Rhode Island Early Learning Council Comprehensive Advisory Plan and Recommendations 2016-2020

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ROLE OF THE EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

Rhode Island's Early Learning Council was formed in June 2010 according to the guidelines for State Early Care and Education Advisory Councils outlined in the 2007 federal Head Start Reauthorization Act. The Council is made up of 50 key leaders representing all the sectors of the early learning and development field and is co-chaired by the Commissioner of Education, Ken Wagner, and by Elizabeth Burke Bryant, the Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, an independent children's policy and research organization.

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council's overarching goal is "to expand access to ensure that more children, particularly from low-income and vulnerable families, participate in high-quality early learning programs, including high-quality child care (both center-based and family child-care homes), evidence-based family home visiting, Head Start, Early Head Start, Rhode Island State Pre-K, Early Intervention, preschool Special Education, and Kindergarten through Grade 3 public education." To achieve this goal, the Council works improve early learning and development outcomes for children from birth through age 8. In this role, the Council has developed an updated **Comprehensive Advisory Plan and Recommendations** to achieve established goals and targets in four focus areas:

- Expand Access to High Quality Programs
- Improve Program Quality
- Develop and Sustain an Effective Early Care and Education Workforce
- Measure and Evaluate Progress Toward Improved Early Learning and Development Outcomes

The Council's Comprehensive Advisory Plan establishes a shared vision and a coordinating framework for the early care and education system in Rhode Island and promotes the use of data, outcomes, and indicators of progress to inform decision-making at the state agency, program, and provider levels.

The Rhode Island Children's Cabinet

The Early Learning Council serves to advise and inform the governor and the Rhode Island Children's Cabinet , developing recommendations for policies and strategies to help the state achieve strategic goals. The Council also reviews and provides support to the state and other stakeholders regarding new opportunities (e.g. new federal funding opportunities, partnerships with philanthropy, etc.). The Council convenes work groups as needed to provide more in-depth review and analysis of progress, strategies and opportunities and to develop draft recommendations for the Council to review and finalize. The recommendations are then submitted to the Children's Cabinet for consideration.

Young Children with High Needs

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council's recommendations are made with the goal of improving outcomes for all children, with a particular attention to improving outcomes for Young Children with High Needs. Young Children with High Needs include:

- children from low-income families (under 200% FPL)
- infants and toddlers
- children who have developmental delays or disabilities
- children who have behavioral or mental health challenges
- children who have been victims of child abuse or neglect (including children in foster care)
- children in non-English speaking families
- children who have experienced homelessness
- children in refugee families

Core Activities

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council is responsible for the following activities required as a State Advisory Council for Early Care and Education under the 2007 federal Head Start Reauthorization Act:

- Conduct periodic statewide needs assessments concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State
- Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs
- Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations
- Develop recommendations regarding the establishment, implementation and use of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State
- Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State
- Assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program
- Make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.
- Meet periodically to review any implementation of the recommendations and any changes in State and local needs

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ADVISORY PLAN & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council's first strategic plan was adopted in December 2012 and included many of the state's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant (2012-2015) targets and strategies as well as priorities identified by the Council's subcommittees. Rhode Island has a long history of collaborative planning and reform in the early childhood sector. Its public and private sector leaders have a proud tradition of working together to develop strategic priorities and accomplish important goals, including the **Starting Right** child care system plan, the **Successful Start** early childhood systems planning initiative, the **BrightStars** Quality Rating and Improvement System Steering Committee, the **State Pre-K** Exploration and Design Committees, the **Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge** initiative, and the **Infant and Toddler Policy Priorities** initiative among other efforts.

In 2015, Rhode Island was selected to receive technical assistance from the National Governor's Association to identify major policy priorities **to support the learning and development of children birth through age 8**. The Governor identified a Leadership Team, acting as an *ad hoc* committee of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, to guide the effort to update the Council's strategic plan.

The leadership team developed the following guiding principles to inform the work:

- **Comprehensive, holistic and inclusive of children from birth through age 8.** School readiness and continued success requires attention to children's early learning and development across all developmental domains, from birth through third grade. A seamless, comprehensive and coordinated 0-8 Early Care and Education system should be part of a continuum of high-quality education and supports, from cradle to college and/or career. It should include home visiting, Early Head Start, Head Start, State Pre-K, Early Intervention, Preschool Special Education, child care, and K-3; and include critical infrastructure components – licensing, BrightStars, professional development, higher education, developmental screening, etc.

- **Coordinated, aligned, and outcome-focused across agencies.** An intentional focus is needed to improve coordination between Birth-K and K-3 programs and policies, and enhancing linkages between Early Care and Education and health and family support programs and policies to create a seamless 0 – 8 early childhood system. Elements include learning standards, assessment systems, family engagement strategies, data systems, transition strategies, and strategies to promote workforce effectiveness. Collaborative interagency governance is critical to improving coordination, maximizing resources, eliminating gaps and duplication, ensuring accountability and achieving outcomes.

- **Focused on expanding access *and* increasing quality**– Improving school readiness outcomes requires ensuring access to high quality early childhood programs that promote learning and development. Sustaining school success outcomes requires ensuring that all children have access to high quality early education programs through third grade.

- **Universal *and* targeted, with a focus on equity and diversity.** School readiness of all children is a priority, but some children (and their families) need additional support to buffer against risk and overcome barriers. Particular attention is needed to meeting the unique needs of, and ensuring equitable outcomes for, children in low-income families and communities, children who are dual language learners (primarily because most live in poverty), and those who have high needs due to disabilities, developmental challenges, homelessness or who are involved in the child welfare system.

