# *Rhode Island Early Learning Council and Early Learning Council Work Group Meeting*

Wednesday, September 28, 2011, 12:00-2:00 p.m.
CCRI Knight Campus, Room 1130, 400 East Ave., Warwick

## **Agenda**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12:00-12:15 (15 mins) | **Welcome /Meeting Overview** | Deborah Gist/ Elizabeth Burke Bryant |
| 12:15-12:25 (10 mins) | **Public Comment** | Public Participants |
| 12:25-1:55 (90 mins) | **Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant** | Grant Team/Early Council Members and Work Group Members |
| 1:55-2:00 (5 mins) | **Next Steps**<br><br>**Next Meeting:** October 5, 2011 12:00-2:00 | Deborah Gist/ Elizabeth Burke Bryant |

# MEETING AGENDA

| | |
|---|---|
| 12:00-12:015 | Welcome /Meeting Overview |
| 12:15-12:25 | Public Comment |
| 12:25-1:55 | Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant<br><br>•Sept 23rd Community Forum – Key Themes<br>•State Targets and Goals<br>•Rhode Island's State Reform Plan |
| 4:55-5:00 | Next Steps |

# PUBLIC COMMENT

# Rhode Island's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Application
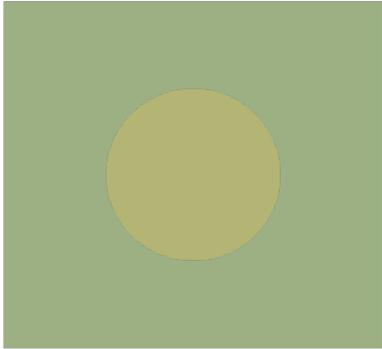
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Discussions with key organizations and groups**
- ❖ DHS Child Care Community Exchange
- ❖ RI Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care
- ❖ RI Head Start Association
- ❖ RI Child Care Directors Association
- ❖ Successful Start Steering Committee
- ❖ Interagency Coordinating Council (Early Intervention)
- ❖ BrightStars Steering Committee
- ❖ Latina Family Child Care Providers Association
- ❖ Preschool IDEA Leadership Network

**Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Community Forums**
- ❖ North Providence Community Forum (9/23)
- ❖ West Warwick Community Forum (9/28)

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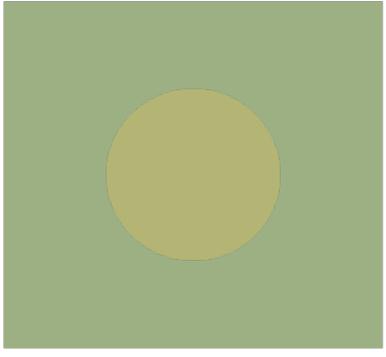
# Sept 23rd Public Forum – Key Themes

❖ Importance of family engagement and the critical role of parents does not come through. How will family engagement be incorporated into application now that C4 is not being addressed.

❖ How to engage families in their children's learning outside of formal programs and increase access to early learning programs. Many children do not have access to any early learning program.

❖ Increase the focus on Children with High Needs. How will the RTT-ELC grant address the needs of and improve outcomes for high need children (English learners, children in foster care, very low income and homeless children, etc).

❖ Increase support for providers to achieve quality standards (particularly support to increase access to higher education)

❖ Tiered reimbursement rates need to be high enough to really enable programs to achieve and maintain quality standards.

❖ Address compensation disparities among early childhood educators.

❖ Programs need support with children's mental health and behavior management issues. Many children being expelled due to behavioral issues.

# STATE GOALS AND TARGETS

❖ The application must articulate:

  ❖ The State's goals for improving program quality statewide over the period of this grant.

  ❖ The State's goals for improving child outcomes statewide over the period of this grant.

  ❖ The State's goals for closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers at kindergarten entry.

# STATE GOALS AND TARGETS (CONT'D)

The state must also provide performance targets for:

❖ Increasing the # and % of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

❖ Increasing the # of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating System

❖ Increasing the # and % of children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the QRIS.

