range, and 19.3% scored above average. After participating, 26.6% scored below above average, 37.1% scored within the average range, and 36.2% scored above average.

Parenting Interactions with Children: Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO) is a reliable, user-friendly assessment of parenting behaviors. The PICCOLO gauges the parent's effectiveness as the child's learning advocate, by assessing the positive parenting behaviors that predict good child outcomes. Pre- and post-participation scores are compared to gauge growth. Among other things, the parent partner observes and notes when the parent explains the reason for something, suggests activities, repeats or expands upon a child's words or sounds, labels objects or actions for the child, engages in pretend play with the child, breaks down activities into a series of steps, mentions the characteristics of objects, or asks the child for information. The PICCOLO also assesses the learning environment the parent has created for the child, noting such attributes as the presence of learning materials. The PICCOLO is administered as the family begins participating in SPARK and again during the first two program visits. The parent partner also consistently assesses the parent's level of engagement during lesson visits.

Other screenings administered at intake include the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE-2); and a health and trauma screening. Informed



by the results of the intake assessments, the parent partner and parent devise a learning plan tailored to the individual child's needs. At each visit, the family receives a book, activities, and supplies to keep the learning going. Learning plans are updated every nine weeks. They contain three goals for the child and one for the learning advocate.

Scores on the state's assessment of kindergarten readiness measure a child's school readiness in social, physical, and academic areas, and they provide important information to teachers and families about supports a child may need to be successful during kindergarten. Every year since 2005, SPARK children have significantly outperformed their non-SPARK peers in the same classrooms. In addition, significantly more SPARK children score 263 or higher on the Language and Literacy section of that assessment. That 263 score is the benchmark that's predictive of whether a child will be reading on grade level in third grade.

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Early-Learning/Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee/TGRG-Guidance-Manual.pdf.aspx>

SPARK has negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with all participating school districts, as well as with the Ohio Department of Education, to provide ongoing data to the independent evaluation team from Kent State University's Center for Public Policy and Health. This allows the evaluator to track all SPARK and comparison group children through the fifth grade, collecting data on standardized test scores, special education classifications, attendance, and promotion. Although the longitudinal results are preliminary, they appear promising. SPARK children retained a significant advantage as they progressed through school. SPARK children significantly outscored their non-participating peers in the same classrooms on the third and fifth grade state tests in math and English language arts. SPARK children also had significantly fewer unexcused absence hours than their peers.



Section 2: Implementation Guidance

COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

Practice Collaborators and Partners		
Partner/Collaborator	How are they involved in decision-making throughout practice processes?	Does this stakeholder have lived experience/come from a community impacted by the practice?
SPARK Oversight Committee	The committee includes the SPARK director, the Kent State University evaluators, and representatives from replication sites. The committee meets quarterly to discuss program needs.	The SPARK director and the representatives from the replication sites work directly in the communities being served. The Kent State team is intentionally independent and removed from the community in order to provide independent and objective analysis of program outcomes.
Kent State University	<p>An independent team from Kent State's Center for Public Policy and Health evaluates program outcomes and provides analyses.</p> <p>Kent State personnel are also helpful in helping to remedy program challenges and gaps in curriculum. For example, while every SPARK lesson focuses strongly on both math and literacy, it became apparent that math screening scores were not improving as rapidly as literacy screening scores. A supplementary program called <i>Let's Talk Math</i> was created to help parents strengthen their children's math skills.</p> <p>A Kent State math instructor has reviewed lesson materials to ensure alignment with state standards.</p>	The Kent State team is intentionally independent and removed from the communities served in order to provide independent and objective analysis of program outcomes.
Schools	Schools collaborate with SPARK to present supplemental programming and to share and address concerns	School personnel work daily with the same populations that SPARK serves; the schools serve preschool students while



about children enrolled in SPARK and preschool. They also provide referrals and allow staff to observe children in classroom settings if parents raise concerns.

School personnel participate in responsive services meetings to ensure the school is able to address learning challenges. SPARK also works closely with schools to ensure smooth transitions into the kindergarten environment. SPARK responsive services team members and parent partners meet with school personnel to share information on each child's assessment scores and SPARK experience, in order to help with correct classroom placement.