- **Inclusive of multi-generation strategies.** Early Care and Education approaches are uniquely suited to include strategies that support better workforce outcomes for low-income adults (parents), while improving high-quality care and learning opportunities for their children

Setting Targets for 2020

The Early Learning Council has consistently used data to measure progress toward goals. The 2012 Strategic Plan included specific target goals for 2015 or 2016 (e.g. by 2016, X% of programs would meet high-quality standards). Some of these targets aligned with performance goals incorporated in the state's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. The new Comprehensive Advisory Plan updates the targets with goals for 2020 based on what the Council believes are ambitious yet achievable goals.

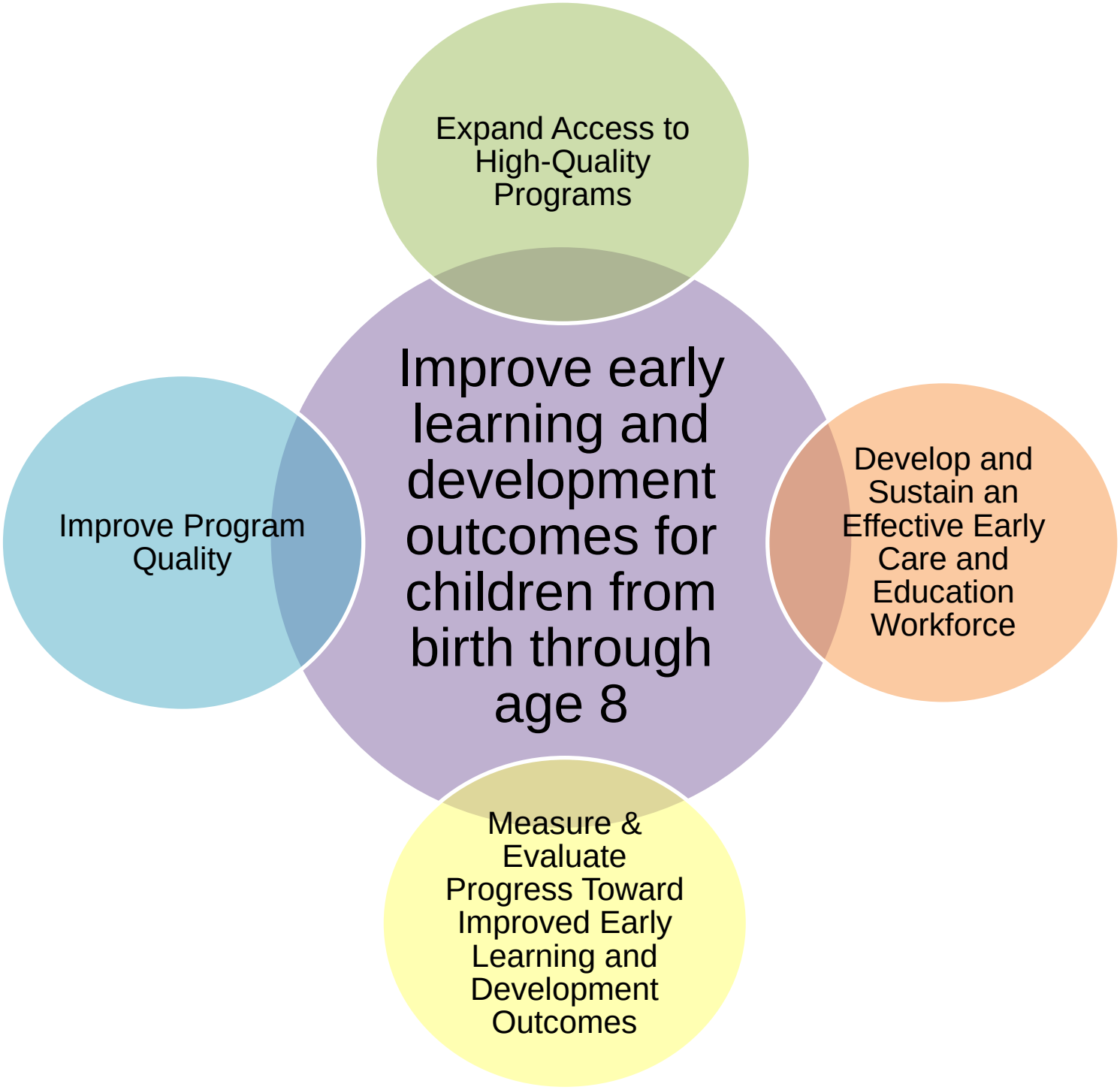
Additional Areas for Action

Through the planning work with NGA, the Early Learning Council identified two additional areas for action in addition to the detailed recommendations in this Comprehensive Advisory Plan. The Rhode Island Children's Cabinet has already begun to take action in these areas:

