



The Basics in East Boston

A CASE STUDY OF SUSTAINED IMPLEMENTATION



**The
Basics**

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Prepared by The Basics, Inc.

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We also recognize the many funders whose support of our partner organizations in East Boston and throughout Boston strengthens the broader network of organizations working alongside families to help young children thrive. The sustained implementation described in this case study reflects not only the commitment of participating organizations and families, but also the collective investment of the philanthropic and public partners that help make their work possible.

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I. Background and Executive Summary

This is the story of how The Basics, Inc.'s Boston-based implementation team, The Basics Boston, and a major nonprofit serving the East Boston neighborhood, the East Boston Social Centers, successfully mobilized that neighborhood around the simple but ambitious vision that every child should enter kindergarten joyful, thriving, and ready to learn.¹

For other communities, the case shows how a backbone organization—here, The Basics Boston—can partner with existing organizations, rather than create new service-delivery structures, to strengthen and align local support for early childhood thriving and kindergarten readiness using The Basics model. The case covers 2018 through 2025.

The Basics Model

The Basics model is a community-wide approach to early childhood development used by more than 60 communities in the U.S. and abroad. The core of the model, The Basics Principles, provides the science-based caregiving prescription: Maximize Love, Manage Stress; Talk, Sing, and Point; Count, Group, and Compare; Explore through Movement and Play; and Read and Discuss Stories.

The model was designed by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University and launched in 2016 as a way to reduce racial and socioeconomic skill disparities that emerge in early childhood. Its relevance has only grown. As national discourse becomes increasingly focused on universal flourishing, beyond just narrowing skill gaps, thought leaders associated with early relational health and positive childhood experiences consider The Basics model to be an allied approach for their own work.²

In practice, a local coordinating organization, often called a backbone, recruits partners and provides the training, tools, and support they need to weave The Principles into relationships, programs, and communication channels that already reach families.

Resources include videos, handouts, activity guides, and Basics Insights. The latter is a free text-messaging service that sends caregivers twice-weekly, age-tailored developmental information and activity ideas centered on The Basics Principles for children from birth until age five. It is currently available in English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.

East Boston and the East Boston Social Centers

East Boston is a historically immigrant neighborhood of about 40,000 residents, separated from the rest of the city by Boston Harbor. Nearly half of residents are foreign-born, and most speak a language other than English at home. The neighborhood has a strong network of established institutions, including NeighborHealth (known as East Boston Neighborhood Health Center until 2024), one of the nation's largest federally qualified health centers.

Over nearly a decade, the partnership between The Basics Boston and the Social Centers has engaged allied organizations, including NeighborHealth, to provide thousands of East Boston families with practical information and tools for supporting infant, toddler, and preschool children's development. This case explains how.

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- ¹ The Basics, Inc. is the national organization, based in Boston, that leads The Basics Learning Network (BLN) with members in more than 60 communities in the U.S. and abroad. Throughout this document, "The Basics" refers to the evidence-based early childhood framework, including its five Principles and implementation approach. "The Basics Boston" refers to the Boston-based initiative and staff responsible for implementing and supporting The Basics locally, including in East Boston.
 - ² David Willis, a thought leader on early relational health and the founder of Nurture Connection, and Bob Sege, founder of Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE), and a thought leader on the impact of positive (versus adverse) experiences, expressed this view at The Basics Learning Network 10th Anniversary Conference in March 2026.

KEY OUTCOMES

The indicators below reflect cumulative progress through 2025.

- **SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT** (*network/systems level*). Cross-sector collaboration has deepened across more than two dozen partner organizations and initiatives, reinforcing The Basics through multiple community settings and cross-organizational relationships that have remained durable even after staff and leadership transitions.
- **CROSS-SECTOR IMPLEMENTATION** (*organizational level*). The Basics Principles have been integrated into healthcare, early care and education, family engagement activities, and other community initiatives, creating a shared developmental language.
- **PARENT LEADERSHIP** (*community capacity level*). Paid, multilingual Parent Partners representing families from nine countries have been trained to support local families who speak their languages, including to share The Principles and related tools.
- **WORKSHOP AND HOME VISIT PARTICIPATION** (*family and child level*). In this neighborhood of approximately 2,600 children younger than age five, cumulative attendance across workshops, home visits, and peer-led activities built around The Principles has exceeded 1,000, with language support offered in Arabic, English, French, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, and Taiwanese.³
- **REACH & ENROLLMENT** (*family and child level*). Annual new enrollment in Basics Insights, the twice-weekly text messaging service, now equals more than 40% of the number of East Boston children per single-year age group (224 enrollments compared with 524 per age group).