Get Ready for School is a unique collaboration between SPARK and the schools. This program for incoming kindergarteners is typically offered just before the start of the school year to familiarize students with their new school, help them develop communication and social skills, and teach them what to expect. Students meet their classmates, teachers, and other school staff, including principals. The program is held for a total of 12 hours (typically two or three hours each day). Children are introduced to the kindergarten routine in small groups through a variety of reading, science, and math activities, all based on state standards. The program is typically led by a kindergarten teacher, who is assisted by a SPARK parent partner. Parent partners are also present during the first week of kindergarten to lend a hand and serve as a familiar and friendly presence for the students.

they participate in SPARK and kindergarten students after they have finished participating in SPARK. Their insights into the needs of the populations served help them provide valuable input on interventions that will benefit individual children.

Parents

Parents are essential collaborators. SPARK home visitors are called *parent partners* because they partner with SPARK parents. It is the job of the parent partner to model strategies that help the parent to become the child's lifelong learning advocate. That is not

Many SPARK parent partners were once SPARK parents themselves, and many of them live alongside the families they serve. This helps to ensure that SPARK services are provided in a culturally relevant manner.



possible unless the parent is an active collaborator. The program consistently engages parents by affirming their critical role as their child's first and forever teacher.

Parents are informed about all aspects of participation and have the right to refuse any element of participation.

Throughout the family's time in SPARK, it is consistently reinforced that the parent serves as the child's learning advocate, who must be actively involved and engaged in the child's education. The SPARK curriculum is designed to transfer onto the parent the responsibility for imparting the lesson. By the third SPARK lesson, the parent is encouraged to take an active role by reading the story and leading the lesson. During SPARK lessons, the parent partner ensures that all information flows from the parent partner to parent to child. Seating during the lesson is arranged accordingly, with the parent partner next to the parent, who is directly next to the child. This allows the parent partner to model teaching techniques for the parent and builds the parent's skills and confidence in engaging directly with the child.

When a parent voices a concern, they understand that the SPARK team is on their side and can help them make a plan to address the concern. Parents who need community services receive parent partner support to connect with any community organizations. Parent partners are also on hand as kindergarten begins, to help ease the transition for both parent and child.

As a job opening becomes available, SPARK first examines the pool of former and current program participants to see whether any might be good candidates for the position.

REPLICATION

During its first year, SPARK served 140 children in two Stark County school districts (a large urban district and a small rural district). The program expanded initially within Stark County and then spread through the state. In 2013, the Ohio Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council commissioned researchers from Columbia University to conduct an independent study to learn which Ohio-based early childhood programs were most



effective. SPARK’s program design was deemed highly valid, with high impact. Further, the study determined that there was persuasive evidence for the program’s effectiveness, and that the program was highly replicable in urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. This piqued interest across the state. The following year, the program expanded again and has been growing ever since.

Today, SPARK is producing positive results in 22 school districts in nine Ohio counties. It has been replicated by school districts and community organizations. SPARK has served more than 17,000 Ohio children. When replicating, sites go through an extensive training protocol, provide their own funding, agree to follow implementation guidelines, and collaborate closely and continually on implementation with the SPARK Ohio director.

The three-year-old program was initially designed as a feeder program to engage families so they would enroll in the four-year-old program. Initially, there were only five lessons for three-year-olds. As need increased, replication sites emphatically requested a full-year program for three-year-olds; the committee then designed a full-year curriculum.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

the Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) holds the rights to program replication. The replication agreement that every site signs outlines the responsibilities of the ECRC and of the replicating organization. All SPARK sites benefit from the support of ECRC administrative staff members, who update program materials, place bulk orders for books and program materials, and facilitate replication billing and tracking.

Meetings are held to introduce new sites to all program elements and share tips for success. Shadow visits are set up for those who wish to see the work in action.

