

Response and Recommendations to RIDE from the Pre-K Planning Group: Pre-K Education Demonstration and Expansion Initiative

Background and Process

In June of 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Act which directs the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to engage in a planning process for a Rhode Island Pre-K Program, including designing a pilot ¹Pre-K program and creating plans to scale up the program after the pilot stage is completed.

During the Fall of 2008 the Commissioner appointed a Pre-K Planning Committee comprised of fifteen (15) people including some representatives of the original Pre-K Exploration Committee plus a few additional people who also have expertise in early childhood education to do additional work to design the components of the Pre-K program in keeping with the required elements set forth in the law.

Approach

The Planning Committee met six (6) times between September 2008 and January 2009 to review and discuss a series of design proposals put forth by RIDE based on a set of core components specified in the Act and research and national best practice as follows:

- Voluntary enrollment. Children will not be required to attend Pre-K.
- Pre-K will be offered in a variety of settings, including child care, Head Start, public schools (this is referred to as a diverse delivery system model).
- Rhode Island's Pre-K program will start with a high-quality, demonstration Pre-K project and expand over time.
- The ultimate goal is universal Pre-K for all 3 and 4 year olds, however the program will start with providing Pre-K for children in the highest need communities first (with high concentrations of low performing schools).
- Pre-K programs need a consistent and stable funding stream sufficient to meet quality standards.

¹ Based on advice from the National Institute for Early Education Research, RIDE is proposing a demonstration project rather than a pilot. This initiative would not be testing a new program design but, rather would be demonstrating the efficacy of research-based best practices in Pre-Kindergarten education in Rhode Island and generating local evidence to support the implementation of universal Pre-K across the state.

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- Rhode Island’s Pre-K program quality standards will meet or exceed National Institute for Early Education Research’s Pre-K standards including a lead teacher with a BA and specialized training in Early Childhood Education and an assistant teacher with a CDA or equivalent.
- Children ages 3 and 4 will be enrolled in the demonstration.

The Pre-K Planning group considered a range of topics including how the program would be designed and also how the program would evolve towards universal voluntary Pre-K. Elements of the program design included proposals from RIDE on 19 different topics ranging from program structure to staffing. The program design, as proposed by RIDE, remained relatively the same for both the demonstration project and the long-term expansion to universal Pre-K with the understanding that there could be “mid-course” corrections based on experience with the demonstration project. A summary of the planning group’s response and recommendations for both the demonstration project and the plan for expansion can be found in the following sections. Please note that this document is intended to reflect a range of opinions and ideas about the proposals put forth by RIDE. It does not represent a majority opinion and attempts to capture all of the perspectives put forth during the process. As a result, there are some recommendations that may seem incongruent with each other reflecting differences of opinion within the group. The detailed minutes of the planning group meetings are attached.

Overall Considerations and Recommendations

The planning group as a whole saw the Pre-K initiative as an opportunity for both children and early childhood providers in Rhode Island. Specifically, the majority of the group agreed on several premises as follows:

- 1) **Goal of Universal Access to Pre-K:** Striving to provide high quality voluntary Pre-Kindergarten for all children in Rhode Island is an important goal that will help children develop important social and cognitive skills and knowledge that prepares them to succeed in school.
- 2) **Commitment to providing high quality childcare and early education:** This initiative provides an opportunity to raise the overall quality of preschool programs for children in Rhode Island.
- 3) **Existing Strengths that can be Leveraged:** Rhode Island has an existing early childhood system with a number of strengths that can be leveraged in this effort including:
 - a. A diverse delivery system of providers (including child care centers, Head Start and family child care providers), many of whom are already delivering high quality programs without commensurate funding or support.

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- b. Developed and implemented Early Learning Standards that have begun to positively influence the quality of Pre-K classrooms statewide.
 - c. The development of a premier quality rating and improvement system, BrightStars, created to improve the care and education of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged children in Rhode Island.
 - d. A Child Care Facilities Fund, started in 2001, to provide capital and technical expertise for child care programs to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space.
- 4) **Professionalization of the Field:** This initiative, if implemented as intended, will be an important step towards elevating and professionalizing the field of early childhood education and ensuring that staff are paid competitively.
- 5) **Adequate Funding & Consistent Child Access:** Adequate funding enables programs to meet high quality standards. Stable and consistent access that is not tied to parental work status, family income or other changing thresholds is essential to the long-term success of this initiative.

