

Early Childhood Services in Kentucky:

*A framework to ensure school readiness
for our students, schools and communities*



Final report of the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education

Established by Governor Steven L. Beshear

November 2010



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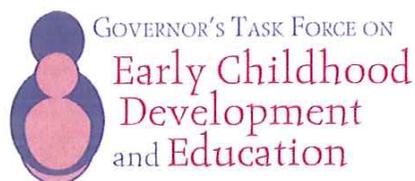
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In memory of Robert F. Sexton

*Executive Director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence,
who believed that all children could learn at high levels and that all parents
could be empowered to help their children's teachers and schools*

1942 - 2010



Nov. 23, 2010

The Honorable Steven L. Beshear
Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky
State Capitol
700 Capitol Avenue
Frankfort, Ky. 40601

Dear Governor Beshear:

The Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education has completed its study of Kentucky's system of early childhood services.

Over the past 20 months, the Task Force met 16 times and provided opportunities for members and the public to participate in four topical sessions. National experts on state governance of early childhood services were consulted along with public and private program and service providers from around the Commonwealth. Kentucky's current system of service delivery was compared with that of states with similar geographic and demographic characteristics as the Task Force explored an extensive array of potential policy options. The Task Force members brought a variety of professional and community experiences to the process. Membership included representatives from the public school system, universities and Head Start; state government agencies including health, education and social service agencies; day care; advocates and community based providers.

This report offers eight recommendations that would serve as an early childhood framework for Kentucky's state agencies, community partners and families to improve early learning experiences and opportunities, helping to ensure school readiness for our children, schools and communities.

These recommendations build on Kentucky's history of innovative early childhood education and development initiatives, from the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) in 1990 to the KIDS NOW initiative and legislation in 2000, to the Beshear administration efforts related to K-CHIP outreach and premium elimination, early childhood oral health and the Transforming Education in Kentucky (TEK) initiative which is focused on reinvigorating public support for K-12 education.

The work of the Task Force provides a unified vision for early childhood education and development in the Commonwealth and a plan of action to establish and strengthen collaboration and coordination across the system.

As co-chairs of the Early Childhood Task Force, we wish to thank the members of the Task Force for giving their thoughtful consideration, time and commitment to the work of the Task Force over the past twenty months. Without their dedication, this report would not have been possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Executive Summary

Recognizing the critical role a child's younger years play in future achievements, Governor Steven L. Beshear created the Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education by Executive Order in February 2009.

While Kentucky has the elements of a comprehensive system of early childhood programs including dedicated service providers, a supportive business community and leaders who recognize the importance of high-quality early childhood experiences, the Governor created the Task Force to bring those components together in order to develop a unified vision for early childhood development policy in the Commonwealth.



Gov. Beshear directed the 28-member Task Force – comprised of stakeholders including public and private child care providers, school system personnel, college professors, businesspeople and state agencies that administer programs for young children – to promote greater collaboration among providers of services to young children and reliance on accepted early learning standards and assessment, to bring a renewed emphasis to quality at all levels and to determine a common understanding and definition of “school readiness.”

Additionally, the Task Force was asked to review the current service delivery system to ensure a more effective use of the public's resources and a successful transition to kindergarten.

Since March 2009, the Task Force met 16 times. Information was solicited and reviewed from local, state and nationally known professionals in the field of early childhood development and education. The Task Force also conducted an inventory of existing early childhood programs and services in Kentucky and developed and compiled recommendations related to defining school readiness, collaboration and quality, including governance, standards, funding and program support.

Finally, the Task Force provided a forum for stakeholder and public input toward creation of Kentucky's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), through the enactment of the Head Start School Readiness Act of 2007¹ whereby Congress authorized the Governor of each state to designate or establish such a council.

Based on its charge by the Governor, the Task Force developed the following definition of school readiness as its mission statement:

School readiness means: Each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success — ready to grow, ready to learn, ready to succeed.

The Task Force recommends that the Governor consider the following steps that would establish school readiness as a value of the early childhood community and prepare children of the Commonwealth for success in school and in life.

Recommendation 1:

Kentucky should adopt and distribute the school readiness definition to local communities, schools, state agencies and early childhood advocates.

Recommendation 2:

Working in cooperation with the ECAC, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) should identify and implement a screening tool for children's transition and entry into kindergarten and coordinate its use with other child assessment requirements.

Recommendation 3:

Kentucky should develop a governance model for the system of early childhood services in the Commonwealth.

Recommendation 4:

Increase opportunities for, and reduce barriers to, collaboration and coordination at all levels of the early childhood system through provision of technical assistance, use of incentives and development of measures to assess and evaluate collaboration and coordination efforts.

Recommendation 5:

Ensure that Early Childhood Standards are widely distributed and used effectively in the programming for high quality child care, early care and preschool programs, Head Start and used across the education community, including postsecondary programs.

Recommendation 6:

Support the work of KDE in the promotion of a model curriculum framework for public preschools and related review of kindergarten standards.

Recommendation 7:

Identify strategies including incentives and other supports to increase participation in the STARS for KIDS NOW program to make it more meaningful to parents.

Recommendation 8:

Strengthen the role of the Community Early Childhood Councils by simplifying the grant process and identifying the needs of each local community to determine support for the local council.

A quality, comprehensive education and development system for our children is the key to Kentucky's economic success in the future. The Task Force recognizes the fiscal constraints the state has faced and continues to face. Despite these economic challenges, the Task Force believes there are opportunities that currently exist and has developed these recommendations which will position the state to move forward in further enhancing Kentucky's early childhood infrastructure.

These recommendations will improve core elements of Kentucky's early childhood system and serve as a framework for Kentucky's state agencies, community partners and families to ensure school readiness for our children, schools and communities.

Introduction

Every child in the Commonwealth from the most rural farm to the inner city deserves the opportunity for a promising life. Kentucky has made incredible strides in providing for the needs of our youngest citizens, but there is much work left to accomplish.

There is mounting evidence that investments in human capital during early childhood have a greater rate of return and prevent societal costs, such as poor high school graduation rates, welfare dependence and crime. It makes economic sense to invest in our children. Research shows a return from \$2 to \$17 for every \$1 put into early childhood programs and services.^{2,3} We also know that the future economic development of our state depends on our ability to educate our next generation, preparing them for the jobs of tomorrow.⁴

Absent a comprehensive national approach to supporting families with young children, states have developed programs and services in response to federal funding opportunities and specific state needs subject to the availability of state funds. The sometimes disconnected nature of the delivery of the services hinders access to them, decreases overall system quality and limits the return on the public's investment in these services.^{5,6}



Kentucky has made a substantial commitment to early childhood development and education, particularly within the last decade. Despite the recent state and national economic downturn, Gov. Beshear has endeavored to protect those prior commitments to children — protecting funding for public schools, increasing the state's outreach efforts in K-CHIP (the state's public health insurance program for children under 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and promoting early childhood oral health.

The Commonwealth has a history of successful, innovative initiatives in the field of early childhood development and education: from Head Start's inception in Kentucky in 1965, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) in 1990, to the KIDS NOW Initiative and legislation in 2000. Additionally, the Head Start Reauthorization Act passed by Congress creates the opportunity for establishing a state Early Childhood Advisory Council.



In recognition of these milestones and in an effort to support greater health, educational attainment, economic success and overall well-being for Kentuckians, Gov. Beshear determined that a comprehensive review of the delivery of early childhood development and education services was both timely and appropriate and established the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education (Task Force)⁷ in February 2009.

Kentucky offers a wide range of services to families and children from prenatal to school entry.⁸ These services are delivered through a variety of state government agencies; local government, health, mental health, and social service entities; non-profit and for-profit providers; and federally funded quasi-government entities.

The Task Force convened its first meeting in March 2009, and met monthly for the past year-and-a-half with members participating in multiple subgroup sessions. During these

sessions, members heard presentations and differing perspectives on social, health and education issues and compared Kentucky's infrastructure and delivery system of early childhood services with that of states across the nation. The Task Force explored a wide range of policy positions on the best practices in governance, funding and program supports.

The Task Force conducted an inventory of Kentucky's early childhood development and education programs and services throughout much of 2009, and released an interim report detailing these programs and services in April 2010. It was the first known report of its kind for Kentucky.

In late 2009 and throughout 2010, the Task Force focused on the development and compilation of its recommendations to address: "greater collaboration among providers of services to young children, quality at all levels from early childcare through kindergarten, agreement on what constitutes school readiness, and reliance on accepted early learning standards and assessment."⁹

Throughout the discussions, the concept of the "whole child" was paramount in that members included the health, socio-emotional, cultural and cognitive aspects of a child and continually acknowledged the importance of the relationships among children, families, schools and communities.