The SPARK Ohio director is available to walk new sites through the process, arrange training, and serve as a resource for all elements of the program. Sites are given a handy resource document to help them direct any inquiries. The director also oversees local programs.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

Phase: Planning/Pre-Implementation		
Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Review school districts with low scores on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	1 month	SPARK Ohio Director
Research community champions for early childhood	1 month	SPARK Ohio Director



Contact schools and known community early childhood champions Present SPARK		
Determination		Interested party

Phase: Implementation

Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Determine who will be responsible for replication agreement Determine number of children the site intends to serve Purchase program materials	Determined by interested party Up to a month	Designated Replication Holder Designated Replication Holder
Hire staff and train	Up to a month	Designated Replication Holder
Begin implementation	Ideally, April-June	Designated Replication Holder

Phase: Sustainability

Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Local funders	Ongoing	Replication site
Fundraisers	Determined by each replication site	Replication site



Local donations	Determined by each replication site	Replication site
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PRACTICE COST

Per-child cost varies by the size of the program and the organizational structure of the replicating agency. All SPARK sites are required to offer core program components. Sites with larger budgets add suggested program components, thus increasing the cost.

Staff salaries, benefits, and mileage are the highest expenses in the budget. Program implementation also requires funding for developmental assessments and screenings, for the time of responsive services team members, and for program evaluation services. Supply costs are minimized through the use of bulk buying power via the ECRC’s wholesale license, which allows for the purchase of SPARK books at a greatly reduced cost. Depending on which components are implemented, the per-child cost ranges from \$1,800 to \$1,900.

Budget			
Activity/Item	Brief Description	Quantity	Total
Parent partner kit	Contains materials parent partners need when conducting lessons	1 per parent partner for each lesson	
Four-year-old program	Program books (books for first two (intake) visits, plus 12 lesson books), plus leave-home materials and supplies	14 individual books, bagged with leave-home materials, activity card, and learning tips If bimonthly visits are offered, additional books are supplied, so the family is receiving a book at each visit	
Three-year-old program	Program books (books for first two visits, plus ten lesson books) plus leave-home materials and supplies	12 individual books, bagged with leave-home materials, activity card, and learning tips	



Electronic devices	Phone for connection with families and colleagues	1 per parent partner	Device cost and monthly cost for service
Phone, laptop or iPad	An iPad or laptop is needed to enter data into FileMaker Wi-Fi Hotspot as needed	1 per parent partner 1 per supervisor 1 per administrator	Device cost and monthly cost for service iphone tuned into hot spot for iPad when needed to access database
Claris License or concurrency used to access database	To provide access and security, The database software is needed. The license is used for laptop, while concurrency is used for iPads	1 per parent partner	Database software license is used for laptops, while concurrency is used for iPads
Total Amount:			See sample budget (in appendix)

SPARK SAMPLE Cost Analysis
Serving approximately 160 Children

DIRECT COSTS:

Acct Description	Description	Amount	Optional Amount
Parent Partners			
Professional Service Contract	4 full time Parent Partners. Salary \$20.00 per hour including benefits	\$ 220,000.00	Optional
Staff Education	Professional Development	\$ 500.00	
Supplies	Misc. Supplies for PP Office / Parent Partner Totes.	\$ 1,440.00	
Mileage	Parent Partner Estimated Mileage (3000 miles @ \$.58)	\$ 6,960.00	
Parent Partner Phone	Parent Partner Phone with data	\$ 2,400.00	
Recruitment			
Supplies	Misc. Prizes and Give-A-Ways	\$ 200.00	
Marketing	Print Materials, Fees for Recruitment Booths, Logo Printing & Etc.	\$ 300.00	
Postage	Mailings	\$ 50.00	
Responsive Services			
Professional Contract Services	Monthly Consult Meetings (2 hrs. x 1 Psychologists x \$80 Per hr. x 12mths)	\$ 1,920.00	
Professional Contract Services	Speech Therapy Services (10% of children require service) 2 children x 24 session @ 1/2 hr. session x \$50 Per hr.	\$ 1,200.00	
Program Supplies	ASQ booklets (one-time cost)	\$ 600.00	
Program Supplies	Get Ready to Read, PENS & Piccolo *(\$275 is one-time kit fees.)	\$ 1,500.00	
Children and Family Supports			
4 year old program Supplies	2 introductory & 12- Books & Supplies (\$100 per child) 4 yr. old	\$ 16,000.00	
3 year old program Supplies	2 introductory & 10- Books & Supplies (\$85 per child) 3 yr. old		\$ 1,700.00
Supplies	Optional items Preschool Box @ \$25		\$ 500.00
Supplies	Optional Transition Backpack @ \$20 - Lakeshore Learning		\$ 500.00
Supplies	Optional SPARK Logo Backpack @ \$15		\$ 300.00
School Based Programs Optional			
	"Lets Talk Kits" (language & math)		
	Get Ready for School		
Incentives - Optional			
Incentives	Gift cards		\$ 400.00
Evaluation			
Professional Contract Services	Independent evaluator - Outcome Evaluation - Kent State University (approx.) * Two years full evaluation cost is required for new sites. (\$90 per child)	\$ 2,140.00	
Affiliate fee	\$25.00 per child annually	\$ 4,000.00	
Administrative			
Salaries & Benefits	Part time Supervisor for Project 20 hours. Salary \$25.00 per hour	\$ 26,000.00	
Staff Travel		\$ 400.00	
Supplies	Office Supplies and Administration Needs.	\$ 500.00	
Computer Software/Hardware	4 iPads or laptops for Parent Partner	\$4,000	* estimate
	Laptop for supervisor	\$1,200	*estimate
	Access fee for data base	\$ 5,000.00	* three year access
Replication Fee	Replication fee (one-time charge)	\$ 20,000.00	
Total Operating Budget		\$ 316,310.00	
			\$ 3,400.00
			\$ 316,310.00
			\$ 319,710.00

