

**Illinois Early Learning Council  
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee**

August 14, 2014  
10:00am - 12:00pm  
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400  
Chicago, IL

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Participants**

*In-Person:* Susan Ben, Pamela Bonsu, Bernard Cesarone, Anna Colaner, Jonathan Doster, Karen Freel, Dan Harris, Eboni Howard, Larry Joseph, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Peter Mulhall, Norica Morgan, Gail Nourse, Elliot Regenstein, Lesley Schwartz, Kelly Sparks, Bob Spatz, Teri Talan, Dawn Thomas, Joellyn Whitehead

*Phone:* David Alexander, Lisa Christensen Gee, Peter Godard, Connie Fletcher, Reyna Hernandez, Lisa Hood

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the May 8, 2014 meeting were formally approved.

**3. Updates**

**a. LDS/UECDS**

The Longitudinal Data System (LDS) is a collaboration among several state agencies and ISBE. The goal is to facilitate the sharing of information across agencies. Right now, if one wanted to research or analyze data from a variety of agencies, multiple data sharing agreements would need to be in place to access this data. Once established, users of the LDS will be able to communicate with a Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), an entity that would receive data requests and, per preexisting data-sharing agreements between the necessary agencies, collect and provide data to the requester.

OECD is working towards developing an unduplicated count of children receiving early childhood services while the LDS work is progressing on its own. The office is close to securing the necessary legal signatures for that process to begin. This work was delayed by a couple of months, so the Committee will have updates in the coming weeks.

Committee members asked how the development of the LDS relates to the work of John Snow International (JSI) and the past work of the DRE Committee. ISBE contracted with JSI to determine how to build a unified data system. JSI's work indicated that there are multiple layers to any sort of comprehensive data system and because the same agencies are involved in the LDS work, it only makes sense to continue working on the LDS without building a separate early childhood system. OECD took JSI's recommendations under consideration when deciding how to proceed. The decision is to move away from the construction of an early childhood-specific system and move towards early childhood data being incorporated into the larger Longitudinal Data

System. The state is now determining which agency would house the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), which oversees functions and services of the LDS. Selecting the CDDA is the first major step forward in building the system; once selected, the rest of the system can be built out.

**b. RTT-ELC Update**

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Annual Performance Review (APR) will be posted shortly. (The state received good feedback.) Excelerate went live in July and school ratings will go live in September. The QRIS Validation Study was awarded to Frank Porter Graham in collaboration with the Erikson Institute. Bill Teale’s team at the University of Illinois will be doing the evaluation of the Preschool Instructional Excellence project and the evaluation for the Innovation Zones will be done by Dawn Thomas and Susan Fowler at the University of Illinois.

**c. ISLE**

The ISLE (Illinois Shared Learning Environment) project has been focused on the K-12 component of what was originally designed as a P-20 system. ISLE is now operating in both Bloomington and Normal school districts on a pilot basis. The project is nine months behind schedule. The goal was for all 32 of the Race-to-the-Top districts to be using this district-wide this year; instead, the two pilot districts will do an expanded pilot and seven more districts will be using tools on a pilot basis with a handful of their teachers.

Three applications have been built: 1) a content tagging and discovery tool; 2) a dashboard that allows teachers to look at the history of assessment scores for students; and 3) ThinkGate, an assessment authoring and delivery tool. None of the pilot districts have used ThinkGate as part of their pilots, but it is integrated into the suite in case districts want to use it. All of the state’s RTT districts have integrated their student information systems and their teacher information into a warehouse hosted by IlliniCloud. This enables a connection between the warehouse and other applications in the future.

From an early childhood perspective, the vision was for ISLE to proceed on its original timeline and ISBE would explore with 7-10 districts the ability to build out some early childhood ISLE applications as part of the RTT-ELC grant. The thought has been not to proceed with that plan because the project is behind schedule and there is some risk of project success with future funding. ISBE will concentrate on getting what has already been started up to a good place before building further early childhood functionality. There was RTT-ELC grant money allocated to the project, but no money has been spent. The funding was specifically for the creation of modules, or applications, that are early childhood-specific. That money will be repurposed if the early childhood piece of the project doesn’t move forward.

**d. REL Midwest Project**

Dr. Eboni Howard and Pam Bonsu provided the committee with an update on the REL Midwest early childhood data systems project. Pam and her team completed their initial document review of 15 states (Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana,

Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wisconsin) and are now preparing to do interviews with nine or fewer of those key states/stakeholders. The REL Midwest scoured the internet to find public documents that recognized the progress of each state's data system(s). Dr. Howard passed around their results, which show the types of systems these states decided to build. Moving forward, the plan is to talk to states about the challenges they faced during this early development process.