Re-organizing the delivery of early childhood services under a common management structure is appealing at first glance but involves logistical, financial and administrative issues of such significance as to interfere with and impede, rather than improve, the delivery of services. Funding a significant expansion of preschool services is a desirable goal, but one that is unattainable in the current fiscal environment of the Commonwealth.

As the Task Force was conducting its work, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)¹⁰ made funding available to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood education and care programs and services. Funding was made available to states to develop a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007,¹¹ Congress authorized the Governor of each state to designate or establish such a council.

The work of the Task Force provided a forum for stakeholder and public input to inform the creation of Kentucky's Early Childhood Advisory Council. In developing its recommendations, the Task Force recognized this unique opportunity to enable Kentucky to develop and implement a plan established by its ECAC for children from birth to school entry.

Kentucky now has an opportunity to move closer to a seamless delivery system of early childhood services for its children through the implementation of the following recommendations of the Task Force and the continuation of this work through the ECAC.



Recommendations

The recommendations of the Task Force which follow are consistent with the overarching improvement areas outlined in Gov. Beshear's Executive Order:

- agreed upon definition of "school readiness,"
- greater collaboration,
- improved quality of early childhood environment, and
- accepted early learning standards and assessment.

Recommendation 1: Kentucky should adopt the following School Readiness Definition and widely distribute it to local communities, schools, state agencies and early childhood advocates.

School Readiness Definition

Ready to Grow...Ready to Learn...Ready to Succeed

The Task Force recommends that in Kentucky:

School readiness means each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success.

Families, early care and education providers, school staff and community partners must work together to provide environments and developmental experiences that promote growth and learning to ensure that all children in Kentucky enter school eager and excited to learn.

In developing the above recommendation, the Task Force recognized the five developmental areas for school readiness are:

- Approaches to learning;
- Health and physical well-being;
- Language and communication development;
- Social and emotional development; and
- Cognitive and general knowledge.

In addition to the definition of school readiness, the Task Force developed a series of indicators related to the above developmental areas. These readiness indicators provide an overview of the expectations of primary schools for incoming students and provide guidance to families and communities on how to prepare children for school.



Also, a readiness indicator provides teachers, child care providers and parents a tool to better inform them on the specific strengths and needs of each individual child. These indicators represent the hopes and aspirations for incoming students, not the expectations. Children develop at different rates, not every child will have mastered all of the skills and behaviors at the beginning of a primary program.

Health and Physical Well-Being

My child:

- Eats a balanced diet
- Gets plenty of rest
- Receives regular medical and dental care
- Has had all necessary immunizations
- Can run, jump, climb, and does other activities that help develop large muscles and provide exercise
- Uses pencils, crayons, scissors, and paints and does other activities that help develop small muscles

Emotional and Social Preparation

My child:

- Follows simple rules and routines
- Is able to express his or her own needs and wants
- Is curious and motivated to learn
- Is learning to explore and try new things
- Has opportunities to be with other children and is learning to play/share with others
- Is able to be away from parents/family without being upset
- Is able to work well alone
- Has the ability to focus and listen

Language, Math and General Knowledge

My child:

- Uses 5-6 word sentences
- Sings simple songs
- Recognizes and says simple rhymes
- Is learning to write her name and address
- Is learning to count and plays counting games
- Is learning to identify and name shapes and colors
- Has opportunities to listen to and make music and to dance
- Knows the difference between print and pictures
- Listens to stories read to them
- Has opportunities to notice similarities and differences
- Is encouraged to ask questions
- Has his television viewing monitored by an adult
- Understands simple concepts of time (night and day, today, yesterday, tomorrow)
- Is learning to sort and classify objects

NOTE:

*School readiness skills and behaviors are not to be used to determine school eligibility; all children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to a public school education.

**School readiness skills and behaviors are aligned to Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and are designed to be used with the KIDS NOW Early Childhood Parent Guide and were adapted from the Final Report of the National Governors Association Task Force on School Readiness, the Northern Kentucky Council of Partners in Education Kindergarten Readiness pamphlet, the United States Department of Education School Readiness Checklist, the Maryland Model of School Readiness, and the School Readiness in North Carolina Report to the North Carolina State Board of Education.



To support statewide adoption of this “school readiness” definition, the Task Force further recommends the collaborative distribution of the definition by the ECAC through the Kentucky Department of Education and the Department for Community Based Services to local schools and communities across the state, as well as early childhood advocates. Distribution efforts should be integrated into existing marketing, training and technical assistance across state agencies.

Rationale

Although the Commonwealth was at the forefront nationally of early childhood care and education with the work of KIDS NOW and the development of Kentucky’s Early Childhood Standards, Kentucky does not have a statewide definition of school readiness. Definitions of school readiness differ in communities across the Commonwealth.

This lack of a common definition of school readiness can create confusion and impede a community’s ability to assess the developmental and educational needs of its children. A common definition would increase continuity across early care and education programs and increase effectiveness of supports for helping children successfully transition to kindergarten and primary school.

The Task Force reviewed definitions from national and international models in developing its definition of school readiness. This definition addresses the whole child while providing guidance on appropriate student expectations in primary school.

Early childhood community partners can use the school readiness definition to develop and strengthen relationships, communicating the strengths and needs of each individual child to ensure school success. This definition provides the opportunity for coordination across systems at the local, regional and state level and can be used in tandem with a continuous assessment system to provide feedback to schools and the early childhood community.



Recommendation 2: Working in cooperation with the ECAC, the Kentucky Department of Education should identify and implement a screening tool for children's transition and entry into kindergarten and coordinate its use with other child assessment requirements and tools.

An effective, efficient and appropriate screening process is an important component of any early childhood continuous assessment system.¹² Screening tools address all development areas (e.g., social, cognitive, physical) and are used to identify which children are meeting or not meeting developmental milestones.



For children who are not developing at an expected rate, screening results can be used to document a need for more extensive assessment using diagnostic tools that can verify developmental or health risks.^{13,14} Diagnostic assessments are designed to provide specific information on a child's health and developmental status and are typically used to determine eligibility for special services.¹⁵ Screening should be used in combination with ongoing assessment to measure children's progress and support changes in curriculum and instruction.

Kindergarten teachers can use screening as a way to ensure that students who need further diagnostic assessment receive the attention and resources necessary for success in school. Screening tools should not be used to place or group children in a special needs program, drive curriculum, or assess the quality of preschool or early care and education programs.

The appropriate use of screening, assessment and diagnostic tools can be the glue that binds together all the elements of Kentucky's preschool services into a system. A screening tool aligned to the readiness profile in the school readiness definition provides a common tool so that public and private preschool, primary and kindergarten programs, Head Start, and early care and education providers can work together to uncover and meet the needs of the child and the community.

The Task Force recommends analysis of child assessment requirements across early care and education programs, followed by a re-examination of child screening tools currently in use. The ECAC should work with KDE to ensure that local districts and communities understand the differences between screening and assessment and the proper use of each set of tools (i.e., screening, diagnostic and assessment).

Recommendations on Assessments

1. Early child assessment should be a tool for coordination, collaboration and transition across a unified system of early childhood.
2. An assessment should provide information on
 - a. A child's strengths and/or need for further diagnostic assessment;
 - b. The effectiveness of the investments in programs and interventions;
 - c. Tracking the system, areas of preparation;
 - d. Additional feedback to the early childhood community for planning purposes; and
 - e. Chart progress and response to intervention for each child.
3. A working group of the Early Childhood Advisory Council should be established to analyze and provide recommendations on child assessment. Local Community Early Childhood Councils, Head Start, school districts, appropriate higher education partners and KDE should collectively review the number, type and reason for screening and assessment to achieve consensus on a tool and to make sure tools are used to establish a baseline at entry, determine the need for further diagnostic assessment, and chart progress and response to intervention.

Approved assessments should be measurable across the board, engage families as an integral part of the assessment equation, and avoid being punitive to individual children, schools, and early care and education providers. A tool should show a child's growth, be standardized and normed nationally and by age. The work of the advisory council should include:

- a. Define common assessment terms to guarantee consistent use of terminology across systems and a broader understanding of common assessment.
- b. Develop a model framework for all transition points in early childhood, similar to the work being done in college readiness between high schools and colleges, and encourage collaboration.
- c. Define the purpose of a screener at a transition point.
 - Identify the needs of the individual child;
 - Collect data to make programming and policy decisions; and
 - Identify the percentage of students that enter schools ready.
- d. Support a collective decision about either using one screening tool statewide or allowing each region to choose a tool.
 - When choosing an assessment tool, it must be one that looks at the whole child and not just the curriculum.
 - An assessment tool that has a version for younger children would be extremely beneficial in identifying the individual strengths and needs of each child before school entry; enabling the use of positive intervention before kindergarten.
 - An assessment tool must be individually, culturally and linguistically appropriate for each child.
 - A screener should provide resources for children with special needs.
- e. Promote the development of a user-friendly companion guide to the Kentucky Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide to increase understanding of the terminology, application of assessment at the district, regional and state level, and the purpose of assessment.
- f. Develop a system for distribution of screening information to local early childhood communities to provide greater information on the strengths and needs of the community.
- g. Enhance the system of professional development training and support for early childhood care and education providers, KERA preschool teachers and public primary teachers on administering assessments and reading results, and the proper utilization of results, including sharing with families.
- h. Promote the use of professional development funds and community early childhood council grants to purchase assessments and provide training on the assessment tools.