Given these opportunities, the group thoughtfully anticipated and raised several overarching challenges for RIDE to consider as it moves ahead:

- 1) **Unintended Effects on Child Care System:** Without careful planning, some planning group members feel that this initiative has the potential to negatively impact the overall early child care system. Some group members felt that the initiative could divert funding away from child care and Head Start or create the perception that programs other than Pre-K are of lower quality. There was concern that there is a lot of energy being invested in Pre-K while there is not a similar effort to address the systemic challenges that currently exist in the early child care system. Members of the planning group stressed that it is important that the entire early childhood education system (0-5) infrastructure remain healthy – especially if a diverse delivery system is desired. It will be critical to have a value of “no programs left behind.” How can Pre-K be used to elevate all boats? For example, how can infant and toddler care be strengthened at the same time that we focus on Pre-K? How can we prevent Pre-K from undermining the business model of private child care providers?
- 2) **Workforce Development:** Group members also pointed out that it will be critical to prepare for the expansion by planning for and implementing a well-resourced, comprehensive strategy for workforce development simultaneously with the implementation of the demonstration project – especially considering the qualifications required by RIDE (a lead teacher with a BA and specialized training in Early Childhood Education and an assistant teacher with a CDA or equivalent). There was concern by some planning group members that the requirement that teachers have a BA will be very difficult for community-based providers to attain and will prove to be a significant barrier to participation – particularly for diverse, urban center-based and family child care providers – as well as be an indication that there is not a strong commitment to a diverse delivery system. These planning group members stressed that it is critical that a workforce development program be designed so that diverse providers can truly participate by recognizing prior experience and ensuring appropriate funding for workforce development and an appropriate

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timeframe for coming up to standard. They also emphasized the importance of building a well resourced, comprehensive professional development system and working closely with higher education to create appropriate degree pathways that accommodate the needs of full-time, experienced workers.

- 3) *Prioritizing Communities for Expansion:*** The planning group also emphasized that it will be important to establish clear criteria for prioritizing communities as the program expands. RIDE will need to strike the right balance between reaching the children with the greatest need first without typecasting the program and undermining support for universal Pre-K. One suggestion was that RIDE require a local match for more affluent communities. Another suggestion was that RIDE seek to integrate programs based on socio-economic background (there is a growing body of research that suggests that this is very beneficial for children).
- 4) *Governance and Management:*** Current governance and management of the early childhood system (including funding, licensing, quality monitoring, and professional development) is fragmented and managed by several different state agencies including the Department of Human Services, Department of Children, Youth and Families, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and the Department of Health. Planning group members felt that it would be very important to develop a more coherent system of oversight, support and monitoring for the early childhood system as a whole and recommended that Rhode Island create an Office of Early Learning similar to the role that the Office of Adult Education plays in integrating and coordination adult education and training efforts across multiple state agencies.

Pre-K Demonstration Project – Program Structure

The following section presents the concerns and recommendations of the planning group on the program design including program structure and staffing.

Design Proposal: Timeframe, Ages, Class Size and Demonstration Project Size

Timeframe: The Pre-K demonstration program will span two years and launch in September 2009.

Ages: Children ages 3 and 4 will be enrolled in the demonstration. Children must be age 3 by September 1 to be eligible.

Class Size: The maximum Pre-K class size will be 18 children for both 3 and 4 year olds.

Demonstration Project Size: The demonstration program will include 396 children (22 classrooms of 18 children each).

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Comments/Concerns:

- Will there be a minimum class size? Can classrooms with fewer than 18 children participate?
- The inclusion of 3 year old children will mean that some 4 years olds who could have been served will not be able to access the demonstration. They will not have another chance to enter the program while the 3 year olds will.

Recommendations:

- To maximize manageability, start with the smallest statistically significant sample size possible.
- Prioritize four years olds.
- Ensure that the Pre-K program is not competing for the same four year olds as Head Start.
- Design the demonstration to have the greater possible effect. If including three year olds increases effect then we should design the demonstration to serve both ages.

Design Proposal: Delivery System

A diverse delivery system will be used. Providers could include public school, Head Start, private preschool, private school, charter school or child care centers.

