

Rhode Island Early Learning Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 14, 2016 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.

Save the Bay

Meeting Summary

AGENDA SUMMARY

The Early Learning Council agenda addressed the following topics:

- Welcome and Opening Remarks
- BrightStars Evaluation Findings and Next Steps
- Opportunities to Support Young Learners in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Public comment
- Upcoming events and meetings

KEY POINTS

Key discussion points from the meeting are summarized below:

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner Ken Wagner and Elizabeth Burke Bryant welcomed the Early Learning Council. Comments and questions included:

- Lisa Nugent has joined RIDE as the new Early Childhood Coordinator.
- It will take a comprehensive effort among various state agencies to reach the Governor's goal to double the reading proficiency rate of children in grade 3 by the time the children born this year reach grade 3 in 2025. Multiple stakeholders are working together to create policy and program goals that the state will implement through a coordinated plan of action. Increasing reading fluency by grade 3 will make possible everything that the state is trying to achieve in education, the workforce and economic development.
- By continuing to advocate for funding during the upcoming budget cycle and looking for supplemental funding from other sources, we hope to sustain all of the great Birth to 3rd grade early childhood education work of the last few years. Improving early childhood education is an important focus for the members of the General Assembly because it also improves economic prosperity throughout the state.

BRIGHTSTARS EVALUATION FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

Karen Beese introduced Kelly Maxwell who presented preliminary findings from the BrightStars evaluation. Soon, Kelly will finalize the full report along with a shorter Executive Summary and a one page highlight document. She will send these final reports to DHS for dissemination. Please see the Executive Summary (<http://bit.ly/2naQvkr>) and full report (<http://bit.ly/2o1ts9l>).

Briefly, the findings of the evaluation provide evidence of the validity of the BrightStars Child Care Center and Preschool Quality Framework. Kelly and her colleagues answered a few questions and then Karen spoke briefly about possible next steps.

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OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT YOUNG LEARNERS IN THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

Leanne Barrett and Elizabeth Burke Bryant introduced a draft of the Early Learning Council's recommendations for the state ESSA plan. (See slides.) Mary Ann Snider also provided a review of the overall ESSA planning process. Comments and questions included the following:

- The process to inform the development of the state ESSA plan has included monthly meetings and many opportunities for input, including 6 community forums held around the state and a 3 hour ad hoc work group meeting of the Early Learning Council. We are using this opportunity to raise up issues related to our goals within the Birth to 3rd grade framework. The more aligned and specific we are with our recommended language, the easier it will be for the ESSA team to process the recommendations and include them in Rhode Island's draft ESSA plan.
- The state ESSA team is planning to release a draft of the state's ESSA plan at the end of January, followed by an opportunity for input. The federal government's deadline for submission of the state's ESSA plan is either April 3, 2017 or September 7, 2017. Rhode Island has chosen the September 7th date for submission of its ESSA plan.
- The ESSA team has heard the request for cross departmental coordination and leadership for early learning and development from Birth to 3rd grade and that request will inform the deliberations of the Early Learning Council going forward. However, a cross departmental strategies do not fit within the parameters of the state ESSA plan. The ESSA plan is only one element contributing to the overall Birth to age 8 system in Rhode Island, which also includes the RIDE Strategic Plan and the Early Learning Council Comprehensive Advisory Plan and Recommendations.
- The team creating the Grade Level Reading Birth to age 8 plan for the Governor is thinking about coherence and how all systems have to work together, including health, child welfare and early childhood education. The team is trying to be intentional and clear regarding cross agency partnerships, with particular emphasis on the needs of high risk children.
- We will amend the Early Learning Council's recommendations for the state ESSA plan to include Birth through age 3 wherever appropriate and whenever there is sufficient data available to support a directive under the state accountability system.
- Under ESSA, there are 3 levels of report cards, at the state, district, and school levels. The state report card can include data elements for which schools will not be held accountable. Compared to the indexing system that rates schools according to federally required narrow metrics intended to differentiate among schools based on performance, these report cards will provide a broader picture of the condition of states, districts and schools. However, the report cards should not contain so much information that they become overwhelming and unhelpful.
- In a well aligned system, if the state performs well on its report card, the districts should also perform well on theirs and, in turn, so should the schools.
- COMMENT: The state report card should include data on Birth to age 3 developmental screenings.

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- COMMENT: On Slide #14, we should add language acknowledging the critical importance of home language literacy for English Language Learners. If children are not literate in their native language, it might indicate bigger learning issues.
- COMMENT: On Slide #12, the bullet, “include community-based birth-to-eight early educators in shared professional development opportunities,” should not be limited to district designed and content-based joint professional development. It should also include joint professional development on aligning and coordinating teaching and learning and the sharing of lessons between community-based and school-based early educators.
- COMMENT: A Birth to age 8 system needs to respect the unique developmental and learning needs of babies.
- COMMENT: We should include Early Intervention data in the ESSA plan because it is a federal Department of Education program and part of the special education continuum. We can also add home visiting data since some Title I school districts use those funds to pay for home visiting and it is a proven strategy to improve school readiness.
- COMMENT: We should include data on the percentage of preschoolers receiving special education services as compared to special education students in Kindergarten through 12th grade.
- COMMENT: If data on chronic absenteeism in community-based programs is available, it should be included in the ESSA plan as well.
- COMMENT: On Slide #13, the bullet, “require LEAs to adopt developmentally-appropriate instruction,” should include the word “curriculum.”
- The Early Learning Council voted to endorse the submission of the Early Learning in ESSA – Recommendations with the inclusion of comments from this meeting in a later version.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no additional comments and questions from the public.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Although future meetings may be extended or additional meetings added, the current 2017 calendar of Early Learning Council meetings is as follows:

- March 22 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (extended to 1:00 p.m.)
- June 28 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (extended to 1:00 p.m.)
- September 20 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (will now start at 9:00 a.m.)
- December 13 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (will now start at 9:00 a.m.)