

## **Early Learning Council Executive Committee Meeting**

April 8, 2013

1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Chicago-Illinois State Board of Education

JRTC- 100 W. Randolph, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor Video Conference Room

Springfield- Illinois State Board of Education

Alzina Building- 100 N. First Street- 3rd floor Video Conference Room

Conference Line: 888-494-4032 Access Code: 7198518485

### **Agenda**

- I. Welcome and Introductions (10 mins)**
  - a. Minutes
  
- II. IV-Waiver Presentation and Discussion (30 mins)**

*DCFS and Children's Home + Aid presentation and discussion on their waiver in Chicago.*
  
- III. Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (50 mins)**
  - a. Scope of Work
  - b. QRIS Forecast
  - c. QRIS Logo
  
- IV. Head Start Sequestration Update (10 mins)**
  
- V. CPS/DFSS Chicago Ready to Learn Update (15 mins)**
  
- VI. Adjournment (5 mins)**

## Early Learning Council Executive Committee Meeting

February 11, 2013

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Chicago – Illinois State Board of Education, JRTC, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor Videoconference Room

Springfield – Illinois State Board of Education, Alinza Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Videoconference Room

### Minutes

#### Participants

**Chicago** – Karen Berman, Jeanna Capito, Gaylord Gieseke, Phyllis Glink, Daniel Fitzgerald, Dan Harris, Theresa Hawley, Reyna Hernandez, Teresa Kelly, Jan Maruna, Beth Mascitti-Miller, Harriet Meyer, Sylvia Puente, Diana Rauner, Elliot Regenstein, Vanessa Rich, Julie Smith, Sara Slaughter, Teri Talan, Maria Whelan, Kay Willmoth, Josie Yanguas

**Springfield** – Jan Maruna, Linda Saterfield, Cindy Zumwalt

**Phone** – George Davis, Phyllis Glink

#### I. Welcome and Introductions

Harriet Meyer welcomed the Executive Committee. She emphasized that this meeting is an opportunity for members to delve into some of the big discussions the Executive Committee needs to have.

##### a. Minutes

The minutes were approved.

#### II. Committee Recommendations

a. **Family and Community Engagement:** Recommendation to Governor Quinn to support Illinois' expansion of early childhood facilities in high-need communities in his FY14 capital budget.

-Approved unanimously

b. **Systems Integration and Alignment:** System Integration and Alignment Committee's recommendation for changes to Rule 407 and its procedures related to obesity prevention (nutrition, physical activity and screen-time standards) for consideration by DCFS.

-Approved unanimously and fast tracked for DCFS

#### III. ELC – The Big Picture

Theresa Hawley thanked members for meeting with her individually since the last meeting. She suggested continuing to do so on a semi-annual basis. She then asked members for suggestions on how to improve full Council meetings.

- Working on a graphic that shows in a cohesive way all the things the ELC is targeting
- Restructuring goes hand-in-hand with these efforts
- People like webinars, especially getting updates on topics
- Given all the changes, could we create an updated organizational chart?
- Do the advisory bodies serve as subcommittees?
  - No – they are more like liaisons.
- We need to not lose sight of the way we communicate things. The more dense the material, the tougher it is to convey to any audience, but especially to the general public.
- ELC meetings should include presentations by an expert in the field.

- Perhaps we could spend 5 minutes at the beginning and/or end of the meeting talking to someone you don't know. We don't know everyone in the room and we don't hear from each other enough on organizational levels.
- We could focus on cross-cutting topics that matter to everyone, and they could become the themes for the meetings. We can't lose sight of the cross-sector nature of our work.
- We should use the meetings of the full Council to maximize interaction time, to set parameters and to assign more specific tasks to the committees.
- We need a better sense of rural communities, their specific needs and how what we recommend or decide will impact them.
- The full Council meetings should be shorter, more of recaps than they are.
- We need to get the equilibrium right between Council members having information on recommendations (and not being unaware of what they're being asked to approve) versus getting too deep into the weeds of issues.
- Many people make a big effort to make it to the full Council meetings when where we really need them to participate is in the committees, sub-committees and task forces.

#### IV. **Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge**

Theresa Hawley informed members that the grant implementation team working on the updated Scopes of Work that are due by 3/29. She also noted that a process for sharing updates with the Executive Committee will need to be developed.

- Community Systems
  - No RFP will be issued. Rather, there's a grant to Action for Children, which is very open to working with others to get the work done.
- Good to Great
  - Perhaps we have a conference open to all for people who have done work on this to present
  - We could issue RFIs.
  - We have a daunting task ahead of us, especially when you consider where our centers are at currently. When I think about resource allocation, we need to develop language that affirms every step of progress centers make, not just the last step of "good" to "great." We're going to have centers in Lincoln Park touting their excellence and centers in North Lawndale being happy at level 1.
  - This reminds me of what Arne Duncan described as "pockets of excellence." How do we make excellence the North Star and expand the impact beyond those select centers?
  - We need to change the language – "good to great" is too subjective.
  - It's really important for us to show what we're talking about. People want to be good/better. When we create a group of parents who demand quality programs, that's how things will really change.
  - I'm noticing a shift in expectations regarding centers attaining a 4 versus attaining a 5.
  - Remember that "adequate" to "good" is also a big part of the grant, and that we're not working a vacuum; many other systems are being built up at the same time.
- Higher Education/Training
  - We need a plan for this portion of the grant.