Comments/Concerns:

- The requirement that teachers have a BA will be very difficult for community-based providers to attain without appropriate funding and support. In addition, the majority of children in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls are attending family child care homes and child care center programs that will not be eligible to participate (either because they are family child care or do not meet the specified quality standards).
- It will be important to ensure that the program is designed and supported so that diverse delivery providers can truly participate; community providers and public schools cannot be treated the same.
- Having a diverse delivery system will help with cultural competence; it will leverage the existing early childhood workforce so that there is racial and cultural diversity that is greater than what we see in the public schools.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that there is an established criterion for selecting high quality, capable providers.
- Ensure that the program is designed to be inclusive of non-public school providers. There needs to be adequate funding and support to allow these programs to come up to standard in a reasonable timeframe.
- Look for opportunities for community-based programs to run Pre-K programs within public schools.

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Design Proposal: Curriculum, Length of Day, Transportation and Special Education

Curriculum: Demonstration classrooms will implement a curriculum that aligns with RI Early Learning Standards. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to engage children in carefully-designed, play-based learning opportunities to foster development of language, literacy, math, and social skills. Provider training along with coaching and mentoring support will be provided to demonstration classrooms.

Length of Day: Demonstration classrooms will operate for a minimum of 6 hours per day and 180 days per year and have the ability to provide wrap-around child care to families who need it OR have a strong connection with and transportation to/from at least one child care provider for families that need it. The program day will include time for morning snack, lunch, nap and outdoor learning/play periods and full breakfast, if needed.

Transportation: Programs would not be required to provide transportation to and from home .

Special Education: Demonstration classrooms must be able to accommodate children with disabilities.

Comments/Concerns:

- It will be critical to ensure that demonstration classrooms are delivering comparable program quality. How will this be monitored and supported?
- Requiring programs to adhere to the RI Early Learning Standards will not yield consistent results –standards without a common curriculum will result in different outcomes.
- Have the linguistic and cultural background of the kids been considered? Research shows that if children are enrolled in an English-language program for six hours at age 3 they are likely to be less fluent in their home language at 4th grade and at 9th grade and are more likely to have problems in school, with dropping out, and losing touch with their families. Is there a way to consider dual language Pre-K? Bilingualism and biculturalism needs to be incorporated into the curriculum – it is fundamental. Is there attention to this in the qualifications for participation and in the overall goals for the Pre-K initiative? If not, parents will not go to the program.
- It will be important to ensure that literacy development is done effectively in all settings. There needs to be a clear strategy for addressing the needs of ESL students. Teachers must also be proficient in English and not just their first language.
- A six hour day is long for this age group. There should be an option for a shorter day.
- Using 6 hour days and 180 days per year reflects the public school structure and may send the wrong message to community providers.
- Allowing providers to link with a childcare provider to cover extended hours would require multiple transitions for the child and is not optimal for a child at that age.
- Will programs that are not handicap accessible be able to participate?

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- Where will the special education services be delivered and who gets to decide where and how they are provided?
- Lack of transportation will likely exclude some children.

Recommendations:

- The requirement to implement a curriculum aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards should be monitored through provider training/coaching and listing a few sample curriculums that could be used.
- Programs should be required to provide evidence of a curriculum framework in the selection process.
- RIDE should require that demonstration programs use a standard curriculum across all classrooms.
- Incorporate bi-lingual and bi-culturalism requirements into the curriculum requirements.
- Develop a clear strategy for addressing the needs of ESL students.
- Balance the intensity and frequency of special education interventions per classroom.
- Parents should have choices not only around which Pre-K setting would be best but also about where the services are provided (e.g. does the special education provider come to the Pre-K program or is the child pulled out?)
- Only programs handicapped accessible to all should be allowed to participate in a publicly-funded program.
- Offer flexible options (half versus full day versus extended day) – this will meet a more diverse range of family needs and accommodate different cultural beliefs and economic realities.
- Consider thinking about the program in terms of total hours and allow programs to deliver those hours over different timeframes (e.g. 4 hours per day over 12 months is almost the same as 6 hours a day for 180 days.)
- Offer a four hour program with additional hours based on family need.
- Ensure that extended day programming is available both before and after school.
- Consider requiring programs to provide extended day programming versus “linking” to other high quality childcare which would add transitions that would not be optimal for the children.
- Learn from the demonstration and see if choice of hours is needed in full implementation.
- Require that programs offer a full breakfast, if needed based on their student population.
- Change the language to say “Providers may opt to provide transportation to and from home”.

