

Final Report:

Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee

September 29, 2018

Governor Rauner, members of the General Assembly, members of the Illinois State Board of Education, members of the Early Learning Council, and members of the P-20 Council,

In 2017, the Early Learning Council and P-20 Council were charged by the General Assembly with creating the Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee to review the kindergarten transition and submit a report of recommendations aimed at informing the creation of legislation to support the transition. This committee, composed of lawmakers, state agency personnel, educators, administrators, community and other advocates, and other stakeholders, has convened over the past year to hear from dozens of experts on this issue, including parents, educators, administrators, program and social service providers, and researchers. The committee synthesized this information to develop a framework that addresses the value of partnership across the transition, promotes and encourages promising practices for supporting the transition, and defines the capacity and incentives necessary to implement these practices.

The 2017-2018 school year saw the inaugural statewide implementation of the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS). This is the first year in which Illinois has a uniform picture of children entering kindergarten, and this picture gives an initial understanding of the skills and abilities with which Illinois children are entering school and a starting point from which to strengthen the transition into kindergarten. We have heard from experts across sector, across Illinois, and across the country that a successful kindergarten transition, and kindergarten readiness, is influenced by many factors. Children in Illinois enter kindergarten from a wide variety of early care and education experiences, some of which work closely with local schools but many of which, for various reasons, do not. While strong, sustainable connections may be best practice, they can be particularly difficult to orchestrate and maintain.

With our new insight into the readiness of Illinois' kindergarteners, the need becomes clear for greater and more intentional alignment, guidance, support, and investment in the ways outlined in the report that follows. Research indicates that there is a strong correlational relationship between a supportive, successful kindergarten transition and kindergarten achievement. With this in mind, the practices and policy levers described in this report strive to move beyond broad strokes to describe the activities present in a successful kindergarten transition and the policies necessary to support their successful implementation.

We hope that this report can serve to further the conversation on the kindergarten transition, whether it is happening in the community, the classroom, the school district, or at the state level, and that it can foster the collaboration necessary to create a successful transition for all children and families.

Sincerely,

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Overview of the Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee

Origin

The Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee was established in May 2017 through House Joint Resolution 24, which states that “the P-20 Council in collaboration with the Early Learning Council shall establish an Advisory Committee for the purposes of reviewing kindergarten transitions” (Appendix A). The Committee, whose membership was appointed by the Chair of the P-20 Council (and is listed in Appendix B), was tasked with submitting by September 29, 2018 “a report to the Governor, State Board of Education, and General Assembly that includes recommendations aimed at informing the creation of legislation” addressing several specific issues as seen in the resolution.

Structure and Process

The Committee met monthly at locations in Chicago, Bloomington, and Springfield to gather and synthesize information on the kindergarten transition before developing the report. At the first meeting, the Committee selected Dr. Cynthia Tate, Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, and Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Policy Director at the Erikson Institute, as co-chairs of the Committee. The Committee also developed a structure for its monthly meetings that would be used to satisfy the charge as outlined in the resolution.

First, the Committee drafted a set of terms and definitions as well as a set of values and principles that would guide their work over the year.

Second, the Committee organized a series of expert panels from which to solicit ideas, recommendations, and feedback related to the kindergarten transition. These panels were organized thematically around the following topic areas: Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) assessment domains (including self-regulation, social emotional development, language and literacy development, and math); age group perspectives (including those with expertise in the birth to age five range and those with expertise in the kindergarten and early elementary range); family and community engagement; assessments and data; and administrator perspectives. The Committee requested relevant materials and other information from panelists and solicited a literature and landscape review (Appendix G), completed internally, to supplement the panel expertise.

Third, the Committee synthesized all information gathered and drew upon this synthesis to identify the factors critical to a successful kindergarten transition and the policy levers that can be used to support the presence of these factors in Illinois. This report represents a collation of these critical success factors and associated policy levers.

Prologue

This report represents the Committee’s attempt to comprehensively and exhaustively document the components of a successful kindergarten transition in Illinois. As such, the Committee acknowledges that it may not be feasible or appropriate for all Illinois communities to implement all components detailed in this report. Illinois has a long tradition of providing public education based on local communities determining the best ways to educate their children. These local determinations are made within a framework of statewide requirements for learning. While many of the recommendations within this report involve statewide support, others are most appropriately determined at the local school and district level within the framework of relevant state statutes, where community context and local decision-making processes can and should be utilized. Illinois is home to a rich diversity of families and residents throughout all corners of the state. Our schools reflect that diversity and should work toward inclusionary practices that remove barriers for engagement and encourage meaningful participation, especially as it relates to the kindergarten transition because it may be the first encounter with the public school system for a family.

The components in this report are recommended practices developed by the Committee. Those involved in the kindergarten transition process are encouraged to consider them and determine which, if any, are appropriate to utilize. It is the Committee’s aim that those involved in various sectors and communities can identify in this report some components that would best serve their individual sector or community.

Introduction

In response to House Joint Resolution 24, this report provides a framework designed to help those involved in the kindergarten transition to better support it.

First, the report defines “best practices for supporting kindergarten transitions [and] continuity of care,” to include recommended practices or approaches, and “the capacity needed and potential incentives for LEAs and early childhood programs to implement these practices.”

Next, the report outlines those practices and capacity needed to implement, including “the role of early learning in required school improvement processes,” “the State’s commitment to the importance of social and emotional learning for children of all ages,” and “best practices for dual language learners.” This is done through a summary of findings, which is organized thematically based on the areas most frequently discussed throughout the life of the Committee, as well as the framework itself, which includes a more comprehensive account of the critical success factors and policy levers associated with a successful kindergarten transition for various groups.

Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee Summary of Findings

This section details the thematic areas of a successful kindergarten transition most frequently discussed and of priority for the Committee.

Aligned Teaching and Learning

- **Early childhood educators, kindergarten educators, and administrators** are supported to participate in aligned professional development during protected release time, possibly through leveraging Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title II funds and others available to educators.
- **Kindergarten educators** are supported to implement aligned, developmentally appropriate, play-based, child-directed practices in kindergarten and early elementary.
- **The State of Illinois** develops and employs an early childhood through third grade best practice implementation manual.

Aligned Assessments and Data

- **Kindergarten educators** use data, transmitted from early care and education providers into a database facilitated by schools and districts and supported through State of Illinois infrastructure, to begin or continue intervention services for children as soon as possible.
- **Early childhood and kindergarten educators** examine Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) assessment results alongside administrators during protected release time and set plans to mitigate deficiencies and build on strengths across the kindergarten transition.
- **Schools and districts** gather feedback from teachers, administrators, and families to determine how best to share information and data with an emphasis on whole child development.
- **The State of Illinois** implements an accountability system in fulfillment of ESSA that values the early elementary years to emphasize to schools and districts the importance of those years.
- **The State of Illinois** implements a school improvement process in fulfillment of ESSA that supports schools identified for improvement in strengthening their work with children prior to third grade.

Strengthened Cross-Sector Partnerships

- **Children and families** are invited into schools prior to and throughout the transition into kindergarten. This includes participating in tours and bridge programs and engaging with staff who support whole child development and family engagement across the transition.
- **Children and families** have the opportunity to engage with service providers that participate in local collaborations to support the kindergarten transition.
- **Communities** are able to convene to examine data, organize to support policy changes, and develop support systems for families.
- **Kindergarten teachers** are able to visit early care and education (ECE) classrooms before the end of the program year to share information, and **early childhood educators** are able to provide space within the classroom for kindergarten exploration and discussion.
- **Schools and districts** are supported in developing structural connections across the kindergarten transition, including participation in a local workgroup involving parents, educators, staff, and local early childhood collaborations to develop a local kindergarten transition plan.

Framework of Recommended Practice and Capacity to Implement: Critical Success Factors and Policy Levers

A successful kindergarten transition means a successful transition for:

- Children, families and communities
- Educators of children ages 0-8
- Schools and districts educating children ages 0-8
- The State of Illinois

The presence of several factors are critical to that success, and policy levers can support effective implementation of those factors.

Defining Features of the Report

Critical Success Factor: Transition practices that the Committee believes are most crucial to ensuring children are successful as they navigate through a coherent and consistent birth-to-eight system. These are intended to:

- Serve as focal points for organizing state and local policies and initiatives tailored to community needs while using a common language across the state
- Aid effective coordination and implementation of initiatives

Transition practices must support all students, families, and educators. They are recommended with the recognition that additional resources must be provided to ensure their success.

Policy Lever: Recommended mechanisms for implementing critical success factors, including indication of likely jurisdiction of that mechanism (such as at the local or state level).

| Example: | |
|--|---|
| Educators are supported to use developmentally-appropriate teacher planned, play-based, child-directed practices in kindergarten and early elementary grades, mirroring the structure of the day in an early care and education setting to support whole child development. | Policy Lever: Providers, schools, and districts have the resources to provide protected time for aligned professional development for educators in early care and education, kindergarten, and early elementary wherein educators can interact in a professional learning community to discuss implementing aligned play-based practices that scaffold depth of learning in content areas. (local) |

Note: Critical success factors for the kindergarten transition appear on the left, while policy levers that can support effective implementation of those factors appear on the right.

In a successful kindergarten transition, children, families, and communities:

Can access high-quality ECE and full-day kindergarten. Wide variation in children’s learning experiences in ages 0-5 creates wide variation in the range of skills with which children enter kindergarten. Greater access to high-quality ECE and full-day kindergarten would narrow the range of variation in children’s skill development.

Policy Level: Districts that demonstrate a need for ECE programming are encouraged to include this programming in their school improvement plans. (state, local)

Policy Level: Additional resources are available to add or expand programming. (state, local)

Receive information about the kindergarten transition from ECE providers, early childhood collaboratives, local school districts, and kindergarten transition collaboration groups.

Are actively engaged by ECE teachers and administrators to establish relationships prior to and throughout the transition.

- Can attend early childhood pre-service work with educators and family support staff
- Can attend meetings with representatives from all kindergarten options at one time
- Participate in tours with children of classrooms and teachers, including kindergarten orientation or open house; educators engage parents to learn about their child
- Participate in bridge programs (especially for those children with limited ECE experience) hosted by compensated educators and supported by community organizations
 - ⇒ E.g., [BPI Pre-K Kindergarten Transitions Program in Altgeld-Riverdale](#)ⁱ
- Participate in teacher-led workshops and small group therapy that focuses on social emotional development and mental health consultation
 - ⇒ E.g., [Juvenile Protective Association’s Connect to Kindergarten](#)ⁱⁱ
- Engage with family educators, home-school liaisons, mental health consultants, social workers, community partnerships coordinators, and/or kindergarten transition facilitators in both ECE and kindergarten settings to support whole child development and family engagement
 - Pre-write students’ goals for the next year, especially for children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans
 - Access home visiting programs that connect families to supports
- Attend first day of kindergarten along with children and/or provide an opportunity for a parent-child transition into kindergarten on or before the first day
- Access on-site resources such as food bank, mental health services, doctor’s offices, tax preparation, etc.
 - ⇒ E.g., [West Chicago District 33 Community Schools Network](#)

Policy Level: Time and staff capacity are available to implement. (local)

Policy Level: Illinois State Board of Education Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten Transition Plan is updated to reflect these factors. (state)

Policy Level: Transition activities during school hours with caregivers present are counted for attendance purposes. (state)

Note: Critical success factors for the kindergarten transition appear on the left, while policy levers that can support effective implementation of those factors appear on the right.

Are aware of policies that support family and community engagement in schools.

⇒ E.g., PA 87-1240, which allows individuals to miss work to attend school activitiesⁱⁱⁱ

Have the opportunity to engage with coordinated service providers across sectors, or comprehensive community partnerships, that support local collaborations for the kindergarten transition and provide services for families.

- Receive services adapted to learning goals for different ages, demographics, and special populations
⇒ E.g., Chicago Children’s Museum
- Access free community resources on days off from school, including parent education
- Participate in a local transition workgroup involving parents, educators, and staff to develop a local plan for a successful kindergarten transition
- Connect with coordinated health, education, and social service referral and service delivery systems
⇒ E.g., Community Collaborations

Policy Lever: Resources and guidance are available to support the development of sustainable early childhood community collaborations that have the capacity to analyze data, coordinate services, and plan strategically to address the needs of young children. (state, local)

Policy Lever: School districts, early childhood providers, health providers, and other community entities are encouraged and incentivized to actively participate in local collaborative efforts to support kindergarten readiness and transition. (state, local)

Are supported in their understanding of learning across the kindergarten transition.

- Are supported in their comprehension of the various forms that learning can take, including the connection between play and learning
- Access information about KIDS assessment domain definitions, information on what is expected in child development by the end of kindergarten, and activities that families can practice at home with children
⇒ E.g., Valley View SD 365U Report Card and Parent Update, Council of Great City Schools Parent Roadmaps^{iv}
- Access information about a continuum of child development and the importance of growth over meeting specific benchmarks

In a successful kindergarten transition, educators of children ages 0-8:

Have the opportunity to participate in local transition workgroups involving parents, educators, and community collaborations to develop a local plan for a successful kindergarten transition.

Early childhood educators are supported to provide opportunities within the classroom for kindergarten exploration and discussion with children and families.

⇒ E.g., Elgin Area School District U-46 Kindergarten Corner

Set goals in kindergarten readiness plans that align with child development learning standards and create a trajectory for children's readiness at the end of preschool to ensure success in kindergarten.

Policy Lever: The State of Illinois defines kindergarten readiness. (state)

Kindergarten educators are supported to visit ECE classrooms before the end of the program year and share information about kindergarten programs with early childhood educators and families.

Policy Lever: Kindergarten educators are invited to participate in the IEP goal-writing meeting. (local)

Participate, during protected release time and with adequate substitute teachers available, in aligned professional development for ECE and kindergarten educators and administrators that:

Policy Lever: Protected release time is created and adequate substitute teachers are identified. (local)

- Is organized as a community of practice or professional learning community
- Reflects developmentally appropriate practice, specifically around play, self-regulation, social emotional development, discipline, and assessment
- Focuses on understanding and addressing challenging behaviors
- Includes assessment of young children and strategies for engaging in observational assessment and data analysis
- Includes opportunities for voluntary peer observation across ECE and kindergarten classrooms
- Includes family engagement, cultural competence, implicit bias, trauma-informed practice, etc.
- Fosters a relationship of mutual and bidirectional communication and engagement amongst ECE and kindergarten educators and administrators

Policy Lever: Professional development providers, including the State of Illinois, align professional development systems across funding streams that serve children ages 0-8, and development opportunities are marketed to early childhood and early elementary staff. (state)

⇒ E.g., Child Parent Center Preschool through 3rd Grade program

Kindergarten educators are supported to plan aligned, developmentally appropriate, play-based, child-directed instructional opportunities for children in kindergarten and early elementary.

- This can include block building, imaginative play, and exploratory play-based teaching
- Mirror the structure of the ECE day to support whole child and social emotional development and to encourage regulation rather than dysregulation
- Focus less on regulating behavioral compliance, as it is developmentally inappropriate and may negatively affect children who have had stressful or traumatic experiences
- Use thematic, inquiry-based instruction that is language heavy to build language skills before moving into literacy

Policy Lever: The State of Illinois provides resources and encourages play-based curriculum in kindergarten. (state)

Policy Lever: Special teacher endorsements may begin in ECE (gym, music, “specials”). (state)

Examine, during protected time and alongside administrators, assessment results including but not limited to the KIDS assessment, and set plans to mitigate deficiencies and build on strengths across early childhood to third grade.