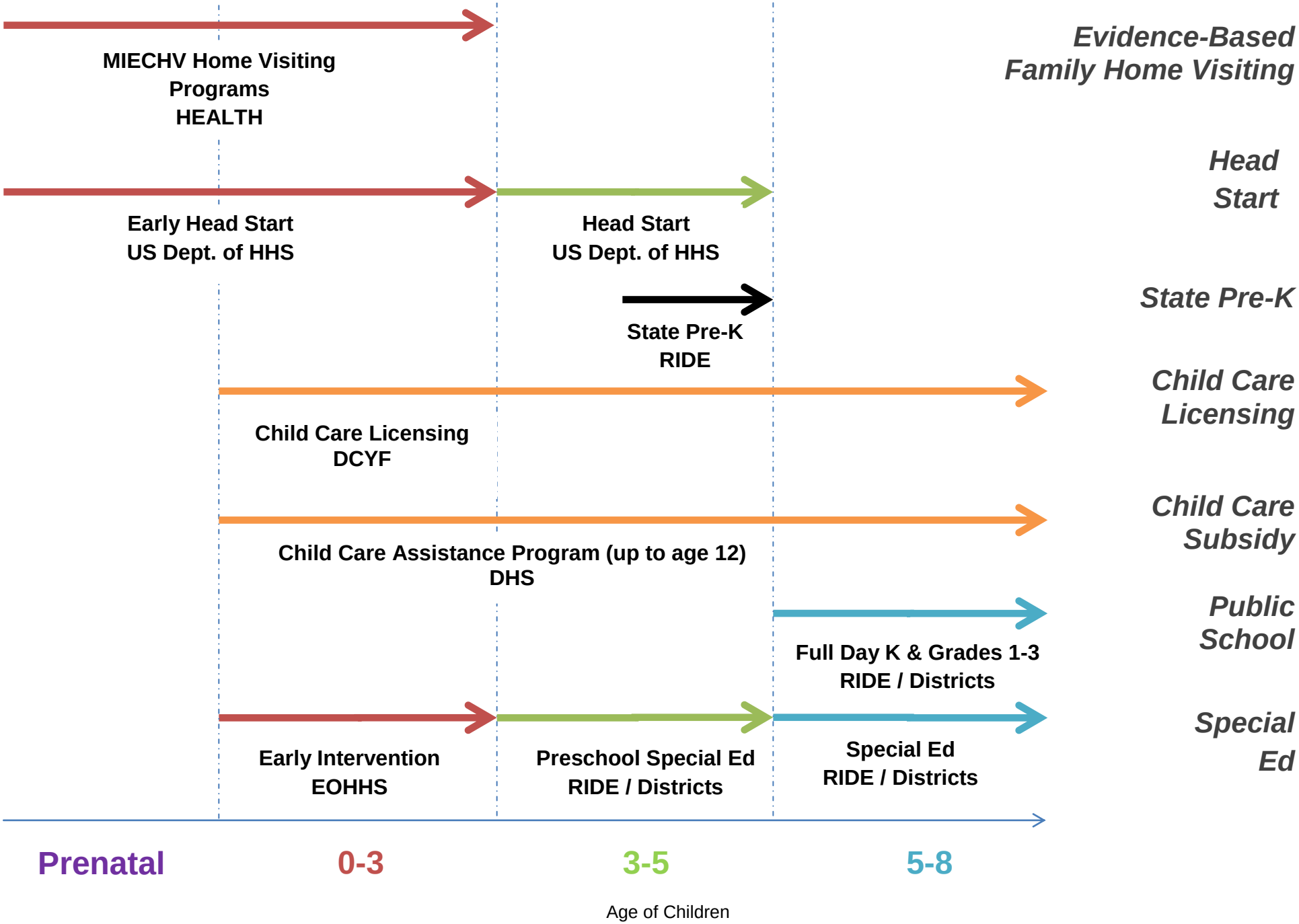
- **Provide coordinated and strong leadership and governance for Early Care and Education (Birth through age 8) across state agencies:** Promote informed, collaborative, and coordinated decision-making to maximize impact and promote continuous improvement.

- **Improve the health and well-being of families with young children as the foundation for improved learning and development outcomes:** Adopt a holistic approach to family support that promotes child development, supports parents in their dual roles as parents and wage earners, and considers the well-being of the family as a whole including: economic security, safety, health, and mental health.

RHODE ISLAND EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS



RHODE ISLAND'S EARLY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM



RI EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Goal: *Improve early learning and development outcomes for children birth through age 8 so that all children can read on grade level by the end of third grade.**

A. Expand Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Development Programs

Continue to expand State Pre-K and Head Start to serve more low-income children statewide	RIDE/DHS	In progress
Implement a permanent cliff effect prevention policy for the Child Care Assistance Program	DHS	In progress
Implement universal access to full-day kindergarten	RIDE	Complete
Increase and maintain enrollment in evidence-based home visiting programs	DOH	In progress
Improve DCYF referrals and follow-up for Early Intervention services for maltreated children < age 3	DCYF/EOHHS/DOH	In progress
Increase enrollment of maltreated children in high-quality early learning programs	DCYF with other agencies	In progress

B. Improve Early Learning Program Quality

Develop and use consistent measurement protocols for monitoring licensing compliance and post licensing inspection reports on web	DCYF	In progress
Implement tiered reimbursement for the Child Care Assistance Program to expand access to high-quality child care programs	DHS	Developing
Continue to increase BrightStars participation and provide quality improvement supports to early learning programs and schools	DHS/RIDE	In progress

C. Develop and Sustain an Effective Early Care and Education Workforce

Promote participation in the workforce registry	DHS/DCYF	In progress
Support early learning workforce access to GEDs, higher education coursework, and college degrees	DHS/OPC	In progress
Provide high-quality professional development for early educators and program leaders working with children from birth through age 8	DHS/RIDE	In progress
Explore and develop wage enhancement strategies to incentivize advancement on career pathways and to improve recruitment and retention of effective early educators	DHS/DLT	Developing

D. Measure & Evaluate Progress Toward Improved Early Learning and Development Outcomes

Improve developmental screening rates to ensure all children with developmental delays and disabilities are identified and receive special education services from birth through K entry	DOH/EOHHS/RIDE	In progress
Implement the Kindergarten Entry Profile statewide to understand individual children's skills and knowledge	RIDE	Developing
Track progress toward improved outcomes in third grade literacy and numeracy	RIDE	In progress

*Priority focus populations are Young Children with High Needs:

- children from low-income families (under 200% FPL)
- infants and toddlers
- children who have developmental delays or disabilities
- children who have behavioral or mental health challenges
- children who have been victims of child abuse or neglect (including children in foster care)
- children in non-English speaking families
- children who have experienced homelessness
- children in refugee families

GOALS, TARGETS & RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Expand Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Development Programs

Goal: Increase participation in high-quality early learning programs for children birth through age 8, particularly children with high-needs

Child Care Assistance Program Enrollment (birth through age 12)

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
7,708 (2011)	**9,684 (2015)**	**10,000**	**14,000**

Recommended Strategies:

