

III. Project Description

Launching the Project

The John Rex Endowment selected the proposal from the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University, which proposed partnering with the Center for Child and Family Health and consultants to:

- Establish a Stakeholder Council to provide guidance and review project materials;
- Conduct a literature review related to the impact of space and environmental design for children’s places or spaces. Use the literature review to identify up to five case studies for more thorough review and analysis;
- Develop case studies to include detailed descriptions and interviews with space developers, implementers and users;
- Conduct a survey of Wake County service providers to establish baseline practices and solicit input about priority initiatives and investments;
- Conduct a survey of Wake County parents/guardians to solicit input about which spaces and components of spaces were of most importance and interest;
- Conduct focus groups with parents/guardians and service providers;
- Interview Wake County service providers to learn more about their spaces, solicit their input about priority focus areas and investment, and solicit their expertise in the area of promoting mental health through healthy spaces and places;
- Conduct an Expert Panel to include Stakeholder Council members and experts to review and refine a Best Practice Indicator framework and determine Quality Improvement Tools; and
- Develop an Integrated Plan to include findings and recommendations stemming from the above project components.

Activity	Apr. 2014	May 2014	June 2014	July 2014	Aug. 2014	Sept. 2014	Oct. 2014	Nov. 2014	Dec. 2014
PHASE I									
Identify research staff, project orientation	X	X							
Stakeholder Council			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Best practice research		X	X	X	X	X			
Case study compilation					X	X			
Interviews			X	X	X	X			
Focus groups				X	X	X			
Surveys					X	X	X		
PHASE II									
Expert Panel							X		
PHASE III									
Finalize best practice profiles							X		
Develop integrated implementation framework							X	X	X
Develop key metrics for implementation							X	X	X
Develop TA manual including CQI tools & resources								X	X
Develop Integrated Plan								X	X
Ongoing evaluation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Project timeline

The initial phase of the project (April - October 2014) included: an extensive review of peer-reviewed literature; interviews with local, national, and international experts in the field; a catalog of innovative and effective case studies exemplifying best practice; focus groups with local providers, parents/guardians, and young child experts; surveying service providers and parents/guardians; and touring two spaces that contained best practice components.

In addition to these products, a *Stakeholder Council* was established that met throughout the project to provide input about Wake County conditions, review materials, and provide guidance regarding future directions and activities of the project. The Stakeholder Council reviewed the products of the first phase of the project to identify the key quality indicators and to recommend more in-depth exploration of a subset of projects and discuss Best Practice Indicators that would form the foundation of the project's subsequent phases. Specifically, members considered the literature review and case study catalog in addition to expert interviews. Based on input from the Stakeholder Council, the project selected five programs for further investigation through case studies.

The programs selected for case studies are:

1. **Blanchie Carter Discovery Park at Southern Pines Primary School**, Southern Pines, NC. This is a schoolyard at a primary school, which uses universal design and focuses on nature and imaginative play. It serves 425 children in Kindergarten through second grade.
2. **Mothers' Club Family Learning Center**, Pasadena, CA. This is a family/community center integrating two-generation learning, caregiver mental health services, and developmentally appropriate design. It serves 120 children, ages six weeks to five years old.
3. **Kids Together Playground at Marla Dorrel Park**, Cary, NC. This public park has a diversity of play areas and structures based on universal design principles and with an emphasis on nature. It primarily serves families in Cary with children, ages two to twelve years.
4. **Great Beginnings Early Education Center**, Lee's Summit, MO. This early education center for special needs students incorporates family counseling services and a community space. It serves 229 low-income children ages three to five years.
5. **Mariposa Redevelopment Master Plan and Healthy Living Initiative**, Denver, CO. This is a low-income housing development and a neighborhood that is transit-oriented and fosters community engagement to develop improvements in safety and attractiveness.

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the individuals interviewed by phone for the five case studies, project team members conducted in-person interviews with many other individuals including Wake County funders, design experts, and providers/practitioners. These interviews helped to identify the landscape of financial support and practice where efforts are underway to build upon and maximize current programming. These interactions provided candid observations about aspects of current spaces that are viewed as superior as well as those that appear to be inadequate and needing improvement. The interviews also highlighted important issues of workforce capacity.

Expert Panel Meeting Summary

The project team convened a two-day expert panel meeting near the conclusion of the project's data collection and input gathering phase. Participants used the key themes identified by the Stakeholder Council to refine a framework of Best Practice Indicators and sustainability drivers. Sustainability drivers for purposes of this project are key processes, procedures, policies, or resources that support and facilitate implementation and ongoing improvement. Such drivers increase the likelihood that the project will maintain the gains achieved during implementation and

maximize the project's success. The strategies and drivers included corresponding strategies, all with the goal of supporting and enhancing children's positive mental health.

Through a series of facilitated small group discussions and development sessions, experts from diverse fields and experiences (young child mental health, indoor and outdoor space design, early childhood education, schools, parks/recreation, child welfare, crisis intervention, physical health, public health, developmental disabilities, museums, program implementation, and community advocacy for vulnerable populations) came to consensus regarding considerations, strategies, and desired outcomes with regard to the potential effect of places and spaces that promote children's positive mental health.

Following the meeting was the development of Quality Improvement Tools for use in implementing the recommended strategies.

Integrated Plan

The planning project's final phase consisted of the development of the Integrated Plan, which includes all of the project products and a set of guidance documents that emphasize ways in which stakeholders across Wake County can improve places and spaces to promote children's positive mental health. Consistent with the John Rex Endowment's overall approach to the project, the Integrated Plan will be publicly available online with the hope that users of all types, including public and private funders, researchers, and policymakers, will benefit from the Plan's information and resources that the Plan provides.