

Rhode Island Early Learning Council Meeting

Wednesday, June 28, 2017 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Save the Bay

Meeting Summary

AGENDA SUMMARY

The Early Learning Council's agenda addressed the following topics:

- Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Meeting Overview
- Review Progress Toward Goals in Early Learning Council Advisory Plan: Data Dashboard
- Children with High Needs: Identifying and Serving Young Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities
- Policy and Program Updates
- Facilitated Discussion: Learning from Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge
- Public comment
- Upcoming meetings

KEY POINTS

Key discussion points from the meeting are summarized below:

WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS, AND MEETING OVERVIEW

Commissioner Ken Wagner and Elizabeth Burke Bryant welcomed the Council and discussed ESSA and Early Learning Updates as well as Legislative and Budget updates. (See slides). The following comments and questions were made:

- The Council welcomes new DHS Director, Courtney Hawkins, who is excited to participate in the Council's work.
- ESSA is winding down its first phase. After more than 100 engagement sessions over the last year and a half, the state ESSA Plan is out for public comment, which will end on June 30th. The team will make updates based on that feedback during July and the governor will review the ESSA Plan during August. The state will submit the final plan in September.
- The ESSA Plan is just one portion of the early childhood education work. There is additional work around school report cards, 3rd grade reading levels and related grant work. We are striving to implement more than just a federal compliance plan.
- The school report cards will ensure compliance with the policies established in the ESSA Plan.
 - The state is working with Tableau to establish a consistent look to the reporting metrics in the school report cards.
 - The school report cards will include metrics for early learning services.
 - Although certain predetermined views will be included on the school report cards, they are customizable by the districts.
- The Children's Cabinet is focusing on the 3rd grade reading work.
- The state is working on a proposal for the Striving Readers grant, which would provide funds for early learning instructional work and increasing the capacity and impact of providers.

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- The state is also working on the New Skills for Youth grant, which connects the state's education sector work with the state's economic development work and recognizes the connection between supporting children and increasing job and economic opportunities for families.
 - The New Skills for Youth grant brings career awareness to all education activities, including increasing the understanding of teachers about the range of pathway options available to children and increasing the exposure of older children to the range of pathway options. This increased exposure includes teaching apprenticeships for high school students seeking a career in education. Teaching apprenticeships are critical to closing the diversity gap between the early childhood education workforce and the communities they serve.
- Since the \$2.5 million for evidence-based programs to support English Language Learners will be made permanent in the final FY18, Rhode Island will no longer one of just four states that did not have designated funding going to ELL education.
- The State Pre-K lottery is open until July 1st. RIDE will notify families about placements by July 5th. There are 1,080 slots available in 60 classrooms [contingent on the FY18 budget].
- The FY18 budget includes a \$390K increase for state-funded Head Start slots.
- Because funding for the KEP implementation was not included in the FY18 budget, we must raise up the incredible need for the KEP and how essential it is for Kindergarten teachers to have a profile of students in their classroom.
- Despite great advocacy work, the CCAP Tiered Quality Rates legislation did not receive funding. Tiered rates are essential to sustaining the quality improvement progress made over the past few years and continuing to support and incentivize quality improvement. Advocacy efforts must continue.
- The Evidence-Based Home Visiting Act legislation, which prioritizes the highest need families, passed the full Senate and the House HEW Committee. We expect it will be enacted.
- Neither the Early Childhood Innovation Act nor the CCAP Eligibility Expansion legislation received funding.
- KIDS COUNT will release a legislative update in July.

REVIEW PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS IN EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL ADVISORY PLAN: DATA DASHBOARD

Leanne Barrett presented an updated Data Dashboard. (See slides). Key comments and questions included:

- New data on 3rd grade reading levels will be available in the fall.