❖ Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from post-secondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

❖ Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

# Rhode Island's State Reform Plan

# REFORM PLAN OVERVIEW

Key Reform Areas:

❖ Improving Program Quality

❖ Improving Child Outcomes

❖ Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

❖ Building an Early Learning Data System

# KEY REFORM STRATEGIES

**Improving Program Quality**

- ❖ Strengthening and realigning BrightStars, RIDE preschool approval and DCYF licensing regulations.
- ❖ Requiring and promoting participation in BrightStars for all state and federally regulated/funded programs.
- ❖ Strengthening program quality measurement and monitoring practices.
- ❖ Promoting consistent access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children with high needs.
- ❖ After alignment/possible revisions, obtain validation of the effectiveness of BrightStars levels.

**Improving Child Outcomes**

- ❖ Expanding and strengthening the RI Early Learning Standards.
- ❖ Supporting use of the RI Early Learning Standards.
- ❖ Establishing and supporting the use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.
- ❖ Establishing and supporting the use of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

**Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies**

- ❖ Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competencies frameworks and career pathways.
- ❖ Supporting the development of workforce knowledge and competencies.

**Building an Early Learning Data System**

- ❖ Developing a shared, comprehensive Early Learning Data System.
- ❖ Supporting use of the data system.

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# HOW DOES THIS PLAN SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS?

**Improving Program Quality**

❖ Aligned, tiered program standards will help programs serving Children with High Needs to understand and work towards achieving higher quality.

❖ Increased supports and incentives for early learning and development programs, particularly for those serving High Needs Children will help families access higher levels of care and will help programs serving Children with High Needs to maintain higher quality levels.

❖ Increased frequency of licensing inspections of family child care homes will particularly benefit Children with High Needs since low-income/disadvantage children are frequently participating in family child care homes.  This is also true of English language learners.

❖ A tiered reimbursement rate system for the Child Care Assistance Program will help families access higher level of care.

❖ Families of Children with High Needs will have the information they need to chose the best program for their children.

# HOW DOES THIS PLAN SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH HIGH NEEDS?

**Improving Child Outcomes**

❖ Supports to Children with High Needs are prioritized in all initiatives focused on increasing developmental screening rates and specifically in providing follow-up to children for social and emotional concerns.

❖ Screening practices and procedures will be appropriate for young English language learners. Investments will be made to train screening teams serving communities with high numbers of Children with High Needs.

❖ Children with High Needs will be better supported if information about what they know and are able to do is robust as possible and if it comes from a variety of perspectives.

❖ Access to shared data leads to better coordinated and more effective services and more seamless transitions for Children with High Needs.

❖ Programs serving Children with High Needs, including IDEA Part C and B and Title I have committed to using Teaching Strategies GOLD.

❖ Communities serving high numbers of Children with High Needs will be prioritized first for professional development opportunities and parent trainings supported by this grant.

❖ By prioritizing the pilot and initial implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment in communities with high numbers of Children with High Needs, RI will be able to obtain information on children's readiness and can begin to take steps to address gaps.

# How Does This Plan Support Children with High Needs?

**Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies**

❖ Communities serving high concentrations of Children with High Needs will be prioritized first for professional development and scholarships, (e.g. TEACH) supported by this grant.

❖ The plan prioritizes the development of core competencies for key sectors of the early care and learning workforce which serve high numbers of Children with High Needs; family child care providers and early childhood special educators.

❖ The completion of these competencies and the alignment initiative which follows will provide a specific framework upon which effective professional development can immediately be aligned resulting in a more prepared and effective workforce serving Children with High Needs.

# How Does This Plan Support Children with High Needs?

**Building an Early Learning Data System**

- ❖ A centralized, shared data system for children's developmental screening information and action from birth to kindergarten entry will be used by pediatricians and early learning programs and will help children access needed services.

- ❖ Access to shared data leads to better coordinated and more effective services and more seamless transitions for Children with High Needs.

- ❖ Data can be used to focus resources to better serve Children with High Needs

# How Does This Plan Help Programs on Their Path to Higher Quality?

**Improving Program Quality**

❖ A tiered reimbursement rate system for the Child Care Assistance Program will help programs serving low-income children maintain higher levels of care.

❖ Programs, particularly those serving Children with High Needs, will receive supports and incentives to continuously improve and achieve and maintain quality benchmarks.

❖ The new standards will provide common benchmarks of program quality for all types of early learning and development programs.

**Improving Child Outcomes**

❖ All early learning and development programs can use Teaching Strategies GOLD to obtain child assessment data that will inform their program and curriculum planning and quality improvement efforts.

