

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee
Monday, April 16th
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Ounce of Prevention Fund
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60603**

Meeting Notes

Meeting Participants

In-Person: Kim Collins, Jana Fleming, Nicole Gillis, Robert Goerge, Dan Harris, Tony Raden, Elliot Regenstein, Nancy Shier, Bob Spatz, Teri Talan, Dawn Thomas

Phone: Bernard Cesarone, Serah Fatani, Julie Janssen, Brenda Klostermann, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Deb Scheiter, Ralph Schubert, Tom Szpyrka, Cindy Zumwalt

1. Welcome and Introductions

New Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee

The Data Work Group is in a transitional period as the Early Learning Council has created a new set of committees. The Data Work Group is now going to be augmented and turned into the Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee. With this change comes a new leadership arrangement with Teri Talan as the new co-chair and Dan Harris as the government representative. *(more under Early Learning Council Committee Structure)*

Teri Talan: New Co-Chair

Teri is the Director of Research and Public Policy at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, which is a part of National-Louis University. Teri's interest in this particular work stems from her research work at the Center to translate data and make it useful for policymakers, practitioners, and the public.

Dan Harris: Government Representative

Dan is the Assistant Director for the Division of Family and Community Services at the Illinois Department of Human Services. Dan was a member of the former Data Work Group and made note of the good work done previously. He is looking forward to making data more accessible and understandable in his position at DHS and with the Committee.

Nicole Gillis: New Staffer

Nicole is the new Policy Associate on the Illinois Policy Team at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. She will be working to staff the Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee.

2. Data, Research and Evaluation Committee (DRE Committee)

Early Learning Council Committee Structure

Since the last reorganization of the Early Learning Council, seven committees emerged along with a number of work groups and task forces over the course of the last few years. The new Early Learning Council structure represents an effort to consolidate some of the previous work and create a smaller set of committees. The Early Learning Council has been organized into four new committees (Program Standards and Quality; System Integration and Alignment; Data, Research, and Evaluation; and Family and Community Engagement) along with the Home Visiting Task Force. (The Home Visiting Task Force has remained the same due to its connection to a federal grant.) In addition, the new structure will support an Executive Committee that will more tightly manage work in each committee and the work that collaboratively spans across committees.

The Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee will take on a good amount of the work that was previously represented by the Data Work Group. Elliot shared that there was a strong recognition at the Executive Committee meeting that the work of the DRE Committee is going to be closely tied to the work of the other committees. Therefore, it will be incumbent on us to collaborate with the other committees as closely as possible.

A list of current committee members will be circulated with the purpose of encouraging others to join the DRE committee. Current committee members should feel free to reach out directly or ask Elliot, Teri, or Dan to contact the potential members.

Transition Timeline

The deadline for funding provided by the Grand Victoria Foundation is approaching and has been one of the reasons driving the relatively aggressive schedule for the reorganization of the Council. Each committee is responsible for developing a work plan in order to receive this funding for the next couple years of work. One of the major tasks for the meeting was to discuss this work plan and make sure all were in agreement. (A draft was included in the meeting materials.) The goal was to come out with agreement on the structure of the DRE Committee's work at least to the level of depth that is needed to continue pursuing the grant. There will be obviously back and forth with the Executive Committee as the grant is prepared. Nancy added that the committee staffing is supported by both the State Advisory Council funding from the Governor's Office and by funding from the Grand Victoria Foundation.

Priorities and Work Plan

The main work of the Data Work Group was focused on preparing the plan for the design of a unified early childhood data system, as per the requirement of the Head Start Act, and developing the list of data elements that would be included in the system. A technical contractor is close to being hired to carry out the work.

There are four proposed priority work areas for the Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee.

- 1) *To develop the framework for the unified early childhood data system.*

- 2) *To support the data, research, and evaluation needs of the rest of the Early Learning Council.* As the other committees are engaging in their work, the DRE Committee could help to think about the data, research, and evaluation needs. The DRE Committee could also act as a clearinghouse to keep track of efforts that are underway within the Council.
- 3) *To help define a broader research and evaluation agenda for IL.* There are a number of specific projects that have research and evaluation components, but might not mean that the projects represent the totality of our research and evaluation needs. The DRE Committee could brainstorm some broader or cross-cutting research and evaluation projects to be pursued by the Council more aggressively once we have developed an agenda.
- 4) *To keep track of the data systems being developed in IL and provide input as needed.* This is with recognizing that the DRE Committee has a focus on early learning, but other related projects (i.e. in K-12 system) will overlap with our work.