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- The data on CCAP is from September 2016. New data will become available once UHIP is fully operational. The goal is to raise the number of participating children to the 14,000 that participated before the big cuts in 2007.
- Head Start occasionally needs to limit available slots in order to direct resources to salaries to maintain its high quality. The goal is to restore the state funded Head Start slots cut in 2008.
- We have made great progress with the State Pre-K program and we are on track to reach our goal by 2017. With the anticipated end of federal funding, the state needs to ensure adequate resources to maintain the State Pre-K progress. Rhode Island is one of only two states in the country that meets all the latest research based standards on high quality preschools.
- The state is working on increasing access to special education in core cities.
- We have reached our goal for Full Day Kindergarten.
- Evidence-based home visiting is heavily dependent on federal funding. We want to sustain and continue our progress.
- Programs not serving CCAP children are not required to participate in BrightStars.
- A lot of programs have moved from 1 star to 2 stars in BrightStars. The challenge is getting programs to 3 stars and above and keeping them there.
- 70% of public schools are participating in BrightStars.
- Head Start programs tend to have higher quality and higher funding levels than typical child care providers so that explains the higher percentage for Head Start on slide #21. That percentage would be even higher if partner sites were not included.
- Q: Can State Pre-K programs be included in slide #21?
A: Including this number might be a challenge because, although the State Pre-K classrooms themselves are higher quality because of RIDE CECE approval, they are often part of a larger program that might overall have a lower star rating so the rating of the State Pre-K locations would not necessarily reflect the quality of the classrooms.
- COMMENT: It is important to track the location and quality of State Pre-K classrooms because providers often use lessons learned from State Pre-K classrooms to raise the quality of the other classrooms in the programs. Teachers act as mentors to teachers in other classrooms and classrooms act as models for how other classrooms can be organized. One high quality classroom increases the quality of all classrooms in a program.
- COMMENT: We should track the progress of programs through the star ratings to help identify the factors that help programs improve.

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- Q: Are State Pre-K classrooms included on the Public School BrightStars Ratings slide?
A: State Pre-K classrooms are included on both the Public School and Center/Preschool BrightStars Ratings slides because State Pre-K classrooms exist in both settings. The BrightStars ratings included on the slide are global for the location and are not specific to a classroom.
- Q: Why is the percentage for children with developmental delays or disabilities so low on slide #21?
A: A lot of those children are in public schools that have only been participating in BrightStars since 2013-2014 and those schools are still learning the rating system. Additionally, that number might be under estimated. We will work on adjusting this slide further to ensure accuracy.
- Q: Do we know why the 3rd grade reading level for children with disabilities was unchanged from 2015 to 2016?
A: The increase in the other categories is at least partially attributable to increased familiarity with the PARCC test so it is not entirely due to improved outcomes. However, to track progress and improve outcomes overall we need to increase focus on the instructional components of programs such as proficiency v. growth and poverty v. proficiency. Part of the ESSA Plan is to introduce scatterplots that do exactly that, which will allow us to call attention to individual schools that may have low proficiency overall but are accomplishing high growth. Looking at the best practices of those schools will help the progress of all schools.
- Q: Given the decrease in family child care slots and the constant number of center and public school slots, are there less available child care slots overall?
A: We do not know the exact number of providers we need in the state, although, anecdotally, we have not heard of waiting lists for slots. We do know that there are many children in unregulated care because we have stopped emphasizing the idea that regulated care at any quality level is better than unregulated care. The state requires licenses for all providers caring for 4 or more unrelated children. The state could lower that threshold, but we want to improve the licensing process before adding more programs. We do not have data on why programs are choosing to operate unlicensed. We should collect data on that to inform future actions.
- The data on developmental screening for children under age 3 just reflects screening of RIte Care members. This screening data is probably similar to the entire population since doctors that serve RIte Care children apply the same processes to all children they serve.
- It is difficult to locate 3 year olds for Child Outreach screenings as many children are not yet participating in early care and education programs. Individual districts are working on initiatives to increase screening rates.

CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS: IDENTIFYING AND SERVING YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND DISABILITIES

Ruth Gallucci and Jennifer Kaufman discussed identifying and serving young children with developmental delays and disabilities. (See slides). Comments and questions included the following:

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- The quality of the home environment is as important as the quality of the early childhood programs.
- Children with disabilities have the same learning goals as all children age birth to 5, although there may be different indicators to measure those goals and a different timeline for achieving them.
- Early Intervention considers families' daily routines and utilizes a coaching model that is more effective than the old medical/therapeutic model.
- Special education ensures that children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). It provides for adaptation of instruction so that each child can meet the educational standards that apply to all children. that is an adaptation of instruction within the general education curriculum.
- It is important to screen children AND it is essential that children who do not pass the screenings are referred to either EI or ECSE.
- Districts implement the Child Outreach screenings for children 3-5 years old according to state guidelines.
- Children who do not pass the vision or hearing portions of Child Outreach screenings are referred to primary care physicians and children who do not pass the speech/language, social/emotional or general development portions of Child Outreach screenings are referred to ECSE.
- Children who pass screenings but are not functioning in their home or school environments should be referred as well.
- EI has providers throughout the state accepting referrals and referrals for ECSE should be made to the school district in which the child lives.
- "NAS" is neonatal abstinence syndrome, which refers to infants born addicted to controlled substances.
- Children do not need a delay in two different areas to be eligible for services. They also do not need a cognitive delay to be determined eligible. A child just needs to satisfy one of the eligibility categories. Children with social-emotional delays should be referred to EI and ECSE. They do not need to have a delay in any other category.
- EI will develop an overall plan for services based on the needs of a child and family, rather than a prescriptive plan based on diagnosis.
- A medical diagnosis does not automatically lead to special education eligibility if that child does not require specialized instruction. Similarly, children do not need a medical diagnosis in order to

