

# James Madison University (JMU) Profile

## The Need

- The Harrisonburg Community has been faced with great challenges, including the impact of poverty on housing, access to quality food, and access to healthcare. This community also has a large and growing immigrant and refugee population, presenting the need to address diverse cultural and linguistic needs as well as significant social-emotional needs.
- These challenges have impacted the Harrisonburg City Public Schools. The population in the community continues to grow; as a result, the number of students enrolling into Kindergarten with no preschool experience increases.
- To minimize the number of children on the Virginia Preschool Initiative waitlist, this project will target children who are on the VPI wait list, meet VPI eligibility requirements, and do not have access to Head Start or private preschool enrollment. JMU is projecting to serve 40 additional children in 2016-17 among JMU's Young Children's Program and three partner child care centers in the community.

## Project Goals

- With the Harrisonburg Community Mixed Delivery Preschool Project, JMU aims to help ameliorate challenges by expanding access to high quality programming for young children in the City of Harrisonburg. Additionally, JMU will develop shared curriculum and assessment that is aligned to the Virginia Foundation Blocks, and work to build a strong and collaborative early childhood network of providers.

## Project Plan

JMU plans to achieve these goals by:

- Forming a Center Directors roundtable that operates as a support group allowing directors to share concerns, engage in dialogue, and make connections with other center directors in the area.
- Facilitating discussion of barriers for serving children who reside in a school division different from the one in which they receive child care, and around potential openings for children to be served by private settings.
- Expanding the services of the HCPS Welcome Center as a single point of entry to include partnering child care centers to offer greater choice to families seeking early childhood programs.
- Providing professional development and training focused on cultural responsiveness to child care staff.
- Coordinating resources available through partnering agencies and offer incentives to increase participation in quality initiatives (e.g. funding to cover substitute costs when teachers have PD during working hours).

## Evaluation Plan

- JMU will use CLASS and ECERS to measure setting quality, and collect data using the PALS Pre-K, and 'Count Me In' math assessments.
- Additionally, they will collect data from the family perspective (e.g. families' use of the HCPS Welcome Center and input on services provided) and the center director perspective (e.g., impact of the single point of entry).
- JMU will also look at the impact of professional development using surveys, class observations, teacher interviews, and focus groups, with a particular focus on professional development targeting cultural and linguistic competence.
- In addition to these impact studies, JMU will also have an on-going program implementation evaluation to identify needs or gaps in delivery of services to families or providers and to ensure continued program improvement. Areas of interest include public awareness, effective communication, and accurate data collection.