Rationale

The Task Force expressed concern with the number of formal assessments that make up a large part of the kindergarten and primary program years in public schools. While the number and types of assessments vary by district, they play too large a role in the average kindergarten class, undermining and taking the place of learning.

A quality screening can identify the degree to which a child is developing typically or atypically across multiple domains and identify when the child may need further assessment. Using the Head Start model developmental screening can be used to establish a baseline at entry to a program, and chart a child's general developmental progress across time. Screening combined with ongoing assessment can support identification of areas of concern, as well as data to support changes in curriculum and instruction to support a child's optimal growth and development.

The appropriate use of screening can serve to support children's successful transition to school by providing information on the child's developmental status at school entry. Available screening tools are aligned with key dimensions of school readiness addressed in the proposed "school readiness" definition and provide a common tool across public and private preschool, primary and kindergarten programs, Head Start, and early care and education providers.



Schools directly benefit from having children enter the public school system prepared to learn and succeed from having the experiences and environments provided to facilitate their individual growth and development. Early childhood partners, such as preschool and child care can share screening results with kindergarten teachers to provide key information about incoming students' developmental levels to support their successful adjustment to kindergarten, thereby promoting school success.

Screening is an important part of any early child care and education program. This Task Force values the use of a screening tool at transition points such as kindergarten entry. This assessment can provide vital information about the needs of a child, but there is potential for misuse of a screening tool. A screener is a snapshot. If a child is having a bad day, feeling sick, tired, hungry or scared this will not provide an accurate account of his or her development, needs, strengths or attitudes.¹⁶ It cannot be stressed enough that a screener should not be used to place or group children.

Recommendation 3: Develop a governance model for the system of early childhood services.

This Task Force encourages Kentucky to build upon its experience with the Early Childhood Development Authority (ECDA) and take advantage of opportunities presented by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007¹⁷ (a.k.a., the Head Start Reauthorization Act) and federal funding to reorganize, rename and expand the purposes the ECDA to fulfill the responsibilities of the ECAC.

Kentucky's Governance Model and Responsibilities of the ECAC

1. The Governor, by executive order or other appropriate action, should reorganize the Early Childhood Development Authority (ECDA), rename it the Early Childhood Advisory Council, and repurpose it to include the responsibilities of the ECAC as set forth in the Head Start Reauthorization Act.
2. The recommended functions of the reorganized council include:
 - a. Developing and promoting the vision for Kentucky's early childhood system.
 - b. Advocating for improved quality of early childhood services.
 - c. Strengthening state, regional, and local coordination and collaboration among the various sectors and settings of early childhood programs in the state.
 - d. Identifying opportunities for and barriers to coordination and collaboration among existing private, federal and state-funded early childhood programs.
 - e. Conducting periodic statewide needs assessments on the quality and availability of programs and services for children from birth to school entry.
 - f. Developing and implementing recommendations for:
 - I. Increasing overall participation of children in existing federal, state, and local child care and early education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
 - II. The establishment or improvement of core elements of the state early childhood system, such as a statewide unified data collection system;
 - III. A statewide professional development system and career ladder for early childhood educators; and
 - IV. High-quality state early learning standards and undertaking efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.
 - g. Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of institutes of higher education in the state toward supporting the development of early childhood educators.
 - h. Facilitating the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness through one or more of the following activities:
 - I. Promoting school preparedness of children from birth through school entry;
 - II. Supporting professional development, recruitment and retention initiatives for early childhood educators;
 - III. Enhancing existing early childhood education and development programs and services;
 - IV. Requesting reports and issuing progress updates on state and federally funded services that impact the quality of Kentucky's early childhood system;
 - V. Carrying out other activities consistent with the state's plan and application;
 - VI. Establishing priorities for programs and the expenditure of funds that include but are not limited to the following:
 - i. Implementation of public health initiatives identified by the general assembly, including those listed in KRS 211.609 and KRS 199.8945;
 - ii. Provision of preconceptional and prenatal vitamins, with priority on folic acid for the prevention of neural tube defects;
 - iii. Voluntary immunization for children not covered by public or private health insurance;
 - iv. Expanding availability of high-quality, affordable early child-care and education options; and
 - v. Increasing public awareness of the importance of the early childhood years for the well being of all Kentucky's citizens;
 - vi. Establishing procedures for accountability and measurement of the success of programs that receive funds from the ECAC.

3. The council should be attached for organizational purposes to the Office of the Governor.
4. The suggested membership of the ECAC would have private and public representation that represents the key stakeholders and community partners in early childhood. A majority of its members would be appointed from outside state government. It is recommended that Kentucky's ECAC be limited to no more than 30 members. The membership of the ECAC is suggested to include the following:
 - a. The Secretary of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, or his/her designee;
 - b. The Secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, or his/her designee;
 - c. An early childhood development advocate;
 - d. State Director of Head Start Collaboration;
 - e. Seven private sector members knowledgeable about health, mental health, education and development of children, prenatal to school entry, who would be appointed by the Governor. At least one person should be appointed from each congressional district. Consumers and families may be considered for these positions if they have the appropriate knowledge base;
 - f. Three citizens at-large of the Commonwealth who would be appointed by the Governor;
 - g. One nonvoting ex-officio member from the House of Representatives who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House;
 - h. One nonvoting ex-officio member from the Senate who would be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the President of the Senate;
 - i. Six persons representing the following: Head Start located in the state, local education agencies, state agency responsible for education, state agency responsible for child care, state agency responsible for Part C of IDEA, and state agency responsible for health or mental health.
5. The Governor would have the ability to appoint additional members.
6. The chair or co-chairs of the council would be voluntary positions filled from the private or nonprofit sector.
7. The chairs should have the authority to appoint non-members of the council to subcommittees or work groups of the council.
8. The council would continue to receive the funding provided to the ECDA and should have the authority to request and receive funds from federal, philanthropic sources, private funds, and state funds.
9. Each council member would be subject to the Governor's Executive Order on Executive Branch Ethics (Amended Order Relating to Executive Branch Ethics. 2009). Issues concerning conflicts of interest must be submitted to the Executive Branch Ethics Commission for resolution.



Rationale:

During the 2000 General Assembly, legislation (HB 583)¹⁸ was enacted that dedicated 25 percent of the proceeds from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to the early childhood development fund.

The Early Childhood Development Authority is statutorily charged with developing a state plan on a biennial basis that identifies early childhood development funding priorities.¹⁹ This funding has supported the KIDS NOW initiative which includes a focus on assuring maternal and child health, supporting families, and enhancing early care and education. Programs included in the KIDS NOW initiative function across multiple state agencies and cabinets.

ARRA²⁰ made funding available to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood programs and services through the development of a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Kentucky's ECAC presents the opportunity to establish a unified and comprehensive early childhood development and education system of state-level management for the provision of services for children prenatal to school entry. The council will continually assess and advocate for the needs of children, families and communities; promote accountability of programs in early childhood services for children prenatal to school entry, and provide research and guidance on issues that affect Kentucky's children and families.



The envisioned purposes of the Commonwealth's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC or council) are to provide vision, leadership, oversight, collaboration, advocacy and accountability for the delivery of early childhood services to children. The ultimate focus of the delivery of services is school readiness and child success.²¹

The ECAC will expand on the collaborative efforts of the KIDS NOW initiative and will have the authority to work across cabinet, government and sector lines. The ECAC will have the ability to make recommendations to elected officials, cabinet secretaries, educators and program directors in early childhood.

Establishing an ECAC provides the opportunity for a unified vision of early childhood development and education and a coherent system of state-level management. The council would be able to advocate for the needs of children and families, promote accountability of programs in early childhood and provide research and guidance on issues that affect Kentucky's children and families.

Recommendation 4: Increase opportunities for, and reduce barriers to, collaboration and coordination at all levels of the early childhood system through provision of technical assistance, use of incentives and development of measures to assess and evaluate collaboration/coordination efforts.

The Task Force recommends that the ECAC encourage increased coordination across the spectrum of early childhood programs and services at the state and local levels. Additionally, the Task Force recommends the ECAC periodically survey, using a trained and experienced researcher, collaboration and coordination efforts to determine effectiveness and identify opportunities.