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be served by Early Intervention. They can be served under the developmental delay category. However, for EI specifically, a child can be found eligible based solely on specific medical diagnoses that are associated with developmental delays (Single Established Conditions).

- Special education services are delivered in the setting in which the child would normally be placed if he or she did not have a disability unless an individual child's education cannot be achieved satisfactorily, given the addition of supplementary aids and services, A continuum of service must be made available in this situation.
- The Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services (IECSE) delivery model is an evidence based practice that supports children in the general education setting, wherever that may be, e.g. Head Start, State Pre-K, community programs, special education program, so that children do not have to move between settings.
- Q: Districts differ in how they operate Child Outreach. Is this a district or state decision and where is the funding for Child Outreach coming from, the state or local level?
A: IDEA provides federal regulations regarding child find. Rhode Island requires that every district implements the state Child Outreach guidelines for 3-5 year olds. All districts are working hard to ensure that programs are screening as many children as possible and many districts are now recognizing the benefits of putting additional funding toward screening/early identification. IDEA funds are limited and districts rely primarily on local funding for screening.
- IECSE professional development and technical assistance provides support for LEAs to utilize resources to reach children in their community settings. LEAs are more familiar with the existing model of using special education funds to establish special education classrooms. Many districts however are now beginning to use resources to provide itinerant supports in the community.
- COMMENT: Urban centers are not reaching families early enough due to capacity issues. Perhaps partnerships can be brokered to assist districts that need help closing the achievement gap.
- Q: What is a 25% delay?
A: Using any assessment tool, a child's delay can be calculated based on performance level and the child's age. For example, a four year old performing at the level of a three year old has a 25% delay. For EI, a significant impact on function, which does not require a standardized tool, can also determine eligibility.
- If anyone sees anything concerning about a child, refer the child for screening.
- COMMENT: We should send mailings to family child care providers informing them about local screenings.
- Q: Should the tools used by districts to determine developmental delays be uniform?

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A: RIDE does not require specific assessment tools, but RIDE will be releasing an evaluation and eligibility support document that contains relevant information regarding eligibility that should help districts in their ECSE evaluation.

- Contact Ruth or Jennifer with questions and comments. Jennifer.Kaufman@ohhs.ri.gov
Ruth.Gallucci@ride.ri.gov
- COMMENT: The national campaign for grade level reading along with the Children's Cabinet's focus on 3rd grade reading and the Rhode Island Reads work by KIDSCOUNT and the United Way of Rhode Island have all heightened the focus on healthy childhood development with screening being a good indicator for that healthy development.

POLICY AND PROGRAM UPDATES

Governor's 3rd Grade Reading Plan

David Allard updated the Council on the Governor's 3rd Grade Reading Plan. Key comments included:

- The governor has received a competitive grant from the National Governors Association to help with nutrition objectives. A team went to the NGA's learning lab to learn about strategies to reduce childhood hunger and to create a plan to ensure school age children have regular access to healthy meals.
- Central Falls, Pawtucket and Providence public schools have agreed to partner with a cohort study being conducted by the Children's Cabinet and the Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute. This study will provide early literacy data to the state that only the districts currently have access to, which will fulfill an important role in data collection.
- The Office of Library and Information Services kicked off the 2017 summer reading program in May. The Providence Public Library will host an event on June 30th for this program.
- The training of child protective services staff on DCYF's Early Childhood Service Referral Policy and Procedure began last month and is now complete.
- Targeted outreach for case work staff to promote the State Pre-K lottery for eligible children has continued.
- DCYF and RIDE have met to develop a plan by September for a baseline indicator to track the rate of successful Child Outreach screenings for children in the foster care system.
- In May, RIDE was awarded \$1.3 million in a 21st Century Community Learning grant to four organizations that prioritizes an early foundations focus. Newport, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket have developed strategies to ensure young students are on appropriate education and developmental trajectories.
- RIDOH is comprehensively evaluating evidence based home visiting programs, including determining the cost of implementing models within the state's infrastructure, documenting and

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describing outcomes, and assessing unmet community needs. The goal is to complete a sustainability and expansion plan.