- Build inter-rater reliability, skills observing children, skills collecting and analyzing work samples, and an understanding of developmentally appropriate assessment (including that not all data is quantitative)
 - ⇒ E.g., *The Power of Observation* by Judy R. Jablon, Amy Laura Dombro, & Margo L. Dichtelmiller
- Use a crosswalk between TS GOLD (or other ECE assessments) and the KIDS assessment
 - ⇒ E.g., ISU Center for the Study of Education Policy and ISBE developed crosswalks
- Develop and adopt responsive classroom techniques and differentiated instructional practices based on assessment analysis

Policy Lever: Protected time is created. (local)

Are prepared using aligned teacher preparation and licensing standards across ECE and early elementary that reflect developmentally appropriate practices and constitute a cohesive career pathway.^v

- Align curriculum across ECE, early elementary, special education, and administration on family engagement, play, self-regulation, social emotional development
- Align family practicum with field time spent working with the families of young children

Policy Lever: Teacher preparation and licensing standards are aligned, including aligning ECE preparation to core competencies. (state)

Can access pathways to teacher and school leadership if interested.

Note: Critical success factors for the kindergarten transition appear on the left, while policy levers that can support effective implementation of those factors appear on the right.

In a successful kindergarten transition, schools and districts educating children ages 0-8:

Create an environment that supports whole child development through sustainable community schools that provide long-term systemic supports.

Policy Lever: Adequate and sustainable funding is available to support community schools. (state, local)

Create kindergarten transition plans in fulfillment of Title I requirements (where applicable) through coordination with early childhood collaborations.^{vi}

Policy Lever: Have access to funds necessary to retrofit an elementary classroom or other appropriate space to offer additional slots for Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG)-funded programs as needed. (state)

⇒ E.g., West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2525, which outlines West Virginia Universal Pre-K program criteria, requires county collaboration creation of a written kindergarten transition plan that uses transition best practices^{vii}

Policy Lever: Have more timely access to information and certainty regarding funding changes and awards for ECBG such that schools and districts can avoid Reductions in Force (RIFs), improve hiring planning, and avoid using local funding to cover Preschool For All and Preschool For All Expansion services. (state)

Offer summer boost programming to reduce summer learning loss and allow children and families to become familiar with a new school setting.

Offer full-day kindergarten to ensure there are opportunities to incorporate play-based learning, recognizing fiscal and structural constraints.

Offer small classroom sizes to mirror the ECE experience.

Policy Lever: Resources are available to execute. (state, local)

Allow families to come to class with children on their first day of kindergarten, and offer a shorter school day at the beginning of the school year.

Policy Lever: Day is counted for attendance purposes. (state)

Encourage administrator participation in training and professional development on ECE/Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), KIDS assessment, kindergarten transition, social emotional and whole child development, family and community engagement, trauma-informed practice, and developmentally appropriate discipline.

Policy Lever: Administrator participation in ongoing professional development is supported through availability of opportunities and resources. (state, local)

Leverage ESSA Title II funds to provide programming that increases “the knowledge base of teachers and principals on instruction in the early grades and strategies to measure whether young children are progressing” and “the ability of principals or other school leaders to support educators to meet the needs of students through age 8, which may include providing joint professional learning and planning activities for school staff and educators in preschool programs that address the transition to elementary school.”^{viii}

Align assessments across ECE (including Desired Results Development Program (DRDP), TS GOLD, etc.), kindergarten (KIDS), and early elementary.

- Streamline assessments across ECE and early elementary
 - ⇒ E.g., Colorado’s Results Matter program, which promotes the use of ongoing, observation-based assessment in ECE settings through training, professional development, and materials^{ix}
 - ⇒ E.g., Illinois State Board of Education Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts^x

Policy Lever: Receive guidance on how to align assessments across ECE through second grade, specifically with regards to required and recommended assessments. (state, local)

Policy Lever: Have the flexibility to customize KIDS assessment training methods to include a train-the-trainer. (state, local)

Gather feedback from teachers, administrators, and families to determine how best to share information and data with an emphasis on whole child development.

- Analyze disaggregated school and district KIDS assessment and other data, data available through the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), and other local and national sources to identify areas of community need that will affect school readiness

Facilitate development of processes and systems, such as a database, for transmitting child data from ECE to elementary schools in a manner that ensures protection and privacy of sensitive student and teacher information. Such data could include:

- ECE setting enrollment, rates of chronic absenteeism, and TS GOLD or other assessment data
- A forum in which teachers can communicate and share practices for easing the transition
- Best practices for data transmission gathered from the IFSP to IEP transition
 - ⇒ E.g., IEP Section 7

Are supported in developing structural connections across the transition to maintain the ECE and elementary partnerships beyond individual staff turnover.

- Access state-provided guidance, including written transition plan samples, family engagement best practices, educator meetings, and data systems, to strengthen connections^{xi}

Policy Lever: Develop this capacity to offer guidance. (state)

Note: Critical success factors for the kindergarten transition appear on the left, while policy levers that can support effective implementation of those factors appear on the right.

- Participate in local transition workgroup involving parents/caregivers, educators, and staff to develop a local plan for a successful kindergarten transition including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and family engagement
 - ⇒ E.g., Washington’s WaKIDS, which requires districts to establish relationships with early learning community providers and engage in kindergarten readiness activities with those providers and parents^{xii}
- Participate in a community-based ECE provider network that meets to support collaboration
 - ⇒ E.g., Ounce of Prevention Fund’s Birth-to-College Collaborative Toolkit and case studies^{xiii}
 - ⇒ E.g., Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) and the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s Early Learning User’s Guide for Illinois School Boards^{xiv}

Consider how to best integrate families of all backgrounds, including those with mixed immigration status, families without permanent housing, families who are justice involved, caregivers who work non-traditional hours, and others.

Policy Lever: Offer opportunities for engagement and partnership that respond to various arrangements and identities. (local)

In a successful kindergarten transition, the State of Illinois:

Encourages and supports aligned practices from birth to third grade.

Policy Lever: Has defined kindergarten readiness and provides intentional professional development to ECE and kindergarten teachers and administrators on the definition and on the KIDS assessment (including how to engage in observational assessment and collect and use data).

Policy Lever: Employs a pre-k – third grade best practice implementation manual to provide guidance for the listed grade levels to support stable environments that allow young children to develop the relationships and trust required to instill curiosity and persistence.

Policy Lever: Provides adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.

Policy Lever: Allows for flexibility within the school calendar to facilitate meetings for ECE and elementary educator and administrator joint communities of practice.

Encourages and supports cross-sector, locally-driven collaboration in support of children and families across the kindergarten transition.

Policy Lever: Incentivizes and creates policies allowing for collaboration and conversation between districts and ECE providers.

⇒ E.g., New Jersey includes in its ESSA plan the use of Preschool Expansion Grant funds to create cross-sector “transition teams” to create kindergarten transition plans for children and families and train districts in data-based decision making. Illinois’ ESSA plan encourages collaboration within and between schools to smooth transitions

⇒ E.g., Oregon Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation grants provide funding to local early learning hubs to support successful kindergarten transitions, engage families as partners in children’s learning and development, provide opportunities for shared professional development, and increase alignment, connection, and collaboration within the prenatal to third grade continuum^{xv}

Promotes the importance of the early years in existing school improvement and support structures.

Policy Lever: In fulfillment of ESSA, implements accountability system that values the early elementary years to emphasize to schools and districts the importance of those years.^{xvi}

- Considers data on gaps in early care and education services to children at risk of school failure when identifying districts that “demonstrate the greatest need for [school improvement] funds,” a required activity under federal law^{xvii}

Policy Lever: In fulfillment of ESSA, implements a school improvement process that supports schools identified for improvement in strengthening their work with children prior to third grade.^{xviii}

- Includes recommendations in the needs assessment guidance document that encourages schools to consider as part of their school improvement plan and process:
 - Their quality of engagement with the early learning community to improve students’ readiness for kindergarten
 - Information about the early learning opportunities within the community
 - The importance of early learning as a school improvement initiative
- Targets resources toward improving school readiness when data indicates that children are not ready for kindergarten entry
- Develops metrics for success in school improvement planning that acknowledge schools that are successfully using resources to improve early learning and early elementary practice. This will incentivize schools and districts to use school improvement funds on early learning and early elementary.
- Incorporates into the template for school improvement planning best practices in supporting the kindergarten transition as detailed in this report
- Incorporates support for the implementation of early childhood programs into technical assistance to districts in improvement status

⇒ E.g., [Early Learning Council Recommendations on Illinois’ Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Plan \(Appendix H\)](#)

Promotes effective and appropriate use of data across the kindergarten transition.

Policy Lever: Encourages uniformity across data transmission by coordinating infrastructure.

- Has developed a set of data elements that can be feasibly shared by ECE providers and that are most useful for kindergarten teachers in their practice
- Has developed a standardized Data Sharing Agreement that supports existing data privacy and permissions standards in compliance with the Illinois School Student Records Act
- Supports data systems as a resource for data transmission
- Supports data acquisition outside the education system

Policy Lever: Does not use assessment as a performance ranking or quality measurement tool to avoid pushing down high-stakes activities into kindergarten and ECE and to avoid improperly evaluating ECE; instead, uses assessment to guide the attention and focus of educators across the transition.

Ensures school administrators are prepared with an understanding of foundational best practices in early childhood.

Supports districts in developing processes and procedures for determining eligibility for early entry into kindergarten.

Appendices



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1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, High quality learning opportunities, beginning at
3 birth, are an essential part of our nation's education system;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Young children facing the most significant
6 challenges stand to benefit greatly from comprehensive and
7 consistent early learning experiences; and

8 WHEREAS, Research demonstrates that investing in early
9 childhood produces outcomes that help ensure children are
10 successful in school and life, such as increased kindergarten
11 readiness, increased high school graduation rates and college
12 attendance, and reduced special education rates; and

13 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois is a national leader in
14 supporting early care and education programs; and

15 WHEREAS, Head Start and State-funded early childhood
16 programs in Illinois are required to comply with a set of
17 standards related to ensuring a smooth transition of children
18 out of the program and into kindergarten; and

19 WHEREAS, Preschool for All programs must have a "written
20 plan to ensure that those children who are age-eligible for

1 kindergarten are enrolled in school upon leaving the preschool
2 education program"; and

3 WHEREAS, The Illinois Preschool Expansion Grant
4 requirements and federal Head Start Performance Standards hold
5 these programs to an even higher standard by requiring programs
6 to collaborate with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to
7 support children and families through the transition to
8 kindergarten; and

9 WHEREAS, While requiring early childhood programs to
10 coordinate with the school districts into which children
11 transition is a good practice, many LEAs are not familiar with
12 the opportunity presented by potential partnerships with early
13 childhood providers, like the relationships fostered within
14 local early childhood community collaborations; and

15 WHEREAS, Illinois State law could better support those LEAs
16 by providing a framework that would help LEAs to identify best
17 practices for supporting kindergarten transitions and give
18 LEAs incentives to adopt these practices; and

19 WHEREAS, This framework would help the state build upon its
20 successful Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant; and

21 WHEREAS, Implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act

1 (ESSA) provides an opportune moment to develop and put into
2 motion such a framework, as the law specifically authorizes
3 districts to use resources to support joint efforts to address
4 kindergarten transitions; therefore, be it

5 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
6 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE SENATE
7 CONCURRING HEREIN, that the P-20 Council in collaboration with
8 the Early Learning Council shall establish an Advisory
9 Committee for the purposes of reviewing kindergarten
10 transitions; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transitions Advisory
12 Committee shall consist of a diverse group of stakeholders and
13 practitioners, appointed by the Chair of the P-20 Council, and
14 including those from State agencies, early childhood advocacy
15 organizations, education related professional associations,
16 and members of the General Assembly; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Advisory Committee shall submit a report
18 to the Governor, State Board of Education, and General Assembly
19 that includes recommendations aimed at informing the creation
20 of legislation that:

21 (1) Addresses the value of K-12 educators and
22 administrators partnering with early childhood programs in

1 their communities, including Head Start, Preschool for
2 All, home visiting, and child care;

3 (2) Will not be prescriptive and will not place any
4 burdensome requirements on school districts;

5 (3) Encourages best practices for supporting
6 kindergarten transitions, including aligned professional
7 development, data collection, data sharing, and family
8 engagement, among others;

9 (4) Could define the capacity needed and potential
10 incentives for LEAs and early childhood programs to
11 implement these practices;

12 (5) Promotes best practices related to the continuity
13 of care between early childhood (including between
14 infant-toddler programs and programs for preschool-aged
15 children), early childhood special education, and special
16 education in the early elementary grades;

17 (6) Could define the role of early learning in required
18 school improvement processes, including the role of
19 kindergarten readiness data in school needs assessments
20 and the expansion of high-quality early learning as a
21 school improvement strategy;

1 (7) Reinforces the State's commitment to the
2 importance of social and emotional learning for children of
3 all ages; and

4 (8) Promotes best practices for dual language
5 learners, which address the cultural and linguistic needs
6 of young children as they transition into kindergarten and
7 ways in which to engage underserved immigrant and mixed
8 status families; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transition Advisory
10 Committee shall first meet at the call of the Chair of the P-20
11 Council; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transition Advisory
13 Committee shall elect a Chair or Co-chairs at its first
14 meeting; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transition Advisory
16 Committee shall seek input from stakeholders and members of the
17 public; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the P-20 Council in collaboration with the
19 Early Learning Council shall provide administrative support to
20 the Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee; and be it

1 further

2 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transition Advisory
3 Committee shall submit its report to the Governor and General
4 Assembly by September 29, 2018; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the Kindergarten Transition Advisory
6 Committee is dissolved upon submission of its report; and be it
7 further; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the P-20 Council and the Early Learning
9 Council shall post a copy of this resolution and the
10 Committee's report to its website.