# How Does This Plan Help Programs on Their Path to Higher Quality?

**Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies**

❖ The development of a common set of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for all different types of early learning and development programs will:
  ❖ support the development of a system of professional development and higher education aligned to common standards.
  ❖ help teachers make strategic choices about their professional development.
  ❖ assist program administrators to articulate teacher job expectations and design evaluation processes;

❖ Professional Development opportunities on the newly revised Early Learning Standards will be designed to reach all sectors of the early care and learning workforce and will utilize technology to increase participation and access to these opportunities.

❖ Family Child Care Providers will be offered bilingual career advisors and ESL supports.

❖ All information on the career lattice, credentialing and professional development opportunities will be translated into multiple languages.

**Building an Early Learning Data System**
  ❖ Programs will have access to comprehensive data on the children in their program that will inform their program and curriculum planning, instruction, and quality improvement efforts.

# How Does This Plan Engage and Support Families?

❖ A continuum of meaningful, effective family engagement strategies will strengthen family engagement by programs.

❖Supports provided to programs to establish effective family engagement strategies will build the capacity of programs to engage families.

❖Families will have access to parent engagement opportunities which will help them support their children's learning and development at home.

# IMPROVING PROGRAM QUALITY

# Strengthening and Re-aligning the State Tiered Quality Rating System

**Goal 1:** Through a collaborative process, strengthen and re-align BrightStars Program Standards, DCYF licensing standards and RIDE preschool approval standards to develop a more coherent program improvement pathway.  Use BrightStars as the state's unified Quality Rating and Improvement System with linkages to DCYF licensing and RIDE preschool approval.

**Goal 2**:  Ensure that BrightStars standards are clear and measurable and meaningfully differentiate quality, recognizing incremental progress toward national, best practice standards at the top tiers.

**Goal 3:** Re-design and clarify the roles and responsibilities of DCYF, RIDE and BrightStars regarding program quality measurement and monitoring to improve effectiveness and efficiency, ensure alignment, and streamline the process for  participating programs.

# Strengthening and Re-aligning the State Tiered Quality Rating System

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Convene collaborative Program Standards & measurement revision/realignment committee. | X | | | |
| Update licensing standards and improve monitoring systems with support from NARA. | X | | | |
| Revise/re-align BrightStars standards and monitoring systems with support from FPG Child Development Institute. | X | | | |
| Revise/re-align RIDE Preschool approval standards and monitoring systems. | X | | | |

# Requiring and Promoting Participation in the State's QRIS

**Goal:** Promote participation in BrightStars by using regulatory and funding levers

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Build capacity of BrightStars program assessment and improvement systems to include more participating programs. | X | X | X | X |
| Require all DCYF licensed and DHS CCAP funded programs to participate in BrightStars. | | X | X | X |
| Require all RIDE funded early learning programs to participate in BrightStars. | | | X | X |

# Strengthening Program Quality Measurement and Monitoring Practices

**Goal 1:** Review, align and strengthen BrightStars, DCYF licensing and RIDE Preschool Approval program monitoring practices and systems while ensuring monitoring systems are sustainable.

**Goal 2:** Build the capacity of DCYF licensing to inspect licensed family child care homes at least once per year.

**Goal 3:** Provide more program quality and licensing compliance information to Rhode Island families with children enrolled and seeking to enroll in Early Learning and Development Programs.

# Strengthening Program Quality Measurement and Monitoring Practices

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase the frequency of licensing inspection visits so that family child care providers are routinely inspected at least once per year. | | X | X | X |
| Build data and information systems to share licensing compliance information with parents/public via the Internet. | X | | | |
| Share licensing compliance information with parents/public. | | X | X | X |

# Promoting Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

**Goal 1:** Develop and implement a tiered reimbursement rate system for the Child Care Assistance Program with higher rates paid to higher quality programs.