- RIDOH is supporting primary care and other community providers to systemize and increase referrals to Child Outreach, with a focus on families in at-risk communities.
- In December, the governor will hold a 3rd Grade Reading Summit.

DHS: Market Rate Survey & Infant/Toddler TA

Karen Beese updated the Council on the DHS Market Rate Survey and Infant/Toddler TA. Comments and questions included:

- Caring for Infants and Toddlers in RI is providing technical assistance from our federal partners at the Administration for Children and Families to assist us in developing an infant/toddler credential for the state. The team is better defining the purpose and goal of the credential and how it links to other requirements that already exist in the state, e.g., DCYF, BrightStars, and CCAP. It will take at least 24 months to complete this detailed work.
- The RI Market Rate survey must increase its geographic variation and its response rate.
- Director Hawkins suggested targeted outreach to collect feedback on the Market Rate Survey so the data collected can be used to support the tiered reimbursement advocacy work that will be starting on July 1st. The data from the Market Rate Survey will inform both rate setting and the advocacy platform.
- There will also be a Survey Monkey sent out to collect feedback. Contact Karen with comments. karen.beese@dhs.ri.gov
- The Market Rate Survey is just the first step. The next step is to determine what it costs to operate a high quality program. There is a provider cost of quality web-based tool available to help determine actual costs at the various BrightStars levels. Programs can use cost data to factor the cost of quality into rate settings while ensuring equal access to high quality programs for high needs children.
- Q: How many families leave child care because they lose their subsidy or because they can no longer afford it?
A: There is data on case closures per month and the reason for those closures. That data can help determine whether we are making progress toward ensuring access for all children.
- Q: Does the Market Rate Survey actually inform rates?
A: Federal law encourages us to examine our rate structures and how they compare to the costs of quality. If our reimbursement rates are insufficient, we need to be specific about our plans and rationale for future adjustments. This is a focus for Director Hawkins. This alignment must be achieved through state funding since federal funding is already maximized.

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- COMMENT: Inherent in the market rate structure is attracting high quality early childhood professionals and staff, which drives the cost of quality.
- The Market Rate Survey will come out later this year. URI and DLT are going through the federal regulations to identify how they impact the survey format.
- Until the new data is available, the data from the 2015 Market Rate Survey is still relevant and can inform advocacy for the tiered rate structure. The goals can be adjusted once the new data is available.
- COMMENT: We cannot advocate for additional DHS slots until the rates are addressed because programs are already struggling to maintain quality for the current number of slots under the existing rate structure.

DOH: Successful Start Update

Kristine Campagna updated the Council on Successful Start, an early learning systems grant. Comments included the following:

- The team is meeting every other month to review data, think about next steps and discuss a more focused agenda on developmental screenings. Contact Kristine for information about future meetings

RI College: Certificate of Graduate Studies in Early Childhood Leadership

Mary Ellen McGuire-Schwartz and Christine Kunkel updated the Council on the Certificate of Graduate Studies in Early Childhood Leadership at RIC. (See slides). Comments included:

- Please provide feedback on this new certificate program to Mary Ellen and Christine.
mmcguire@ric.edu ckunkel@ric.edu
- The program is aligned with the WKC for Early Childhood Administrators and Education Coordinators, NAEYC, RIELDS, RIDE CECE standards and all college based leadership standards.

RIDE: Social-Emotional Learning Standards

Stephanie Enos and Alice Wood updated the Council on RIDE's Social-Emotional Learning Standards. (See slides). Key comments included:

- In 2013, RIDE collaborated with CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, and designed a blueprint for action.
- Social-Emotional Learning Standards were included in RIDE's Strategic Plan.
- RI has been working with a collaborative of 18 states under a grant from CASEL to develop a draft of standards that will go before Commissioner Ken Wagner tomorrow. RIDE hopes the final draft will come before the Council for endorsement in September.
- Once the standards are endorsed, RIDE will develop resource tools and supports to ensure a seamless continuum.