II. Introduction

On a Tuesday morning in East Boston, Fatima knocks on the door of a young mother who gave birth three weeks ago. Fatima is an East Boston Family Engagement Network (EBFEN) Parent Partner, trained and supported by EBFEN's long-time director, Gloria DeVine. Fatima speaks Arabic, has raised her own children in East Boston, and understands the challenges many families face in a culturally and linguistically diverse community.

She carries a welcome basket and a simple message. The young mother smiles in recognition. A nurse at NeighborHealth introduced her to The Basics during a medical checkup and shared the same message about the importance of early caregiving. In addition, the receptionist helped her enroll to receive Basics Insights in Arabic.

Meeting at families' homes was most common during the COVID pandemic. Now families encounter similar support across the neighborhood through Parent Partners, NeighborHealth, and other organizations.

None of this existed a decade ago. What follows traces how it was built, beginning with the organization that made it possible.

3 Basics Insights is available in Arabic, English, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Four of the eight languages Parent Partners speak — French, Italian, Mandarin, and Taiwanese — have no Insights equivalent, so families reached in person in those languages cannot yet receive the messages in their own language.

III. East Boston Social Centers: An Ideal Anchor Partner

For more than a century, the Social Centers has been a cornerstone of community life. Formed in 1918 through the merger of settlement-era organizations dating back to the 1880s, the organization has long focused on childcare, family support, social work, and public health for immigrant families. It had broad community credibility and substantial organizational capacity.

In 2018, its newly appointed CEO, Justin Pasquariello, decided to explore deepening the relationship with The Basics Boston for a new early childhood initiative.

A Mature Family Engagement Infrastructure

The East Boston Family Engagement Network (EBFEN) is a longstanding collaborative that connects families with young children to playgroups, parent leadership opportunities, and other early childhood supports. Based at the Social Centers for more than 25 years, EBFEN has been led throughout that period by Social Centers staff member Gloria DeVine.

A core element of EBFEN—and its primary means of reaching families directly rather than through allied organizations—is the Parent Partner program, which trains and compensates local parents to provide developmental information, peer support, and connections to community resources in multiple languages. Before the Social Centers began incorporating The Basics into its work, EBFEN already had a strong foundation for family engagement. Its Parent Partner model provided multilingual reach, trusted relationships with families, and an established structure for connecting parents with information and resources. That made EBFEN an ideal platform for helping spread The Basics across East Boston.

The Parent Partners receive a stipend for their participation, though the roles they play extend more broadly than the hours for which they receive compensation. There were fifteen at the end of 2025, all of whom have raised their own children in East Boston. Several have remained in the program for years.

DeVine recruited candidates intentionally to reflect East Boston's cultural and linguistic diversity. A key requirement was that they had young children themselves, ensuring shared lived experience with the families they would serve. Parent Partners represent nine countries of origin and speak eight languages: Arabic, English, French, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, and Taiwanese.

"The relationship parent-to-parent builds trust much faster than agency-to-parent ever could."

Katie White, *Director,
Every Child Shines*

Gloria DeVine's leadership has been instrumental to the program's success. Over more than two decades, she has recruited and supported Parent Partners, cultivated relationships across East Boston and the City of Boston more broadly, and sustained the Social Centers' family engagement work through periods of organizational and programmatic change.

KEY FEATURES OF THE PARENT PARTNER MODEL

Several design features distinguish the Parent Partner model:

- **LEADERSHIP.** East Boston's Parent Partner program has benefited from DeVine's longstanding leadership of EBFEN and her sustained mentorship and coordination of Parent Partners, demonstrating the importance of dedicated leadership to family-engagement models of this kind.
- **COMPENSATION.** Parent Partner roles are paid through stipends, rather than filled by volunteers.
- **TRAINING.** Parent Partners receive training in The Basics and other approaches for supporting families and children's development, including, in some cases, training for specialized roles and responsibilities.
- **LIVED EXPERIENCE.** Parenting experience is recognized as a valuable qualification, with Parent Partners drawing on their own experiences raising young children to support other families.
- **LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.** Language and culture are viewed as integral to effective engagement, not secondary considerations. Parent Partners focus much of their work within their own linguistic and cultural communities while also serving families more broadly.
- **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING.** Partners serve as connectors across settings and organizations, building relationships and helping families access information, resources, and support..