**Goal 2:** Strengthen and expand the resources available to programs to support continuous quality improvement.

# Promoting Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Design and implement tiered child care reimbursement rate system. | X | X | X | X |
| Expand and align technical assistance and training supports to help programs serving Children with High Needs meet quality benchmarks. | X | X | X | X |
| Offer Program Quality Improvement Grants to help programs serving Children with High Needs meet quality benchmarks. | X | X | X | X |
| Expand access to higher education (through T.E.A.C.H.) to help programs serving Children with High Needs meet quality benchmarks. | X | X | X | X |
| Design and implement a wage supplement program to help programs serving Children with High Needs attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. | X | X | X | X |

# Validating the Effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

**Goal:** Work with an independent evaluator to conduct a study of BrightStars to:

- Validate its effectiveness at differentiating the quality of programs, and
- Compare children's learning and development for those enrolled in lower tier programs vs. higher tier programs.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identify evaluator and design study. | | X | | |
| Conduct a study of the re-aligned BrightStars QRIS (September 2014 - June 2015) . | | | X | X |

# Competitive Priority: Include all Early Learning and Development Programs in State Tiered QRIS

**Goal 1:** Expand licensing to include small family child care homes that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee.

**Goal 2:** Require all state-licensed and state-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs in BrightStars (see section B).

# IMPROVING CHILD OUTCOMES

# Expanding and Strengthening the RI Early Learning Standards

**Goal:** Strengthen and expand state-wide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards, including Early Learning and Development Standards for infant/toddlers.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Convene a broad-based Early Learning Standards Advisory Team. | X | | | |
| Engage an expert consultant to identify resources and develop a detailed cross-walk. | X | | | |
| Convene standards development work team to develop Early Learning and Development Standards for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers. | X | | | |
| Seek broad-based community feedback the recommended standards through public forums. | X | | | |

# Expanding and Strengthening the RI Early Learning Standards (cont'd)

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Design, publish and distribute the final standards. | X | | | |
| Convene a Curricula Review Team and review the initial list of nationally recognized curricula in use in the state and develop and post information regarding the aligned curriculum identified. | | X | | |
| Assess Teaching Strategies GOLD alignment with the new Early Learning and Development Standards. | | X | | |
| Develop and implement new professional development and technical assistance opportunities to support the use of the new Early Learning and Development Standards in infant and toddler classrooms. | | X | | |
| Revise existing professional development opportunities to reflect the Early Learning and Development Standards. | | X | | |

# Supporting the Use of RI Early Learning Standards (cont'd)

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop new Fun Family Activity Cards based on the expanded Early Learning and Development standards (in English and Spanish). | | X | | |
| Conduct Fun Family Activity Parent Training statewide for a variety of groups including , but not limited to: Head Start, public schools, child care, Parents as Teachers, public libraries and the Children's Museum. | | | X | |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems

**Goal 1:** Develop and implement a variety of professional development opportunities aligned with Rhode Island's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Frameworks to support improved knowledge and competencies in early childhood assessment for Early Childhood Educators

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop and implement professional development opportunities which address:<br><br>•the different purposes and uses of assessment information and selecting assessment systems<br>•formative child assessment practices<br>•using assessment data to improve instruction at the classroom and program level<br>•interpreting and understanding classroom quality measures and using that information to improve classroom quality.<br>•understanding and using standardized assessment data | X | X | X | X |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems (Cont'd)

**Goal 2:** Support the use of common, developmentally appropriate, valid and reliable screening instruments statewide.

**Goal 3:** Increase the numbers of children ages birth through age five who are regularly screened.

**Goal 4:** Increase access to follow-up services in urban communities for children identified with social and emotional concerns.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Modify KIDSNET to track developmental screening data. Develop mechanisms to use the database to increase the numbers of children birth-5 years old who receive developmental screening. | X | | | |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems (Cont'd)

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expand the capacity of primary care providers to increase developmental screening rates and to include social and emotional screenings using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social and Emotional. | X | X | X | X |
| Expand Project LAUNCH to Child Outreach programs and to pediatricians in the core urban communities to ensure families receive follow up for any identified social and emotional concerns by those communities. | | X | X | X |
| Train regional ELL screening teams to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate Child Outreach screening to young English Learners. | X | X | X | X |
| Create a public awareness campaign regarding the importance of regular developmental screening for children between birth-5 years old and how to access screening. | | X | X | X |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems (Cont'd)

**Goal 5:** Use Teaching Strategies GOLD in all programs receiving state or federal education funding (IDEA Part C and B, State Pre-Kindergarten, Title I).