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FACILITATED DISCUSSION: LEARNING FROM RACE TO THE TOP-EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

Leanne Barrett facilitated the discussion on lessons learned from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC). Feedback from small group activity included:

- Governance/Communication
 - Success
 - Utilized the Early Learning Council in RTTT-ELC efforts.
 - Improved communication through the development of a governance structure comprised of a regular group of all key partners meeting to discuss topics such as alignment issues, etc.
 - Challenge
 - Ending of regular meetings and key alignment strategies for governance issues.
 - Not funding the Sustainability Plan and not discussing it further.
 - Priority for Future
 - Maintaining momentum through the return of an active governance structure that regularly promotes alignment and dialogue among agencies, thereby ensuring real participation by all agencies and stakeholders.
- Improving Early Learning Program Quality
 - Success
 - Establishment of incentive payments that recognized and rewarded program quality and had an impact on higher quality learning environments.
 - Alignment among the DCYF, BrightStars, CECE standards and the continued use of that strong alignment.
 - Increased participation and ratings in BrightStars.
 - Increased collaboration and coordination among agencies.
 - Completion of the BrightStars evaluation study.
 - Challenge
 - No establishment of tiered quality incentive payments for CCAP.
 - Sustainability, particularly with respect to incentive payments for maintaining quality with increased costs.
 - No focus on school age and a lack of coordination across that system.
 - Minimal focus on family child care.
 - Misalignment possibly caused by the new DCYF regulations.
 - Over support (financially/technical assistance) for four and five star programs with not enough resources for lower rated programs to raise rating and quality.
 - Priority for Future
 - Establishing tiered quality incentive payments/reimbursements through calculating the true cost of quality for programs participating in CCAP.
 - Creating incentives for public schools to enroll in BrightStars.
 - Putting money behind people and programs by offering quality dollars for programs and program staff to, for example, improve their education.
 - Evaluating making BrightStars ratings based on an average as opposed to being determined by the lowest score in any category.

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- Continuing collaboration among agencies.
 - Making additional money available to assist programs in improving and maintaining quality.
- Building a Strong Early Learning Workforce
 - Success
 - Creation of supports for administrators, including professional development, technical assistance, the Center for Early Learning Professionals, the professional development approval system, and the RIC and CCRI programs, which all address the needs of students working in the field.
 - Development of WKC, including embedding the EI/ECSE competencies within the WKC, and all of the other alignment work.
 - Challenge
 - Increasing accessibility for non-English speakers and offering college courses in Spanish.
 - Addressing the critical challenge of generalized ECE staff with special concern about the qualifications and readiness of lead teachers.
 - Priority for Future
 - Ensuring financial accessibility for higher education.
 - Continue the TEACH program for AA and BA candidates as well as for students pursuing 12 credit/ advanced course work and degrees.
 - Aligning reimbursement rates with higher education requirements.
 - Increasing compensation of the workforce
 - Increasing collaboration among all state institutions of higher education, specifically articulation.
 - Creating additional professional development for infants/toddlers.
 - Promoting Improved Learning & Development Outcomes for Children
 - Success
 - Increasing number and accessibility for RIELDS professional development offerings.
 - Inclusion of Child Outreach data system in KIDSNET.
 - Inclusion of infant/toddler standards.
 - Development of the EI/ECSE joint child outcomes policy.
 - Challenge
 - Utilizing screening results to improve access to services.
 - Priority for Future
 - Improving the utilization of RIELDS in EI programs.
 - Increasing the focus on applying professional development to practice in the classroom to improve child outcomes.
 - Engaging more pediatricians so they are promoting/advocating for early literacy to their young patients and their families (Reach Out and Read).
 - Improving the percentages of screening, referrals and other supports for children.
 - Increasing access to required RIELDS trainings.
 - Improving understanding of formative assessment and using it effectively.

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- Measuring Outcomes and Progress
 - Success
 - Developing successful ECEDS Program Search.
 - Improved sharing of data.
 - Challenge
 - Unavailability of data on child enrollment by age and program (CCAP, Head Start, State Pre-K, Early Intervention, home visiting, public school, etc.).Unclear ownership for ECEDS.
 - Implementation of too many requirements for programs at too quick a pace.
 - Delayed implementation of the KEP pilot and ECEDS.
 - Unsuccessful implementation of the universal application.
 - Unable to follow an individual child's experiences.
 - Priority for Future
 - Establishing a focus on Kindergarten entry, transition and assessment.
 - Collecting data on child enrollment across sectors for measuring gaps in access.
 - Developing full functionality and utilization of ECEDS across state agencies, including funding and maintenance.
 - Finishing the implementation of the KEP.
 - Measuring reading skills when children enter Kindergarten and assess the effectiveness of the programs in which they participated.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no additional comments and questions from the public.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next Early Learning Council meetings will be September 20, 2017 and December 13, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Save the Bay.