Rationale

Numerous state programs in multiple state agencies and cabinets administer existing early childhood programs creating a fragmented system that is confusing to many. Different state and federal funding requirements make program alignment and effective communication difficult.

The competing missions of funding sources, differing rules, standards and processes, ownership and responsibilities create significant barriers to collaboration and coordination of state, regional and local-level programs and services. Further threat is posed by current economic conditions that strain public and private resources. Additionally, the culture of each community can curtail or enhance collaboration and coordination. Effective tools to address the needs of communities and, later, to determine accomplishments made on behalf of the communities and the state are not readily available.

Collaboration among the policy and provider agencies is essential to realizing the maximum benefit for the public's investment in early childhood services.

The Task Force used a survey (Appendix B) concerning collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs and services in an effort to engage a broad array of early childhood providers and practitioners across Kentucky. Though informal in many aspects, the survey results confirmed experiences and observations of the Task Force members and stimulated study of existing collaborative and coordinating efforts and discussions regarding possible strategies for greater collaboration and coordination.



See Appendix B for complete survey results.

The ECAC promises a structure to formally address collaboration and coordination barriers in Kentucky through its position within the state system and implementation of its proposed strategic plan. The ECAC is purposed to act as a liaison between federal, state and local officials in an effort to foster resolution, common ground, the maximization of resources, and progress with a more comprehensive and cohesive system of early care and education. The planning dedicated to the ECAC will ensure that the ECAC is not negatively impacted by known barriers to collaboration and coordination, but can rise to meet these barriers in an effort to develop a more comprehensive and cohesive system of early care and education.

Strategies to Strengthen Collaboration and Coordination

The Task Force suggests implementing the following strategies to strengthen the value system for collaboration and coordination, developing the capacities of communities regardless of its size and re-orienting funding priorities to encourage collaboration and coordination.

1. Study existing models to incorporate values and best practice approaches into a model framework for early childhood collaboration and coordination. Suggested models for study and/or further expansion include:
 - a. The Community Early Childhood Councils;
 - b. The Madison County Schools Early Childhood Alliance, a group of public and private community organizations working together to assist with the development of young children and the promotion of high-quality preschool services regardless of preschool provider type; and
 - c. The Family Resource and Youth Service Centers.
2. Enhance the skill level of community partners through dissemination of best practices, ongoing training and technical assistance to help communities tailor the model framework for early childhood collaboration and coordination, and promote the ongoing use of collaboration and coordination to expand services to targeted populations through common ground, shared goals and reduced duplication of efforts.
3. Establish the demonstration of collaboration and coordination with other early care and education providers as a condition of funding or grant eligibility. In particular, encourage the incorporation of a collaboration and coordination condition in a budget bill or other set aside if and when additional appropriations are made for the expansion of state-funded preschool or other early care and education program(s).
4. Develop measures to assess and evaluate collaboration and coordination efforts. Having a measurement of collaboration and coordination efforts will reinforce activities, directions and future decision making; hold partners accountable; and provide evidence of progress, a critical component to maintaining the investment of community partners.
5. Conduct a formal survey, directed by a trained and experienced researcher, at regular intervals in future years to measure the status and needs of collaboration and coordination efforts among early childhood programs and services. These surveys will evaluate past and ongoing practices and provide justification and rationale for new approaches or directions.



Recommendation 5: Ensure that Early Childhood Standards are widely distributed and used effectively in the programming for high quality child care, early care and preschool programs and Head Start and are used across the education community, including postsecondary programs.

First developed in 2003, the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards represent specific learning standards for children from birth through 4 years of age. These standards are designed as a framework to assist parents, early care and education professionals, administrators and others in understanding what children should know and be able to do at intervals from birth through 4 years of age.



The ECAC should work in partnership with KDE, the Department for Community Based Services and Head Start to ensure that: a) high quality training is provided on the standards; b) that standards are widely distributed and marketed; and, c) that colleges and universities and other professional development programs provide training and information in early childhood and primary education courses about the standards and how to effectively use them.

This recommendation reaffirms the work of the early child community and the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood (1999) in the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards. This work was revolutionary at the time and is now being reproduced in states across the country.

Rationale

These standards were developed to support early childhood professionals across the state in understanding appropriate expectations for children from birth through 4 years of age. Using the standards

as a guide, programs can provide children with appropriate experiences to support their overall growth, development and learning. To foster and promote family-professional communications and collaborations, the Parent Guides to the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards is an excellent resource to help families support their children's development by introducing them to the standards, what they mean and examples of ways to help children develop important skills.

This recommendation serves as a plan of action to improve the overall ability of Kentucky's early childhood programs to provide the environment and experiences that will facilitate the school readiness of all Kentucky's children. Greater knowledge of the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and increased use will lead to more children in Kentucky entering school eager, excited and prepared to learn.

Recommendations on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards

These recommendations provide the implementation strategy to prepare each child in the Commonwealth to enter school ready to benefit from early learning experiences.

Use and Promotion of Standards

1. The Field Guide to the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards provides information on the best ways to meet the developmental and learning needs of young children, but it is difficult to use. The next edition should simplify the standards and examples of activities for families
2. Ensure that Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards are widely used.
3. Early childhood curriculum should connect to the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.

System of Training

1. Create a seamless system of collaborative early childhood professional development approach for Head Start, kindergarten and primary program teachers, public school administration, and early education and care providers so that the standards are used cohesively and with greater collaboration.
2. Implement a training program on partnering with parents on the use of the Early Childhood Standards Parent Guide for child care directors, trainers, the allied health field, KERA preschool teachers, and primary program staff and administrators, among other community partners such as postsecondary education elementary education faculty and administration.

Access to Training

1. Develop a training module on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards for all audiences.
2. Involve early childhood community partners such as private care and education programs, church programs, YMCA, Head Start, KERA preschool and primary program teachers, Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, and higher education faculty and administration in collaborative professional development around the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.
3. Budget public resources more effectively and pool together with the nonprofit sector to meet the training needs of the early childhood community.
4. Create an online open courseware to help develop a course catalog for early childhood professional development and provide a resource for trainers.

Quality of Training

1. Develop a consistent, quality structure for standards training and credential programs across the Commonwealth. Currently, quality and rigor of programs vary greatly.
2. Create a differentiated professional development framework plan (career ladder) and hours for directors and staff of early education and care centers to meet their specific needs.
3. Implement a training module on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards for directors and a mandated orientation for staff on standards within the first two years of employment to increase awareness and usage of the standards.

Recommendation 6: Support the work of the Kentucky Department of Education in the promotion of a model curriculum framework for public preschools and related review of kindergarten standards.

KDE should develop a model P-12 curriculum framework for dissemination to local Kentucky districts and schools by June 2011, and the ECAC must support this work. The framework should identify teaching and assessment strategies, instructional resources, a directory of model teaching sites, alternative use of school time, ideas on how to incorporate community resources and strategies to include character education throughout curriculum.

Focus should be on the cross-curricular and cross-level competencies and perspectives that districts and school-level personnel need to keep in mind as they develop their local curricula. KDE should determine what cross-curricular competencies should be included and how to keep them from “falling through the cracks” as attention is focused on subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills.



As KDE works to develop a model curriculum framework for public preschool, the alignment of preschool curriculum and kindergarten standards should be reviewed and specified. At the local and state level, the integration of public preschool into the P-12 structure has been slow and fragmented in many communities. This alignment would be a positive step to address the need for communication, collaboration and coordination between preschool and primary transition points. Local districts must be involved and consulted in the process.

It is important to note that the Early Childhood Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods. What students can learn at any particular grade level depends upon what they have previously learned; therefore, educators should make every effort to meet the needs of individual students based on their current understanding.

Rationale

The development of a model curriculum framework for public preschool aligned to kindergarten standards will serve to fully integrate preschool into the P-12 spectrum. On an individual level, this will ensure that the educational needs for kindergarten are met.

On a national level, Kentucky is participating in discussions on possible common early childhood standards. Working with the Common Core Initiatives and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) allows Kentucky to align expectations for learning with other states. It also gives the Commonwealth access to content experts from across the country in the development phase of the standards and reduces costs associated with development.

Recommendation 7: Identify strategies including incentives and other supports to increase participation in the STARS for KIDS NOW program to make it more meaningful to parents.

The STARS for KIDS NOW Program (STARS) is a voluntary, quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care providers and certified family child care homes. It was created as a result of House Bill 706²² enacted during the 2000 General Assembly. STARS is a four-level system that establishes quality standards above and beyond those required for child care provider licensure or certification and offers rewards and incentives to child care providers who apply and meet a STARS quality-rating level. Technical assistance to achieve quality indicators is incorporated within STARS.