Early Care and Education

The Social Centers operates the largest early care and education program in East Boston. In addition, it provides professional learning opportunities for other early childhood providers. These programs provide natural settings to reinforce The Principles through everyday classroom activities and to share ideas with families for use at home.

Established Community Partnerships

Among the Social Centers' most important community partnerships is its longstanding relationship with NeighborHealth. Its pediatric services reach nearly every young child in East Boston and nearby communities.

Beyond healthcare, the Social Centers has longstanding collaborations with the East Boston branch of the Boston library, schools, early childhood providers, and numerous others.

The Basics Boston became a new partner that could help align organizations around both a shared vision for early childhood and a practical framework for achieving it.

IV. Building the Partnership

Implementation expanded incrementally—first through EBFEN’s family engagement activities and the Parent Partner program, then throughout the Social Centers’ childcare programming, and ultimately across a broader network of community organizations.

Embedding The Basics Through EBFEN

EBFEN became one of the partnership’s principal implementation channels. Parent Partners and EBFEN staff received training in The Principles from The Basics Boston staff and integrated them into family engagement activities that were already part of their work: Welcome Baby visits, parent-child playgroups, developmental screenings that used the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), and other relational supports.

The Parent Partners also introduced families to The Basics’ digital tools, including text messaging and the online Parent Toolkit, which offers parenting videos and activity ideas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they helped ensure that The Basics remained visible in the community by including materials in every bag of food, diapers, or wipes distributed.

PARENT PARTNER-LED BASICS WORKSHOPS

Parent Partner-led workshops originated during the pandemic and have since become a regular feature of family engagement efforts. Developed collaboratively by EBFEN staff and Parent Partners, they are delivered in multiple languages.

“We took the English version and translated every single word to Arabic — the workshop, the slides, everything. ... That was the first time Arab families had a workshop just in their own native language.”

Naoual, an East Boston Parent Partner

Each workshop includes:

- An overview of early brain development
- One slide per Basics Principle
- Group reflection and discussion
- A QR code for enrolling in Basics Insights text messages
- Childcare and meals for workshop attendees
- A Brain-Building Bag for each attendee

Brain-Building Bags

The Brain-Building Bags contain items for each of The Basics Principles: books, musical instruments, puppets, blocks or stacking cups, and calming tools. Facilitators model activities using the materials and encourage parents to identify ways to incorporate them into routines at home.

“Everything in the bag connects back to one of the Basics—it makes the science tangible.”

Workshop facilitator



Every Child Shine’s Brain Building Bag is for the time you spend together, with fun activities to help your child grow happier and smarter. Use the QR code on this sheet (or on your bag) to sign up for Basics Insights text messages that bring tips twice a week on how to make The Basics Principles a fun, simple, and powerful part of everyday life with your child.

The workshops have expanded beyond parents and caregivers to include staff from East Boston childcare centers, pre-K programs, the YMCA, and other community organizations. Partner organizations frequently co-host workshops and assist with recruitment, meeting space, and logistics.

Parent Partners take on different roles based on their skills and interests. Some specialize in developmental screenings or playgroups, while others facilitate Basics workshops. Regardless of specialization, all incorporate The Basics into their work with families.

Parents who facilitate Basics workshops receive extensive preparation, including shadowing experienced facilitators and conducting mock sessions before leading workshops independently.

Facilitators and DeVine meet regularly to coordinate schedules and outreach, organize materials, assemble Brain-Building Bags, and refresh their knowledge.

Through 2025, cumulative attendance across workshops, home visits, and other Parent Partner-led activities exceeds 1,000, although some individuals may have participated more than once. For a neighborhood with an estimated 2,600 children under age five, these activities represent substantial cumulative participation.

Integrating The Basics into Early Care and Education

The Social Centers' on-site early care and education program provided another natural setting for integrating The Basics. From the outset, Michele D'Ambrosio, Director of Early Learning Programs, incorporated The Principles into staff onboarding and professional development to make them a standard component of classroom practice.

