

# Clarkston Families Decide

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and CDF Action (CDF), Clarkston Families Decides (CFD) engages families and community members together to develop a vision and implement programs and policies to ensure that each and every child from birth to eight years of age is prepared for success in school and in life. *The Early Learning Community Trust, described below, is one of the programs of CFD.*

## EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY TRUST

*"That's a great project. Who chose it?"*

Through a facilitated participatory decision-making process that began in the spring of 2014, more than 100 Clarkston residents chose "improving the quality of early learning programs for Clarkston's diverse families" as their goal. The next step was to choose a project, funded by \$50,000 by the Trust, to help realize that goal. In September, residents chose to fund activities to **"recruit and train multi-lingual teachers for Clarkston's child care centers."**

Trust participants were vocal about their desire to have accessible, welcoming programs that respected and celebrated the languages and cultures of Clarkston's diverse community — *and* actively engaged families and multi-lingual teachers in the programs. Trust participants agreed, "We want our children to be in good programs that support and respect all languages and cultures."

Participants in the Trust process cited the research that tells us that young children CAN learn two languages and that respecting and using the home language helps children learn English. In addition, children who learn two languages tend to have higher math and executive functioning skills.

The next phase of the community trust process was to further define the project and select specific activities to be funded. To accomplish this task, Trustees, selected by Clarkston residents, met frequently at CDF offices. Trustees include residents with young children from Somali, Bhutan, Iraq, Sudan, and Burma, as well as a teacher at Indian Creek Elementary whose child attended a Clarkston child care program, an early learning professor at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, a plumber from Sudan, and a member of Clarkston First Baptist Church who works at Emory University.

In November and December of 2014, Trustees researched training programs for early learning teachers and visited Clarkston child care centers to identify who the centers are currently serving, the number of multi-lingual teachers at each center, and the center director's interest in hiring multi-lingual teachers as well as supporting parents as volunteers in the classroom. When that research was complete, Trustees met in January and chose the below activity:

**Multi-lingual Child Development Associate (CDA) Workshop in Clarkston, leading to a national CDA credential.** *This activity will be planned by families alongside the Trustees and conducted by Georgia Piedmont Technical College. The workshop is scheduled to begin in Spring 2015.*

The Trustees are working on a plan to use Trust funds for a CDA workshop for 10 to 12 Clarkston residents conducted by Georgia Piedmont Technical College, located in Clarkston. The workshop will include simultaneous translation and facilitators who speak several languages to guide and assist the participants through the process. The CDA credential, which includes 120 classroom hours, a child development portfolio, and a practicum in a child care center, is a pre-requisite for childcare teachers seeking employment in licensed early learning centers in Georgia. Funds will also be used to provide mini-grants to Clarkston's child care centers who serve as practicum sites and to engage center families and teachers in creating "welcoming centers." Trustees are meeting to develop criteria for CDA participants and expectations upon completion of the credential. Trustees are already spreading the word, and there is great interest in the upcoming CDA workshop. More to come soon!

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