- Make the "Exit bill," cliff-effect prevention policy permanent
- Implement tiered reimbursement so more programs will be serve CCAP children with high quality care
- Adopt higher reimbursement rates for infant slots
- Promote use of high-quality early learning programs (including licensed care as the foundation of quality)
- Increase/restore eligibility to 225% of FPL
- Remove or narrow the child support enforcement and asset tests currently required for eligibility since they are not federally required and create added paperwork
- Officially de-link the hours of employment from the hours a child can be in childcare so families have more flexibility and can potentially access higher quality programs
- Reduce/eliminate the required minimum of 20 hours of work before a family can access childcare assistance
- Allow more people participating in higher education and workforce training programs to receive childcare assistance

Early Head Start Enrollment

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
519 (2011)	**590 (2015)**	**800**	**800**

Head Start Enrollment

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
2,342 (130 state funded) (2011)	**2,233 (130 state funded) (2015)**	**2,972**	**2,972** (400 state-funded)

Recommended Strategies

- Restore state funded Head Start slots
- Improved messaging and communication:

- Head Start is a type of preschool and works together with the state funded Pre-K program, to serve 4 year olds
- Showcase how Head Start works with vulnerable populations and clarify those services
- Head Start and the state Pre-K program both serve the same broad population. Head Start focuses exclusively on lowest income/most vulnerable population

- Advocate for increased federal money for expansion
- Learn from the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and potentially expand the partnership if we can show Congress that the program is successful and has a meaningful impact on vulnerable children
- Connect Early Head Start to home visiting programs by establishing cross referrals and sharing resources

State Pre-K Enrollment

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
108 (2011)	**594 (2015)**	**504**	**1,080**

Recommended Strategies

- Continue to implement State-Pre K expansion plan as a categorical program within the state's education funding formula
- Implement the federal Preschool Expansion Grant to reach target of 1,080 children enrolled by 2017-2018
- Complete program evaluation to show improved child outcomes based on program participation
- Communication and messaging with state decision makers about the importance of the state Pre-K program
- Coordinate and use joint communication efforts to recruit and enroll children in both Head Start and state Pre-K programs.
- Engage in federal advocacy to continue funding for state Pre-K programs
- Build capacity for expanded programs (community and district leadership, overall program quality, qualified teaching staff, building facilities)
- Ensure that RIDE's statewide assessment of public school facilities include specific attention to the availability and need for Pre-K classrooms in public schools within the diverse delivery system expansion plan (public schools and community-based programs). Focused attention should be paid to the high-poverty communities identified for Pre-K expansion

Early Intervention

Referrals of Maltreated Children from DCYF

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
65% (2011)	**63% (2015)**	**100% (2016)**	**100% (2020)**

Early Intervention Status Updates of Maltreated Children Referred by DCYF or First Connections

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended

			2020 Target
N/A	**N/A**	**N/A**	**100% (2020)**

Recommended Strategies

- Develop communication protocols with DCYF about EI participation in evaluation and services, including formalizing the feedback loop.
- Review and update protocols to ensure biological and/or foster parent consent is not a barrier for participation in evaluation or services.
- Develop clear messages and marketing materials that emphasize the value of EI as a child development intervention serving many different families across the state (not a DCYF program)

Preschool Special Education

Enrollment in Preschool Special Education (% of population)

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A	**7% (2015)** with 6% in the core cities and 8% in remainder of state	**N/A**	**11% (2020)** with 12% in the core cities and 9% in remainder of state

Providing Special Education Services in Inclusive Early Care and Education Settings

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
52% (2011)	**47% (2015)**	**85%**	**75%**

Recommended Strategies

- Increase developmental screenings to reach all children ages 3 to 5 and ensure children receive appropriate referrals to services
- Improve messaging and communication around access to and value of participation in high quality early childhood education programs along with supportive special education services
- Increased access to high-quality early childhood education programs with embedded special education supports

Full-Day Kindergarten Enrollment

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
64% (2011)	**88% (2015)**	**100%**	**N/A**

Note: State law now requires all school districts to offer full-day kindergarten by August 2016 so we anticipate meeting this target on time. As of September 2015, there are four districts remaining that need to implement universal full-day kindergarten: Coventry, Cranston, East Greenwich, and Warwick

Evidence-Based Family Home Visiting

Enrollment in Evidence-Based Family Home Visiting

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
83 (2011)	**823 (2015)**	**N/A**	**1,600**

Recommended Strategies

- Implement MIECHV grant to expand access to evidence-based home visiting programs. The RI Department of Health has been awarded grant funding to expand services to reach 1,600 families per year.
- Advocate for continued federal MIECHV funding
- Promote cross department/agency use of blended funding (DCYF, DHS, and Health) and coordination of resources to reach vulnerable families
- Increase public awareness/marketing for home visiting. Continue family recruitment campaign, “Love that Baby”
- Expand outreach to obstetricians in order to target expecting families and get them enrolled during prenatal visits
- Improve retention of families
- Extend home visiting to age 4 so more children can transition right into a high quality early childhood education program (Pre-K or Head Start)

Chronic Absence Kindergarten-Grade 3

Goal: Reduce Chronic Absence for public school students in K-3

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
12% (2010-2011)	**14% (2014-2015)**	**N/A**	**≤ 10%**

Recommended Strategies

- Continue to publicly report early chronic absence data statewide and for each school district
- Identify reasons for K-3 chronic absence at district and school levels and develop and implement strategies to address reasons.
- Engage families and reach out early to understand and address chronic attendance problems
- Implement customized strategies at school and district level to reduce chronic absence. See strategies at www.attendanceworks.org including transportation/safe walking routes, breakfast in the classroom, improved health practices in schools, provide more engaging after school programs and recess

Consistent Participation in Early Learning Programs (birth through 5)

GOAL: Improve participation/retention rates in high-quality early learning programs

Recommended Strategies

- Use data systems to monitor attendance and participation rates (e.g. no shows) in various early learning programs (home visiting, Early Intervention, preschool special education, Early Head Start/Head Start, child care, and State Pre-K).
- Develop and implement strategies within each early childhood system to improve attendance and participation rates, particularly for Children with High Needs.
- Clarify CCAP policy to ensure children can attend child care programs during hours/days when their parent may not be at work.