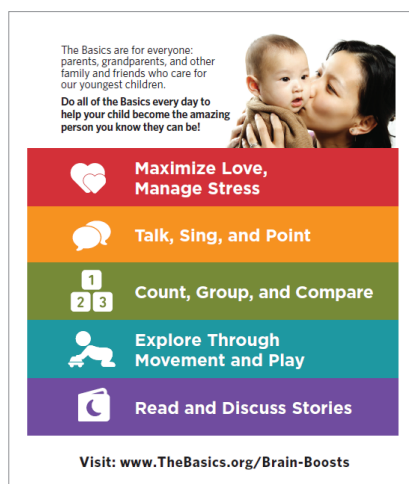
Families are first introduced to The Basics Principles and related resources when they enroll in the program. Later, information is shared through conversations, printed materials, and events.

A workshop delivered by Parent Partners in Spanish for local family child care providers.



Figure 1: Workshop facilitators with participants from local family childcare programs. Participants are holding their Brain Building Bags.

The front and back of a palm card showing The Basics Principles and other information, with a link to the parent toolkit at the bottom, where videos and activity ideas are provided, by age group. The cards are available in multiple languages.



V. Expanding the Partnership Through Every Child Shines

As The Basics became increasingly integrated into the Social Centers' own internal programming, new philanthropic support enabled the next phase. Every Child Ready—later renamed Every Child Shines (ECS)—became a community-wide effort to coordinate and strengthen East Boston's early childhood ecosystem. ECS adopted The Basics multi sector partnership approach as the central organizing framework for reaching families.

ECS brought together healthcare providers, early childhood programs, libraries, schools, family support organizations, and other community institutions around a shared goal: ensuring that every child enters kindergarten "joyful, thriving, and ready to learn." ECS expanded the reach of The Basics while advancing the Social Centers' vision for children and families.

The Launch of Every Child Shines

The ECS kickoff, held virtually on May 1, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, marked a shared commitment to a community-wide approach to supporting young children and their families. The event was attended by more than 70 key stakeholders, including political leaders, healthcare providers, educators, nonprofit colleagues, and other civic leaders. They joined the Social Centers, The Basics Boston, and NeighborHealth in affirming the vision for East Boston's youngest children. Multiple speakers spoke about how children's early development is a community responsibility. They celebrated that ECS was a new vehicle for coordinated action.



Screenshot of Every Child Shines' kickoff, attended by over 70 community leaders and partners.

Coordinating ECS and The Basics

The new grant funding for ECS supported Parent Partner stipends and enabled the Social Centers to hire dedicated ECS leadership. Over time, ECS broadened its focus to include material challenges facing families, such as housing and food insecurity, which extended beyond the scope of The Basics Boston. However, The Basics model remained at the center of the child development strategy.

Within the Social Centers, ECS leadership focused on coordinating organizations and expanding the use of The Basics Principles across community settings, while EBFEN and the Parent Partners assisted with ECS and continued to engage families directly across languages and cultures. ECS and EBFEN together formed an effective structure for the community-wide engagement that the Social Centers aimed to achieve.

How ECS Partners Collaborated

“Initially, I thought it was just another thing. ...But then as I looked more into it, ... it very quickly appeared to be **the instructions that ought to come with the baby** when you take them home from the hospital.”

Thomas Silva, MD, Chair of Pediatrics, NeighborHealth, 2020

From the very beginning of ECS, NeighborHealth was one of the most important planning partners and a major setting through which East Boston families encountered The Basics. At NeighborHealth, The Basics Principles were incorporated into pediatric guidance, printed materials, waiting-room displays, and caregiver conversations.

The collaboration among the Social Centers, NeighborHealth, and The Basics Boston operated through regular meetings and a relatively simple division of responsibilities. ECS staff at the Social Centers coordinated the local effort and partner communication. NeighborHealth incorporated The Basics into healthcare practices and adapted its internal procedures to facilitate family enrollment in Basics Insights. The Basics Boston provided training, materials, implementation guidance, technical support, and access to Basics Insights.

The partners set practical goals together. These included introducing The Basics to pediatric staff, sharing videos and materials in clinical settings, and building enrollment in Basics Insights. When Basics Insights text messaging launched in 2021, NeighborHealth established a goal of enrolling 500 of its pediatric families (irrespective of whether they lived in East Boston), which it achieved within two years.