**Goal 6:** Support and incentivize the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD for child care and Head Start at the upper levels of BrightStars for all programs.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incentivize the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD for Head Start and private early Learning and Development programs by incorporating them under the state license and affording them the state rate. | X | X | X | X |
| Revise state policy to require Title I funded programs to use Teaching Strategies GOLD. | | X | | |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems (Cont'd)

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop and implement a coordinated set of professional development opportunities which address using Teaching Strategies GOLD system and achieving reliability status. | | X | X | X |
| Develop new professional development and technical assistance opportunities to support the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD by IDEA Part C (Early Intervention). | X | X | X | X |
| Identify and invest in technological supports to facilitate seamless, effective child assessment data entry that allows teachers to collect and enter child observation data without redundancy of effort. | | X | X | X |
| Incorporate more focused classroom assessment tools, into professional development system and program quality improvement supports. | | | X | |

# Establishing and Supporting the Use of a Statewide Kindergarten Assessment System

**Goal:** Develop and implement a common, state-wide Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identify a core Kindergarten Assessment planning team to review current research and national trends to identify key assessment issues to be considered. | | X | | |
| Gather stakeholder information using forums, surveys and focus groups. | | X | | |
| Develop policies and procedures to specify exactly how the assessment will be conducted and how the information will be collected and used. | | | X | |
| Develop supports for Kindergarten teachers and administrators. | | | X | |

# Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

# Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks and Career Pathways

**Goal:** Expand Rhode Island's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of aligned credentials.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop core competencies for family child care and create an addendum to Teacher competencies for special educators and early intervention professionals. | X | | | |
| Develop competencies for program administrators and education coordinators. | | X | | |
| Develop competencies for professional development providers and higher education. | | | X | |
| Review existing teacher preparation program curriculum against Core Competencies Frameworks. | | X | | |
| Host a Higher Education Alignment Summit. | | | X | |

# Supporting the Development of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

**Goal 1:** Increase the overall quality of Professional Development Offerings and ensure alignment with recognized standards.

**Goal 2:** Expand Access to effective Professional Development opportunities and encourage the use of multiple delivery methods.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Review current PD offerings to ensure alignment with Recognized Standards. | X | X | | |
| Design & Implement a Trainer Approval Process. | | | X | X |
| Expand the current offerings of "Approved PD". | | X | X | X |
| Create new PD Opportunities to address gaps in system and areas identified as "high need" e.g. infant/toddler and family child care. | X | X | X | X |
| Ensure Access for educators who do not speak English. | | X | X | X |

# Supporting the Development of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

**Goal 3:** Provide a continuum of supports that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway and that are designed to increase retention.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Promote the Resource Center as Centralized location for PD information. | X | X | | |
| Research & implement policies and financial incentives  (e.g. wage supplements for highly qualified early childhood educators.) | X | X | X | X |
| Expand TEACH Early Childhood RI. | X | X | X | X |
| Explore alternate pathways for earning college credit / teacher certification. | | X | X | X |

# Supporting the Development of Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

**Goal 4:** Collect and publicly report aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention.

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conduct professional workforce study. | X | | | |
| Establish unique identifier for educators that can be tied to classrooms and programs. | | X | | |
| Create and implement Workforce Registry as part Longitudinal Data System. | | X | X | X |

# Data System Development

# Developing a Shared, Comprehensive Early Learning Data System/ Supporting Use of the Data System

**Goal 1:** Expand the Rhode Island Department of Education's State Longitudinal Data System (the RIDE Data Warehouse) and build a strong link to the Rhode Island Department of Health's KIDSNET database to track information on 1) young children's participation and attendance in early learning programs, 2) young children's learning and development, 3) early learning programs and classrooms, and 4) the early learning workforce.

**Goal 2:** Expand the Rhode Island Department of Health's KIDSNET database to track information on children's developmental screening and follow-up action.

**Goal 3:** Build infrastructure to track data on young children's development and learning from birth to K entry, including development and implementation of formative child assessment systems during the early childhood years and at entry to kindergarten (see section C2 and E1 of this application).

**Goal 4:** Ensure shared access and use of the Early Learning Data System across state departments, by early learning intermediary organizations, and by early learning programs.