Cross-Sector Campaign to Expand Access and Enrollment in High-Quality Early Learning Programs

GOAL: Develop partnerships to implement a broad, large scale public awareness campaign to inform families with young children about the early learning resources available and the importance of high-quality early childhood education and family support services. Include strategies to support early learning and development at home. Campaign can also educate/target elected officials and citizens about importance of investing to support expanded access to high-quality early learning and development programs

Recommended Strategies:

- Build on the United Way of Rhode Island/Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's Campaign for Grade Level Reading (part of the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading)

Targeted Strategies to Improve Access for High Needs Populations

Maltreated Children 0-8

GOAL: Expand access to high-quality early learning programs for children who have been maltreated (including those in foster care)

Recommended Strategies

- Create a Comprehensive Education, Learning, and Development Plan for all children birth through age 8 that specifies the high-quality early learning program(s) in which that child is or should be enrolled, including:
    - Early Head Start/Head Start
    - Rhode Island State Pre-K
    - CCAP (high quality)
    - EI
    - Home Visiting
    - Public School
    - Special education PK-Grade 3
- Ensure regular and timely developmental screenings and appropriate referrals for interventions for all maltreated children 0-5.
- Ensure biological/foster parental consent for evaluation, treatment or services is not a barrier for children in foster care accessing needed early care and education services.
- Establish stable categorical eligibility to high-quality programs for CCAP children as they transition from biological families to foster families and back again.

- Maintain access to Head Start across different home settings.
- Change state Pre-K policy to allow high needs children to be prioritized for enrollment, including maltreated/foster children and homeless children.
- Work with the Family Court to promote children's participation in high-quality early learning programs.

Homeless Children

GOAL: Improve access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children who have experienced homelessness

Recommended Strategies

- Use data systems to understand needs of homeless children and families and facilitate enrollment in high-quality early learning and development programs
- Establish categorical 12-month eligibility to CCAP for homeless children and facilitate enrollment in high-quality child care programs
- Ensure homeless and domestic violence shelters (and others who work with homeless families) are aware of existing categorical eligibility for Head Start and provide pathways to facilitate enrollment.
- Improve affordably housing options and housing stability for families with young children (Children's Cabinet)

Children in non-English speaking families

GOAL: Improve access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children from non-English speaking families

Recommended Strategies:

- Use data systems to understand children from non-English speaking families and that population's access to high quality ECE programs
- Develop outreach materials in Spanish and increase outreach to non-English speaking families to let them know about opportunities to enroll in high-quality programs to support children's learning and development.
- Increase the number of bilingual and native Spanish speaking ECE teachers
- Expand the availability of dual language programs (English/Spanish) for children in the core cities.

Children with Developmental Delays & Disabilities

GOAL: Improve access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children who have a developmental delay, disability, or challenging behaviors.

Recommended Strategies:

- Use data systems to identify which early learning and development programs and the quality of programs where children with IFSP's/IEP's are enrolled.
- Identify barriers and resources available to early learning programs that need support to serve children with special needs and challenging behavior.
- Review and make any needed improvements to the Medicaid Kids Connect program as a support for programs serving children with special needs
- Create a system connecting EI, Preschool Special Education, Kids Connect and the mental health consultation program to ensure that children with special needs have the necessary services and supports to successfully participate in high quality early learning and development programs.

Improve Early Learning and Development Program Quality for Children Birth through 8

GOAL: Improve the quality of early learning programs, particularly those serving children with high needs.

Child Care Licensing

GOAL: Ensure child care licensing systems in Rhode Island enforce health and safety requirements and provide a consistent and stable foundation for program quality improvement. By November 2017, completed licensing inspection reports will be posted on a website for public review (required by new CCDBG regulations)

Recommended Strategies

- Keep licensing regulations up to date (review and update every 3 years).
- Improve the effectiveness and consistency of licensing by developing transparent measurement protocols, supporting the licensing unit to enforce those protocols consistently, and collecting data on licensing compliance to inform program quality improvement strategies. The transparent protocols should be shared with programs so they can understand how compliance is measured and can self-assess to see if they are in compliance in preparation for licensing visits.
- The Council requests the child care licensing office provide updates to the Council and gather input about the website, including examples of inspection reports that will be posted.
- Use data systems to monitor compliance history for child care and early learning programs
- Consider fines/negative consequences for noncompliance with important licensing regulations. Programs with several years of compliance could have reduced licensing fees.
- Implement differential monitoring with more visits to lower quality programs with a negative compliance history.
- Review licensing infrastructure and governance.
- Set targets for the number of inspections per year, differentiated by history and quality. Use national best practices to determine the targets.

BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System

GOAL: Maximize participation in BrightStars and increase the percentage of programs who achieve high-quality ratings (Star 4 and Star 5)

Participation

Program Type	Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
Early Learning Centers	**12% (2011)**	**82% (2016)**	**100%**	**100%**
Family Child Care	**12% (2011)**	**87% (2016)**	**100%**	**100%**
Public Schools Serving Preschoolers	**N/A**	**60% (2016)**	**100%**	**100%**
K-3 School-Age Child Care Programs	**2% (2011)**	**87% (2016)**	**N/A**	**100%**

% With High-Quality Rating (4 or 5 stars)

Program Type	Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
Early Learning Centers	**7% (2011)**	**17% (2016)**	**30%**	**30%**
Family Child Care	**<1% (2011)**	**2% (2016)**	**8%**	**8%**
Public Schools Serving Preschoolers	**N/A**	**13% (2016)**	**100%**	**50%**
K-3 School-Age Child Care Programs	**N/A**	**9% (2016)**	**N/A**	**30%**

% Children with High Needs in High-Quality Programs (4 or 5 Stars)

Program Type	Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
CCAP Children	**3% (2011)**	**10% (2016)**	**30%**	**30%**
Head Start Children	**20% (2011)**	**61% (2016)**	**100%**	**100%**
Children with IEPs in public schools	**N/A**	**12% (2016)**	**100%**	**50%**

Recommended Strategies:

- Implement CCAP tiered reimbursement rates connected to BrightStars levels (starting at Star 2) to support participation and quality improvement for child care programs serving low-income, working families
- Target quality improvement resources to programs serving larger numbers of CCAP kids.
- Identify new resources to support program quality improvement for public schools serving children with developmental delays and disabilities and to support enrollment of children with disabilities in high-quality community-based programs.
- Continue to offer professional development and technical assistance on Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) for all settings and other topics relating to implementing high-quality practices in early learning and out-of-school time programs (e.g. CLASS and RIPQA).
- Continue to invest in supports that are part of the BrightStars rating and encourage quality improvement, such as higher education support and access (TEACH, CCRI, RIC), Program Improvement Grants, Facilities Grants, and RIELDS trainings
- Maintain the CCAP policy requiring participation in BrightStars.
- Continue and expand marketing of BrightStars to the public and featuring BrightStars ratings on the www.exceed.ri.gov program search
- Require BrightStars rating for all programs that access state/federal quality supports (e.g. professional development, etc.).
- Consider changing legislation and/or regulations to require BrightStars participation for licensed programs and public schools serving preschoolers.
- Consider time limits on remaining at 1 star for CCAP programs.

Quality of Public Schools PK-Grade 3

GOAL: Prioritize specific school improvement resources for public schools with PK- Grade 3 classrooms within RIDE's **2020 Vision for Education** with attention to improving social-emotional learning opportunities and supports, family engagement, and dual language instruction

Recommended Strategies:

- Improve PK-Grade 3 school climate. Increase the percentage of students and families who describe their school and their educators as welcoming and culturally respectful.
- Provide more opportunities for PK-Grade 3 students to demonstrate and practice skills related to social and emotional learning.
- Expand the quality and quantity of in-school mental and behavioral-health services for PK-Grade 3 students.

- Provide/expand activities for PK-Grade 3 students that promote healthy cultural identity and rich peer-based experiences.
- Welcome and engage with all PK-Grade 3 families, especially those with diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.
- Double the number of PK-Grade 3 students participating in dual-language programs that focus jointly on English and world language literacy and fluency.
- Ensure that unique needs of PK – Grade 3 population are included in the RIDE facilities-adequacy standards and that the unique needs of PK-Grade 3 children are given full consideration in facility assessment and planning.
- Increase the percentage of students receiving special education services embedded into general PK-Grade 3 classes.

Develop and Sustain an Effective Early Care and Education Workforce

Goal: Develop and sustain an effective early care and education Workforce, particularly for programs serving children with high needs.

Workforce Registry

GOAL: Promote participation of teaching and caregiving staff the workforce registry

Recommended Strategies

- Connect state funding to participation in the Workforce Registry (e.g., all teachers in state funded PreK programs could be required to participate in the Registry).
- Produce and disseminate an annual report on the early learning workforce using data from the Registry and other sources.
- Require participation in the Workforce Registry for individuals participating in federal/state funded professional development or accessing scholarships.
- Use data in the Workforce Registry for licensing applications, renewals, and inspections.
- Use the data in the Workforce Registry for BrightStars applications and renewals.
- Consider requiring participation in the Workforce Registry for licensing and/or for BrightStars to improve and streamline data collection.

Professional Development

GOAL: Increase the % of individuals who complete aligned, high-quality professional development each year

Recommended Strategies:

- Conduct annual assessment of professional development needs and tailor offerings to needs
- Provide sufficient access to professional development in the RI Early Learning and Development Standards to promote understanding and use across all sectors

- Provide sufficient access to professional development in high-priority topics for educators working with children birth through Grade 3 and topics needed to improve BrightStars program quality ratings (e.g., child behavior management strategies, Environment Rating Scales, family engagement, self-assessment, etc.)

- Increase training and supports for early childhood educators and programs so they will have the tools necessary to support children with delays and disabilities and their families within their early childhood programs.
- Connect professional development to higher education credits whenever possible.
- Develop strategies to assess the impact of professional development (e.g. does professional development change practice and improve quality of programs).

Adult Education

GOAL: Provide opportunities for members of the ECE workforce to complete a high school diploma, learn English as a Second Language, and/or build basic literacy and math skills.

Recommended Strategies:

- Provide sufficient access to GED, ESL and Adult Basic Education courses, including learning opportunities linked to early childhood content and context.

Higher Education for Current ECE Workforce

BASELINE DATA (RI Early Learning Workforce Study, 2014):

Staff Type	HS Diploma or Less	Some College –No Degree	AA Degree	BA Degree or higher
Family Child Care Provider	**36%**	**40%**	**10%**	**14%**
Infant/Toddler Teacher in Center	**24%**	**44%**	**17%**	**15%**
Preschool Teacher in Center	**8%**	**27%**	**18%**	**47%**

Note: college coursework/degrees could be in any field

GOAL: Increase the % of teaching staff and family child care providers who meet the education qualifications required in BrightStars (e.g. college credits in ECE and AA or BA degrees with college credits in ECE/related).

