Early Childhood Care and Education Commission: State System, Local Governance

October 3, 2018

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Agenda

I. Welcome
II. Roll Call
III. Approval of Minutes
IV. Consideration of Current and Future Governance in Louisiana
V. Consideration of Lessons of Local Governance from Other States
VI. Public Comment
VII. Adjournment

Review of Past Commission Discussions

At the August 1 meeting, the Commission heard from the National Governors Association, the Education Commission of the States, the University of Virginia, and leaders of Community Networks.

- High quality early learning impacts children's brain development.
- Since 2012, Louisiana has created a vision and framework to unify early childhood programs toward ensuring every child is prepared for success in kindergarten and life.
- Louisiana's lead agency leaders have gone above and beyond policy requirements and have shown the path forward on local leadership toward improving access to high quality programs.
- The commission will develop recommendations to expand access to quality in early learning programs.

Review of Past Commission Discussions

At the September 6 meeting, the commission heard from the Louise Stoney, Bridget Hamre, and Elliot Regenstein.

- The state supports early childhood programs through a quality rating system linked to positive outcomes for children.
- There are a wide variety of early childhood programs in Louisiana with differing funding sources and requirements.
- Privately-run child care programs play a critical role in supporting early learning for children birth to three from all economic backgrounds.
- Additional strategies are needed to improve quality access for children birth to three.

The Legislative Charge of the Commission

Today's meeting will begin to address three of our legislative charges at a high level to establish a vision for the future of early childhood care and education in Louisiana, building on the work of Act 3 (2012).

Meetings 1 & 2:

- Gather and analyze data and develop a plan focused on family access, affordability, and quality.

Meeting 3:

- Determine best practices for the purpose of informing the continued development of local governing entities.
- Determine a sustainable infrastructure to ensure quality programs, including workforce and professional development, monitoring and assessment, coordinated enrollment, and data-informed decision making.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination.

Meetings 4 & 5:

- Define a timeframe for achieving the vision and determine benchmarks for the intervening years.
- Determine the amount of funding needed to achieve affordable access to quality care and education for all children from birth through age four and recommend policies that prioritize the allocation of future funding.

Current and Future Governance in Louisiana

The Role of Early Childhood Community Networks

Louisiana's system of early childhood community networks was established as a result of Act 3. Each community network has a lead agency (LEA, Head Start grantee, nonprofit) that works with all publicly funded programs to facilitate the required work.

Community Network's lead agency coordinates these administrative functions:

- Account for every birth-to-age-5 at-risk child.
- Provide two *CLASS* observations per classroom annually.
- Coordinate enrollment to improve access for families.
- Request slots for the community based on family demand.

Approaching these functions looks different across the state:

- Geographic diversity and sizes of urban and rural communities require different approaches.
- Understanding local contexts and relationships are critical to success.

Current State System with Local Implementation

Early childhood is more unified.
All publicly-funded early childhood programs--child care, Head Start and school-based pre-K-- participate in a rating system with incentives and consequences; licensed programs meet unified health, safety and academic expectations; increases in child care funding and eligibility for child care have begun to address disparities across programs.

Programs are providing higher quality care and instruction.
All toddler and pre-K classrooms are evaluated twice a year, and infant classroom observations are being piloted; quality is improving based on measurements of teaching and use of curriculum; all lead teachers in publicly funded programs will be required to be certified by 2019, and will have a new, ancillary certificate based on a national credential; and national research on Louisiana shows children in classrooms with higher ratings learn more.

Families can make an informed choice through a centralized process.
Louisiana families can learn about program quality and compare programs through easy-to-use website; families can more easily access publicly funded programs through locally-coordinated enrollment.

Current Local Innovation from Community Networks

Community Networks comprised of publicly funded providers (child care, Head Start, public and nonpublic pre-K) have come together to work to improve their classroom quality and make access easier for families.

Successful Community Network Lead Agencies:

- Leverage resources to improve quality at lower performing sites
  - Share professional development and training resources
  - Provide coaching for teachers
  - Share resources for curriculum, instructional materials and supplies
- Know that relationships among program leaders are foundational for success
  - Bring in diverse partners such as municipal governments, libraries, etc.
- Engage with all partners, even those with whom it is difficult to connect
  - Site visits to those program leaders unable to attend meetings

What are the challenges to resolve?

Though greater coordination exists and program quality has improved, all families that need early childhood care and education do not have access to quality options.

There are not enough publicly funded seats. Although Louisiana serves about 90 percent of economically disadvantaged four-year-olds, it reaches just 30 percent of economically disadvantaged three-year-olds and even fewer birth-through-age-two children who are economically disadvantaged.

Of the seats that do exist, too few are high quality. The new rating system for publicly-funded sites shows that more than one third of all economically disadvantaged children, birth to three, are served in low-quality sites and 16 percent of four-year-olds are enrolled in low-quality sites.

Lead Agencies have not been positioned to drive community-wide growth in access or quality. Lead agencies are funded only to conduct network administration activities, coordinate observations, and coordinate enrollment. Improvement is the responsibility of individual programs, not strategically managed across the community; access is driven by the availability of state and federal funds that do not carry incentive for local match. Without local governance and authority, funds do not yield maximum potential.

The State's Approach

To address these challenges, Louisiana's legislature amended RS 17:407.23, Louisiana's Early Childhood Care and Education Network, during the 2018 regular legislative session.