# Developing a Shared, Comprehensive Early Learning Data System/ Supporting Use of the Data System

| Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Establish cross-department public-private planning/ oversight body for the Early Learning Data System. | X | X | X | X |
| Design data system to include all Essential Data Elements, build on the SLDS infrastructure and KIDSNET and ensure shared access. | X | X | | |
| Develop and implement training, technical support and incentives to support data entry/data transfers by early learning programs and state administrators. | | | X | X |
| Roll-out data system in phases. | | | X | X |

# NEXT STEPS

❖ **Next Community Input Forum:**

  ○ Wednesday, September 28, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at West Warwick High School

❖ **Next ELC Meeting:**

  ○ Wednesday, October 5, 2011 3:00-5:00 at the United Way of Rhode Island, large conference room.

# *Rhode Island Early Learning Council and Early Learning Council Work Group Meeting*

Wednesday, September, 28, 2011, 12:00-2:00 p.m.
Community College of Rhode Island, Knight Campus, Room 1130

**Council & Work Group Members In Attendance:** co-chairs Elizabeth Burke Bryant and Deborah Gist Brenda Almeida, Chris Amirault, Leanne Barrett, Karen Beese, Blythe Berger, Tammy Camillo, Director Janice DeFrances,  Rhonda Farrell, Maryann Finamore-Allmark, Ruth Gullucci, Leslie Gell, Pamela High, Denise Jenkins,  Kristin Lehoullier, Khadija Lewis Khan, Susan Lusi, Mindy Mertz, Joseph Morra, Michele Palermo, Sandra Powell, Larry Pucciarelli, Barbara Schermack, Susan Warford

**Additional Attendees:** Lynda Dickinson, Indira Prado, Carol Patnaude, Joyce Ruppell, Lisa LaDew, Andrea Riquetti-Salvatore, Mary Varr, Catherine Walsh, Tammy Russo, Deborah Masland, Sherilyn Brown and Sue Libutti.

## *Welcome/Meeting Overview*

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council and Workgroup Joint meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Co-chairs Elizabeth Burke Bryant and Deborah Gist.

## *Public Comment*

None

## *Presentation and Discussion: Rhode Island's Application for  Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge – Key Themes from the September 23rd Community Forum:*

Elizabeth and Deborah thanked everyone for their participation in the community forums and emphasized that the success of the application will depend on the input and buy-in of the community. Elizabeth shared that members of the core grant team have been able to attend meetings of various community organizations to talk about the state's application response and ask for input.  Organizations that they have visited include but are not limited to: DHS Child Care Community Exchange, RI Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care, RI Head Start Directors Association, RI Child Care Directors Association, Successful Start Steering Committee, Interagency Coordinating Council, BrightStars Steering Committee, Latina Family Child Care Providers Association (Ready to Learn Providence), Preschool IDEA Leadership Network.

She presented the key themes that were raised during the first publicforum (see meeting slides for more detail) and asked if anyone had anything to add.   There were no questions or comments.

## *Presentation and Discussion: Rhode Island's Application for  Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge – State Goals and Targets:*

Elizabeth shared with the Early Learning Council and Work Group members the application requirements for goals and targets.  She emphasized that the goals need to be ambitious yet achievable

and said that it is important that Rhode Island push itself but that we do not go beyond what is doable in the next four years. There were no questions or comments.


### *Presentation and Discussion: Rhode Island's Application for Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge – Reform Strategies:*

Deborah gave an overview of the reform plan including the key reform areas reform strategies (see meeting slides for more detail) and asked if anyone had any questions.

Several discussion points and questions were raised on the presentation:

- This application process will accelerate the work regardless of whether Rhode Island is awarded the funds. While some things are dependent on funding, many of the strategies that are included in the response are not dependent on funding. The alignment of the standards was cited as an example of work that could go forward with or without the grant funding.

- The "6th star" on the umbrella slide has caused concern among programs. Some programs don't feel that a 6th star is achievable for many programs. For example, some programs will not be able to achieve RIDE Approval due to costly facilities issues.

- Two important things to address as a part of developing a quality continuum are: 1) eliminate the multiple points of entry into the quality framework, and 2) foster a sense of support and respect for all the programs across the quality spectrum and target resources strategically to those programs that are serving high needs children.

- Can the Head Start Performance Standards be considered as a part of the alignment process?