Recommended Strategies

- Provide access to higher education coursework and degrees for the incumbent workforce through the CCRI 12-credit program and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood workforce development program. Reward progress toward degree completion with wage enhancements.
- Provide support for after school staff to meet BrightStars higher education requirements.
- Develop and implement wage enhancements to connect improved education levels to improved wages.
- Improve articulation agreements and streamline pathways between AA (at CCRI) and BA (at RIC and URI) so more AA coursework is counted toward BA degrees.

- Improve career pathways for individuals who enter the workforce directly after high school (high school to career to AA) including attention to high school vocational programs in child development and early learning.
- Establish ECE college coursework delivered in Spanish (12 credits).
- Explore the feasibility of offering AA degrees in ECE in Spanish.
- Ensure sufficient college coursework is available in high-priority topics (e.g. infant/toddler development and learning, trauma-informed care, supporting children with disabilities and behavioral/mental health concerns, etc.)

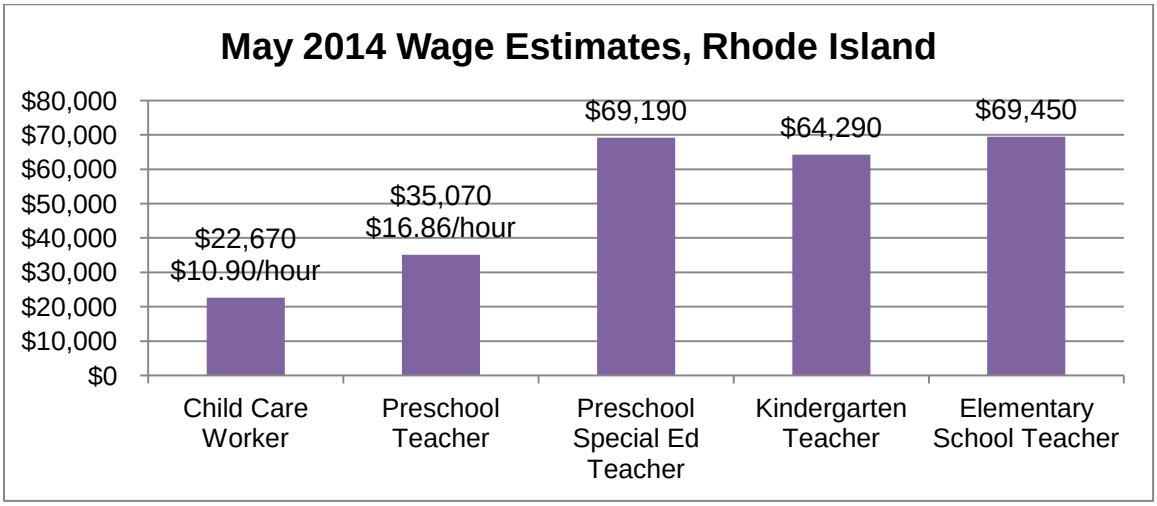
Wages

BASELINE DATA (RI Early Learning Workforce Study, 2014)

Staff Type	HS Diploma or Less	Some College –No Degree	AA Degree	BA Degree or higher
Infant/Toddler Teacher in Center	**$9.70/hour**	**$10.25/hour**	**$10.52/hour**	**$13.00/hour**
Preschool Teacher in Center	**9.00/hour**	**$10.25/hour**	**$12.99/hour**	**$15.25/hour**

Staff Type	< $20K	$20K - $30K	$30K - $40K	> $40K
Family Child Care Provider	**32%**	**28%**	**24%**	**15%**

BASELINE DATA (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014)



GOAL: Improve the wages of teaching and caregiving staff in community-based child care and early learning programs and connect to qualifications. Ensure a minimum living wage for entry level professionals. Close the gap in wages between community-based and public school early childhood education professionals.

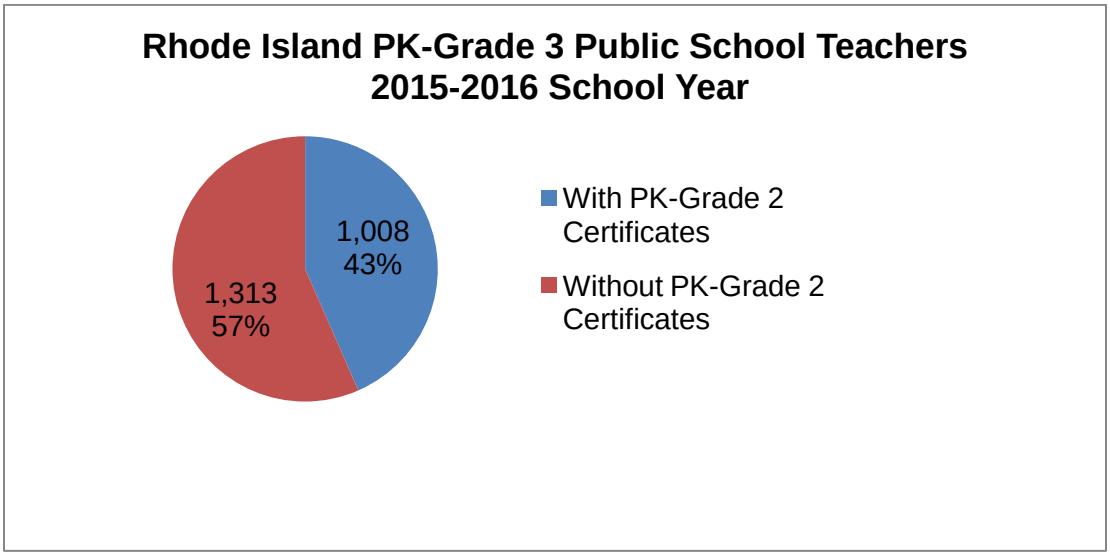
Recommended Strategies

- Continue to support the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood model as a strategy to improve workforce education, compensation, and retention.