REL Midwest asked for input from the committee on both the summary document and the nine states the REL Midwest should interview. They also asked members to provide contacts at the 15 states so the REL Midwest can connect with the right people.

**e. Research Agenda**

The Research Agenda document was created after extensive discussion by the committee over the last several meetings of how to best achieve objectives in the committee's work plan related to supporting the specific data, research, and evaluation needs of the ELC and providing recommendations that would define and address the larger scope of research and evaluation needs for early childhood programs and services throughout the state of Illinois. The DRE Committee has started to set up meetings with different ELC committees to share the draft research agenda document. The goal is to engage the committees in the project: DRE Committee members will ask attendees to review the research questions and think about whether or not the DRE Committee is asking the right questions. Committee members will also be soliciting general feedback on the document. The hope is that the research agenda will help inform the work of the other committees. All DRE members received an email asking if they'd be interested in attending any of the upcoming ELC meetings. The schedule is being populated now.

**f. State Agency Data Advocacy**

At the May DRE Committee meeting, Committee members had a conversation about the importance of capacity within state agencies to respond to data requests and to manage data systems. Agencies don't have the staff sufficient to do the data work that's important and necessary, so the DRE Committee asked how as a group it could support and advocate for more resources dedicated to maintaining healthy data systems.

The committee noted that this is not just an early childhood issue. The broader issue is that agencies used to have program evaluation staff, but the General Assembly has cut funding for these types of positions over the years. The committee also noted that agencies are doing everything they can, but the lack of resources makes it very difficult.

Before the FY16 budget season begins, the DRE Committee will have a fuller conversation on the topic. That said, if opportunities come up between now and then – like ISBE Board hearings – it might be worth articulating the need for agencies to have enough capacity to manage their data systems and respond to data requests.

The committee staffer will work on drafting a resolution for the November DRE Committee meeting. In addition, the organizations that can advocate should consider this an issue when planning for the next legislative session.

#### 4. ISBE Use Cases

During the 2014 legislative session, the Illinois General Assembly considered several bills that would have imposed new student data security and privacy requirements. None passed, but there was a commitment from ISBE to proceed forward with a workgroup that would focus on these very privacy and security issues. That group has been convened by Nicki Bazer, ISBE's General Counsel. Representative Scott Drury (D-58), who led some of the legislative efforts, also attended the first meeting. The goal of the group is to develop consensus around these issues in case legislation moves during the next session. Elliot Regenstein was appointed to represent the Early Learning Council.

The group agreed to develop a list of data "uses cases," or examples of legitimate uses of data that are critical to the functioning of our various systems. Then the group will select a handful of examples and study them, thinking about how to write legislation that allows for the legitimate use of data to continue while imposing the right privacy and security requirements. ISBE sent out a use case template. DRE Committee members submitted examples to the DRE staffer prior to August 14<sup>th</sup>, which were then compiled into a list that was shared with the Committee. At the meeting, committee members chose two cases from the list to highlight for the larger workgroup, and then built them out. The two use cases prioritized by the Committee were identified for the following reasons:

- They represent uses of data that have been previously identified by the Committee as important, and because they raised key principles that could be applied to numerous other potential use cases.
- They both focus on an essential aspect of early learning data usage: it requires multi-agency data coordination. This can raise different privacy and security concerns than work within an individual data system. For example, our first priority – coordinating enrollment data across programs – will lead to many products that include de-identified, aggregated data raising no privacy concerns, but the process of developing that data will require linking individually identifiable data across agencies, which requires privacy and security protections during the development process and in administering the linkages.
- Our first example was chosen primarily for its impact on policy, although as noted it has potential impacts on practice as well; the second example was chosen because of its potentially deep impact on practice.

Elliot Regenstein committed to submitting the complete list with the two prioritized examples to ISBE, noting that the intention of the list is to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. The DRE staffer will compile the list of use cases and send it to ISBE by the Monday, August 18<sup>th</sup> deadline.

#### **ACTION ITEMS FROM 8/14/14 MEETING**

- **DRE staffer will circulate the REL Midwest document so members can review it and provide feedback (general comments, state suggestions for the interview process, contacts of state agency staff or other stakeholders, etc.) by August 25<sup>th</sup>**
- **DRE staffer will re-circulate Research Agenda presentation calendar**
- **Before the November DRE meeting, the DRE staffer and co-chairs will develop a resolution recommending that more state funding be spent on the capacity of state agencies to manage and process data**
- **DRE staffer will submit use cases to ISBE and then share back with the Committee what was submitted**