Elizabeth and Deborah explained that the goal was to develop a more coherent, tiered quality system that exists on a single continuum so that programs are entering through a common door and experiencing less duplication of effort. They also explained that the application response will state that we want to develop an aligned continuum but it will not specify exactly what the final product will be. Elizabeth also noted that it would make sense to include the Head Start Performance Standards as a resource.

Elizabeth, Karen, Leanne and Michele gave an overview of how the reform plan will: 1) support children with high needs, 2) support programs on their path to quality and 3) engage and support families and asked if anyone had any questions.

Several discussion points and questions were raised on the presentation:

- Can we use assessment information to ensure that our professional development is customized to the needs of children in the community?
- Do parents have input into Teaching Strategies GOLD?
- Can professional development opportunities be offered to parents that are designed and facilitated by experts who work with children who have high needs?

- It might make sense to develop a partnership with established programs like "Reach Out and Read" as a part of the response to reach Children with High Needs who are not enrolled in an early learning program.  These programs are operating already, already have an infrastructure and can act as a filter to ensure that high needs families aren't missed.  And they are currently losing funding.
- Does the child assessment piece take a holistic approach?  It is important that it focuses on more than just academics.
- We need to explicitly state in the outcomes that when we strengthen the family it has a ripple effect - it positively affects other children in the family.

Karen explained that it was a part of the plan to use assessment data to customize professional development to the children in the community.  Michele explained that Teaching Strategies GOLD offers a parent portal where parents can look at their children's portfolio and enter information and she clarified that Teaching Strategies GOLD is a group-based assessment tool that is focused on early learning and development programs.   Cathie Walsh noted that Teaching Strategies GOLD would provide one strand of key information that would be available through the Early Learning Data System.  Michele noted that in the response we have a plan to offer training opportunities for parents that are aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards.  Deborah noted that we have to be strategic about how our plan will be sustained.  We cannot include items that we cannot sustain within our current structure.   Elizabeth, Ruth and Leanne clarified that Teaching Strategies GOLD is a broad-based tool that looks at a range of functional outcomes.

Deborah and Elizabeth asked Leanne, Karen and Michele to present the key reform strategies being included in the response.

Karen and Leanne presented the strategies for "Improving Program Quality".
(see meeting slides for more detail).

Several discussion points and questions were raised on the presentation:

- We need to do a program survey to identify the impediments for programs to raising their level of quality.  There are issues with the current standards that are real barriers.
- The committee that is tasked with aligning the program standards needs to have some sound governance and governing principles to make sure that the alignment work is successful.
- It is important that we specifically mention that we want to align various observational tools that we are already using as a part of the alignment process.  This will raise up that we actually have these tools in place where other states do not.
- How are we supporting programs that are trying to build quality?  Perhaps the tiered reimbursements can begin the first year?
- Will the tiered reimbursement be linked to tiers or improvement?  There was a recommendation that there be an incentive for going from a 0 to 1 or a 2 or a 3.
- What is an upper level of quality?

Leanne explained that part of our plan includes engaging consulting support to make sure national best practices are looked at throughout the alignment process and that we are measuring things well. We have also budgeted funds to make sure we can get some facilitation help to make sure we are making good decisions. Karen noted that quality improvement grants were included as a strategy so that programs can get funding to build quality. She also mentioned the tiered reimbursement will be linked to BrightStars rating and that it will take some time to develop the tiered reimbursement program which will impact the timing of the roll-out. Leanne noted that the grant team is really trying to target supports towards program that serve high needs children. She also mentioned that we need to define what an upper level of quality is.

Michele and Karen presented the strategies for "Improving Child Outcomes" and "Improving Workforce Knowledge and Competencies." (see meeting slides for more detail).


One question was raised on the presentation:

- Can we make sure that we ensure access for educators who do not speak English by contracting with culturally appropriate trainers?

Leanne presented the strategies for "Data System Development" (see meeting slides for more detail). She noted that she also included an assessment of existing technological capacity so that we could potentially help programs without good capacity build it.

No questions or comments were raised


***Next Steps***
Elizabeth encouraged everyone to send additional feedback via email to Kristin at klehoullier@gmail.com.

Deborah reminded the Council and Work Group members that the next joint meeting will be Wednesday, October 5th from 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the United Way of Rhode Island, large conference room.