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Design Proposal: Eligibility and Fees

Eligibility and Fees: There will be no specific income eligibility requirements. Children will be selected using a lottery system. The demonstration will be free of charge to all children. There will be no co-payments, registration fees, field trip fees or enrichment fees. Field trips and enrichment activities are expected to be built into the program.

Comments/Concerns:

- How will this work for programs that have both state-funded and parent-funded classrooms? How will parents react when they cannot access the program's best quality and free classroom and are told they will have to pay for a potentially lower quality classroom?
- Income should be a selection criterion and low-income children should be prioritized.
- Is this realistic to expect programs not to charge additional fees for field trips and enrichment activities?

Recommendations:

- Prioritize families who have lost or are at risk of losing their childcare subsidy.
- Use objective selection criteria unless you can assure a spot for every child that applies.
- Prioritize communities with schools that are low performing.
- Ensure that teachers have input into the budget process.
- Programs should be able to assess fees for families who need/want care beyond established program hours.

Design Proposal: Funding

There will be a consistent and stable funding stream that is sufficient for providers to meet quality standards. Start-up costs associated with equipping a Pre-K classroom with adequate high-quality equipment and materials will be provided (Note: process for distributing start-up funds is not yet determined).

Comments/Concerns:

- Funding is fundamental to the success of this initiative. Adequate funding must be a non-negotiable.
- The Pre-K program needs to be coordinated with attention to other funding streams and possible unintentional outcomes. For example, some parents may choose to enroll in a 6-hour Pre-K program instead of a half-day Head Start program, which could leave some Head Start slots vacant and not be a good use of federal funds that might have to be returned if there is under-enrollment in Head Start.

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Recommendations:

- An effective system for allocating start-up funds needs to be developed.
- Give programs flexibility to use a portion of the funds to elevate their whole program. Programs should be able to use professional development funds for staff in non-state-funded classrooms.
- Include funds to pay for substitute teachers to cover for other teachers participating in professional development activities.
- Ensure that the Pre-K program is coordinated with attention to other funding streams so that resources are not left unutilized. For example, minimize competition between Head Start and Pre-K so that Head Start slots are not left vacant and unfunded by Federal dollars.
- Ensure that the program's performance and outcomes are clearly linked to program funding.

Pre-K Demonstration Project – Staffing (teacher qualifications, compensation, professional development)

Design Proposal: Teacher Qualifications

Each demonstration classroom will have one lead teacher with a BA and specialized early childhood training and one assistant teacher with a CDA or equivalent (12 college credits in Early Childhood Education).

Comments/Concerns:

- A few members of the group argue that, while it is a good goal, this requirement will exclude participation of quality community-based programs, especially in the core urban communities, unless there are appropriate pathways, funding and a reasonable timeframe. Others argue that to increase the quality of the whole field, compensation must be attached to education and experience - the BA justifies the compensation and that starting with less than a BA would give the impression that the Pre-K initiative was not high quality.
- The current system of higher education does not have capacity to meet the new demand that this will generate and work must begin immediately to engage them in a plan to develop that capacity (**see workforce development for more details.**)
- These requirements exceed the new draft requirements for RIDE Pre-K approval.

Recommendations:

- Require that there is “at least” one teacher with a BA in a classroom.
- Start with an AA requirement and progress to a BA requirement overtime; give teachers credit for prior experience.
- Ensure that there is adequate funding and that staff with higher credentials see improved benefits and salaries (**see workforce development recommendations on page 14**).
- Align the teacher qualification requirements for this initiative with the new draft RIDE Pre-K Approval standards.
- Use the demonstration project to gather data to look at classroom outcomes for AA teachers compared to BA teachers.

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Design Proposal: Teacher Compensation

All Pre-K teachers with Early Childhood Teacher Certification and early childhood qualified teaching assistants in state-funded Pre-K demonstration classrooms will be paid on the same salary scale as local public school teachers and teachers' assistants. Both public and community-based programs will be required to pay qualified staff working in state-funded Pre-K classrooms according to the scale. For further information, please reference the attached fact sheet from NIEER on the impact of low wages on program quality.