The Task Force recommends increasing incentives and support to programs and public awareness of STARS as a way to encourage providers to participate. Specific efforts should be implemented to educate families so that when they are choosing child care, they will use the STARS designation as a tool.

The Task Force adopted the products developed by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Early Childhood Development Authority, Quality subgroup as possible strategies for achieving its recommendation. The Task Force also added another possible strategy for enhancing the overall quality of child care: make STAR level 1 mandatory for child care provider licensure and certification. The January 2010 changes to the child care licensure administrative regulation making the minimal operating standards more rigorous and better aligned with a STAR Level 1 rating. The Department for Community Based Services should work with its partners, including KDE and ECAC, to actualize the recommendation and corresponding strategies, as enhancements in the quality of child care.



See Appendices C and D for the referenced strategies.

Rationale

The recommendation and corresponding strategies for STARS proposed by the Task Force affirm the state's current quality-rating system for child care and identify and incorporate new opportunities to support participation in STARS. Additionally, they display the varied perspectives of the Task Force members, from academicians, educators, health and social service practitioners.

They provide the integral steps necessary to enhance the quality of Kentucky's child care community and services to its consumers. The costs of the recommended strategies can be adapted to public and private capacities over time.

Recommendation 8: Strengthen the role of Community Early Childhood Councils by simplifying the grant process and identifying the needs of each local community to determine support for the local council.

Community Early Childhood Councils (CECC) address the unique needs and strengths of local communities related to early childhood. CECCs are a vehicle for bringing together community members to support issues of importance to children and families.^{23,24} KIDS NOW has designated a CECC service area as being no smaller than a county, with counties having the option to partner with other counties to form a council.



CECCs were designed to encourage local communities to establish and strengthen relationships, collaboration and coordination between early education and care providers, schools and the community as a whole, involving individuals from a cross-section of the community who can foster efforts to improve outcomes for young children and families.

CECCs use new and existing relationships within communities to build and sustain supports for early childhood development and learning. Quality improvements are supported by seed money that may be applied for and disbursed by the Early Childhood Authority.

To strengthen the role of Community Early Childhood Councils:

1. The ECAC should simplify the request for the application (RFA) process for councils.
2. The ECAC should fund fewer seed grants at larger amounts to encourage the initial development or growth of councils.
3. As a part of the RFA process, the ECAC should require councils to
 - a. Conduct a needs assessments;
 - b. Use funding as a seed grant;
 - c. Have certain members as a part of the council makeup (essential partners), through providing priority points on the grant application for membership including Head Start, school personnel, and private child care providers;
 - d. Demonstrate measures of success; and
 - e. Demonstrate sustainability of the project if appropriate.

Rationale

These recommendations are an important step toward greater collaboration at the community level between private and public child care and preschool providers and schools. Communication between school personnel and child care and preschool providers is an integral part of ensuring our children are ready for school and that their individual needs are met. The councils will act as an infrastructure to meet the needs of families and children locally.

Endnotes

- ¹ Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 Section 635. <http://www.head-start.lane.or.us/administration/regulations/42USC9801.Sec635.html>.
- ² Strong Start Kentucky: Investing in Quality Early Care & Education to Ensure Future Success. Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. (October 2007). Lexington, Kentucky.
- ³ Grunewald, R. & Rolnick, A.J. (2003). Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return. *fedGazette*. Retrieved September 1, 2010, from http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/pub_display.cfm?id=1839.
- ⁴ Knudsen, E.I., Heckman, J.J., Cameron, J.L., & Shonkoff, J.P. (2006). Economic, neurobiological, and behavioral perspectives on building America's future workforce. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science U.S.A.*, 103, 10155-10162. Retrieved September 1, 2010, from <http://www.pnas.org/content/103/27/10155>.
- ⁵ Bruner, C., Wright, M. S., Gebhard, B., & Hibbard, S. (2004). *Building an Early Learning System: The ABCs of Planning and Governance Structures*. Des Moines, Iowa: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network.
- ⁶ Satkowski, C. (November 2009). *The Next Step in Systems-Building: Early Childhood Advisory Councils and Federal Efforts to Promote Policy Alignment in Early Childhood*. www.EarlyEdWatch.org: New America Foundation.
- ⁷ Amended Order Relating to the Establishment of the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education, # 2009 0232 (March 13, 2009).
- ⁸ Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education. (2010). Interim Report of the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood. Frankfort, Kentucky: Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.
- ⁹ Amended Order Relating to the Establishment of the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education, # 2009 0232 (March 13, 2009).
- ¹⁰ American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (P.L. 111-5) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:l:/temp/~c111YV47e1:e789>:
- ¹¹ Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 Section 635. <http://www.head-start.lane.or.us/administration/regulations/42USC9801.Sec635.html>.
- ¹² Rous, B. & Townley, K. (2006). *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide*. Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education.
- ¹³ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010, January 14). Retrieved June 16, 2010, from [www.ccsso.org: http://www.ccsso.org/projects/SCASS/projects/early_childhood_education_assessment_consortium/publications_and_products/2917.cfm#Definition](http://www.ccsso.org/projects/SCASS/projects/early_childhood_education_assessment_consortium/publications_and_products/2917.cfm#Definition).
- ¹⁴ Meisels, S.J. & Provence, S. (1989). *Screening and Assessment: Guidelines For Identifying Young Disabled Children and Their Families*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Clinical Infant Program.
- ¹⁵ Rous, B. & Townley, K. (2006). *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide*. Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education.
- ¹⁶ NAECS/SDE, N. &. (2003). *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth Through Age 8*. Washington, D.C.: NAYEC.

¹⁷ Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 Section 635. <http://www.head-start.lane.or.us/administration/regulations/42USC9801.Sec635.html>.

¹⁸ Kentucky House Bill 583 (2000) <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recarch/00rs/HB583.htm>.

¹⁹ KRS 200.703 Duties of the Early Childhood Development Authority, <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/krs/200-00/703.pdf>.

²⁰ American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (P.L. 111–5) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:1:/temp/~c111YV47e1:e789>:

²¹ Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education. (2010). Interim Report of the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood. Frankfort, Kentucky: Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

²² Kentucky House Bill 706 (2000) <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recarch/00rs/HB706.htm>.

²³ KRS 200.703 Duties of the Early Childhood Development Authority, <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/krs/200-00/703.pdf>.

²⁴ KRS 200.707 Community Early Childhood Councils. <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/krs/200-00/707.pdf>

Appendices

APPENDIX A



STEVEN L. BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Secretary of State
Frankfort
Kentucky

2009-154
February 19, 2009

**RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

WHEREAS, Kentucky is committed to the educational success, health and welfare of its children; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky has made substantial commitments to improving the provision of early childhood development and education services through the KIDS NOW programs funded through Kentucky's tobacco settlement proceeds, the KERA pre-school program, and several other initiatives aimed at improving child and maternal health, child development, and school readiness; and

WHEREAS, research shows that investment in high quality early childhood education results in later academic success; and

WHEREAS, the expansion of child health programs and high quality educational opportunities are prerequisites to achieving more meaningful readiness for Kindergarten and ultimate success thereafter; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky's system of early childhood development and education should recognize, incorporate and value the continuing role of private child care providers and private early childhood education providers, both not-for-profit and for-profit; and further recognizes that the delivery of early childhood development and education services crosses the boundaries of several different government sectors; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that a comprehensive review of the delivery of early childhood development and education services is appropriate to ensure a more effective use of the public's resources, greater collaboration among the wide variety of early childhood development and education providers, and an effective transition to Kindergarten:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steven L. Beshear, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the Commonwealth, and KRS 12.029, do hereby Order and Direct the following:

1. There is hereby created and established the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education ("Task Force") which shall be responsible for reviewing the delivery of early childhood development and education services in Kentucky and recommending improvements to the system to accomplish:
 - Greater collaboration among providers of services to young children
 - Quality at all levels from early childcare through kindergarten
 - Agreement on what constitutes school readiness



STEVEN L. BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Secretary of State
Frankfort
Kentucky

2009-154
February 19, 2009

- Reliance on accepted early learning standards and assessment
2. The Task Force will be attached to the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet for administrative purposes.
 3. The duties of the Task Force shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Develop a unified vision for early childhood education and development incorporating all aspects of the early childhood, development and education systems.
 - b. Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs.
 - c. Define "school readiness".
 - d. Revalidate early childhood standards and identify ways to ensure they are widely understood and used effectively in the programming for high quality early care and pre-school programs and used across education, Head Start and child care.
 - e. Examine the STARS program for child care programs and recommend ways to enhance its effectiveness to promote improved quality of child care programs and to make it a more useful and effective tool for parents.
 - f. Analyze child assessment requirements and needs; re-examine the Kentucky recommended assessment tools and win broader understanding of and common acceptance by child care, pre-school programs and kindergartens.
 - g. Work with the Kentucky Department of Education to urge adoption of a model curriculum framework for the KERA pre-schools and to review kindergarten standards.
 - h. Identify ways to strengthen the role of the Community Early Childhood Councils.
 - i. Recommend a coherent system of state level management for the effective provision of early child development and education services for children ages birth to six.
 4. The co-chairs of the Task Force shall be: Secretaries Helen Mountjoy and Janie Miller.