No funds were exchanged, as each partner used its own funds, primarily from philanthropy, to cover the cost of what it provided. The Basics Boston covered the cost of its staff time, handouts, videos, and Basics Insights. The Social Centers covered its staff, stipends for Parent Partners, space for events and activities, and materials such as the Brain-Building Bags. Similarly, NeighborHealth contributed staff time and space. The benefits to the organizations were reciprocal: ECS and NeighborHealth created additional opportunities for families to encounter The Basics, while The Basics Boston provided the framework and practical tools that supported ECS's and NeighborHealth's goals for young children and families.

ECS Action Teams

As ECS evolved, Katie White became its second director when Rosie Baptista — her supervisor, who had laid the ground-work — moved on.

White organized Action Teams to engage community partners around shared priorities affecting young children and their families. These sector-based groups brought together providers and community leaders to identify opportunities for collaboration and coordinate activities aligned with ECS's broader goals.

Although none of the Action Teams focused exclusively on The Basics, all provided additional opportunities to incorporate The Basics Principles and tools into existing community initiatives.

The three Action Teams focused on:

- **Early Care and Education**, which sought to promote positive educational and social-emotional outcomes for young children in East Boston, with strengthening out-of-home childcare as the primary focus.
- **Family Support**, which focused on strengthening outreach to families and connecting them to information and tangible supports.
- **Home-Based Early Childhood Educators**, which sought to equip home-based educators to give the families they serve parenting tools and child development supports.

The Early Care and Education Team, with its focus on care outside the home, and the Home-Based Early Childhood Educators Action Team, with a focus on home-based caregiving by families, had the greatest overlap with The Basics. Team members incorporated The Basics Principles and tools into workshops and interactive activities designed to help both professionals and parents support children's learning.

White coordinated the Action Teams in collaboration with EBFEN, Parent Partners, The Basics Boston staff, school system representatives, and other community leaders. Together, the Action Teams provided an additional mechanism for incorporating The Basics into East Boston's ecosystem.

Exhibit A provides additional examples of the settings, activities, and roles through which The Basics was implemented across the neighborhood, including those associated with the Action Teams.

Exhibit A | ECS Implementation Table

	Primary Setting	Implementation Activity	Who Did the Work
	Early care and education programs	Embed Basics Principles into daily routines of childcare providers (e.g., circle time)	Early learning educators (East Boston Social Centers)
		Incorporate Basics into staff onboarding and training	Program leadership and supervisors
		Recommend Basics Insights and the online Parent Toolkit	Any program staff at an early care and education program
	Enrollment sites for multiple program types	Distribute Basics palm cards at intake, introducing Principles	Enrollment staff
	Emergency family support program settings	Include Basics materials in food/diaper distributions	Social Centers staff
	Neighborhood public spaces	Community billboard campaign	East Boston partners
	Families' homes	Introduce the Principles during Welcome Baby visits	Parent Partners and home visitors
		Use videos and reading to model Basics behaviors	Parent Partners
	Health center (especially pediatrics)	Implement Basics in pediatric well-child visits	Pediatric clinicians
		Extend conversations during reduced-volume COVID visits	Pediatric providers
	Parenting programs	Integrate Basics materials and information into 12-session parenting curriculum	Families First facilitators
	Virtual and in-person community trainings	Train parents or others who might play a variety of roles	The Basics Boston's team and partner organizations
		Peer-to-peer sharing and focus groups	Parent Partners
	Multiple touchpoints (including any of the above)	Enroll families in Basics Insights text messaging	Service providers and a number of Parent Partners
	Cross-sector EBFEN meetings	Coordinate partners and trainings	East Boston Family Engagement Network

As the collaboration expanded, participating organizations took on complementary responsibilities while advancing a shared community vision.

Together, these roles enabled The Basics to become woven throughout East Boston’s early childhood ecosystem while allowing each organization to contribute its unique strengths.

Exhibit B | Shared Vision, Complementary Roles

Organization	Primary role in the partnership
The Basics Boston	Provided the evidence-based framework, training, implementation guidance, communication resources, and Basics Insights.
East Boston Social Centers	Led neighborhood implementation, integrated The Basics throughout its programs and initiatives, coordinated family engagement activities, and launched Every Child Shines.
NeighborHealth	Embedded The Basics within pediatric healthcare, expanded caregiver enrollment in Basics Insights, and reinforced developmental messaging.
ECS partner organizations	Incorporated The Basics into existing programs and reinforced consistent developmental messages across community settings.

See Every Child Shines’ Theory of Change in Appendix B.