Appendix B: Committee Membership

Co-Chairs

Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Erikson Institute

Dr. Cynthia Tate, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

Committee

Samantha Aigner-Treworgy, City of Chicago

Emily Bastedo, Governor's Office

Stephanie Bernoteit, Illinois Board of Higher Education

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Senator, 49th District

Ben Boer, Advance Illinois

Avery Bourne, Representative, 95th District

Angela Brito, Blaine Elementary

Lynn Burgett, Illinois State Board of Education

Mary Beth Corrigan, Department of Children and Family Services

Jonathan Doster, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Roger Eddy, Illinois Association of School Boards

Donna Emmons, Illinois Head Start Association

Melissa Figueira, Advance Illinois

Diego Giraldo, Chicago Public Schools

Leslie Harder, Illinois Federation of Teachers

Dan Harris, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Gloria Harris, Community Organizing and Family Issues

Jason Helfer, Illinois State Board of Education

Susan Hilton, Illinois Association of School Boards

Jennifer Jones, Illinois Federation of Teachers

Jason Leahy, Illinois Principals Association

Ashley Long, Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University

Cathy Mannen, Illinois Federation of Teachers

Colleen McLaughlin, John A. Logan College

Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Illinois Head Start Association

Tracy Ocomy, POWER-PAC, a project of Community Organizing and Family Issues

Kris Pennington, McLean County Unit 5 School District

Kelly Post, Illinois Education Association

Kevin Rubenstein, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education

Diane Rutledge, Large Unit District Association

Bryan Stokes, Illinois Action for Children

Janet Vargas, POWER-PAC, a project of Community Organizing and Family Issues

Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, Latino Policy Forum

Kathleen Willis, Representative, 77th District

Joyce Weiner, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Appendix C: Committee Meeting Schedule

| Phase | Date | Location | Topic | Panelists |
|---------------|----------|-----------------------|--|--|
| Introduction | 9/26/17 | Chicago | Introduction | N/A |
| | 10/24/17 | Springfield | Self-Regulation and Social Emotional Development | Barbara Abel, Ph.D., Educare Stephen Budde, Ph.D. LCSW, Juvenile Protective Association Norma Irie, LCSW, I/ECMH-C Juvenile Protective Association Jenna Kelly, LCSW, Caregiver Connections / Chaddock Janet Kester, LCSW, Rosemont Elementary SD 78 Michelle Lee-Murrah, Erikson Institute |
| | 11/14/17 | Bloomington | Language and Literacy Development and Math | David Banzer, Erie House Lisa Ginet, Ed.D., Erikson Institute Gillian McNamee, Ph.D., Erikson Institute Jaclyn Vasquez, Erikson Institute |
| Expert Panels | 12/19/17 | Chicago | Birth to Five Perspectives | Sarai Coba-Rodriguez, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago Evelyn Polk Green, Chicago Public Schools Emily Powers, BPI Peggy Ondera, Elgin Area School District U-46 Kali Skiles, Round Lake Early Education Center |
| | 1/16/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Early Elementary Perspectives | Paula Barajas, Chicago Public Schools Angela Brito, Blaine Elementary Christine Igoe, Ed.D., Naperville SD 203 |
| | 2/27/18 | Bloomington | Family and Community Engagement | Pam Horan-Bussey, LCSW, Ounce of Prevention Fund Cathy Main, University of Illinois at Chicago Jackie McDougle, COFI POWER-PAC Ramona Richards, Chicago Children's Museum Kristina Rogers, Illinois Action for Children |
| | 3/27/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Assessments and Data | Lynn Burgett, Illinois State Board of Education Amanda Dykstra, Valley View School District 365U Elliot Regenstein, Foresight Law and Policy Advisors |

| Phase | Date | Location | Topic | Panelists |
|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Expert Panels (continued) | 4/17/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Administrator Perspectives | Megan Clarke, Exceptional Learners Collaborative Kristina Davis-Salazar, West Chicago District 33 Dave Deets, Harmony Emge SD 175 Andrew McCree, SD 308 Oswego Julie Oziemkowski, Ph.D., CUSD 200 Wheaton Warrenville Kris Pennington, Brigham Elementary |
| Report Development | 5/29/18 | Bloomington | Identify and define key terms, principles, and values; synthesize foundational information | N/A |
| | 6/26/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Report Development | N/A |
| | 7/24/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Report Development | N/A |
| | 8/22/18 | Webex | Report Development | N/A |
| | 9/25/18 | Chicago / Springfield | Report Development and Submission | N/A |

**Illinois P-20 Council and Illinois Early Learning Council
Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee**

Terms and Definitions

Assessment: The process of measuring student learning in a developmentally-appropriate way, as well as measuring contextual factors in the learning environment, and using that information to understand children’s development and to inform instruction. Assessments, both formative and summative, may look different depending on the skills and abilities typically demonstrated by children at different ages, and should be demonstrated to be valid and reliable.

Continuity of Care: Refers to continuity of relationship. The programming and policies that ensure children and families are consistently engaged in high-quality early learning experiences through stable relationships with caregivers who are sensitive and responsive to a young child’s signals and needs. Includes services provided to children in a manner that promotes primary caregiving and minimizes the number of transitions in teachers and teacher assistants that children experience over the course of the day, week, program year, and to the extent possible, during the course of their participation.

Early Childhood: Birth to third grade.

Early Learning: the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and social emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. For program funding and planning purposes, services are often referenced by the developmental stages of infant-toddler (birth to age three), pre-kindergarten (three to kindergarten entry), kindergarten, and early elementary.

Family Engagement: A continuum of services, practices, activities, and communication feedback loops that includes the family in the process of student support and provide the family with services that allow them to be meet their goals.

Readiness: Being prepared socially, cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally to thrive and to meet the challenges of a developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous kindergarten experience. Readiness can refer to a child’s readiness for school as well as a school’s readiness for a child; further, there is no standardized version of readiness but rather an individualized stage of development for a child.

Social Emotional Learning: Defined through Illinois Social and Emotional Learning Standards to mean the process through which children develop awareness and management of their emotions, set and achieve important personal and academic goals, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision making and responsible behaviors to achieve school and life success.

Transition: The process of children, families, schools, and communities in moving from one stage of development, and often one instructional provider or learning environment, to another.

**Illinois P-20 Council and Illinois Early Learning Council
Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee**

Values and Principles

- High quality learning opportunities are a child’s initial introduction to formalized learning and an essential part of our nation’s education system.*
- Young children facing the most significant challenges stand to benefit greatly from comprehensive and consistent early learning experiences.*
- Research demonstrates that investing in high quality early childhood learning experiences produces outcomes that help ensure children are successful in school and life.*
- It is good practice for early childhood programs and the school districts into which children transition to coordinate; we encourage that coordination and encourage support for that coordination.
- There is value in K-12 educators and administrators partnering with early childhood programs in their communities, including Head Start, Preschool for All, home visiting, and child care.*
- Early learning should play a role in required school improvement processes, including the role of kindergarten readiness data in school needs assessments and the expansion of high-quality early learning as a school improvement strategy.*
- The State of Illinois is committed to the importance of social and emotional learning for children of all ages.*
- The State of Illinois is committed to supporting children in special populations, including English Learners, children with Individualized Education Plans, children experiencing homelessness, children experiencing poverty, and children who are welfare-involved.

**Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee
Panel Synthesis Summary**

How can we work together to support a successful kindergarten transition in Illinois?

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Administrators can: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement developmentally-appropriate play-based practices in kindergarten and early elementary to support whole child development (possibly facilitated by full-day kindergarten) Participate in training and professional development on early care and education, social emotional and whole child development, family and community engagement, trauma-informed practice, and developmentally-appropriate discipline | |
| Schools and districts can: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create time to allow for KIDS assessment results examination as a team and collaboration to identify next steps, including mitigation of deficiencies across pre-k – 3rd grade based on results Solicit feedback from teachers, administrators, and families to develop a KIDS-aligned school report card that emphasizes whole child development and can be shared externally Create database to support data transmission from various ECE providers to kindergarten; develop data report to be shared externally with supporting community stakeholders | Data |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set goals in kindergarten readiness plans that align with child development standards Mirror the structure of the ECE day by creating time for play-based, child-directed activities to encourage self-regulation and social emotional development | Classroom Practices |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite families and providers into schools prior to and throughout the transition and coordinate bridge programs to support children with limited prior ECE experience; conduct home visits Create protected joint collaboration time for ECE and kindergarten educators Hire family educators, home-school liaisons, mental health consultants, social workers, community partnerships coordinators, and/or kindergarten transition facilitators in both ECE and kindergarten settings to support whole child development and family engagement | Engagement |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align PD for educators and administrators across ECE and early elementary to better reflect developmentally appropriate practices, specifically around play, self-regulation, family engagement, and assessment Implement communities of practice and professional learning communities that include ECE and kindergarten teachers and administrators | Professional Development |
| Educator Preparation Providers can: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align teacher preparation standards across ECE and early elementary to better reflect developmentally appropriate practices Blend courses on family engagement and other topics across ECE, early elementary, SPED, and admin. | |
| The State of Illinois can: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define kindergarten readiness and develop a pre-k – 3rd grade best practice implementation manual Incentivize full-day kindergarten, collaboration across ECE providers and school districts (including through school calendar), and pathways to administrative leadership for early childhood educators Avoid using assessment as a performance ranking or quality measurement tool to avoid pushing down high stakes activities into kindergarten and ECE and to avoid improperly evaluating ECE Create attendance policy for kindergarten that considers and accounts for non-mandatory status | |
| Communities can: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support parent understanding of types of learning (including the connection between play and learning) Expand parent awareness of policies that support family and community engagement in schools Unite service providers from all sectors to support local collaboration through the transition | |

Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee Complete Panel Synthesis

KTAC panels have identified best practices and recommendations across the kindergarten transition, for:

Administrators (serving children birth through third grade)

- Advocate for and implement play-based practices in kindergarten, like block building, imaginative play, and exploratory play-based teaching, as a mechanism for developing academic and social emotional skills
 - Consider moving to full day kindergarten to ensure there are opportunities to bring in play-based learning
 - Expand developmentally appropriate play-based learning activities into 1st-2nd grades
- Attend KIDS assessment and kindergarten transition professional development to understand the importance of all KIDS domains and how they work together to bolster development

Schools and Districts (serving children birth through third grade)

Data: KIDS Assessment

- Solicit teacher, administrator, and family feedback to develop a KIDS-aligned school report card free of jargon that emphasizes whole child development
 - E.g., Valley View SD 365U Report Card and Parent Update
- Create time to allow for examination of KIDS assessment as a team and collaboration to identify next steps. This could include:
 - Early release time for PLCs for ECE and Kindergarten teachers together
 - Resources devoted to building inter-rater reliability
 - Training on how to analyze a work sample
 - Building an understanding that not all data is quantitative
- Use KIDS assessment results to guide mitigation of deficiencies and continuous quality improvement across K-3rd grade
 - Adjust KIDS assessment scores for demographics to informally compare teacher effectiveness. Seek out teachers in classrooms with higher and lower scores; connect these teachers so that they can compare practices and interventions
 - Provide collaborative professional development and intervention implementation in response to KIDS assessment data specifics for your district
 - Develop and adopt responsive classroom techniques and differentiated instruction practices and procedures based on KIDS assessment information
- Use KIDS assessment and teacher evaluation to educate administrators on ECE, family engagement, and their importance
- Streamline kindergarten assessments around the KIDS assessment, perhaps allowing for discontinuation of other assessments
- Align assessments across ECE (DRDP, TS GOLD, or others), kindergarten (KIDS), and early elementary (not PARCC)

Data and Information: General

- Create an electronic data wall or common database so that students' data is accessible to school personnel across the ECE to kindergarten transition and educators can begin interventions earlier in kindergarten with a better understand of a student's development
 - General transition information and reflections from ECE teacher to kindergarten teacher
 - Chronic absenteeism data
 - Forum for teachers to communicate and share practices for easing the transition
 - Mechanism for transferring TS Gold and other student information
- Identify and incorporate best data practices utilized in the transition 1) from IFSP to IEP and 2) IEP from ECE to kindergarten
 - E.g., IEP Section 7 organization and components
- Use community data beyond what's available in the school to identify areas of need in the community that will affect school readiness. This could include:
 - Survey data (nationally representative and other)
 - Police reports
 - Census data
 - Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, hosted by the University of Illinois
 - Other community data on services
- Develop data report with analysis across ECE and kindergarten; share outside of the school so agencies can help to support
 - E.g., participation in all-day kindergarten, KIDS assessment results, indicators disaggregated by subgroup (including geography and ECE attendance)
 - E.g., Wheaton CUSD 200 Strong Start to Kindergarten

Classroom Practices

- Early care and education:
 - Set goals in kindergarten readiness plans that will create a trajectory for where kids need to be by the end of preschool to ensure readiness and success in kindergarten
 - Provide space within the pre-k classroom for kindergarten exploration and discussion
 - E.g., U-46 Elgin Kindergarten Corner
- Kindergarten and early elementary:
 - Create time for child-directed play or play-based activities to counteract research indicating that overemphasis in academics early on may bring short term academic gains but poorer long term academic outcomes and behavioral challenges
 - Focus less on regulating behavioral compliance, as it is developmentally inappropriate
- Mirror the structure of the day in ECE to encourage regulation rather than dysregulation
- Consider how discipline policies affect children with trauma

Communication and Engagement

- Early care and education:
 - Invite parents to early childhood pre-service with educators and family support staff; integrate kindergarten transition discussion into pre-service time
 - Create family time in pre-k to model kindergarten practices and prepare parents and children for the transition
 - With families, pre-write students' goals for the next year, especially if a child has an IEP

- Gather school representatives together at the pre-k to share all options with parents
- Ensure kindergarten teachers visit ECE classrooms before the end of the program year
- Train family support staff on accessing the local school's homelessness liaisons
- Kindergarten:
 - Provide tours. Allow families and non-school-based providers to bring children to school; let them visit the classroom and teachers.
 - Create a summer bridge program alongside the kindergarten registration process (especially those without ECE experience); compensate teachers for participation
 - Host a kindergarten orientation or open house, and use this time to explicitly engage parents to learn about the child
 - Conduct home visits with incoming families prior to the start of kindergarten
 - Expand small pre-k classroom sizes up into kindergarten
 - First day: allow families to come to class with children
- Throughout the year: provide parents with written updates on children's development through the lens of the KIDS assessment through a newsletter
 - Definition of each of the domains (especially social emotional development) and how to practice it at home, what is expected from each standard by the end of kindergarten year
 - Discussion on a child's continuum of development and that growth is more important than meeting a specific benchmark by the end of the year
- Create protected collaboration time for ECE and kindergarten educators
 - Expansion of developmentally appropriate curriculum in kindergarten and support in implementation
 - Discuss social and emotional skills within the context of positive relationship development between children and adults
 - Focus on understanding and dealing with challenging behaviors
 - Allow peer observation across pre-k and kindergarten classrooms
 - Use crosswalk between TS Gold (or other ECE assessments) and the KIDS assessment
 - E.g., ISU Center for the Study of Education Policy and ISBE developed crosswalk for KIDS assessment and ECE assessments
- Hire family educators, home-school liaisons, mental health consultants, licensed social workers, community partnerships staff, and kindergarten transition facilitators in both ECE and kindergarten settings
 - Utilize staff to facilitate the transition, support trauma-informed practice, align curriculum and practices, etc.
- Set up opportunities for the community to enter the setting
 - Facility where families can access resources, like a community schools network
 - On-site food bank, mental health services, doctor's offices, tax preparation
 - E.g., West Chicago District 33 Community Schools Network
- Implement relational approach to transition that includes teacher-led workshops with parents, with a focus on mental health consultation. Therapeutic relationships and psychotherapy can drive outcomes in the kindergarten transition.
 - E.g., Juvenile Protective Association's Connect to Kindergarten
- Identify and develop structural supports to maintain partnership between ECE and elementary settings to ensure partnership can survive through turnover

Cultural Responsiveness

- Coordinate local advisory groups for special populations, such as DLLs
- Develop curriculum around thematic, inquiry based instruction; ensure it's language heavy to build oracy before moving into literacy (to support high share of DLLs)

Professional Development Coordinators (in-service)

Data

- Train teachers on developmentally-appropriate assessment, observational assessment, and how to incorporate KIDS into the daily classroom environment
- Support educators implementing KIDS assessment through practices including book study, solicitation of teacher feedback and concerns, provision of resources to ease those concerns (such as how to fit the assessment into a classroom schedule)
 - E.g., *The Power of Observation*

Communication and Engagement

- Administrators should participate in professional development on ECE, especially if they were not part of the new ECE training policy required for administrators.
 - Developmentally appropriate instruction (utilize videos and documents on what it looks and sounds like in a developmentally appropriate pre-k and kindergarten classroom)
 - Guided play, how it aligns with standards, and how it looks across P-2 classrooms
- Provide (and consider implementing requirements for) professional development to educators and administrators (birth to third grade) on family engagement, cultural competence, implicit bias, trauma-informed practice, developmentally-appropriate discipline practices, self-regulation in a relational context
 - Could be supported by community organizations
- Ensure space for parents at (and supports to help them access) trainings so they can train other parents and share information
- Implement communities of practice and professional learning communities that include ECE and kindergarten teachers
 - Protected planning and coordination time
 - Identify common foundational practices on which to focus and align practice, including self-regulation and dramatic play
 - Focus specifically on self-regulation and social emotional development; include reflective supervision and exploration of teacher implicit bias
 - Use this space to identify teacher leadership groups; teachers can identify issues and ways in which things can change that utilize a school's strengths