STEVEN L. BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

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Frankfort
Kentucky

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5. Non-state employee members shall be eligible to receive actual and reasonable travel expenses.
6. The Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, the Personnel Cabinet and the Finance and Administration Cabinet shall take all steps necessary to implement the provisions of this Order.
7. I hereby appoint the following to serve as members of the Commission:

Helen Mountjoy (Co-Chair)
Secretary
Education and Workforce Dev. Cabinet
500 Mero Street, 3rd Floor
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Janie Miller (Co-Chair)
Secretary
Cabinet for Health & Family Services
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STEVEN L. BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Secretary of State
Frankfort
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Department for Public Health
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Judith M. Jerald
108 Oak Street
Brattleboro Vermont

Please issue Commissions to them.

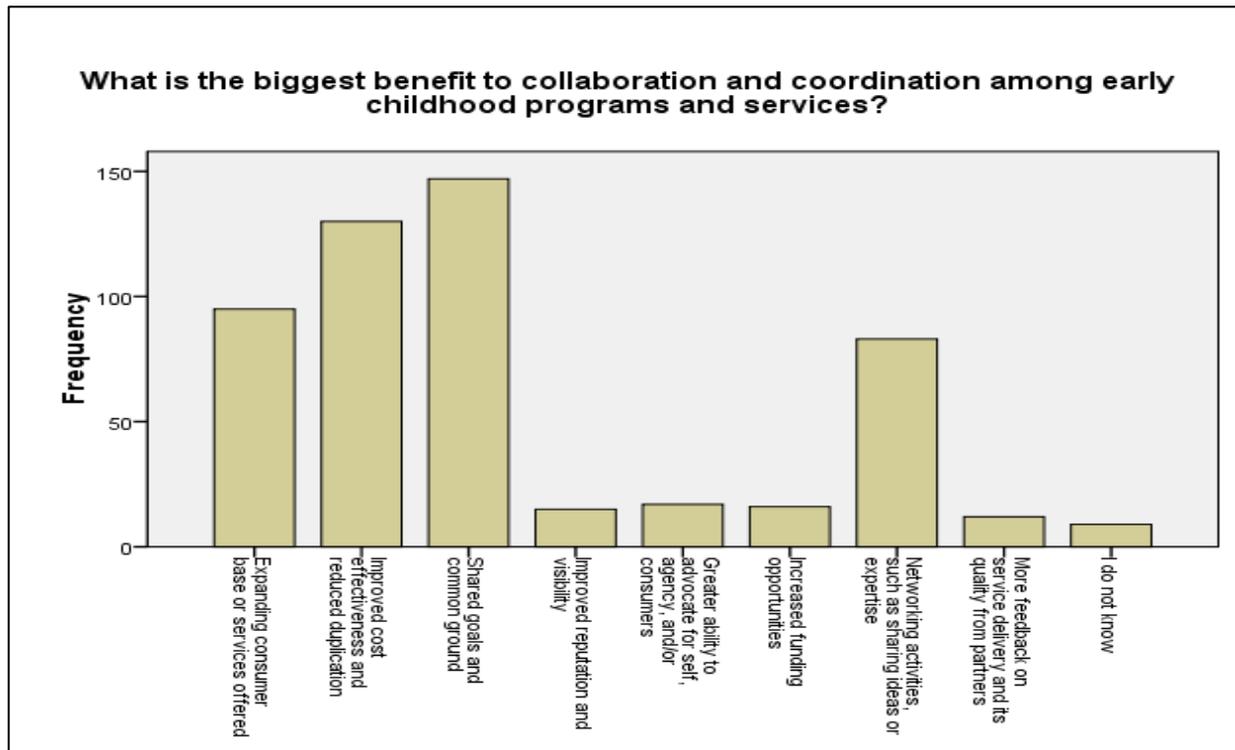

TREY GRAYSON
Secretary of State


STEVEN L. BESHEAR, Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky

APPENDIX B

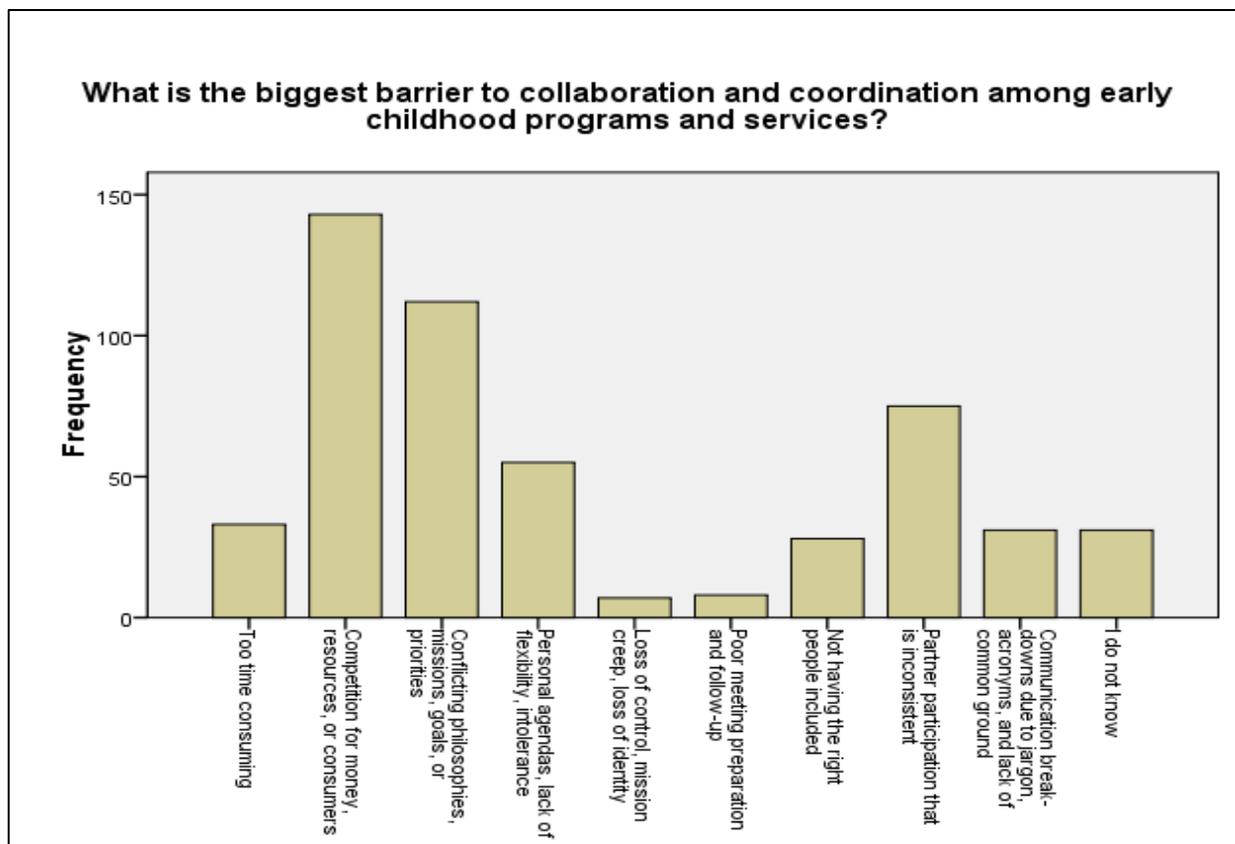
Collaboration and Coordination Survey Findings¹

1. What is the biggest benefit to collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs and services?
 - Shared goals and common ground (28%)
 - Improved cost effectiveness and reduced duplication (25%)
 - Expanding consumer base and services offered (18%)
 - Networking activities, such as sharing ideas or expertise (16%)
 - Greater ability to advocate for self, agency, and/or consumers (3%)



¹Content for this survey was taken from:
 Homan, M.S. (1994). Promoting Community Change: Making It Happen in the Real World. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

2. What is the biggest barrier to collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs and services?
- Competition for money, resources, or consumers (27%)
 - Conflicting philosophies, missions, goals, or priorities (21%)
 - Partner participation that is inconsistent (14%)
 - Personal agendas, lack of flexibility, intolerance (11%)
 - Too time consuming (6%)