Comments/Concerns:

- Some group members are concerned about the inequity of paying teachers differently within a program that has both publically and privately-funded classrooms - especially when all the teachers have a BA and similar experience. There is a similar concern about how the salary differential would affect infant/toddler teachers. Others felt that the infusion of funds in a classroom would be celebrated because it elevates the whole.
- This initiative is an opportunity to align performance, merit and accountability with compensation. It would be a mistake to adopt the human resource management structure of the local school systems.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that Pre-K salaries are competitive while not inheriting the human resource management structure of the public school system. The Pre-K system should build its own structure with attention to performance, merit and accountability. Program Directors should have some flexibility to set teacher salaries.
- Consider differences in salary structures across districts.
- Consider strategies for helping community-based providers minimize internal wage disparity.
- Ensure that teachers are compensated for planning time.

Design Proposal: Professional Development (see workforce development for more detailed related to developing a workforce to meet the demand that this initiative will generate)

Teachers and assistant teachers in Pre-K demonstration classrooms will receive training in curriculum and child assessment (for all domains of development including social and emotional)

Comments/Concerns:

- The current system of professional development for early education is very fragmented. More coordination and alignment is needed.
- How will bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism be incorporated into professional development and into the plan for workforce development?

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Recommendations:

- Centralize State agency monitoring and management of the Early Childhood system.
- Include training on social/emotional development and potentially evaluate this in the research design.
- Ensure that bi-lingual and bi-culturalism are incorporated into professional development for Pre-K classroom staff.

Pre-K Demonstration Project – Staffing Target Communities and Provider Selection

Design Proposal: Target Communities

Target Pre-K demonstration funding to the 15 communities with state intervention status in 2008 (including watch status): Central Falls, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Providence, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Comments/Concerns:

- Intervention status is not a good overall indicator of the performance of a district. A district could be in intervention status because of low high school math scores. Elementary literacy scores should be core criteria.
- Why should we open an RFP up to an entire district if only one school/neighborhood is struggling? Is there a way to be more specific? How do we balance targeting struggling schools with generating evidence for universal Pre-K and not typecasting the program as only for low-income students?

Recommendations:

- Double-check literacy proficiency by community to be sure that communities with very poor 4th grade reading results are included. Within these target communities, further target highest need neighborhoods and feeder schools.
- Mandate that a certain number of classrooms must come from the core cities.
- Make sure that programs are located in places where there is full-day Kindergarten.

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Design Proposal: Provider Selection

RIDE will develop an RFP with community input inviting any public school, Head Start, private preschool, private school, charter school or child care center operating or planning to operate in a target community to apply for 2 years of Pre-K funding at \$XXX,XXX per classroom. RIDE requires applicants to demonstrate that they are:

- Located in a target community
- Currently serving 3 and 4 year old children.
- Currently have at least one RIDE Early Childhood Certified Teacher (CEE or Professional Certificate) on staff.
- Have staff who have completed the RI Early Learning Standards training.
- Have experience serving low-income children.
- Able to open a new state-funded Pre-K classroom without displacing current families (can apply for more than one classroom, can operate classrooms in another space e.g. child care programs could operate a Pre-K classroom in a public school building.
- Able to staff each of the state-funded Pre-K classrooms with a BA/Early Childhood Certified lead teacher and a CDA credentialed assistant teacher.
- Are able to provide supervision, mentoring and support to the state-funded Pre-K classroom by a qualified supervisor.
- Are able to provide wrap-around child care to families who need it OR have a strong connection with and transportation to/from at least one child care provider for families that need it.
- Implementing a curriculum in state-funded Pre-K classrooms that aligns with RI Early Learning Standards. Evidence of a curriculum framework is required.

Priority will be given to programs that are participating in Bright Stars.

Comments/Concerns:

- “Define” participating in Bright Stars. What will be the capacity of Bright Stars in 2009? Bright Stars is a new, untested program – it might be too early to explicitly link it to the Pre-K initiative.
- All of the quality improvement rating systems are focused on child care. How do we assess the quality of public school classrooms?
- Allowing providers to link with a childcare provider to cover extended hours would require multiple transitions for the child and is not optimal for a child at that age.
- There is not enough emphasis on family engagement.
- Will programs need to add a new classroom or can they convert an existing classroom? It is important to ensure that programs do not displace children.

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Recommendations:

- Allow providers who had not previously operated in a target community to apply (to run a program in the target community)
- Require programs to demonstrate that quality staff will be hired rather than say “able to staff.”
- Prioritize programs participating in Bright Stars or the current NAEYC accreditation (under new system).
- Require programs to demonstrate that they have a well developed system for ongoing quality assessment and program improvement.
- Make sure there is community input to the RFP development.
- Add a requirement that providers must demonstrate that they have a strong family engagement component to their program.
- Require programs to show that they have applied to RIDE for Pre-K approval.
- Include a site visit as a component of the selection process.
- Assess Bright Stars when it is more developed and determine whether there should be a minimum rating for participation in Pre-K.
- Ensure that extended care is clearly defined as before and after school.
- Prioritize programs that provide extended care rather than a strong connection with another child care program. Change the language in item (i) to say “high quality” child care program.