This legislation put in motion:

- **A Commission** to recommend funding strategy for expanding access and improvement
- **Community Network Pilots**, launching in December, that will implement new strategies to increase access and improve the quality of early childhood care and education programs. Lessons learned from these pilot programs will inform and influence policy.

Advancing the Current System with New Ideas

To explore using expanded local authority to drive quality and access, on August 31, the Department released a Request for Applications for Community Network Pilots. Initial applications are due October 8 and BESE will award the pilots on December 12.

The state is seeking to improve early childhood program quality and access through local evidence-based planning and intervention by local governance structures that engage broad sectors of the community. For these pilots, the state will:

- Support communities to put in place a local governing structure for collaborative planning and shared decision-making
- Provide each pilot up to $100,000 of funding per year, for two years, to implement improvement plans
- Prioritize pilots for both existing and innovative funding opportunities that will increase the number of economically disadvantaged children served by their community network
- Give pilots the authority to distribute improvement resources across programs in their community
- Give pilots the authority to locate publicly funded seats within the community network

Lessons of Local Governance from Other States

Karen Ponder

Smart Start

Louisiana
Early Childhood Commission

Partnering with Communities for Greater Impact

Karen W. Ponder
October 3, 2018

National Scan

For over 25 years, states have tested a variety of state and local early childhood partnerships, to improve the skills, knowledge, health and mental health of young children before they start to school.

States with a System of Local Public Private EC Partnerships

North Carolina Smart Start- 1993
California First Five- 1998
Iowa Empowerment Zones- 1998
Colorado Local Councils- 1999
South Carolina First Steps- 1999
Alabama Smart Start- 2000
Hawaii Good Beginnings- 2000

States with a System of Local Public Private EC Partnerships

Kansas Smart Start- 2002
Oklahoma Smart Start- 2003
Wyoming Early Childhood Partnerships- 2005
Florida Early Learning Coalitions- 2005
Virginia Smart Beginnings- 2005
Michigan Great Start- 2005
Vermont Building Bright Futures- 2006

States with a System of Local Public Private EC Partnerships

Arizona First Things First- 2006
Washington Thrive by 5- 2006
Kentucky Kids Now- 2006
Alaska Best Beginnings- 2007
Oregon Early Learning Hubs- 2013
Georgia Empowerment Zones- 2014

RTT: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Illinois and others- 2014-2016

Primary Purpose of State/Local Partnerships

The primary reason given by all states for developing local partnerships was to build a stronger, more family-friendly early childhood system and to get better outcomes for all the states' children, especially children with high risk factors.

North Carolina Smart Start

* Design and structure
* Mission
* State/local relationship
* Results
* Lessons learned

Florida Early Learning Coalitions

* Mission
* Structure
* Focus and strategies

Why does a Local Governance Strategy Make a Difference?

* Sharpens community vision, focus and planning
* Creates expanded potential for problem solving
* Improves service delivery, with reduced duplication and fragmentation
* Simplifies access to services for clients
* Improves data collection

Why does a Local Governance Strategy Make a Difference?

* Improves measurement of results in communities
* Increases flexibility in responding to needs
* Maximizes resources
* Strengthens case with funders
* Strengthens capacity for advocacy on behalf of young children

Lessons Learned about Effective Local Governance

* **The strongest outcomes are achieved when the state and local relationship, recommended council membership, roles and responsibilities, and metrics are defined in law or rules.**

* **It is critical that local coalitions are funded for coordination, needs assessment, data collection and community engagement. Without dedicated and predictable funding for these foundational functions, coalitions often dissolve or become ineffective.**

* **State government should define the parameters for local coalitions (parish, county, regional, school districts, etc.), based on the vision and goals for the coalitions' work.**

Lessons Learned about Effective Local Governance

* **In order for a local governance model to be sustained over time, there must be statewide outcomes and metrics, which are defined from the beginning, and reported to the Governor, Legislative Body, and the public on a regular basis.**

* **A cross sector approach is the most efficient and effective way to serve all children well. This approach is cost effective because it maximizes the current supply; it is family friendly and solidifies all early childhood teachers and the general public around an understanding that "it's not the sector, but what happens in each setting, that affects child outcomes."**

Lessons Learned about Effective Local Governance

* **The welfare of infants and toddlers must be at the heart of the work of early childhood coalitions. Brain research, according to Dr Jack Shonkoff at the Harvard Center for the Developing Child, is an argument for what we do in the first year of a child's life, rather than an argument for four year olds.**

* **In local coalition work, there are functions that should not be decentralized. The state should be in charge of developing policies, guidelines and outcomes, setting standards, and data collection. These should be consistent across all local entities, including having a common statewide database.**

* **The best models of state/local governance include both state guidance and local flexibility.**

* **Leadership of local coalitions matters a lot!**

Policy Reminders

* Council membership must be broad and inclusive of all sectors of early childhood, public and private.
* Coalition funding must be adequate for coordination and other related functions.
* A mixed delivery system works best to meet the needs of the maximum number of children/families.
* Statewide outcomes and metrics should be determined early in the development stage and should include metrics about the functioning of the coalitions as well as child outcomes.
* The state should determine parameters of local councils, based on the long term vision.

Questions ?

Public Comment

Adjournment

Commission meeting 11/5: Cancelled to accommodate workgroup

Commission member workgroup:

no. 1: late October/early November
no. 2: late November, early December

Email: Emmy.odwyer@la.gov by 10/10 if you want to participate

Commission meeting 12/13: Consideration of early childhood landscape to make funding recommendation

Commission meeting 1/30: Review recommendations