Feedback

- Concern about the second priority and it should be clear that the DRE Committee is not going to conduct the research for the other committees. For example, the DRE Committee will help more to frame research questions or perhaps help to understand what data is currently being collected. It may be possible for the DRE Committee to match the other committees with researchers, grants, and engage in other efforts to try to cause the research to be done.
- Has the Data Work Group ever inventoried the data being collected by key early childhood programs? A document was created in the past, but it is expected that the technical contractor will provide an updated list as part of the contractor's analysis of what we are collecting and where.
- Develop a database/inventory of current projects being conducted in the city or state.
- Not just provide input to agencies, but to also request access to key data the Committee thinks should be collected by the agencies. There have been issues with advocating when the only data available is incorrect, incomplete, or out-of-date. The DRE Committee could also focus on identifying agencies that may have already collected data, but are not reporting or not reporting adequately.
- Make the language consistent and refer to the data system as "unified".
- County-wide level reporting is useful, but for the more populous counties the data is so aggregated that it is not helpful for local municipalities, providers, and even funders.
- Is assessment a part of the work? (i.e. child assessment and classroom/program assessment)
The development of assessment tools is not necessarily under the work of the DRE Committee,

but instead would be to analyze the results of the assessments. Developing assessment tools might fall more under the scope of work for the Program Standards and Quality Committee. Along with assessment work, the DRE Committee may also collaborate with the Program Standards and Quality Committee around the development of the T-QRIS.

- Be mindful of funding streams and how they are connected to data. If not, it is often difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of dollars spent.
- Keep track of larger research and evaluation projects and for the DRE Committee to report policy recommendations or other findings to Executive Committee. With that being said, if the work directly relates to another committee, the DRE Committee would first approach that committee to report on the findings. The role of the DRE Committee may be to make sure that in the end all results are being reported either through the DRE Committee or another related committee.
- There seems to be a need for the collection of statewide Head Start data. One of the roles of the DRE Committee is to be a part of the process with the technical contractor to outline some of the data that is not collected, but ought to be in the unified data system. Head Start currently collects key data and there is a willingness in the Head Start community to be a part of the unified data system (not mandatory). There would be an advantage for the Head Start community to be able to aggregate their data on a statewide level. As of now, it will require building out the system in a way that currently there aren't funds for, but may be possible with the Early Learning Challenge Grant.
- DRE Committee could work with the Illinois Collaborative of Educational Policy Research (ICEPR). The group is funded by Race to the Top and is having their first meeting in June. ICEPR brings together education policy researchers in the state to help form and inform the longitudinal data system and the education research questions that would be helpful to answer. The group could help with developing an education research agenda to ensure that the data being collected helps answer key questions. Brenda Klostermann volunteered to contact Deb Bragg (from University of Illinois) who is unofficially leading ICEPR in order to inform the group about the Committee's work and determine potential areas of collaboration.
- Another research related idea in the Race to the Top application was to create a new consortium on Illinois early childhood research that will create and drive a research agenda.

3. Updates

Early Childhood Data System Contractor

A technical contractor has been identified and is currently going through the contract process. An announcement can't be made until they are officially under contract, which should be complete

relatively soon. The technical contractor will directly report to DHS and the Governor's Office, but the scope of work demands that the contractor coordinates with the DRE Committee.

New Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Proposal

The Department of Education has announced a second round of Early Learning Challenge grants. Five states are being invited to apply, including Illinois. Similar to round three of Race to the Top (K-12), a certain number of states were told to apply and were asked to shrink down their scope significantly. The DOE has not issued an official statement, but using history as a guide the state might get funded between \$30 to \$35 million dollars. It is likely that the Executive Committee will lead a process where Illinois will have to turn the \$70 million dollar request into a \$30 million dollar ask. It is also possible the DOE will ask states to focus on the highest scoring elements of the grant, which would include the data system. The DOE will probably issue the regulations in the spring or latest in the fall. Regardless of the federal timeline, the Executive Committee process is going to begin sooner than later.

Feedback

- Along with the E2 section of the grant related to the data system, B5 is about a required validation and outcomes study of the T-QRIS system, which might also be of interest to the DRE Committee. In addition to those sections, the DRE Committee should generally be aware of the projects associated with the grant that relate to data, research, and evaluation needs.
- It would be helpful to have some clarity as to where we currently are, such as the current status of the T-QRIS system.
- It might be worthwhile to analyze the peer comments and see if there are few broad takeaways to inform our discussion process.
- Given what we know about changes in ISBE and DCFS rules to start thinking about how the DRE Committee can move forward (i.e. workforce data).
- In general, DRE Committee should be aware of changes happening on both city and state levels as it relates to data, research, and evaluation (i.e. teacher evaluation, KIDS, and T-QRIS).