7/19/2022



LESSONS LEARNED

- Build relationships with families, schools, and the community. Readiness is a community concern, not an individual concern. Toward that end, it's equally critical to engage local champions for early childhood in the community; they are instrumental in encouraging recruitment, familiarizing schools and community organizations with the program, and helping families feel comfortable participating.
- Publicly share evaluation results. Good outcomes attract new sites seeking a highly effective intervention. When results are allowed to speak loudly for the program's effectiveness, the right partners come on board.
- Know your audience. Communication is most effective when it starts with and emphasizes the information that's most important to the audience being addressed. Principals are often data driven, so presentations to them start with the nuts-and-bolts results. Teachers want to understand that children will be coming to school ready to learn. Parents want to know the SPARK team will be there to guide and support them.
- Hire right and train well. Asking the right questions during the interview process, and ensuring that candidates have a thorough understanding of the work, boosts staff retention dramatically. Early on, after a parent partner was hired, it sometimes became apparent that they weren't suited for the work; several had significant concerns about being home visitors, for instance. Now, in the initial stages of hiring, candidates shadow staff on home visits (with the permission of the families involved). This ensures that prospective candidates fully understand the work. It's also extremely important to provide lots of relevant and thorough training to ensure parent partners are effective, engaged, and committed. Once a parent partner is officially hired and trained, they are accompanied during initial home visits by an experienced colleague. This helps them contextualize the training and fosters confidence in their work going forward.
- Cultivate trust. Recruiting staff members from the communities being served goes a long way toward developing the culturally relevant relationships needed for engaged participation.
- Make sure you have the community support needed to secure sustainable funding.

NEXT STEPS

SPARK is currently working to expand to serve more diverse populations, including homeless families and English language learners.

A parent committee will be established in fall 2022 to ensure parental perspectives are more thoroughly considered when making future program improvements. Stipends will be provided for participation.

The oversight committee continues to examine program books and curriculum to ensure cultural relevance throughout all SPARK lessons. In 2023, lessons for the three-year-old program will be reviewed to ensure portrayal of and emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The lessons for the three-year-old program will then be revised as needed.

SPARK is working to deepen its relationships with school districts and early childhood programs.



To progress toward the goal of serving every district across the state, SPARK has recently contracted with a consultant to educate state legislators and policymakers about the benefits of the program, work with the governor's office on early childhood initiatives, and collaborate with the Ohio Department of Education. The consultant will also provide strategic advice, monitor and update the team on relevant pending legislation, and collaborate with early childhood stakeholders to increase support for SPARK.

In addition to the annual evaluations of each site, the independent evaluation team is conducting a longitudinal evaluation to assess and compare educational outcomes over time (2015-2019). Analyzing data from many school districts across several counties, they will compare SPARK children to non-participating children in the same classrooms on standardized test scores, absences, discipline incidents, IEP status, RIMP status, and promotion/retention rates. The results will inform future program improvements.

RESOURCES PROVIDED

- [Program elements table](#)
- [Contact table](#)
- [Sample replication agreement](#)
- [Responsive services process overview](#)
- [Sample lesson](#)
- [Community newsletter](#)
- [IdeaStream article](#)