- Ensure that CCAP rates and program revenue support adequate and competitive wages for qualified early childhood educators. CCAP rates should increase with quality so that more resources are available for higher quality programs to pay staff competitive wages.
- Explore the feasibility of implementing the Child Care WAGE$ model implemented by five states to provide regular education-based salary supplements to certain high-need/low-wage early educators (e.g. infant/toddler teachers with AA degrees, education coordinators with PK-2 certification, etc).
- Explore the feasibility of implementing a refundable state income tax credit strategy as an education-linked wage supplement for early childhood educators. (Louisiana has implemented as part of a comprehensive tax credit strategy for early care and education programs).

Public School Workforce (PK – Grade 3)

BASELINE DATA



GOAL: Work with districts to increase the % of Grades PK to Grade 3 teachers who hold a PreK-2 certificate

Recommended Strategies

- Explore collaborative relationships and opportunities for public school PK – Grade 3 teachers to take full advantage of current professional development offerings in early childhood.
- Provide incentives to school districts to hire more PK-Grade 2 certified teachers in Grades 1 and 2.
- Explore the feasibility of updating teacher certification standards to require PK-Grade 2 certificates for teachers in grades 1 and 2 (not just PK and K).
- Explore the feasibility of expanding PK – Grade 2 teacher certification to include Grade 3 to align with national best practices.

GOAL: Ensure school administrators responsible for grades PK-3 have training in early childhood development and learning

Recommended Strategies.

- Develop an add-on certificate for existing PK- Grade 3 principal to sit on top of the existing elementary principal certificate. The coursework to meet the certificate requirements would also benefit community-based programs.

- Ensure that early care and education content is integrated into the elementary principal certificate programs for new principals.

Afterschool/Summer Workforce

GOAL: Update the Afterschool Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for professionals working in after school and summer learning programs serving 5 to 12 year olds.

Recommended Strategies:

- Include after school and higher education experts in the planning process

Measure Early Learning and Development Outcomes

GOAL: Measure early learning and child development outcomes across all domains of learning for children birth through age 8.

Developmental Screening

GOAL: Increase the % of children who have completed developmental screenings as recommended.

Completed Screenings for Children Under Age 3

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A (2011)	**27% of high-priority pediatric practices (19% of all pediatric practices) are implementing screening protocol (2015)**	**50% at age 3**	**80% of children screened in participating pediatric practices**

Recommended Strategies

- Maintain and provide additional support to primary care practices.
- Maintain follow-up resources/systems so doctors feel supported in screening.
- Encourage Medicaid to audit for following screening requirements & to continue to reimburse for screenings completed.

Completed Screenings Children Age 3 to 5

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A (2011)	**38% at age 4 35% ages 3-5 (2015)**	**80% at age 4**	**50% ages 3-5***

* Target from RIDE 2020 Vision for Education

Recommended Strategies

- Continue the developmental screening campaign.
- Maintain and provide additional support and professional development to districts re: screening, referral, and follow-up.
- Identify barriers districts face in reaching children and completing screenings.
- Ensure districts screen all children including those in early childhood centers, family child care and those not yet participating in any formal early childhood program.
- Ensure maltreated children ages 3 to 5 receive regular developmental screenings and eligible children have access to preschool special education services.
- Expand the efforts of pediatric practices to promote Child Outreach to all patients ages 3 to 5.
- Ensure coordination and collaboration between Child Outreach and early childhood programs around implementation of screenings and referral.

Kindergarten Entry Profile Implementation

GOAL: Implement a Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) statewide to inform kindergarten teaching and to provide aggregate data to help policymakers focus resources to improve school readiness.

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A (2011)	**4 districts**	**4 districts**	**Statewide**

Recommended Strategies

- Expand resources to address district readiness to implement and use a KEP.
- Include the KEP in RIDE's evaluation framework for school districts.

Social Emotional Competence 0 to 8 (Early Childhood and PK- 3)

GOAL: Improve the social-emotional competence of children birth through age 8

Recommended Strategies

- Establish social/emotional learning standards for children in grades K-3 that are aligned and progress from RIELDS standards for children 0 to K entry (RIDE aligned)
- Expand and improve social/emotional learning opportunities in early learning programs serving for children birth through age 8 (RIDE aligned)
- Expand and improve mental health services available within early learning programs serving children birth through age 8. (RIDE aligned)

- Educate pediatricians about the inter-related concepts of typical social-emotional development and the need for mental health resources and supports for those children who are not developing according to plan.
- Identify more social-emotional and mental health resources for pediatricians in order to expand and improve the mental health services available in pediatric practices serving children from birth through age 8.
- Ensure educator preparation programs for PK-2 and Grade 1-5 teachers and elementary principals/administrators include content on children's social-emotional development and learning

Third Grade Reading Proficiency

GOAL: Improve the % of children who can read proficiently by the end of third grade.

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A (2011)	**37% (2015)**	**N/A**	**47%***

* Target from RIDE 2020 Vision for Education

Recommended Strategies

- Review *Birth to Third Grade State Policies that Support Strong Readers* from the New America Foundation and identify policies that should be updated or implemented in Rhode Island
- Implement strategies identified by the *Campaign for Grade Level Reading* (improve access to high-quality early learning programs, reduce chronic absence, and expand summer learning opportunities)
- Implement strategies identified by the National Governors Association in the *Governor's Guide to Early Literacy*
- Work with United Way's Campaign for Grade Level Reading to build awareness and support for implementation of strategies to improve development of strong language and literacy skills for children from birth through age 8.

Third Grade Math Proficiency

GOAL: Improve the % of children who are reaching math proficiency targets at the end of third grade.

Baseline	Current	2016 Target	Recommended 2020 Target
N/A (2011)	**36% (2015)**	**N/A**	**46%***

* Target from RIDE 2020 Vision for Education

Recommended Strategies:

- Implement strategies identified by the National Governors Association in *Unlocking Young Children's Potential: Governors' Role in Strengthening Early Mathematics Learning*