3. What would improve collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs and services in your community?
- Regular and consistent communication (25%)
 - A strong driver of the collaboration or coordination (20%)
 - More cross-training or reference materials to start everyone on the same page (16%)
 - More support from the state system (15%)
 - A plan to hold people accountable (10%)
4. How could state agencies best support collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs and services in your community? (Top 5)
- Including more local early childhood partners in state-level policy and program development (21%)
 - Developing a strategic plan for Kentucky's early childhood programs and services (19%)
 - Building common data systems or systems that can speak to each other across programs (19%)
 - Offering more guidance to local communities (10%)
 - Sharing practice and research across the state, among communities (9%)

5. Who is missing most from the collaboration and coordination efforts among early childhood programs and services in your community? (Top 7)
- Parents/Families- 12%
 - Local Government- 11%
 - Faith Organizations- 9%
 - Private Sector or Business Consumers- 9%
 - Child Care and Pre-school Providers- 7%
 - Schools- 6%
 - Researchers- 6%
6. What would most improve communication among early childhood programs and services? (Top 5)
- A model protocol for communities to offer communication and resource guidance (24%)
 - A state agency responsible for statewide communication, organization, and advocacy (21%)
 - More information sharing and communication meetings (19%)
 - Greater recognition for best practice and accomplishments (15%)
 - A state Internet site for networking and news (14%)
7. What would most improve collaboration and coordination meetings among early childhood programs and services? (Top 5)
- Including the right people (30%)
 - A state-level resource to help guide and direct communities (24%)
 - Using more technology as an alternative to face-to-face meetings (14%)
 - Greater statewide communication about meetings and events (14%)
 - Identifying state- and community-level meeting facilitators (12%)
8. Additional Comments:
A total of 103 open response comments were collected from survey participants. Commentary highlights include:
- “I do not see collaboration becoming a long-term reality until there are both ‘sticks and carrots’ around collaboration.”
 - “With state budget cuts and participants being stretched thinner and thinner, participation in many areas has reduced drastically.”
 - “It is crucial that health promotion, poverty reduction and child abuse/neglect prevention efforts be a cornerstone of any effective early childhood initiative.”
 - “Agencies need incentives - something that makes the work of collaboration worth the time and energy. That could include increased funding or recognition or both. Community leaders also need good examples, information about the advantages and challenges of collaborating. School leaders need information showing the benefits that lead to closing achievement gaps.”
 - “Early childhood programs have got to include more academics in their curriculum. The State of KY currently only allows programs to be social developmental and this is causing students to be behind when they enter Kindergarten.”
 - “Early Childhood Education is the most important of all, as it sets the tone for a child’s whole school career; if the first experience is negative it can affect that child for life. Conversely, if a child has a very positive and developmentally appropriate first educational experience, it will set them on a lifetime path to success. Unfortunately, America devotes the least of our educational resources towards ECE/Child Care. Most often those who are caring for and educating our youngest, most vulnerable citizens are the lowest paid and educated of all teachers/educators. ECE is the most physically and emotionally demanding job in education yet these educators receive very little recognition or recompense for their considerable efforts.”
9. In what region of the state do you work most?
- West Kentucky- 19%
 - East Kentucky- 18%
 - North Central Kentucky- 29%
 - South Central Kentucky- 26%
 - Statewide- 8%

10. What practitioner or provider type are you?

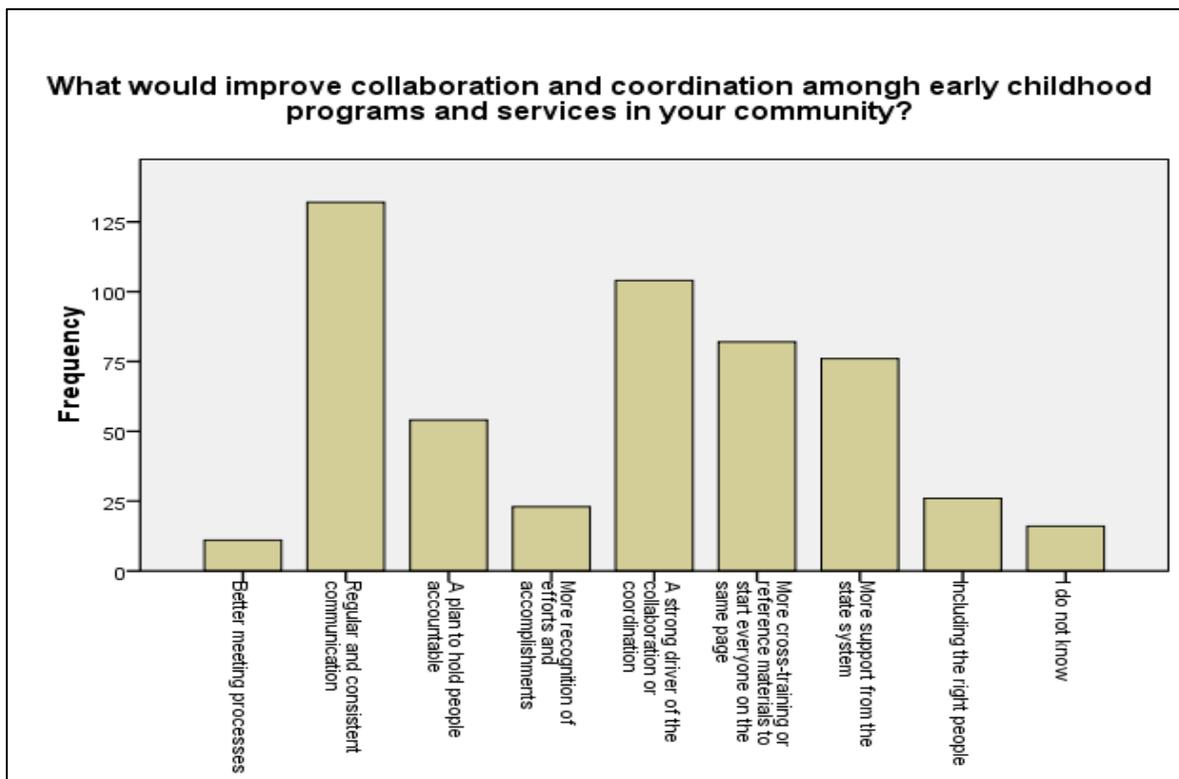
- Child Care Operator- 6.9% (36)
- Pre-school Teacher- 1.5% (8)
- Kindergarten Teacher- .2% (1)
- Elementary Principal- 9.9% (52)
- Secondary Principal- 2.7% (14)
- Superintendent- 11.2% (59)
- School Board Member-12.8% (67)
- State Administrator- 5.1% (27)
- CECC member- 8.2% (43)
- Local Health Dept- 7.6% (40)
- Behavioral Health, Intellectual, or Developmental Disabilities Provider- 6.3% (33)
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency- 2.7% (14)
- Head Start Director- .4% (2)
- Academician or Researcher 2.9% (15)
- Other- 21.5% (113)

11. How long have you worked as this provider or practitioner type?

- Less than 1 Year- 3%
- 1 to 5 Years- 24%
- 5 to 10 years- 29%
- More than 10 Years- 43%

12. Please rate your level of experience with collaboration and coordination.

- No Opportunity- 8%
- Little Experience- 17%
- Some Experience- 36%
- Years of Experience- 39%



APPENDIX C

STARS for KIDS Now Strategies: Adopted from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services

The duty of the Task Force was divided into two groups to reflect: (1) STARS strategies to promote improved quality child care programs, and (2) STARS strategies to make it a more useful and effective tool for parents. Under each group, the presentation of the strategies shows current initiatives, short-term efforts, and those that will require more time and shared resources. The strategies do not include detail of their implementation; rather, they represent a vision based upon current assumptions and best practice. To support their sustainability, they allow for flexibility to adapt to national and state circumstances and to integrate findings as implementation progresses.

Grouping 1: STARS Strategies to Promote Improved Quality Child Care Programs

1. Make program improvements to recruit and retain more child care providers in STARS:

- a) Examine STARS standards and incentives to improve alignment and meet the financial support necessary for child care providers to achieve and maintain quality. Possible options may include a study of average overhead costs for providers as they increase their STARS rating, and incentive packages to assist child care providers in their efforts to move to, or maintain, a higher STARS level.
- b) Continue the role of the STARS Advisory Council through recommendations regarding child care providers' roles in issues such as pediatric obesity, minority and income disparity, injury prevention, early childhood mental health, oral health, disabilities, and early childhood education and assessment.
- c) Analyze and be responsive to, the results or findings of:
 - I. The KIDS Now Study, which includes an evaluation of the rapid implementation of key KIDS Now components (i.e., Healthy Start, Scholarship and STARS programs);
 - II. The evaluation of STARS focused on processes and practices, inclusive of efficiencies, duplication, barriers, and recommendations; and
 - III. Any national quality rating system(s) evaluation, as it becomes available.
- d) Increase collaboration among the Cabinet for Health and Family Services' organizational units and other partners to improve efficiencies for the state and streamline process requirements for child care providers. Possible options may include alignment of the operational standards (i.e., health and safety requirements) across Head Start, child care, public preschool, and STARS to facilitate the development of collaborative models across the state.