VI. Outcomes at Multiple Levels

The outcomes described below reflect what the partnership has made possible at the family and child, community capacity, organizational, and systems levels. Definitive evidence of effects on kindergarten readiness will require further study.

Network/Systems Level

At the systems level, the collaboration has created relationships and working practices that have remained durable through changes in funding sources, leadership, and staff. More than two dozen organizations have participated in Every Child Shines activities, including its Action Teams, while the working relationship among the Social Centers, NeighborHealth, and The Basics Boston has continued despite relying primarily on collegial working relationships rather than formal agreements.

The Basics' concepts and language now appear across multiple institutions and settings, and cumulative attendance at workshops, home visits, and Parent Partner-led activities has exceeded 1,000. What began as a vision has increasingly become a shared approach to supporting young children and families.

Organizational Level

The Basics has become part of routine practice within several participating institutions. At the Social Centers, the Principles are incorporated into EBFEN and the Parent Partner program, early care and education, and Every Child Shines. At NeighborHealth, they are integrated into well-child visits, anticipatory guidance conversations, printed materials, waiting-room displays, and Basics Insights enrollment procedures.

Across these settings, The Basics has provided a shared developmental language for parents, clinicians, educators, and family-support staff. It has also become part of staff onboarding, professional learning, and communication with families. Together, these forms of integration have helped make implementation less dependent on individual champions and more likely to continue through changes in staff and leadership.

Community Capacity Level

The Basics model has also contributed to the capacity of the Parent Partner program. Fifteen multilingual Parent Partners, representing families from nine countries, have been trained in The Basics since the program began. Several have gone on to coach other parents and work alongside clinic staff to enroll families in Basics Insights.

Because Parent Partners draw on shared languages, cultures, and parenting experiences, they can help engage families in ways that staff members might not be able to do alone. Their involvement also strengthens connections between families and local organizations.

Family and Child Level

Reach and enrollment. Across 2024 and 2025, annual new enrollment in Basics Insights equaled more than 40% of the number of children in a single-year age group.⁴ If that pace is sustained, more than 40% of all East Boston children from birth to age five will be in households receiving the messages.⁵

Starting early. Most East Boston caregivers who enroll in Basics Insights join while their children are still very young: one quarter by five months, half by one year, and three quarters by age two. Earlier enrollment gives families more time to receive—and children more time to benefit from—age-tailored developmental information and activity ideas during children’s earliest years. Across the multi-community Basics Learning Network, quantitative analyses of survey data have found associations between longer exposure to Basics Insights and child development.⁶ These findings are consistent with, though not evidence of, a causal effect.

Sustained caregiving practices. In December 2024, The Basics, Inc. conducted a survey of parents whose children had reached five years old in time to enter the fall 2024 kindergarten class. Respondents reported that, although they no longer received the texts, they had continued the practices the messages encouraged.⁷

Multiple forms of influence on caregivers. The Basics, Inc. also conducts an annual *Parental Assessment of Child Developmental Status*.⁸ Following a battery of forced-choice items, parents are asked, “If the messages have helped you, what is the most important way they have?”

The following are illustrative quotes from East Boston caregivers, drawn from East Boston responses to that assessment.⁹

1. **Parental knowledge and confidence**

“I love The Basics. ... As a parent, you might feel that you are doing things wrong, since parenting didn’t come with a manual. I look forward to my weekly text and to trying anything new that I’ve read about.”

2. **More intentional parent-child engagement**

“I love the messages. They make me pause and think of ways to better engage with and guide my child, helping her learn and grow up with curiosity and confidence.”

3. **Understanding child development**

“I really like them—especially the insight into how she is developing and experiencing the world. It’s great for new parents.”

4. **Supporting early literacy and communication**

“They help us, as parents, encourage our children to love reading. Through books, children also learn to communicate.”

5. **Practical activities and social-emotional understanding**

“They are very helpful in showing us what activities to do ... and in helping us better understand their feelings.”

4 East Boston corresponds to ZIP code 02128. The most recent U.S. Census Bureau ZCTA 02128 profile (accessed March 1, 2026) identifies 2,621 children younger than five living in the ZIP code, or an average of approximately 524 children per single-year age group. In 2024, NeighborHealth began using a bulk enrollment process in which staff securely submitted information for multiple consenting families at once, rather than enrolling each family individually. Annual enrollment through other East Boston organizations remained relatively constant, while NeighborHealth enrollment more than doubled. As a result, average annual East Boston enrollment increased from 131 before 2024 to 224 in 2024 and 2025. The latter figure equals 42.7% of 524.