Educator Preparation Providers (pre-service)

- Align ECE and elementary teacher preparation standards to better reflect developmentally appropriate practice, specifically around play, self-regulation, and social emotional development
 - Ensure sufficient training in early math across ECE and elementary
- Blend courses on family engagement across ECE, SPED, elementary, and administration

- Implement a family practicum where teacher candidates have to spend time in the field working with a family with young children

The State of Illinois

Early Care and Education

- Provide funds for facilities to retrofit an elementary classroom or other space to offer additional slots for ECBG-funded programs
- Provide greater certainty regarding funding changes and awards so that districts can avoid RIFs, avoid using local funding to cover pre-k and expansion grants, and plan for hiring
- Develop and incentivize pathways to administrative leadership for early childhood educators

Kindergarten

- Define kindergarten readiness
- Decrease kindergarten classroom ratios to more closely align with ECE settings
- Consider moving to full day kindergarten to ensure there are opportunities to bring in play-based learning
 - Incentivize or encourage mandating time in K-2 dedicated to play and unstructured gross motor activities to smooth the transition from school-based pre-k
- Collect data from incoming kindergarten families on which ECE setting their child attended
- Allow families to come with children on their first day and allow it to be counted as attendance day
- Create kindergarten attendance policy for registered, enrolled, or attending students that provides accountability (where there currently is little due to kindergarten's non-mandatory nature)
- Provide greater flexibility in KIDS assessment training methods
 - Could include train-the-trainer model, multiple trainings offered

Communication and Engagement

- Incentivize collaboration and conversation between districts and ECE providers
- Develop an implementation manual on high-quality best practices in pre-k – 2
- Coordinate infrastructure and design policy on data to be collected across P-2 and accessible across settings
 - Develop and provide a standardized Data Sharing Agreement that wouldn't require paying district attorneys to develop.
 - Support acquisition of data outside the education system, such as birth certificates
- Augment the school calendar to develop a model that allows consistent communities of practices for teachers across ECE and kindergarten (as well as other grades)
- Avoid using assessment as a performance ranking or quality measurement tool to avoid pushing down high stakes activities into lower elementary and ECE and to avoid improperly evaluating early learning programs
 - Instead, use assessment to guide the attention and focus of educators across the transition

Community Organizations

- Support parent understanding of types of learning (i.e., connection between play and learning)
- Adapt learning goals for different populations (age groups, demographics, special populations)

- E.g., Chicago Children’s Museum
- Use the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, hosted by the University of Illinois, as a resource to better know of available services across the early learning and early elementary continuum
- Initiate collective impact coalition uniting organizations from all sectors in the community to support the transition
 - E.g., BPI Pre-K Kindergarten Transitions Program in Altgeld-Riverdale

Multiple Actors (could be picked up by one or more of the above)

Communication and Engagement

- Develop a transition workgroup at the local level that involves parents, ECE and kindergarten educators, and staff to develop a local plan for a successful transition
 - Provide parent education on play-based learning in ECE and kindergarten to support buy-in
- Establish a student-centered, community-based collaborative to support comprehensive communication on the kindergarten transition
 - E.g., local early childhood collaborative
- Develop a community-based ECE provider network that meets regularly to support collaboration

Service Provision

- Cross-system community efforts to lower chronic absenteeism
- Individual case management for children with IFSPs or IEPs
- Expand parent awareness of policies that support family and community engagement in schools, such as laws allowing individuals to miss work to attend school activities
 - E.g., PA 87-1240
- Identify free resources in the community and coordinate families to meet at those places on days off from school; provide parent education and resources
- Provide mental health consultations to teachers to support them in working with students with trauma and other challenges
- Provide small group therapy and parent workshops at the school to strengthen the home school connection

Research

- Examine whether and why early childhood educators are less likely to become school administrators
- Examine and mitigate any unintended consequences of PA 100-421 (early entry into kindergarten)
 - E.g., whether the policy incentivizes applications for accelerated entry for the purpose of receiving full-day care rather than a need for accelerated placement
- Examine the parent experience through the transition; identify ways to support their needs

Literature & Landscape Review: Early Childhood through K-12 Transitions

Executive Summary

A large and growing body of research on the critical role of early childhood education in the cognitive and social-emotional development of young children has led to increased efforts across the nation, and here in Illinois, to ensure that all students and families have access to high quality early childhood education. The state has worked to implement policies that support assessment of kindergarten readiness (KIDS), relevant licensure requirements and professional development for early childhood educators and administrators, program quality evaluations for early childhood programs, and the allocation of resources to ensure that sufficient seats are available to meet demand. However, in order to avoid the “fade-out effect” and for these efforts to yield the greatest possible returns by helping to close racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, gains made in the early childhood years must be sustained and built upon in the early elementary grades. In addition, stronger transitions should help to improve coordination and improve programming in both the early years and in the early grades.

Transitions to and through kindergarten and the early grades are an especially vulnerable time in a child’s educational progression. Ensuring that these transitions maintain and build upon children’s social, cognitive, and academic competencies is pivotal in creating a healthy education system. States leading in ECE, such as Washington and West Virginia, have worked to smooth transitions by aligning curricula, instructional supports, and assessments, and establishing systematic methods of communication between childcare providers and elementary teachers and school leaders. This review is intended to synthesize research on best practices for supporting students and families through the transition from early education to kindergarten and the early grades, as well as to tabulate work being done in this area in Illinois and other states.

Among the practices and activities identified in the literature, the following emerged as effective in improving student outcomes and are particularly salient to consider as Illinois’ Kindergarten Transitions Advisory Committee works to create a framework for high quality transitions for all students.

1. **“Logistical” transition activities** – these are designed to help students and families acclimate to the different environment, social setting, and demands of kindergarten and include activities such as:
 - Sending information about the kindergarten program home to parents
 - Allowing preschoolers to spend time in kindergarten classrooms and settings
 - Shortening the school day at the beginning of the school year
 - Allowing parents and children to visit kindergarten prior to the start of the school year
 - Inviting parents to attend an orientation session prior to the start of the school year
2. **Aligned social and emotional learning** – SEL should be aligned to Illinois’ SEL standards and coordinated across the kindergarten transition. This element of transitions would include developmentally appropriate instruction, play-based learning, and use of mindfulness practices across B-3rd.
3. **Parental involvement strategies across B-3rd** to build trusting relationships, including
 - Conducting home visits in which teachers visit students’ homes at the beginning of the school year
 - Providing materials and guidance on activities parents can do with their children
 - Engaging parents regularly, beginning at least as early as the spring of the year prior to kindergarten
 - Ensuring that engagement is conducted in a culturally sensitive manner and accommodates the language needs of families in their community

4. Utilize opportunities to strengthen alignment and transition created by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), via

- Support systems for struggling schools
- The creation of kindergarten transition plans in schools receiving Title 1 funds
- The use of Title II funds for high quality professional development on early childhood and transition best practices for educators and administrators

5. Create collaborative transition teams and student transition plans, and provide training in data-based decision-making. These can be incentivized with PEG or other funding and/or required within school districts. Two Illinois school districts have made strides in this way by

- Restructuring early childhood education and kindergarten within districts so they are more closely connected in decision-making and planning (Elgin)
- Incentivizing community-wide early childhood and district systems partnerships to conduct joint PD, family engagement, data analysis (Oak Park)

6. Strengthen development of early childhood educator and school leader expertise, by

- Providing protected time for professional learning communities (PLCs) and opportunities for shared professional development between early learning and elementary school educators
- Supporting principals grandfathered in to the new Early childhood education training policy

7. Incorporate personalized learning – teachers and classroom staff can accommodate different skill levels by modifying assignments, adapting learning materials, providing different levels of support, or using small-group instruction.

- Utilize KIDS data to identify strengths and areas of growth for children upon kindergarten entry, with particular focus on providing individualized supports to students performing behind their peers and those with no prior formal care experience.

8. Aligning instruction across grades by aligning or coordinating standards, curricula, instructional practices, assessments, and professional development.

Literature & Landscape Review: Early Childhood through K-12 Transitions

Part 1: Research on Transitions & Alignment - What Do We Know?

Importance of ECE - K-12 Alignment

An extensive body of evidence suggests that high quality early childhood experiences and intentional transition practices between early childhood and kindergarten (and beyond, including to and through the early elementary grades) can have a powerful effect on students' later school and life outcomes. A 2005 study that analyzed national data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study on more than 17,000 children established a link between the number of transition activities facilitated by schools prior to the start of kindergarten and improved academic achievement in kindergarten (language and literacy and general knowledge of the social and physical world)¹. The major goal of this study was to empirically investigate the relationship between school transition practices and kindergarten academic achievement, as measured by cognitive assessments of children's reading skills, math skills, and general knowledge of the social world. Notably, positive gains were greatest for children whose families were low-income and middle-income. "Transition activities" considered included the following:

- a) information about the KG program is phoned or sent home to parents
- b) preschoolers spend time in the KG classrooms
- c) school days are shortened at the beginning of the school year
- d) parents and children visit KG prior to the start of the school year
- e) teachers visit students' homes at the beginning of the school year
- f) parents attend an orientation session prior to the school year

In addition to these findings concerning children's progress on academic measures, a separate study found that transition activities practiced by Pre-K teachers were also associated with an increase in kindergarten teachers' perception of student performance on non-academic measures, including social-emotional competence and self-regulatory skills.² The study included 722 children from 214 classrooms using data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning's Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten. The Academic Rating Scale was used to measure teachers' perception of students' language and literacy skills and the Teacher-Child Rating Scale to measure their perception of seven elements of children's social and emotional competencies. A greater number of transition activities was associated with more positive social competencies and the transition activity with the greatest effect on teachers positive perception of child social and emotional competency was contact between Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers about specific children or curricula. In this study, "transition activities" included the following:

- a) PK children visit KG class
- b) KG teacher visits PK class
- c) Spring orientation for PK parents
- d) Individual meetings with parents
- e) PK teacher visits KG class
- f) Contact with KG teacher about curriculum or specific children
- g) Spring orientation for PK children
- h) School-wide activity for PK children
- i) Written records shared with KG

Analyses point to the importance of receiving multiple alignment and transition supports – these approaches and interventions work to supplement and complement each other, meaning that no one approach, such as coordinated professional development for example, will on its own markedly increase student performance and reduce learning fadeout. Studies using data from the ECLS-K 1999 cohort and the Carolina Abecedarian project support this conclusion. In both instances, students who received a number of interventions (full-day preschool and Kindergarten, appropriate student-teacher ratios as measured by class size, high-quality teachers as measured by teacher certification and reading instruction, and accountability as measured by sustained parental involvement) performed better than those who received only a few of the interventions, and those who received only a few outperformed those who received none.³

Positive Effects of Transition Activities Have Lasting Effects

A recently published cohort study of the Chicago Child Parent Centers which followed 1,398 children through 35 years of age found that multi-year interventions (from preschool to third grade) are associated with long term educational success, including a 48% higher rate of degree completion, which in turn contributes to positive economic and health outcomes.⁴ Service continuity across preschool and early elementary supports a stable learning environment and is a hallmark of the centers.

Negative Impact of Poor Transitions & Lack of Alignment is an Equity Issue

Though the benefits of high quality early childhood experiences are well documented and the efficacy of transition and alignment between early childhood and elementary grades has been shown to be especially beneficial for traditionally underserved student populations, studies have found that some of these benefits do not persist into third grade⁵. This problem of fadeout is compounded by the fact that schools located in districts serving large numbers of low-income students were found to be less likely to provide kindergarten transition activities compared to wealthier schools, meaning that students and families who would likely benefit most from transition activities are the least likely to receive them.⁶

Components of Successful Transitions

The topic of facilitating transitions to and through the early elementary grades has recently received a great deal of attention in light of the overwhelming evidence of their importance in improving student outcomes. As a result, a number of useful frameworks have been developed for strengthening PreK-3rd grade transitions⁷. These frameworks provide a basis for identifying policy levers that can be used to develop and strengthen “mechanisms, resources, and structures...that reflect, support, and sustain shared vision, collaborative relationships, and mutual accountabilities between 0-5 and K-12”⁸. For the sake of this review, we will organize critical components of successful transitions using the multipart structure for school readiness defined by the National Governor’s Association, which defines readiness as including “ready kids” and “ready schools” supported by “ready families and communities” which are in turn supported by “ready states”⁹.

Ready Kids

In order for us to ensure that children enter school “ready to learn”, we must start from an understanding of *how* children learn. Before a child can understand and apply academic content knowledge, they must have strong social and emotional foundations. Indeed, social emotional learning is best understood not as something separate from cognitive development and academic learning, but something that is integrated with it¹⁰. Social and emotional development “comprises specific skills and competencies that students need in order to set goals, manage behavior, build relationships, and process and remember information”¹¹. These skills and competencies develop within a system of relationships, interactions, and contexts. Work to implement mindfulness practices in early childhood classrooms on both sides of the kindergarten transition can support the development of students’ social emotional competencies, and help reduce the stress that is inherent in a large change in routine like transitioning to kindergarten¹². Adults, both parents and professionals, must understand and have the skills to foster this development in children in order to prepare them for the social and emotional demands of the classroom and everyday life¹³.

A growing body of empirical evidence points to play-based learning and sociodramatic play as invaluable in helping students develop social and emotional skills as students interact with peers, navigate social situations, learn skills like sharing, and develop communication skills¹⁴. Additionally, play-based learning has been shown to serve a critical function in the development of young children’s literacy skills as it allows students to develop cognitive faculties including thinking symbolically, negotiating meaning, and using language as a sense-making tool to process experiences¹⁵. The importance of play in the development of cognitive functions cannot be understated, and as such, it is incumbent upon early care providers, schools, families, and state agencies to ensure that instruction is conducted in a developmentally appropriate manner. The research suggests that students benefit when there is continuity in instructional style between pre-K and kindergarten, including the use of play-based learning, rather than an abrupt change in teaching style and content¹⁶.

Ready Schools

High quality, coherent instructional approaches across the Pre-K through third grade span increase the likelihood that children will complete third grade ready to tackle increasingly challenging academic curriculum¹⁷. The three facets of ensuring that schools are ready to support children and families through the transition to kindergarten by providing such a coherent instructional approach are aligned curriculum, collaborative teacher development, and school leader support. A 2016 USDOE study highlighted the following findings as effective school based strategies to support transitions based on case studies of programs in Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, North Carolina, and California¹⁸.

- All of the case study programs aligned instruction across grades by aligning or coordinating standards, curricula, instructional practices, and professional development; three sites also used aligned assessments.
- Common elements of P–3 programs included the use of protected time for professional learning communities (PLCs), coaches, parent engagement, and play-based or student-initiated learning.
- Teachers in all five programs reported using strategies to incorporate personalized learning and to accommodate students’ different skill levels, including modifying assignments, adapting learning materials, providing different levels of support, or using small-group instruction.
- All programs focused on increasing students’ vocabulary, oral language, *and* social-emotional skills.