Pre-K Demonstration Project – Evaluation

Design Proposal: Evaluation

The demonstration project will be evaluated using a randomized, control group design. Children will be randomly assigned to receive Pre-K or to a control group.

Comments/Concerns:

- Is a randomized control trial worth the investment? Isn't national evidence enough?
- Will a study so early in the implementation set us up for failure?
- Are there other evaluation tools that are more reliable?
- Is this good for children in the control group?
- Will there be enough uniformity in the control group to see effect e.g. some will end up in other programs and some will be home with parents, etc.

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Recommendations:

- Ensure that the demonstration is evaluated using the most reliable, kid-friendly, cost-effective evaluation methodology.

Pre-K Demonstration Project AND Expansion – Workforce Development

Design Proposal: Workforce Development

Funding: Invest state funds to establish Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) Early Childhood in Rhode Island to provide scholarships to child care workers to complete coursework in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. Secure matching funds from private philanthropy. Allow early childhood staff in a variety of settings to access TEACH scholarships (family child care, directors, preschool staff, infant/toddler staff, etc.). In addition, create a state-funded loan forgiveness program for Early Childhood Education.

Pathways: Engage RI institutions of higher education in planning to meet increased market demand for early childhood education programs and develop alternatives pathways for obtaining degree credits including:

- Create pathways for current CDA's to obtain their BA in early childhood.
- Ensure that C.E.C.s count towards core requirements
- Offer programs that accommodate the needs of full-time workers.
- Give a reasonable timeframe for degree completion.
- Update the State's requirements for early childhood education coursework.

Professional Development: Provide leadership to strengthen the overall professional development system for early child care and education professionals. Ensure that higher education programs are closely aligned with professional in-service training requirements. Investigate successful professional development systems in other states (Connecticut's Charts-A-Course, Maine's Roads to Quality, Illinois's Gateways to Opportunity)

Comments/Concerns:

- Are the resource levels in TEACH enough to meet our workforce development needs? TEACH scholarships are small relative to the cost of tuition in Rhode Island. In addition, the salary increases required by TEACH are very small.
- How does access to TEACH get prioritized? Is it for everyone or only staff in state-funded Pre-K programs.
- Directors will have to be flexible for staff to get to courses and higher education will have to be flexible to offer courses at different times.
- Does higher education have the capacity to meet the increased demand for Early Childhood BA's and CDA's?

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- We need to make sure that we focus on both CDA's and BA's. The current supply of CDA's in the state does not appear to be enough to meet the potential demand.

Recommendations:

- Make sure the program includes coaching and mentoring support for funded classrooms and appropriate supervision.
- Make sure there are alternative methods for obtaining credits e.g. ensuring that C.E.C.'s count towards core degree requirements and programs that can accommodate the unique needs of full-time workers.
- Engage higher education, especially CCRI, in the planning. Ensure that the articulation agreement between CCRI and URI keeps going and develop articulation agreements with Rhode Island College.
- Create pathways for CDAs that want to obtain their BA and pair experienced CDAs with inexperienced BA teachers.
- Create a loan forgiveness program for Early Childhood similar to the Pharmacy program that was implemented recently.
- RIDE should update the course work needed for an Early Childhood Degree.
- Make sure the timeframe for achieving a BA or CDA is realistic.
- Continue to offer affordable courses, like the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards course that are eligible for credit.
- Ensure that higher education programs in Early Children are connected with in-service training requirements.
- Track changes in the early childhood education workforce over time to monitor impact.

Additional Planning Considerations

In addition to responding to the program design proposals, the planning group generated a list of areas that will require further analysis and planning as RIDE moves forward including:

- Planning for Infrastructure Needs: Members of the planning group pointed out that RIDE will need to plan for and make an investment in the infrastructure of early childcare programs – many community-based providers do not have the space, equipment or materials to meet the quality standards of this initiative and are not in a position to secure funds to invest in infrastructure improvements. In addition, some programs will be adding new classrooms and converting old ones, requiring new equipment. RIDE should review infrastructure needs at the local level and assess the amount of funds needed for materials, buildings, curriculum, etc. Can the Childcare Facilities Fund be used to help assess needs?
- Fostering a Diverse Delivery System: The group felt that there needed to be more thinking around the logistics of how all the stakeholders in a diverse delivery system would interact. For example, what will be the relationship between the Local Education Authority and community-based providers? What can Rhode Island learn from New Jersey's experience?

