Rhode Island Early Learning Council

These recommendations were approved by the Rhode Island Early Learning Council on June 29, 2011 to guide the development of a shared, statewide early learning data system. The recommendations were informed by a team of Rhode Island leaders' participation in the National Governors Association Ready States Initiative in 2010 and a site visit organized by the national Early Childhood Data Collaborative in June 2011 to learn more about Pennsylvania's Early Learning Data Network.

Overall Recommendation

Rhode Island needs a shared, statewide Early Learning Data System that will:

1) Provide aggregated data to inform policy makers and guide resource allocation to support increased school readiness of children.   Data about young children, early learning programs, and the early learning workforce should be used to track the results of investments, monitor trends over time, sustain and grow current investments in effective programs, identify areas most in need of intervention, and make changes to improve outcomes for young children and families.

2) Provide data to inform educators about individual children. Data on young children's development and learning is needed to guide instruction and services for specific children.

Rhode Island Needs Improved Access to Data to Answer Critical Policy Questions

Children's Development and Learning
- ❖ How many/what percentage of children are on track to succeed, during the early childhood years, at school entry, and beyond?

Access
- ❖ What percentage/how many children are in various early care and education settings? (unduplicated children by type of setting, location, and quality).
- ❖ Are low-income and disadvantaged children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs?
- ❖ How much high-quality early care and education programming are children receiving?
- ❖ How many different programs do children attend before entering kindergarten?

Program Quality
- ❖ What percentage/how many of early care and education programs are high-quality?
- ❖ Does program quality improve over time? What are the barriers for quality improvement?

Early Childhood Workforce
- ❖ What percentage/how many of the early childhood workforce are qualified, by meeting specific established standards, to prepare children to succeed at school entry (e.g. core competencies, career lattice education levels)?
- ❖ What are workforce characteristics and patterns (turnover, compensation, diversity, education, etc.)?

Recommendations re: Next Steps

1) Work with the co-chairs of the Early Learning Council and the current ELC Data Work Group to identify leadership and establish an **official cross-departmental, public-private planning/governing body** with authorized decision-makers for state early learning data systems to act on the recommendations of the Early Childhood Data Work Group.
   - Hire a consultant to support continued planning and development of more specific, detailed data system plan
   - Capitalize on Department of Education's expertise and resources re: e-transcripts and program-teacher-child data logic already developed
   - Build upon the capacity of the Department of Health's KIDSNET as a universal database with information on children beginning at birth
   - Determine best strategies to link/coordinate and build data capacity across state departments and in the community.
   - Use guidance from the national Early Childhood Data Collaborative (e.g. 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems)
   - Strengthen data connections with health care providers.

2) Use a central data system to **track child participation in early learning programs across sectors**.

3) Continue progress expanding KIDSNET to track **child-level developmental screening data** for children ages birth – K entry. Build on RIDE-Health partnership and add RIDE's Child Outreach screening data to KIDSNET. Consider creating SASID at age 3 (or earlier) in KIDSNET.

4) Move forward to develop a statewide **kindergarten entry assessment system** using best practices for early childhood assessment with the goal of supporting kindergarten instruction. Link to development of early childhood and Grade 1 and 2 assessment systems.

5) **Examine statewide use of early childhood assessment tools and data collection and storage systems** (e.g. Teaching Strategies GOLD). Consider alignment across early childhood and K-2 assessment systems.

6) Use **BrightStars as the central storage place for program quality data** (including star level, licensing status, accreditation status, RIDE preschool classroom approval status). Clarify state ownership of database. Strengthen resources to encourage program participation and support quality improvement.

7) Establish a **central storage place for data on Rhode Island's early learning workforce** (including demographic , education, compensation/benefit, and turnover/retention data). Build on data collected and systems in place at DCYF, BrightStars, RIDE, and R2LP (TEACH). Consider using licensing data as foundation by requiring programs applying for and renewing a DCYF license to enter/update workforce data in a registry where they can also track annual professional development hours