Whether or not Pre-K is housed on a school campus, school leaders have a key role to play in strengthening connections between Pre-K, Kindergarten, and the early elementary grades. As one report put it, “Principals can be the architects or demolitionists of developmentally appropriate instruction because they set the vision for their schools’ instructional philosophy and practice”¹⁹. As it stands however, according to information gathered through a series of focus groups with 48 school leaders conducted by The New America Foundation in 2015, current relationships between school leaders and early childhood educators, especially those external to the school itself, tend to be informal rather than sustained and strategic communications efforts or ongoing collaboration²⁰. Research suggests that it is important both to ensure that elementary principals have a deep understanding of early childhood education through preparation programs and professional development and to encourage principals to form and strengthen linkages between elementary schools and other pre-K providers. Recommendations for doing so include incorporating early childhood education into principal preparation (IL was the first state to do so - more on this can be found later in this review), requiring and providing in-service professional development opportunities, and using Title II funds to support professional development for classroom staff and administrators.

Ready Families & Communities

Transitions occur not just for students but also for their parents and families, as they enter along with their child into a new set of relationships with the educators and individuals who will teach and care for their child in the formal education system. The Harvard Family Research Project describes three different kinds of parental involvement that have been proven to improve the academic outcomes of young children: good parenting practices, strong relationships with schools and resource providers, and “complementary learning” experiences provided outside of school²¹. In the context of transitions, family readiness means that families have an understanding of what their children should know and be able to do when they arrive at school.

In addition to knowing what is expected of their child, they must also know what to expect over the course of the transition itself. Successful transition practices in this realm build trust and relationships between families and schools as well as provide content knowledge to parents, and include such activities as hosting parent nights for families of incoming kindergarteners, home visit programs, and provision of resources (like the “parent roadmaps” developed by the New York City Department of Education) directly to parents. Schools successfully facilitate parent knowledge and build relationships when they engage with families in a combination of approaches, including engaging in frequent communication with parents, offering them the opportunity to visit classrooms, and allowing parents to take active responsibility in their child’s learning and

development by providing materials and guidance on activities parents can do with their children. School districts and members of school or district transition teams bear the responsibility of ensuring that information and engagement is conducted in a culturally sensitive manner and accommodates the language needs of families in their community.

Ready States

Much of the work of planning and establishing a connected and consistent system for supporting children and families in the transition from early childhood through the early grades is the purview of local providers and school districts. However, states have a vital role to play in establishing systems of support to enable successful local implementation of transition work. State policy establishes the requirements for principal and teacher preparation and licensure, which provides an opportunity to ensure that educators are trained in developmentally appropriate practice and exhibit the competencies necessary to help ensure that the earliest learners in their districts and classrooms have what they need to thrive. Additionally, states have the ability to mandate data collection, including data on program readiness and kindergarten entry, as well as to create structures for data sharing across grades and systems. Finally, and critically, state policy drives the allocation and distribution of funding for both early childhood programs and K-12 district schools.

Robust Body of Research Points to Promising Practices

We now have a research base for the importance of systematic supports for transition to kindergarten and the early grades, and a framework for thinking about the roles of children, schools & educators, families & communities, and states in ensuring kindergarten readiness and healthy transitions. But what best practices specifically have shown a measurable impact on Kindergarten readiness and on later student outcomes?

The National Early Childhood Transition Center has conducted extensive research to answer this very question. They conducted a recent national social validation study that sought to gather information on the extent to which early childhood professionals (working with children birth through age 8, with membership in either the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children), agreed on a set of practices they perceived as effective for early childhood transitions²². Survey results validated a list of 21 practices that represent practices that concern 1) interagency systems and those that concern 2) child and family preparation and adjustment. The list of practices is included below.

Child and Family Preparation and Adjustment

- Individual child & family transition meetings are conducted.
- Staff follow-up on children after the transition to support their adjustment.
- Team members share appropriate information about each child making a transition.
- Transition plans are developed that include individual activities for each child & family.
- Staff know key information about a broad array of agencies & services available within the community.
- Children have opportunities to develop & practice skills they need to be successful in the next environment.
- Families are aware of the importance of transition planning & have information they need to actively participate in transition planning with their child.
- Families' needs related to transition are assessed & addressed.
- Families have information about and are linked with resources & services to help them meet their specific child & family needs.
- Families actively participate in gathering information about their child's growth & development.

Interagency Service System

- A primary contact person for transition is identified within each program or agency.
- Community- and program-wide transition activities & timelines are identified.
- Referral processes & timelines are clearly specified.
- Enrollment processes & timelines are clearly specified.
- Program eligibility processes & timelines are clearly delineated.
- Agencies develop formal mechanisms to minimize disruptions in services before, during, & after the transition of the child and family.
- Staff & family members are actively involved in design of transition processes & systems.
- Staff roles & responsibilities for transition activities are clearly delineated.
- Conscious & transparent connections are made between curricula & child expectations across programs/environments.
- Methods are in place to support staff-to-staff communication within & across programs.
- Families meaningfully participate as partners with staff in program- & community-wide transition efforts.

ESSA Creates an Opportunity for Improving Transitions & Increasing P-3 Alignment

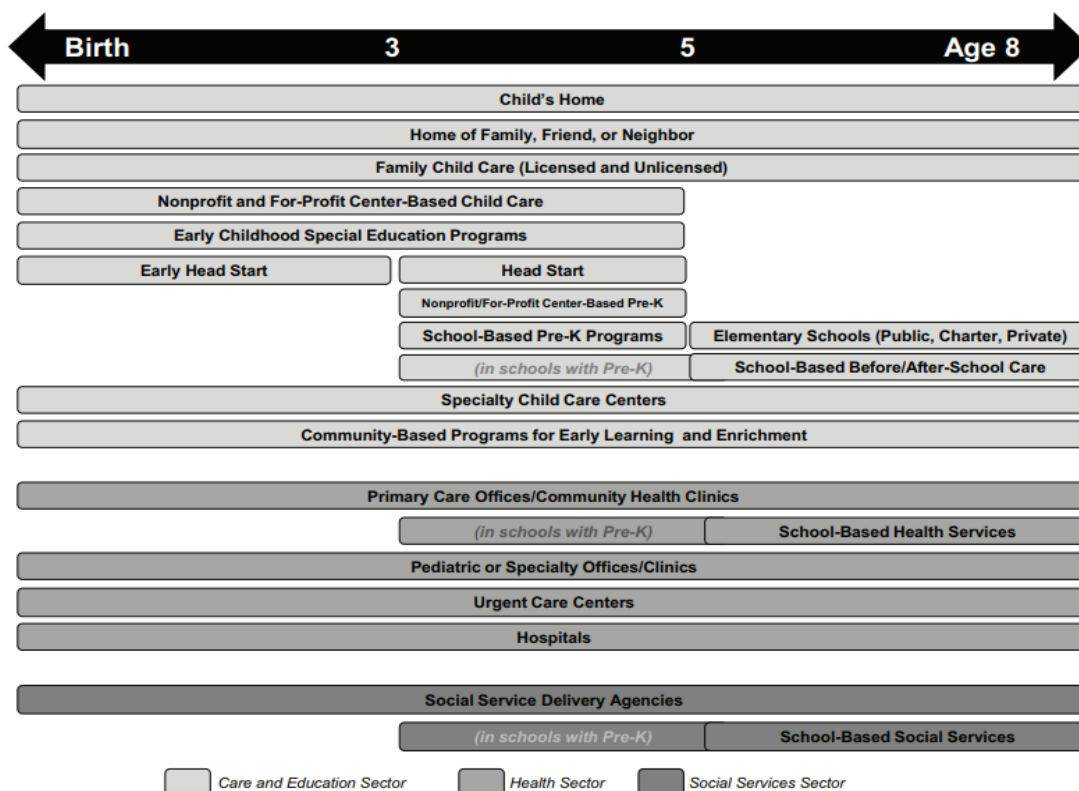
ESSA creates two major areas of opportunity for states seeking to improve alignment and kindergarten transitions by allowing states to create a system of supports for struggling schools and by requiring programs receiving Title I funding to develop kindergarten transition plans to improve academic outcomes for academically disadvantaged students²³. New Jersey, for example, has included in its ESSA plan the intent to use Preschool Expansion Grant dollars to create cross-sector "transition teams" to create kindergarten

transition plans for children and families. They also plan to train districts in data-based decision-making to improve student outcomes. Illinois' plan also makes mention of the importance of a "whole child" approach and encourages collaboration within and between schools to smooth transitions, but includes no specific requirements as to how this is to be achieved. Additionally, under ESSA, Title II funds can be used to provide programming that increases "the knowledge base of teachers and principals on instruction in the early grades and strategies to measure whether young children are progressing" as well as "the ability of principals or other school leaders to support [educators] to meet the needs of students through age 8, which may include providing joint professional learning and planning activities for school staff and educators in preschool programs that address the transition to elementary school"²⁴. Relevant language from Illinois' state ESSA plan is included in this document as an appendix.

Part 2: Research on how IL and other states are supporting transitions - What Is Being Done?

IL Context – The Care & Education Landscape

It is important to note that vertical transition between early care and kindergarten can take on a multitude of forms, as students enter kindergarten from a wide variety of early care settings, including home or neighbor care, care by a licensed provider, Head Start Pre-K program, or school based pre-K, as pictured below²⁵.



From *Transforming the Workforce for children birth through age 8: A Unified Framework*

The quality of early childhood experience varies within and between these different environments. For many, access to high quality early care options is severely limited. According to The Center for American Progress, "59% of people in IL live in a childcare desert". A childcare desert is defined as "any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots."²⁶

Given this reality, many families choose to utilize home based care provided in most cases by a friend, family member, or neighbor (FFN care). In many cases, even in places where licensed early care is available, families, especially recent immigrants, may choose FFN care because they trust these individuals, with whom they have existing relationships and who may share the same values, culture, and home language²⁷. In addition to possessing this valuable cultural capital, home-based caregivers may also be more convenient for families,

especially those with infants and toddlers, as they can often accommodate more flexible schedules than formal care. These providers have varying degrees of knowledge of child development and best practices for providing cognitive stimulation for the young children they care for. For the sake of supporting transitions by ensuring continuity of quality from early care through kindergarten and the early grades, states must consider how best to support quality improvement and capacity building in this sector of early childhood care²⁸.

Approaches to Transitions & Alignment in IL

Illinois has taken some critical steps at the state level to help support the development of strong transitions and several districts have forged ahead in this work on their own. The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) rolled out statewide in the fall of 2017 and is slated to provide a comprehensive statewide picture that can inform work to strengthen transitions. Several key indicators related to healthy transitions, including the percentage of children birth to age three enrolled in high quality publicly funded programs, were identified by the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth as critical to ensuring progress to achieving the goal of preparing children to be engaged citizens with meaningful and rewarding careers²⁹. Below are a few more examples of work in IL related to transitions and alignment of early childhood and K-12 systems.

Principal Preparation & Licensure

Illinois is nationally recognized as a pioneer in incorporating the early years into requirements for elementary principal preparation and licensure, including a performance-based internship and competency based assessments requiring prospective principals to engage with all grade levels, including Pre-K. It was the only state to do so as of 2016. The next step is to provide school leaders with incentives and supports to actively and regularly collaborate with early childhood providers in the planning and implementation of transitions.

Birth through Third Grade Continuity Program

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) currently partner with the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University (ISU) to develop state supports for B-3 efforts, create tools and opportunities to support communities in the creation of an aligned B-3 education continuum³⁰. These include providing technical assistance, conducting site visits, hosting informational webinars, and convening B-3 institutes during which participants can share best practices for B-3 alignment and engage in collaborative planning.

Child-Parent Center P-3 Program

The Child-Parent Center Preschool through 3rd Grade (CPC P-3) program is a school reform effort designed to promote school readiness skills and effective transitions to elementary school for children from low-income families. A Midwest expansion of the program was funded by an Innovate to Achieve grant of \$15 million over 5 years, ending in the 2016-2017 school year. Chicago Public Schools participated in the program, with support from the Erikson Institute and Metropolitan Family Services. Hallmarks of the program include small class sizes, strict staff qualification requirements, ongoing professional development and the formation of professional learning communities. CPC's also co-locate Pre-K and K in the same building when possible, have a dedicated family liaison (a School Community Representative) and engage families in school activities on a monthly basis. It may be worth further analyzing the components and outcomes of these programs, and investigating the continuity of such programming beyond the I3 Funding.

Illinois Early Childhood Collaborations

Across Illinois, local early childhood program agencies, and in some cases school districts, have worked to embrace a cross-sector approach and develop collaborative strategies to better serve children and families, including supporting the transition to kindergarten. Illinois Action for Children, funded by a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, published a summary of the work of 51 such collaboratives operating in Illinois as of 2015. Further research would be needed to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which such collaboratives have worked to support transitions and what the outcomes of such work has been on student outcomes, but the format does provide a useful existing framework of community based peer networks.

Ounce of Prevention Fund District and Community Initiative

The Ounce of Prevention District and Community Initiative facilitates a nationwide peer learning network for school district leaders that provides virtual and in-person opportunities for them to share best practices on P-3 alignment. The Ounce has an extensive collection of online resources as part of a Birth to College toolkit that provides in-depth information about the importance of transitions and guidance on how communities, early learning programs and schools can improve transitions for students. Finally, the Ounce has compiled case studies on communities in Illinois that have implemented initiatives to align their early childhood and K-12 systems, including Elgin, Oak Park, Urbana and West Chicago. Below are highlights from Elgin and Oak Park.

Elgin

School District U-46 leveraged community partnerships to create the Give Me Five! Campaign to improve school readiness, increase literacy by 1st grade, and address birth to 3rd grade goals. The initiative is a district-community partnership led by the Elgin Partnership for Early Learning (EPEL), which includes representatives from community organizations like Advocate Sherman Hospital, Elgin Community College, United Way, Elgin Library and the Health Department. The initiative has been successful in creating cross-sector collaborations and implementing tools for aligned instruction with an emphasis on ensuring continuity for English learners.

Elgin's alignment efforts are facilitated by external investment (including a grant for Early Reading First) and bolstered by an organizational restructuring that placed Kindergarten under the jurisdiction of the Early Childhood director. "With this change, U-46's Preschool for All and special education preschool classrooms, which are located in both local school and community-based organizations, became integrated into district-wide instructional planning"³¹. Lessons learned include the need to build trust among stakeholders to establish strong relationships and the need for a consensus-style process of strategic planning and decision-making.

Oak Park

Oak Park's District 97, High School District 200, and the Village of Oak Park made a joint investment in the Oak Park Collaboration for Early Childhood to spearhead efforts to build a community-wide early childhood system in partnership with more than 60 organizations.³² The Oak Park program emphasizes the importance of joint professional development to bring together practitioners from early childhood and K-12. They host an annual symposium as well as content workshops and coaching sessions throughout the year that bring together early childhood and elementary school teachers, early intervention specialists, and social service providers. In addition, integral to the collaborative's efforts is a family engagement component which includes a home-visiting program (Parents as Teachers) and a Parenting Resource program that provides families with information as well as developmental screenings. Finally, the district created a voluntary longitudinal data system in order to set benchmarks, establish baseline performance, and track progress against goals. Key to the launch and ongoing success of the collaborative has been building buy-in of government agencies, engaging in deliberate and ambitious strategic planning to enable system-wide effects, and formalizing the collaboration to allow it to be well-staffed and self-sustaining rather than an informal volunteer effort.