5 This assumes, consistent with the evidence, that the vast majority remain enrolled until the program ends on the child’s fifth birthday. However, the percentage who move out of the neighborhood while continuing to receive the texts is unknown. If that percentage is high, the statement would need to be revised.

6 See Ronald F. Ferguson and Ji Hye (Esther) Park. “Evidence that Basics Insights Text Messaging Has Positive Impacts on Child Development.” The Basics, Inc., Issue Brief. November 2024.

7 The invitations were distributed by text message. Among 175 parents invited from four priority Boston neighborhoods—East Boston, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury—41 responded, for a response rate of 23%. Roughly half of those invited and half of respondents were from East Boston.

8 See Ferguson and Park, note 6. The Parental Assessment of Child Developmental Status is the data source.

9 N = 111 for East Boston, cumulative across three annual administrations. Quotes were lightly edited for length and clarity; quotations 4 and 5 were translated from Spanish.

VII. Challenges and Resilience

Funding sustainability has remained an ongoing challenge, as it is for most nonprofit initiatives. However, during the period covered by this case, each of the core organizations was able to secure support for its role.

The second challenge was achieving continuity during staff and leadership transitions. Key advocates and staff members left positions at NeighborHealth, The Basics Boston, and ECS during the period covered by the case. Some transitions caused temporary interruptions, including lapses in Basics Insights enrollment procedures.

The work nevertheless continued. Katie White's promotion to lead ECS provided continuity within the Social Centers, while new staff at NeighborHealth and The Basics Boston assumed responsibility for maintaining the collaboration. When staff responsible for enrollment procedures at NeighborHealth changed, the organizations worked together to identify problems, train successors, and restore the process.

The experience suggests that resilience did not depend on any single individual or formal agreement, but on overlapping institutional commitments, regular communication, and layers of relationships—at CEO and staff levels—that bound together multiple organizations. Those arrangements were strong enough to absorb personnel changes, though not always without temporary disruption.

VIII. Transferable Lessons for Other BLN Communities

The East Boston experience reflects one neighborhood's particular history, organizations, and relationships. While other communities should therefore not attempt to reproduce its precise structure, four broad lessons emerge from the case.

1. **Build on the Strengths of Established Neighborhood Institutions.** East Boston Social Centers brought credibility among neighborhood organizations, strong community relationships, and the capacity to incorporate The Basics into existing programs. In other communities, an organization with similar assets, working in partnership with the local Basics backbone, can provide a strong foundation for implementation.
2. **Incorporate The Basics into Existing Programs.** Rather than creating parallel services, participating organizations adapted The Basics to activities and relationships already central to their work. This flexibility lowered the burden of adoption, extended developmental support across multiple settings, and helped sustain implementation even when circumstances changed, as during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Expand Through Partnerships.** Once The Basics had become established within the Social Centers' programming, a funding opportunity enabled the organization to engage partner organizations to improve kindergarten readiness and child well-being more broadly.

ECS provided the broader community agenda, while The Basics offered a practical framework and tools for engaging families and aligning organizations around everyday child development. Together, they engaged healthcare providers, educators, libraries, family-support organizations, and other institutions.

The transferable lesson is not to recreate ECS, but to establish a coordinating structure that can extend a shared framework across sectors while allowing each organization to contribute according to its role and strengths.

4. **Invest Systematically in Parent Leadership and Community Capacity.** East Boston's success depended not only on organizational partnerships but also on investing in parents as leaders, educators, and connectors within their native language communities. The Parent Partner model demonstrates that caregivers themselves can become powerful agents of implementation when they are trained, compensated, and supported in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. Communities need not replicate the Parent Partner model exactly but should consider how parents and caregivers can play meaningful roles in advancing The Basics and strengthening connections among families and organizations.

"When I came to the United States, I didn't get the help I really needed — a new country, a different language, a different culture. ... That's what made me want to be involved, helping families ... to give them what I didn't get when I needed it."

Naoual, an East Boston Parent Partner

IX. Conclusion: A Living Model

Community-wide implementation of The Basics model as a centerpiece of Every Child Shines was possible because leaders worked across organizational boundaries, persisted through challenges, and learned together, while embracing the vision that CEO Justin Pasquariello shared at the May 1, 2020 kickoff event, that children should reach kindergarten joyful, thriving, and ready to learn.