2. Support the longevity and expansion of STARS and quality improvements in child care:

- a) Explore methods which result in increased STARS participation of child care providers who serve a significant share of children receiving federally funded child care assistance.
- b) Study other funding opportunities to continue and increase incentives for the participation of child care providers in STARS. Possible options include tax credits, private partnerships or philanthropy, non-state funding sources.
- c) Examine STARS for the inclusion of registered child care providers.
- d) Engage community stakeholders and families as advocates for, and active partners in, achieving quality child care.
- e) Explore other state programs' child/family assessments and supports (e.g., technology, training, and technical assistance) as possible resources for child care providers.

3. Address unique subpopulations within the child care community:

- a) Review Kentucky's capacity to increase and support the number of highly specialized professionals involved in quality child care with specific emphasis on infant/toddler care.
- b) Explore ways STARS-rated child care providers can receive additional supports for children with disabilities in their care and recognition for their integration of children with disabilities, their families, and other service providers as means to enhance the exposures and experiences of all children.
- c) Build partnerships with early intervention, pre-school, educational, and other health and social services programs to foster the inclusion of child care providers in individualized planning efforts on behalf of children and their educational goals.

4. Build the rationale for future programmatic directions:

- a) Monitor national progress around the development of reliable and valid tools for measuring quality in child care, including measurements of the interactions within the child care setting.
- b) Encourage the integration of data from multiple sources (e.g., health, child care, and Infinite Campus) into longitudinal datasets and analyses that can inform decisions concerning STARS and identify correlations amongst STARS participation, school-readiness, and overall child/student outcomes.

Grouping 2: Strategies to Make STARS a More Useful and Effective Tool for Parents**1. Improve families' understanding of quality child care:**

- a) Continue to train from and distribute field guides to the Early Childhood Standards developed for child care providers and parents.
- b) Enhance outreach through a consumer awareness campaign to inform parents about child enrichment, the value of quality child care, and STARS.
- c) Enhance technologies through online resources to increase public awareness of, and parental access to, child care provider information.

2. Acknowledge and empower families as active participants in their children's care and the quality of that care:

- a) Review child care provider training and current STARS standards to strengthen parental involvement.
- b) Support a more family-driven care model (e.g., parental feedback through child observations, questionnaire, online rating, and provider evaluation; family contribution to provider hiring and decision-making; parent-to-parent advocacy; and providers' capacities to engage in continuous quality improvement).

APPENDIX D

STARS for KIDS Now Strategies: Adopted from the Observations and Recommendations Developed by the Quality Subgroup of the Early Childhood Development Authority

Observations

Members of the Early Childhood Development Authority have reviewed the STARS for KIDS Now Program (STARS), a voluntary quality rating system for licensed and certified child care providers. The work group believes that the STARS framework is still the right one and positively correlates to higher quality with higher STARS. There is a need to increase voluntary participation in STARS throughout Kentucky.

There have been a number of administrative disincentives to participation in STARS. Most of those have now been addressed by Department for Community Based Services, Division of Child Care. They have established a new rating process that addresses challenges in timing, duplication, and discrepancies between licensing and STARS rating. There is now a need to educate child care providers about improvements in the process.

Beyond administrative challenges, the biggest barrier to participation in STARS and especially to achieving a higher STARS rating, is financial. It takes money to implement and maintain high quality programs for early care and education. While the committee has been unable to identify the exact cost increases, directors say that after a Level 2 STARS, the costs are prohibitive. Providing incentives such as materials, training and scholarships could help increase participation.

And finally, beyond providers, parents have a primary role in demanding high quality programs for their children. Increasing public awareness of STARS would drive parent demand and increase the likelihood that programs would participate. Current attitudes are often, "Well, I am full and I'm not rated so what is in it for me?" When parents use the STARS rating as a basis for making decisions about which competing provider to use, programs will want to participate in STARS.

Strategy 1:

Identify a maximum of five pilot communities to conduct an extensive promotion of STARS.

To promote STARS, it is recommended that communities be informed about high quality child care options, as well as the system that Kentucky utilizes to promote high quality. This strategy has three distinct parts that are outlined below.

- 1. Provide incentives for participation in a sponsored session outlining the changes made to the STARS Quality Rating process.** To promote STARS, it is important to ensure that programs which do not participate (i.e., those that have never participated or those that once participated and no longer do) are aware of the recent changes in the rating process in the STARS Program. Since changes are intended to prevent duplication of licensing visits and streamline the process, providers may be more willing to participate and less likely to feel overwhelmed by the process. With the support of Quality Enhancement Initiative (QEI) staff and the Division of Child Care, a face-to-face and/or a web-based session will be created with a specific message targeting programs that do not participate and detailing the benefits of participation. Incentives for participation will be provided to programs and may take the form of material goods to enhance quality or professional development opportunities at no cost, offered through the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.

- 2. Provide incentives for child care programs to increase their STARS Rating.** Once a provider becomes a STARS rated program, it is important for the program to continue to improve the quality of care it is providing. This recommendation supports providing a time-limited package of incentives for moving from a lower STARS level to a higher STARS level. The Division of Child Care and QEI staff will be responsible for defining what incentives will be included within this package (e.g., parent engagement tools, training specific for directors, or other incentives).
- 3. Target parent/community awareness of STARS.** Some families and community members are still unaware of the STARS and may not know the importance of looking for quality indicators when choosing child care. In an effort to promote STARS, a strategic community awareness initiative will occur in targeted communities. Communities will be chosen based upon population and the number of child care facilities. For this pilot to be effective, it is imperative that there is some buy-in within the community for the importance of quality child care. Data will be collected by the Division of Child Care at the beginning of the pilot period and after the awareness campaign is completed to determine any growth in the number of facilities participating in STARS and the level of involvement.

Observation

Since STARS is costly, we should leverage all possible resources to support the effort to improve quality. The workgroup strongly encourages active pursuit of private philanthropy and federal grants to provide more resources for STARS.

Strategy 2:

Support the recommendations from the Kentucky Commission on Philanthropy Summit – The Power of Philanthropy: Forging Partnerships for Kentucky's Children.

The Commission on Philanthropy was appointed by Gov. Beshear in 2009 to bring together broad representation from the private sector – business and corporate funders, foundations, private philanthropists, and advocates for strategic philanthropy. It engaged an array of experts to apply the best research, experience and practices to the issue of early childhood education and child health and welfare.

Using a multidisciplinary membership to assure a broad-based and diverse perspective, two advisory committees examined child care issues and performed a rigorous review of research, current programming and potential opportunities to produce clear and measurable benchmarks of progress and make some concrete recommendations, including six related to high quality early care and education. The Commission on Philanthropy's recommendations are opportunities the philanthropic community can and have indicated they will embrace. The philanthropic community in Kentucky – including nearly 850 foundations – has collective assets of more than \$1.9 billion and gives away about \$120 million each year.

If we are truly committed to quality and want programs to engage in STARS, stay in STARS, and progress to the highest level as a mechanism to validate that quality, we must find the resources to support their participation. There are not sufficient resources available in the state budget to support this goal. We have an opportunity to utilize the resources we have to leverage additional public and private funds to implement some or all of the Commission on Philanthropy's recommendations to promote collaboration and increase quality.

Funds should be set aside in the budget to seek philanthropic partnerships to support the Commission on Philanthropy recommendations related to quality care and education, specifically recommendation #5:

Improve the quality of child care and early childhood programs by supporting the collaborative preschool model at the local level.

In order to better understand how collaboration can occur between the three early care and education entities (i.e., state funded preschool, child care and Head Start) an effort to support existing collaborative models is recommended. A portion of existing KIDS Now funding should be used to support this recommendation. The Governor's Commission on Philanthropy has targeted early care and education; specifically they are interested in activities related to collaboration. With their support, there is a possibility of using external funding to support collaborative relationships between child care, state-funded preschool, and Head Start within local communities.

With the ability to effectively select the communities in which collaborations currently exist, the Early Childhood Advisory Council will oversee the collaborative projects in an effort to grow a cadre of model collaborative relationships for the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Contributors To This Report

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Obtaining Report

This report can be accessed online at:

www.educationcabinet.ky.gov

General Questions

General questions about this report should be directed to the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet at (502) 564-0141.