Alignment Work in Other States

Many states have taken steps to actively encourage and provide a supportive state infrastructure for this work. The Education Commission of the States collects data on what each of the 50 states is doing to support school readiness³³. Key takeaways of the national report included the following:

- 18 states provide schools and districts with guidance, which includes written transition plans, family engagement best practices, meetings with educators, and assessment data systems. Illinois does not.
- 21 states require parental involvement in the promotion/retention process. Illinois currently does not.
- 33 states, including Illinois as of fall 2017, require the administration of Kindergarten entry assessments. It will be important for these states to ensure the results of these assessments inform transition activities by shining a light on areas of strength and weakness upon kindergarten entry.

- 36 states emphasize social-emotional learning in grades K-3 in rules, regulations, or statute, often in kindergarten entrance assessments, school readiness definitions, and/or teacher training requirements. Illinois includes social emotional learning as a kindergarten readiness domain.

• Only six states have an official definition of kindergarten readiness. Illinois is not currently among them. The table on the following page highlights efforts from specific states, including several featured in a recent report on “State Strategies to Ease the Transition from Pre-k to Kindergarten”, published by New America³⁴.

| STATE | TRANSITION APPROACH | KEY RESOURCES/CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION |
|----------------|--|---|
| South Carolina | <p><i>First Steps to School Readiness</i> is a public-private statewide initiative that utilizes a variety of strategies to promote school readiness, including a home visiting program called <i>Countdown to Kindergarten</i>, which pairs the families of high-risk rising kindergartners with their future teachers in the summer before school entry. Teachers conduct six visits with each family, centered upon classroom and content expectations.</p> <p>Several major initiatives in North Carolina support transitions. Smart Start was created by the state legislature in 1993 that formed a state level partnership and 75 local partnerships to work on improving school readiness. <i>Ready Schools</i>, provides a comprehensive online toolkit for schools and a separate toolkit for districts, as well as technical assistance and coaching to communities across the state. <i>FirstSchool</i>, an initiative launched by the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill to help schools design transitions to better serve high need students. <i>Power of K</i> initiative launched by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which offers kindergarten teachers professional development opportunities focused on developmentally appropriate practice.</p> | <p>Following North Carolina and California, South Carolina was the third state to create a statewide public-private partnership to increase school readiness outcomes.</p> <p><i>Smart Start</i> is funded by the state and was established through state legislation to improve early care and includes alignment work but is not specifically focused in transitions. <i>Ready Schools</i> is supported by grants from the North Carolina Partnership for Children.</p> |
| North Carolina | <p>In 2006, Colorado implemented Results Matter, a statewide program designed to streamline the use of observation-based assessments for children birth to age 5 by training care providers and teachers to perform observational assessments and enabling those results to be tracked across years and between systems. Participation is required for children enrolled in Colorado’s preschool program and those who receive special education services. Though participation is otherwise voluntary, 98% of Head Start providers in the state have elected to participate.</p> | <p>The Temple Hoyyn Buell foundation awarded grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 to 3 Colorado school districts & provides districts with technical assistance. Creation of the statewide streamlined data system of Results Matter was funded by a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.</p> |
| Colorado | <p>Oregon’s legislature established the Early Learning Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation grant program, which was funded at \$4 million in 2014-15. Grantees have a high degree of discretion over the programs they choose to implement, but must use grant resources for one or more of the following: support transitions to kindergarten, engage families as partners, provide opportunities for shared professional development between early learning and elementary school educators, and to increase connection, continuity, and alignment from birth to 3rd grade.</p> | <p>Grant dollars are awarded by the state to 16 regional early learning hubs created by the legislature’s Early Learning Council in 2013. Goals the hubs must work towards in regards to transitions are included in state statute.</p> |
| Oregon | <p>In 2011, Washington passed legislation known as the Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), establishing an initiative to improve the kindergarten transition process. WaKIDS is run collaboratively by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Early Learning, and Thrive Washington. WaKIDS consists of three components: family connection, while child engagement, and early learning collaboration. For family connection, schools are required to hold individual meetings with families to discuss expectations and goals for the kindergarten year and the state law permits schools to use up to 3 school days for these meetings.</p> | <p>State legislature enacted specific legislation or policy to establish requirements for transition planning & supports. Initially funded by a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant and the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation, as of 2017, WaKIDS is entirely state funded.</p> |
| Washington | <p>West Virginia established Board of Education Policy 2525 in 2003, and updates the policy frequently. Requires counties to establish county “collaborative early childhood teams” who are responsible for smoothing the transition from universal pre-K programs to Kindergarten. Each team is composed of a “core team” which includes “representatives from the county pre-K program, the pre-K special needs program, a licensed community child care program, and a Head Start program in the county”. The full team can potentially include an elementary school principal, kindergarten teachers, and family resource network providers. The county team is required to establish a system for transferring assessment data to students’ future kindergarten teachers, as well as to create written transition plans. Teams are required to provide an opportunity for pre-K providers to meet on an annual basis with kindergarten teachers to discuss how best to support students as they transition. County teams are required to use transition best practices outlined in the West Virginia Board of Education’s Ready, Set, Go! School Readiness Framework.</p> | <p>State legislature enacted specific legislation or policy to establish requirements for transition planning & supports.</p> |
| West Virginia | | |

APPENDIX

Relevant Excerpts from the *Illinois State Board of Education State Template for the Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act*

Section 5.2, “Support for Educators”, Page 97

Professional Learning and Resources for Educators

ISBE understands the importance of job-embedded professional learning¹³⁶. To that end, as the ESSA State Plan for Illinois is implemented, ISBE is committed to using Title II dollars in order to:

- Build the content knowledge of educators regarding the Illinois Learning Standards in core content areas and characteristics of learners;
- Develop resources on supporting learning environments and transition throughout the continuum of early childhood through college and career (Title II and Title I);
- Develop resources and professional learning opportunities for educators on Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, balanced assessment, and data and assessment literacy (Title I, Title II, Title III and IDEA funding);
- Continue to build upon the resources for family/caretaker and community engagement; social and emotional learning; cultural, racial, and socio-economic competence; conflict management; trauma and behavioral health issues; restorative practices; cultural competence; anti-racism; recognizing implicit bias; and actualizing anti-bias approaches (Title I, Title II, Title III and IDEA funding);
- Continue to support training for teacher and principal evaluators (Title II and state funding); and
- Districts, especially those identified for comprehensive and targeted services, will, through IL-EMPOWER, be provided access to professional learning opportunities that include an emphasis on Governance and Management, Curriculum and Instruction, Climate and Culture. More specifically, capacity-building strategies, with an emphasis on sustainability, will be emphasized (Title I, School Improvement, Title II, IDEA, Title IV Part A and B, State Longitudinal Data Systems funding).

Section 5.2, “Support for Educators”, Page 98

School Leaders and Administrators

ISBE understand the importance of shared leadership within schools and districts in Illinois. School leaders include superintendents, principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and, when appropriate, LEA leaders. To this end, ISBE shall:

- Continue to support an educator leader network (ELN) to connect leaders between districts. These funds will be coordinated with state funding (Title II and state funding).
- Develop a competitive grant program wherein districts will propose 30-60-90 day research projects. These projects will assist Illinois in continuing to be a leader in advocacy for and approaches to teacher leadership, in particular. More specifically, in a 30-60-90 project, a district, school, or portion of faculty will propose a problem of practice important to teacher leadership at the school and/or district, develop a plan in which the problem of practice is investigated, and report findings. This work will be used to increase clarity on the roles and work of a teacher leader. This work will be shared through ELN among other spaces.

- Create resources emphasizing the school leaders as instructional leaders, particularly for teachers in the early grades. School leaders need knowledge of child development, pedagogical content knowledge, differentiation of instruction, and knowledge of pedagogical practice and high-impact teacher-child interactions for young children (Title II, Early Childhood).
- Provide school leaders with opportunities to build their capacity as facilitators of continuous teacher learning and development (Title II).
- Professional learning opportunities provided to school leaders, especially those identified for comprehensive services and through IL-EMPOWER, may include strategies regarding family and community engagement, as well as the use of referral mechanisms that link children to appropriate services.

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INTRODUCTION

Making sure a child is developmentally ready to begin kindergarten is imperative. However, “kindergarten readiness” is a term with differing views among policymakers, parents and teachers. Illinois has taken an important step in understanding what readiness looks like by recently introducing a kindergarten readiness assessment. As educators, we know that that children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.¹ Therefore, kindergarten readiness must include children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. We believe that fostering kindergarten readiness must permeate all these areas.

Why is kindergarten readiness so important?

Kindergarten is when foundational skills are developed. All future academic success depends upon strong early learning concepts. Because of the importance of that first year of school, kindergarten readiness is a topic of paramount importance to families and early childhood educators alike.

Research documents the importance of high-quality early childhood experiences and the impact they have on future literacy skills. Attending a high-quality early childhood program can increase a child’s language and literacy skills prior to entering a formal school setting and impact their third-grade reading scores.² Third grade is a pivotal transition year. Leading up to third grade, children are learning to read. Beyond third grade, students read to gain understanding in a variety of subjects. Children in third grade reading below grade level are 25% more likely to drop out of school, 50% more likely to be placed in special education, and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime later in life.³

Ensuring that children are ready for school is an important topic in early childhood policy and practice today. This paper aims to share key ideas on what the state can do to ensure kindergarten readiness. The focus of this paper is to share ideas about what readiness means for 1) children, 2) families, and 3) schools in order to set children up for successful kindergarten experiences. These three areas must work together to best prepare our children for the world of tomorrow. When combined, quality relationships built on trust and respect can be developed, and rich experiences at home, in the community, and at school can lead to student success.

BACKGROUND

The Teach Plus Early Childhood Advisory Board, a team of 14 early childhood professionals selected from across Illinois. The Advisory Board is comprised of educators who work in public schools, community-based programs, private preschools, center-based daycares, and home-based daycares. Through collaborative work, communicating with stakeholders, and engaging legislators, the Advisory Board seeks to provide insight and influence on topics important to Early Childhood Education.

In 2017, the passage of House Joint Resolution 24 created the Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee (KTAC). This committee was established by the P-20 Council and the Early Learning Council. KTAC was tasked with creating a report to be used in crafting legislation that will address the vertical integration of early childhood education with later school education.

This policy brief has been created by members of the Teach Plus Early Childhood Education Advisory Board for the consideration of KTAC as they create their recommendations for the General Assembly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Child Readiness

We believe that kindergarten readiness can be nurtured in every child through positive interactions with other children, teachers, families, and the greater community. Thinking about where children are in their development, what they know, and what is developmentally appropriate is at the forefront of our minds throughout this paper and therefore is the first place to consider our recommendations for providing better support.

Improve Standards Alignment

The Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) are meant to be used “to enhance planning for preschool children, to enrich play-based curricular practices, and to support the growth of each child to his or her fullest potential.” However, they are not intended to push down the expectations from upper grades. Based in research, the IELDS, “identify expectations that are appropriate for preschool children.”⁴

We applaud the IELDS and their commitment to researched-based developmentally appropriate practices. The standards recognize that children come to school with different skills and backgrounds. We acknowledge Illinois’ work to align the IELDS with the Illinois Kindergarten standards. However, we would like to see greater alignment to promote continuous learning for children transitioning into kindergarten. We recommend the following:

- The Illinois Kindergarten Standards should be adapted to be more aligned with the IELDS.
- The Illinois Kindergarten Standards should be adapted to recognize the wide array of students who enter kindergarten classrooms, including children who may not have attended prekindergarten programs and therefore may not have mastered the IELDS.
- The Early Childhood Block Grant should be increased for 0-3 and 3-5 year olds in order to increase the number of children who master the IELDS and are kindergarten ready.

Provide District Support for Different Transition Plans

As children enter kindergarten, they come in with a wide variety of pre-kindergarten experiences - some children have had Pre-K, others have been in the care of family members, and some have been enrolled in home care or childcare centers. With this wide variance of prior experience, the transition into a full-day kindergarten can be more difficult and stressful for some children. While we believe that a high-quality, full-day kindergarten program can offer the best opportunity to remedy risks for low-income and minority students, we also want districts and parents to have flexibility and choice in how they ramp up to full-day kindergarten. For example, Kanakee SD 111 offers the first week of school as a transition time for both parents and students. Students come to school for half the day and parents get to meet with kindergarten teachers to learn about norms and expectations. Other districts that want to replicate this model have run into funding requirement issues. We recognize that half day transitions could be a barrier for working families, so we recommend simply that districts have the flexibility they need with kindergarten funding requirements to offer innovative transitions that meet the needs of their children and families.

Families

We know that parents are a child’s first teachers. As such, families are one of the most important factors in shaping a child’s early development. Ensuring parents are ready for school is as essential as ensuring children are ready. However, not all parents feel comfortable in school settings. The State Department of Education in Indiana has found that parents who “do not interact with their child’s teacher are more likely to feel like outsiders in their school, less likely to understand what teachers expect of them or their child,

and less likely to attend parent teacher conferences.”⁵ It is our recommendation that as a state, we focus on strengthening the relationship between families and schools in the following ways:

Collect Contextual Information from Families

As a group of educators, we know how important it is to meet our students where they are. However, that information is not readily available when children walk into our classrooms. We recommend creating better methods of sharing information about students’ pre-kindergarten experiences by:

- Instituting better data sharing agreements between early childhood providers and local school districts,
- Encouraging the state to share pre-kindergarten information with kindergarten teachers that includes basic information like attendance and developmental attainment, or
- Designing and distributing a survey that kindergarten teachers and schools can use to better understand their incoming students. The survey could be distributed to families of incoming kindergarteners and would share basic information about where they believe their child is – socially, emotionally, and academically.

Provide More Supports for Families

Knowing how important families are to a child’s success in life, we would like to see more families engaged from a child’s birth. In particular, we would like to see:

- Better information on the ISBE website about the Prevention Initiative. Using the KIDS website as a guide, we would like to see a description of the initiative, communication and resources for families and educators who are interested in it, and information about how much money is currently allocated and who is eligible to apply for funding.
- Building connections between the educator and families. National and Illinois-specific research has found that high-quality, evidenced-based home visiting programs promote language development and school readiness. As such, we recommend increasing funding for home visiting programs.⁶

Expand Preschool for All

With the recent grant process for Preschool for All (PFA) funding, it is clear that many communities in our state want and are eligible to receive state funding for Pre-K for at risk children. However, with limited funding, many districts, even those who previously offered PFA, will not be receiving funding to run these programs.⁷ If kindergarten readiness is our goal in Illinois, then we need to provide more funding for programs that prepare our neediest children to be successful. We recommend expanding PFA so it truly is preschool for all.

Support and Communicate About Innovative Engagement Efforts

Getting families ready for the journey of learning can mean something simple and fun. Districts around the state host academic nights, grandparent days, “donuts with dad” or “muffins with mom” where they feel invited into the learning setting. One creative example is called a “Kindergarten Round Up,” which is designed to create comfort and familiarity with going to school for the first time.⁸ Parents are able to ask questions, meet school staff, and ride the buses. Ideas like this can be compiled and shared among superintendents to foster learning and encourage new ideas.

School Readiness

What we call “School Readiness” is the call for improved collaboration and stronger alignment between school-based, community-based, and home-based Pre-K programs and elementary schools.