Notably, the model does not prescribe creating new family-serving organizations or replacing channels through which providers are already reaching families. Instead, it prescribes embedding The Basics Principles and tools into existing family-serving structures, relationships, and routines, such as the Social Centers' early care and education and family-engagement work, EBFEN and its multilingual Parent Partners, NeighborHealth's pediatric visits, and community settings from libraries to food distribution sites.

Every Child Shines fostered alignment and unity because distributed ownership made it a living model; implementation continued as grants cycled and staff and leaders changed because multiple organizations were jointly committed to East Boston's children and families.

East Boston exemplifies The Basics motto: *What none of us can do alone, all of us can do together.*

Appendix A: Key Locations and Organizations

An interactive map of key locations and organizations is available [at this link](#).

 Key Action Team Organizations

 Constitution Beach

 Central Square

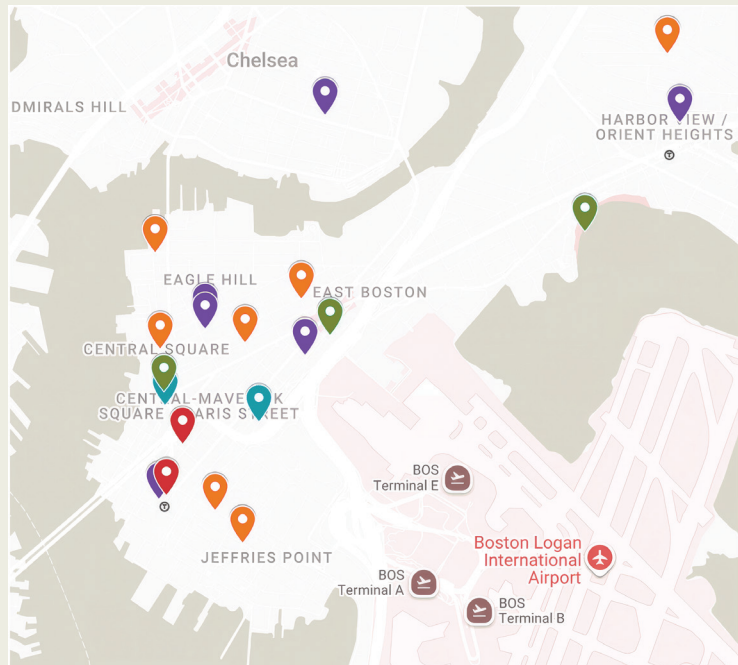
 Library

 The Social Centers

 East Boston YMCA

 Child Care Centers

 NeighborHealth



Appendix B: Every Child Shines' Theory of Change

If we invest these inputs and implement these activities → we will produce these outputs → which will lead to these outcomes → and ultimately this long-term impact

In the case narrative, outcomes are discussed at the family and child, community capacity, organizational, and network/systems levels. The Theory of Change below presents a complementary sequence showing how ECS inputs and activities are expected to contribute over time to short-term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and intended long-term impacts.

INPUTS	CORE ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	INTENDED LONG-TERM IMPACTS
Social Centers (leadership & access) NeighborHealth (access to caregivers) East Boston Family Engagement Network (coordination) Parent Partners (leadership, service) The Basics Boston (leadership, framework, and materials) Multilingual resources Public & philanthropic funding	Welcome Baby home visits	Number of parent and caregiver contacts	Increased parent knowledge of early brain development	FLOURISHING Improved language, social-emotional, and cognitive development among children Stronger parent-child relationships Higher levels of kindergarten readiness indicators Reduced early developmental disparities Higher educational attainment Improved lifelong health and economic outcomes A sustainable, community-owned early childhood ecosystem	
	Training for Parent Partners	Number of workshops delivered	Increased frequency of Basics-aligned parenting behaviors		
	Parent Partner-led Basics workshops (multilingual)	Number of families enrolled in text messaging	Stronger parent confidence and reduced stress		
	Brain-Building Bag distribution	Number of trained Parent Partners	Greater consistency of messaging across institutions		
	Basics Insights enrollment	Number of partner organizations aligned			
	Developmental screenings (ASQ)				
	Community tabling at libraries & events				
	Cross-sector partner alignment meetings				



**The
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