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- Inclusion of Family Child Care Providers: There were mixed opinions about the efficacy of including family child care providers in the expansion. Some members of the group felt strongly that as integral members of the child care system, family child care providers should have the opportunity to participate. Others noted that inclusion of family childcare providers will require some special considerations. For example, family-based childcare providers would have smaller groups of kids versus the class size of 18 that we are envisioning. Would they be required to only take 3 and 4 year olds? Or could they serve mixed ages (toddler, infant and Pre-K)? In addition, it will be important to consider economies of scale. It is a lot more expensive for a BA to serve 2-6 kids than 18 kids. What would be the impact of the cost model of a significantly smaller student to teacher ratio? It will be important to look at best practices re: inclusion of family-based childcare providers. How have other states cost effectively included home-based providers? How have they provided quality assurance and support?
- Child Selection: The planning group felt that the process for selecting children as the program grows beyond the demonstration will need to be carefully designed (note: child selection will be centralized at RIDE for the demonstration but handled locally as the program expands necessitating a different process for selection). Questions from the group included:
 - Should sites be required to prioritize children based on need?
 - Will siblings be prioritized?
 - How will a lottery be done?
 - What best practices can we utilize from public/charter schools' experience with lotteries?

Attachments

- Pre-K Planning Group Participants
- Pre-K Planning Group Meeting Minutes

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Pre-K Design Team

Clark Greene
Chief of Staff and Policy Director
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 222-8705
clark.greene@ride.ri.gov

Ken Swanson
Director, Office for Diverse Learners
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 222-8350
kenneth.swanson@ride.ri.gov

Michele Palermo
Coordinator of Early Childhood Initiatives
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 222-8941
michele.palermo@ride.ri.gov

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Executive Director
Rhode Island Kids Count
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 351-9400
ebb@rikidscount.org

Leanne Barrett
Policy Analyst
Rhode Island Kids Count
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 351-9400
lbarrett@rikidscount.org

Kristen Greene
RIAEYC Board
The Providence Center, Early Childhood Institute
520 Hope Street
Providence, RI 02906
(401) 276-4142
kgreene@imageri.org

Response and Recommendations to RIDE from the Pre-K Planning Group: Pre-K Education Demonstration and Expansion Initiative

Pre-K Design Team (cont'd)

Kim Maine
RIAEYC Board
Sunshine Child Development Center
11 Iafrate Way
North Kingstown, RI 02852
(401) 294-3510
kmaine@sunshinecdc.com

Karen Bouchard
Rhode Island Head Start Association
Executive Director
Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Assn., Inc.
204 Warwick Street
Woonsocket, RI 02895
(401) 769-1850
kbouchard@whscda.org

Larry Pucciarelli
Head Start Collaboration Director
Rhode Island Department of Human Services
600 New London Avenue, Building 38
Cranston, RI 02920
(401) 462-3071
lpucciar@dhs.ri.gov

Leslie Gell
Director
Ready to Learn Providence
945 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 490-9960
lgell@provplan.org

David Caprio
Executive Director
Children's Friend & Service
153 Summer Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 276-4305
dcaprio@cfsri.org

Susan Warford
Coordinator, Child Development Center
University of Rhode Island
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
10 Lower College Road
Kingston, RI 02881
(401) 874-2758
suew@uri.edu

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Pre-K Design Team (cont'd)

Marcia Reback
President
RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals
356 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 273-9800
marciarift@aol.com

Jo Eva Gaines
Rhode Island School Committee Association
Newport School Committee
227 Eustis Avenue
Newport, RI 02840
(401) 846-7222
jeg227@aol.com

Edda Carmadello
Principal
Captain G. Harold Hunt School
14 Kendall Street
Central Falls, RI 02863
(401) 727-7720
carmadelloe@cfschools.net

Independent Facilitator:
Kristin Lehoullier
Consultant
60 Forest Street
Providence, RI 02906
(401) 447-7101
klehoulrier@yahoo.com