Right now, there are multiple ways Illinois’ children are prepared to enter kindergarten. Some attend formal preschool programs within the district and even the school where they will start kindergarten. Others enroll in private or community-based preschools or remain in home daycare centers and family care until they reach they are enrolled in elementary school. This wide range of possibility for the state’s young children creates a similarly wide range of possibility in the content and quality of their preparation

to enter formal school settings. With this wide variance, it behooves all stakeholders in Illinois' early childhood landscape to find a way to align the systems where our youngest learners are taught in order to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage. We recommend the following areas for consideration by KTAC:

Create Shared Professional Development Opportunities

In districts that offer school-based Pre-K programs, the connection between Pre-K and kindergarten teachers is weak if it exists at all. We encourage the state to consider implementing incentives that provide time to collaborate. The Responsive Classroom, an approach to teaching based on integrating academic and social-emotional skills asserts, "when teachers spend time in one another's classrooms, the benefits can be tremendous, not just for teachers and students, but for the whole school. Colleagues who observe one another strengthen relationships and pick up new teaching strategies."⁹ Such experiences also offer insight into what is happening in each setting, allowing teachers of each age group to calibrate on curriculum and expectations, and to create a more cohesive plan for teaching our youngest learners.

Align Assessments and Share Data

In Illinois, early childhood students are currently assessed using a hodge-podge of similar but different tools. All of the tools serve the same purpose, but the lack of standardization makes it impossible for agencies, districts and even schools to share what is known about students in ways that effectively influence how those students are taught. While the decision to implement the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) is a step in the right direction, we argue that it does not yet go far enough in aligning efforts that happen prior to kindergarten.

KIDS is similar to other early childhood data collection tools such as Teaching Strategies Gold or the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry. However, they are not connected or integrated. In order to help students be successful, teachers across early childhood settings need to be able to access a shared database with aligned and cohesive assessment data. As such, we recommend the selection and implementation of a statewide, birth through age 8 data collection tool.

Support Play-based Kindergarten

What we call "play-based kindergarten" was once simply, kindergarten. In the quest for rigorous instruction to help American students compete in the global marketplace, best practice for older students pushed into early grade classroom settings.¹⁰ The advent of KIDS has created a renewed appreciation and need for a more hands-on, student-driven way for students to experience the school day. Teachers must be able to collect data for four domains of learning: Approaches to Learning and Self-Regulation; Social and Emotional Development; Language and Literacy Development; and Cognition: Math. While kindergarten teachers of the NCLB era have become adept at collecting student data about language and math, in the ESSA era they will have to return to a focus on social emotional development. This data can be more readily and authentically collected in play-based classrooms. This means kindergarten teachers must now align their approaches more closely with expectations for preschool classrooms. The ECEAB recommends the state of Illinois support this trajectory by ensuring that schools and teachers receive funds for classroom resources and training that will allow developmentally appropriate teaching to continue.

Ensure Educator Quality and Strong Preparation

Research has shown that highly effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student achievement.¹¹ Effective teaching is also critical in early childhood. Illinois is in need of teachers and administration who possess expertise in early childhood education and development. We recommend increased pathways to teacher licensure, particularly teachers of color and dual language teachers. We also recommend increased training for school administrations and other early childhood decision-makers across settings.

CONCLUSION

A strong early foundation in a child's life is the key to success in kindergarten, throughout their academic careers, and in their lives. These recommendations illustrate the complex systems that must work together to establish that foundation.

As an Advisory Board, we believe that in order to achieve kindergarten readiness, children need to have the right social emotional, physical, and academic skills upon entering kindergarten; families should have the resources necessary to support this goal; and schools need to come together to better align around this goal. With the future of our students in mind, we are energized and are looking for opportunities to collaborate with KTAC, state leaders, and others to implement positive changes.

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To the P-20 Council:

We are pleased to transmit to you the Early Learning Council's recommendations relating to Illinois' Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan.

These recommendations are the result of a process that engaged a wide range of stakeholders within the early childhood community. On September 21, the Early Learning Council's co-chairs solicited participation in four Early Learning Council work groups to draft recommendations on key topics in the ISBE plan. (A full copy of their email request is attached.) The work groups included:

- Standards, Assessments, Accountability, and Supports (focused on Sections 2 and 3 of ISBE's draft);
- Supporting Excellent Educators (Section 4);
- Supporting All Students (Section 5); and
- Title I and Title IV discretionary spending.

The Council also appointed liaisons to the P-20 Council committees addressing these topics: Elliot Regenstein (Data, Assessment, and Accountability) and Dan Harris (Teacher & Administrator Effectiveness). These liaisons have represented the Council's recommendations to the P-20 Council committee processes, and will continue to do so. The recommendations that follow were developed by the four work groups, presented to the full Early Learning Council, and then approved by the Early Learning Council's Executive Committee.

ESSA presents an opportunity for Illinois to build a cohesive educational system from birth through post-secondary. A well-rounded education includes increasing access to high quality early childhood programming as a viable investment for schools in reducing the opportunity gap. Schools are a central hub in communities and are ideally situated to bring families and resources together. Our recommendations emphasize the importance of the following ideas:

- Aligning early childhood education programs and the K-12 system, with reciprocity of learning in a community focused on creating a more seamless continuum of education;
- Expanding quality early childhood education programming;
- Investing in adequate resources and support personnel to meet the needs of the whole child in every school;
- Implementing culturally and linguistically responsive practices throughout the P – 12 system;
- Capitalizing on community and family strengths to support the entire learning community;
- Focusing resources on the communities with the greatest need, taking a holistic and equity-based approach to determining need; and
- Incentivizing collaboration among all Illinois state-sponsored programs

We hope the P-20 Council will incorporate our recommendations into its transmission to ISBE, and use these ideas as a catalyst to better serve children, families, and communities.

Handwritten signature of Beth Purvis in blue ink.

Beth Purvis
Co-Chair, Illinois Early Learning Council

Handwritten signature of Phyllis Glink in blue ink.

Phyllis Glink
Co-Chair, Illinois Early Learning Council



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Standards, Assessment, Accountability, and Supports

2.1 Challenging Academic Content Standards and Aligned Academic Achievement Standards

- ISBE should continue its practice of identifying and serving English learners as they enter early childhood education and encourage native language screening as part of the identification process.

3.1 Accountability

- The state's K-12 accountability system should place specific weight on the K-2 years through the Section 1111(c)(4)(B)(v) school quality improvement measure, to encourage school districts and schools to focus on improvements in those years.
 - Accountability based solely on test scores in third grade gives schools incentives to undervalue the K-2 years. Despite that, many districts have nonetheless done incredible work in the early elementary years. But the state's incentive structure should include a focus on that critical time period.
 - Real accountability for the K-2 years can strengthen the connection of schools to early childhood providers and create a more seamless continuum from birth through third grade.
 - The weight placed on K-2 should be at least half of the non-assessment score for elementary schools, or 15% of an elementary school's overall score, whichever is greater.
- The measures used for K-2 should be clear, fair, and developmentally appropriate.
 - The measures should not include assessment results, as assessments for children in the K-2 years are not designed for this purpose. Moreover, focusing accountability on what can be measured in assessment could limit the quality of instruction in the K-2 years.
 - Some of the indicators being considered throughout the K-12 spectrum could be disaggregated by grade to allow for weight to be placed specifically on the K-2 years. For example, chronic absenteeism is measurable in K-2 and by subgroup.
 - We support the inclusion of chronic absenteeism in the state's accountability formula. Research shows that chronic absenteeism in the early years is correlated with chronic absenteeism in later years, which is in turn correlated with lower academic performance. Using this metric in K-2 and subsequent years should focus educators on reducing chronic absenteeism, which will improve the overall performance of the system.
 - The measures used should be ones that are not simply proxies for a school's poverty rate, and should be ones on which schools have a realistic chance at improving through the use of educationally beneficial strategies.
- ISBE has raised the possibility of developing an indicator focused on K-2. The Early Learning Council would like to work with ISBE to explore possibilities in this area, including how a K-2 indicator might serve as a bridge between K-12 accountability in the tested years (third grade and above) and the state's quality rating and improvement system for birth to five programs (ExceleRate).

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- Additional reporting system indicators should be used to give a picture of early learning services in a district.
 - District report cards should include data from the Illinois Early Learning Council's systems dashboard, which includes the results of the KIDS assessment.
 - Preschool chronic absenteeism should be reported on school report cards. Including this data should help schools address issues of chronic absenteeism as early as possible, which should have a ripple effect throughout the system.
 - Other indicators relating to K-2 – and school based preschool where it exists -- that would be valuable to report include student-teacher ratios; class size; teacher credentials; number/percent of English Learners, and behavioral and school climate metrics (potentially including suspension and expulsion, referrals to law enforcement, the use of aversive behavioral interventions; and incidences of violence, bullying, and harassment). There are some challenges with consistency in some of the data on behavior and school climate, and we hope that ESSA will help prompt work to develop more consistent reporting and tracking.
 - The state longitudinal data system should collect and include variables across various systems (child care assistance, Head Start education, and health). This will require analysis of the current strengths and gaps in the coordinated data system, a deep understanding of data available at the state and local level, memoranda of agreement across agencies and auspices to share information without violating program, family and provider privacy, and dedicated staff and other resources to create and use a new data system.
 - Reporting of any data on social and emotional development should be sensitive to the limitations of measurement tools in this area.
- ISBE should continue the current practice of annual English language proficiency assessments K-12 as part of the assessment and accountability plan under ESSA.
 - Fostering instruction in a child's home language is critical in the early learning and K-2 years, as it is a means of building content knowledge that contributes to children's achievement on content exams conducted in English. In accordance with research, the language of instruction should always match the language of the assessment. When content assessments in 3rd grade and up are *only* available in English, there can be a tendency to shift from home language instruction to English as early as 1st grade—even when this is contrary to best practice—in order to meet the English language demands of the assessment.
 - New Title I regulations call for states to make every effort possible to offer academic content assessments in languages other than English when 30 percent or more of English learners speak the same language. ISBE should develop home language assessments along the Prek-12 continuum – including assessments prior to third grade whose results would not be used directly for accountability purposes -- to ensure quality language and literacy development for ELs. This would also ensure the provision of valid and reliable data for measuring student growth.



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3.2 Identification of Schools

- The identification of schools for improvement status should be based on a holistic review that includes data beyond test scores.
 - We appreciate that ISBE has recommended the same approach, and are pleased that the final federal rules open the door to this approach in a way that the draft rules did not.

3.3 State Support and Improvement for Low-Performing Schools

- In identifying the districts that “demonstrate the greatest need for [school improvement] funds,” one factor ISBE should take into account is data on gaps in early childhood services to children at risk of school failure. This data is readily available through the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map.
- ISBE’s rubric for assessing the quality of school improvement plans should consider the quality of the district’s efforts to engage its early learning community (including local and regional collaboratives, Head Start, and private early learning providers) and to ensure that children are entering kindergarten ready. This can include efforts to support coordination and collaboration among teaching professionals in early learning and the early elementary grades.
- As the LEA is developing school improvement plans, ISBE should require use of a template for the needs assessment that includes information about the early childhood landscape, resources, strengths and weaknesses. The needs assessment should include information from existing needs assessments, including those from Head Start, population information, such as in EDI or other inventories, a description of the landscape of the early childhood opportunities (including data on quality and access) for children in the catchment area of the low-performing elementary school.
 - School improvement plans should also include a description of any plans the LEA has to use Title I resources effectively (through community programs or at the school level) to provide children with increased access to quality early learning opportunities without duplicating existing services.
- The development of improvement plans for low-performing elementary schools should include a review of child assessment data in early learning and K-2, to help identify where the need for improvement is greatest and inform the development of improvement strategies.
- When a needs analysis demonstrates that a significant challenge in a school or district is that children are entering kindergarten behind, school improvement resources should be targeted toward improving school readiness.
 - Strategies for improving school readiness should include both programs implemented directly by the district and programs implemented primarily by community partners, with the exact mix of services to be dictated by community needs. They should also look at both increasing access to and improving the quality of existing early learning programs.

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- ISBE's technical support to districts in improvement status should include support for the implementation of early learning.



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Supporting Excellent Educators

4.1 Systems of Educator Development, Retention, and Advancement

4.1 A Educator Development, Retention, and Advancement Systems

- The draft plan seeks to ensure that the professional development (PD) of LEAs offered to their teachers and instructional staff is consistent with the definition of “professional development” by aligning the process of auditing approved PD providers with the definition of PD, establishing an annual PD audit, and communicating the definition to LEAs in guidance. ISBE should include early learning in the professional development alignment and the annual professional development audit. Professional development that is specific to early learning is requisite to high-quality early childhood instruction.
- The state plan should describe how the SEA will align the goals and purposes of Title I, Title II and Title III funds to create and support joint professional development opportunities for district superintendents, school board members, elementary school principals and administrators, elementary school teachers, and community based early learning providers. To achieve this goal, the state plan should describe:
 - Coordination of professional learning opportunities with the state plan for Child Care and Development Block Grant and how the SEA will leverage professional development available to Head Start providers.
 - A new framework to create a strong pipeline of high quality educators (teachers, principals, and superintendents) and caregivers to support linguistically and culturally inclusive instructional practices.
 - Tenets of aligned professional development, including:
 - appropriate child development and instructional practices that foster learning across the range of developmental domains, including social and emotional;
 - working with children with special needs and other issues to identify and support children and minimize suspensions and expulsions;
 - understanding and implementing standards for social-emotional learning;
 - engaging in trauma-informed practice;
 - addressing implicit bias;
 - effective parent and family engagement strategies and best practices;
 - minimizing suspension and expulsion; and
 - working with children who are English learners.

4.2 Support for Educators

- The field of early learning has developed and implemented a variety of methods that improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Integrating early learning



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experiences with K-2 curricula, assessments, and professional development opportunities supports children's acquisition of critical cognitive and executive functioning skills.

- The state should encourage LEAs and local early learning programs to develop processes that represent best practices for helping children successfully move from early care and education experiences into kindergarten and primary school settings. Guidelines for parents, teachers and building principals will support those who are responsible for creating welcoming environments and supporting children and families that may be experiencing challenges and stress during a transition period.
- Title II professional development resources can be most effective when used to support the alignment of learning environments during the early childhood and early elementary grades, when the trajectory of a child's learning can best be impacted. Title II funds (and funds from Titles I and III when appropriate) should be used in the following ways:
 - *Increase student achievement consistent with the challenging state academic standards;*
 - Develop sequenced curricula, instructional expectations, and appropriate assessments between early childhood and early elementary classrooms.
 - Build relationships with community-based providers to facilitate shared kindergarten entry expectations, joint professional development, and kindergarten transitions opportunities.
 - Coordinate professional learning opportunities with the state plan for Child Care and Development Block Grant and leverage professional development available to Head Start providers.
 - Coordinate family engagement across early learning programs and elementary schools.
 - *Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers and principals or other school leaders;*
 - Promote developmentally appropriate quality instruction in the early grades that enhances principal's knowledge of play- and activities-centered learning environments that engage students and supporting teachers in shared lesson planning, analysis of assessment data, and problem-solving.
 - Focus attention and resources on student-based early learning and K-2 environments to strengthen learning in subsequent tested grades.
 - Credit towards licensure renewal should be granted for embedded professional development activities that meet the Standards for Professional Learning as defined by Learning Forward, which has been recognized by ISBE.
 - Improve transition practices for children from early childhood programs to kindergarten and between the early elementary grades (K-1, 1-2, 2-3), as well issues related to school readiness.
 - Create opportunities for teachers and principals in early learning and K-12 to learn from each other and share best practices.
 - *Focus on the needs of English learners through an aligned approach from early childhood programs into third grade.*



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- Require LEAs to demonstrate how they have created alignment in the professional learning opportunities for teachers serving English Learners throughout the P-12 continuum.
- Adopt recommendations from the Higher Education Learning And Professional Development Work Group (HELP) on strategies for advancing early childhood dual language learning and culturally responsive practices.
- Leverage state seal requirements to build pipeline of bilingual/bicultural teachers. Provide technical assistance and other support to districts to use the home language survey to drive development of professional development plans, include demographic information in needs assessments and other planning documents, implement appropriate parent engagement strategies and create earlier intervention opportunities with families.

4.2 A Resources to Support State-level Strategies

- The professional learning opportunities provided to districts, especially those identified for comprehensive services, should include strategies regarding family and community engagement, social emotional development and child trauma, as well as the use of referral mechanisms that link children to appropriate services.
- Districts should be encouraged to work with and provide resources to support local and regional collaborations, such those funded through AOK Network, the state's preschool expansion grant and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. These (and other) early childhood collaborations work to improve quality of care so that children are prepared for school and success.
- These existing collaborative efforts can help districts understand the specific needs to the community and align learning opportunities to best meet those needs.
- Early learning referral systems, such as the network of child care resource and referral agencies, can inform districts in this regard.

4.2 B Skills to Address Specific Learning Needs

- ESSA provides opportunities to expand high quality inclusion within early childhood settings. Research shows that attitudes and beliefs are often the biggest barrier to preschool inclusion.
- To reduce disparities in outcomes for children with disabilities, the plan should ensure that the professionals serving them in both school-based and community-based programs have the competencies and confidence to support them.
- This requires not only ensuring that children can enroll in all early childhood programs, but also the existence of cross-sector professional development and embedded coaching and support.
- If the state decides to move forward with micro-credentialing, ISBE should look to existing structures to inform how best to implement such credentials. For example, the Gateways credentials

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for early childhood professionals contains the best-practice elements to be modeled. These credentials are well-defined, regulated, widely recognized, competency-based and portable.



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Supporting All Students

SECTION 5.1 WELL-ROUNDED AND SUPPORTIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS

A. Transitions, continuum of a student's education from preschool through grade 12

- Illinois is a leader in providing high quality early childhood education (ECE) and therefore should put a greater emphasis on the implementation of best practices in transitioning children from stage to stage. This includes transitions from birth to three services into preschool and Head Start programs, and then from these programs and services into kindergarten.
- ECE personnel should be equipped to handle new child enrollment across the continuum of the entire school year as children transitioning from Early Intervention turn three.
- To capitalize on ECE gains, professional development and resources must be provided to preschool and kindergarten teachers to support the transition of children and families to kindergarten.
- ISBE must ensure timely and appropriate transitions for children receiving Early Intervention. Children receiving Early Intervention are to receive a timely evaluation and an IEP if needed. It is imperative that the student is then appropriately transitioned to preschool special education services, or appropriate community supports when the child turns three.
- ISBE should also require districts to create transition plans in collaboration with community stakeholders that create shared understanding between early childhood programs, schools, administrators and families of what children should experience between early childhood programs and schools and between kindergarten, first grade and second grade. These should be thoughtful and inclusive of providers, parents, school leaders and early learning community leaders.

B. Equitable access to a well-rounded education in all subject areas

- ISBE should ensure access to high quality early learning programs and wraparound services that are targeted to underserved communities with persistent poverty. A body of research supports that high quality early learning programs significantly improve academic achievement for children of color and/or children living in poverty. Children living in these communities may also be exposed to higher levels of violence, trauma, and toxic stress. For them to feel safe and achieve in school they will need a trauma informed school climate with professionals that are prepared to support their learning.

C. School conditions for student learning: bullying, discipline practices, student health and safety

- Preschool expulsion and suspension disproportionately impacts low-income students of color. All state sponsored early childhood education programs must develop behavior intervention policies, which are developmentally and culturally appropriate for the early learner.
- To be effective in addressing the needs of the whole child regardless of setting, it is critical that all students, beginning at the early childhood level have access to school nurses, guidance counselors, social workers, mental health professionals, and other resources to address child health in their programs. Please refer to the Illinois Early Learning Council's Proposed Plan for Integrating Health into Early Care and Education Systems <http://bit.ly/2e315qA>.



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- ISBE should require practitioner-led professional development and additional resources for social-emotional screening and behavioral health intervention at the early childhood level. It is also important to provide mental health consultation to teachers in early childhood education settings (using Title II or Title IV funds); this will address preschool suspension/expulsion disparities, discipline practices, exposure to trauma, and the social-emotional needs of students.
- The opportunity gap can be linked to socio-economic factors. Schools should demonstrate how they provide resources and connect students and families to support services they need, including SNAP, TANF and All Kids, therefore creating a more supportive environment for learning and decreasing absenteeism. A coordinated data system can provide the information needed for districts to understand the needs in their community. (This has been demonstrated through Chicago Public Schools Children and Family Benefits Unit.)

D. Effective use of technology and digital literacy

- To address digital literacy of all students, ECE student access to technology and the integration into student learning should be developmentally appropriate and follow the joint guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on technology and early education. Please refer to the following website: <http://tech.ed.gov/earlylearning/principles>

E. Parent, family, and community engagement

- ESSA allows a portion of family engagement funds to be used for joint professional development inclusive of early childhood educators. ISBE should outline how it will use professional development funds and family engagement funds for joint professional development between ECE and K – 12 to best meet the unique needs of families in their communities.
- Parent and family engagement must be collaborative, inclusive, culturally and linguistically responsive, and conducted at a time when guardians and caregivers can participate. Engaging families is especially crucial in the early years of learning as it sets the foundation for young children in their development.
- ISBE should describe how it will implement authentic parent and family engagement to include community-based programs, as well as reach underserved families beyond the walls of the school and outside of school hours.
- ISBE should include and invest in multi-generational approaches to family engagement that include workforce development and career pathways to caregivers.
- ISBE should develop additional tools and internal and external resources to engage underserved families (such as students and families who are homeless, those with disabilities, migrant, English Learners, immigrant, and those experiencing mental health issues and trauma) to ensure that all families are included.
- Illinois School Code calls for the formation of Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils in order to engage the parents of English Learners. Early childhood is a critical time for English learners beginning their academic journey; participation in Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils should be inclusive of preschool programs.



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F. Accurate identification of English Learners and children with disabilities (p. 53 – 54)

English Learners and children with disabilities are two distinct student populations with unique instructional needs. There is an overlapping group, which consists of ELs, who through an evaluation process, are identified as needing special education.

Identification of English learners:

- Illinois should continue the practice of identifying English Learners upon enrollment in state-funded programs (including those supported through the Prevention Initiative) through a Home Language Survey and English screening. ISBE should replace the current Home Language Survey with the recommended language survey included in the U.S. Department of Education Tool Kit (<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED564264.pdf>) because it provides more relevant information for instruction for teachers in all state-funded early childhood programs.
- As the SEA identifies English Learners, it should use that data to better understand where and how services can be delivered and the types of services and supports needed.
- Illinois should continue to serve ELs beginning in ECE with culturally and linguistically sound programming. Please refer to the joint statement issued in 2016 by the DOE and HHS https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/dll_policy_statement_final.pdf.
- EL years of service should be counted beginning in first grade, which is the first mandatory age of enrollment in Illinois.
- ELs once identified should continue to be served in programs until they meet the state established reclassification criteria.
- ISBE should demonstrate the importance of successfully serving English Learners by maintaining a senior staff position overseeing these policies.

English Learners with disabilities:

- It is critical that Illinois continue the practice of using qualified bilingual educational support personnel in identifying ELs with special needs. This avoids potential misidentification. EL students are entitled to both ESL/Bilingual and Special Education services if the child receives an IEP.

ECE children with disabilities:

- ISBE should develop a system for informing Local Education Agencies (LEA) of their responsibility to conduct Child Find activities and hold them accountable for implementing best practices in this area.
- Child Find should be supported by adequate funding, offered monthly, and monitored by the school district. With increased marketing, event frequency, and better coordination with Early Intervention, school districts will identify young children birth to five who are eligible for services.
- If students require special education services, parents and families of students should be included in developing the IEP before services are delivered; particular attention should be given to families who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

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- Increased funding is needed so all children enrolled in community-based ECE programs can receive district sponsored special education services at the site of instruction. This would remove unnecessary barriers to accessing services during the most vulnerable years of a child's development.

SECTION G - Other state-identified strategies

Title I

- ISBE should incentivize LEAs to use Title I funding to expand ECE programming in schools that are underperforming. Schools must describe how they will support, coordinate and integrate ECE programs with K-12, including transition planning.
- The SEA must describe in their state plans how they will support both LEAs and individual schools that choose to use funds to support early learning programs. Title I funds can be used to provide dedicated support for local collaboration that links early childhood programs and elementary schools (following the best practices from the Consortium for Community Systems Development project).

Title IV Part A & B -- 21st Century Schools:

- LEAs applying for funds under Title IV (including Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants [SSAEG] and 21st Century Community Learning Centers), should be required to demonstrate how they will use the grants to adopt evidence-based interventions that will increase access to high quality early learning opportunities, either through partnerships with community early childhood agencies to increase access to specific practices (such as mental or physical health supports) or through direct provision of early childhood services.
- To promote effective uses of funds, the SEA should provide a list of evidence-based models that LEAs can fund through Title IV grant funding. These may include Community Schools, home visiting programs such as those supported through MIECHV funds, and the Chicago Parent/Child Centers model.
- ISBE should emphasize the value of transitions as children move from early childhood programs into elementary school through application requirements for 21st Century Community Learning Center funds. Priority can be given to LEAs and partner organizations that can demonstrate an evidence-based approach to transition activities that are developmentally appropriate, encourage data sharing and include joint professional learning opportunities.
- To ensure coordination, the applications for SSAEG should require LEAs to include data and other information from the local collaborative in developing the required needs assessment.

SECTION. 5.2 – PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Title I, Part A (p. 58): No Comment

Title I, Part C – Migratory Children

- ISBE should be coordinating with Migrant Head Start and using the Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX) to ensure seamless transitions to K-12 for early childhood migrant students.

Title III Part A:

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- As children enter programs supported by the Prevention Initiative, the intake process should note the language of the caregiver in order to plan appropriate services from the beginning.
- Beginning at age three the Home Language Survey is to be used for all state-funded early learning programs. ISBE should replace the current Home Language Survey with the recommended language survey included in the U.S. DOE Tool Kit (<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED564264.pdf>).
- ISBE should support early dual-language programs as a pathway to promoting bilingualism and biliteracy, considering the state's efforts in endorsing The Seal of Biliteracy awarded to high school seniors.
- Illinois currently has a shortage of bilingual endorsed ECE teachers, and should set aside a portion of Title III funds to explore changes to ECE teacher preparation programs. We recommend seeking the advice of the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education on this topic.

Title V, Part B, Rural and Low Income Schools – No comment

McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth

The ESSA makes some important updates to the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, including the following requirements related to preschool age children:

- ESSA state plans must include procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the State Education Agency (SEA) or LEA, as provided to other children.
- McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure homeless families and children can access early intervention services under IDEA Part C, if eligible.
- The definition of school of origin includes preschools.

Although ISBE's draft ESSA plan adequately describes how Illinois will implement many McKinney-Vento requirements, new and old, we feel the plan would be significantly strengthened by more comprehensively addressing issues related to data collection and reporting, identification of homeless children, training for McKinney-Vento liaisons and other staff, cross-divisional collaboration, and transportation. Specific ideas for addressing these areas are included below.

- Make aggregate data available for the State of Illinois on the number of students identified as homeless. Break down the data by age/grade level/race/language, including children under the age of three. This statewide data should be included on the ISBE website by county.
- Update the Common Form to better reflect and support referrals to early care and education programs, particularly those programs that serve infants and toddlers.
- Local districts identify relevant training on the McKinney-Vento Act for key early childhood program staff, as well as strategies for identifying, serving, and transporting young homeless children as needed.
- Homeless liaisons need adequate time to fulfill the responsibilities of their role to truly ensure homeless children can access early childhood programs.

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- Ensure that ISBE early childhood policies, manuals, and training materials/efforts reflect the importance of recruiting, identifying, and enrolling homeless children in early childhood programs and understand how young children can maintain a connection to their school of origin.

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APPENDIX: SEPTEMBER 21 EMAIL TO THE COUNCIL



Early Learning Council Colleagues,

We're writing to update you on the status of conversations about the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and to solicit your involvement in developing recommendations from the Early Learning Council to inform the state implementation process.

As you may be aware, the State Board has put out a draft plan for implementing this federal law in Illinois ([link](#)), and Partners for Each and Every Child has prepared and posted a User's Guide ([link](#)). The State Board is seeking concrete feedback from stakeholders on the ideas in its plan, and has raised some specific questions on which it would like feedback. ISBE has requested feedback on its current draft by October 7, and then plans to incorporate feedback and release another draft for further discussion. (For the full ESSA State Plan Development Timeline follow this [link](#).) In addition to ISBE's stakeholder engagement, the Illinois P-20 Council is engaged in its own feedback process, which is intended to draw on a wide range of stakeholders. We have attached a master calendar that includes more details about the ISBE and P-20 Council processes for your reference.

We know that some of you have been involved in both the ISBE and P-20 processes. Two members of the Council have already been designated as liaisons between the ELC and the P-20 Council on specific topics: Dan Harris (Teacher & Administrator Effectiveness Committee) and Elliot Regenstein (Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee). To facilitate Early Learning Council input into the P-20 process, we will be convening conversations to discuss ISBE's plan and to attempt to develop recommendations on behalf of the Council on those topics. We are organizing the conversations accordingly:

- Standards, Assessments, Accountability, and Supports (Sections 2 and 3 of the ISBE draft): These topics are being considered in the P-20 Council's Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee. As the liaison between that committee and the Council, Elliot Regenstein of the Ounce of Prevention Fund will convene a working group to discuss recommendations in this area. Please be in touch with him at eregenstein@theounce.org by September 27 if you would like to be a part of that conversation.
- Supporting Excellent Educators (Section 4 of the ISBE draft): These topics are being considered in the P-20 Council's Teacher & Administrator Effectiveness Committee. As the liaison between that committee and the Council, Dan Harris of INCCRRA will convene a working group to discuss recommendations in this area. Please be in touch with him at dharris@incrra.org by September 27 if you would like to be a part of that conversation.
- Supporting All Students (Section 5 of the ISBE draft): At this time it is not certain where these topics will be discussed within the P-20 Council structure - but regardless, ISBE could benefit from Early Learning Council recommendations. Karen Garibay-Mulattieri of the Latino Policy Forum will convene a working group to discuss recommendations in this area. Please be in touch with her at Kgaribay-mulattieri@latinopolicyforum.org by September 27 if you would like to be a part of that conversation.
- Additionally, there may be interest in developing a working group to prepare recommendations for potential

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ISBE guidance on Title I and Title IV discretionary spending by districts; spending on early learning is authorized under these sections, and concrete examples of how districts can use these funds to advance early learning would be helpful to districts interested in advancing early learning. Please be in touch with Erika Hunt at elhunt@ilstu.edu by September 27 if you would like to be a part of that conversation.

These processes are fast-moving, and we do not expect these working groups to have recommendations ready by the October 7 deadline for submission of comments to ISBE. We would like the working groups to develop key principles for implementation that can quickly be turned into specific recommendations when ISBE releases its next draft plan in mid-November. We also expect the liaisons to represent these conversations in the P-20 forum on an ongoing basis.

Thank you for your interest in ESSA. We will provide continued updates, including at the full Council meeting on November 21.

Best wishes,

Beth and Phyllis

Appendix I: Reference List of Resources Reviewed

Self-Regulation and Social Emotional Development

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