- Loyola University is doing some very creative things around ESL endorsements – they’re a good example of thinking outside the box.
- This is a larger conversation than just the early learning world. It involves many players and we can’t really have the conversation in isolation of them. We need to have a broader strategy.
- Members recommended clarifying the purpose of these pieces (like what was done with the SAC grant).
- Licensing Small Child Care Homes
  - We are going to form a small task force to look into this. Let us know if you are interested in participating.

**V. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT



**Project Link: *Southside Early Learning Network - Child Welfare Partnership***

Project Link is a two-year pilot project designed to improve outcomes for young children (ages zero to 5) in or at risk of entering foster care. This demonstration project is funded through a discretionary grant from the Children's Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

**The Need**

Early exposure to child abuse and neglect can affect the very architecture of the developing brain, preventing infants and toddlers from developing the neural pathways and connections necessary for later learning. This can lead to cognitive delays, poor self-regulation, and difficulty paying attention.

The best opportunity for mitigating these effects is comprehensive, high quality early education and care services. This includes a combination of early intervention services for children with identified developmental delays as well as high quality early learning and development programs like home visiting, Preschool for All, Early Head Start and Head Start.

**Our Approach**

This pilot project will use a community-driven early learning system to learn how to improve data collection, coordination and follow-up from the child welfare system. We will focus on 3 distinct populations served by the child welfare system: children 0-5 in foster care; children 0-5 receiving intact family services; and children 0-5 whose parents are teens in foster care. The target population consists of children in these populations living in the Chicago community areas of Englewood, West Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing.

The primary goal of the project is to improve identification, referral, enrollment, and follow-up of children 0-5 in or at risk of entering the child welfare system, and to use lessons learned from the pilot to improve systems, practice and policy statewide to increase the participation of these children and their families in comprehensive, high-quality early childhood development services.

**Southside Early Learning Network**

The Southside Early Learning Network (SELN) is a partnership between the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and evidence-based home visiting models in Englewood, West Englewood, and Greater Grand Crossing. The SELN will serve as a referral and service platform for this project.

The SELN includes an expanded system of home visiting services through the federal Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), as well as high quality early childhood education programs (Early Head Start, Head Start, Prevention Initiative and Pre-School For All) and other early learning services. The SELN connects home visiting providers and the early childhood community to facilitate one seamless network of universal assessment and referral for services in Englewood, West Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing. Children's Home + Aid is serving as the coordinating agency for this effort, spearheading training, universal screening, referral, and data sharing for participating partners.



### **Key Project Activities**

➤ **Coordination.** This project will formally integrate IDCFS into the work of SELN (and by extension, IDHS and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development) in several important ways. The model focuses on five key activities to increase the target population's participation in high quality early learning and development services:

- 1) Identification and screening
- 2) Referral
- 3) Enrollment
- 4) Follow-up
- 5) Improved data tracking and coordination.

By identifying barriers and successes around these key activities, we will form a set of recommendations and best practices which can be scaled up in other communities.

➤ **Training.** In addition to the coordination goals of this project, we seek to build awareness among child welfare caseworkers, parents, foster parents and other caregivers, and relevant members of the legal community about the impact of maltreatment on infant and toddler development, and important strategies for promoting optimal development for young children in or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system.

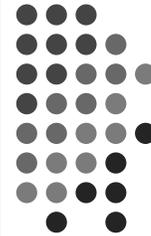
Illinois has a particularly strong infrastructure in place to ensure cross-system training targeted to both child welfare service practitioners and the early learning community. Strengthening Families Illinois is a partner capable of reaching across varied communities, constituents and stakeholders. Strengthening Families Illinois will deliver trainings to the target audiences listed above.

➤ **Policy and Systems Change.** As lessons about practice and policy begin to emerge based upon the work of this project, the Ounce of Prevention Fund will lead information-sharing efforts with key stakeholders about the available services for the target population, and how to best meet the needs of this at-risk population. The Ounce will also convene and participate in meetings of key government and other stakeholders, including judges and other members of the legal community to review project findings and consider options for system implementation. This work will shape policy recommendations specific to each relevant state agency for changes designed to better serve young children who are in or at-risk of entering foster care.

### **Partners**

This project is a partnership between Children's Home + Aid, the Southside Early Learning Network, the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services. Key members of the advisory board include Strengthening Families Illinois and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development.

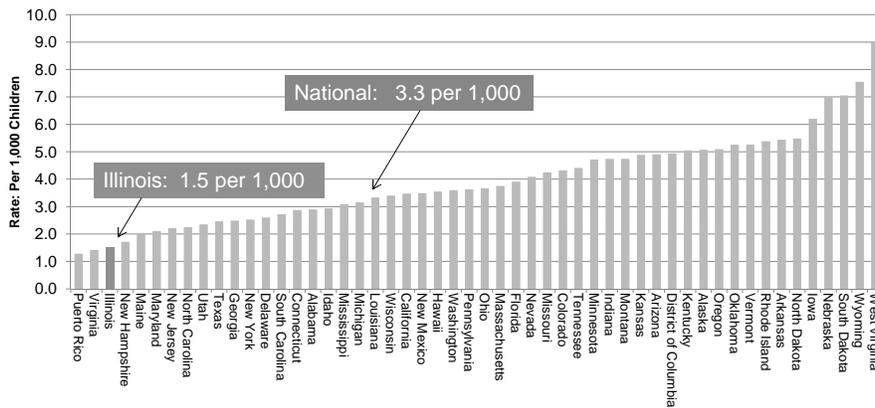
# Illinois Birth through Three Title IV-E Waiver



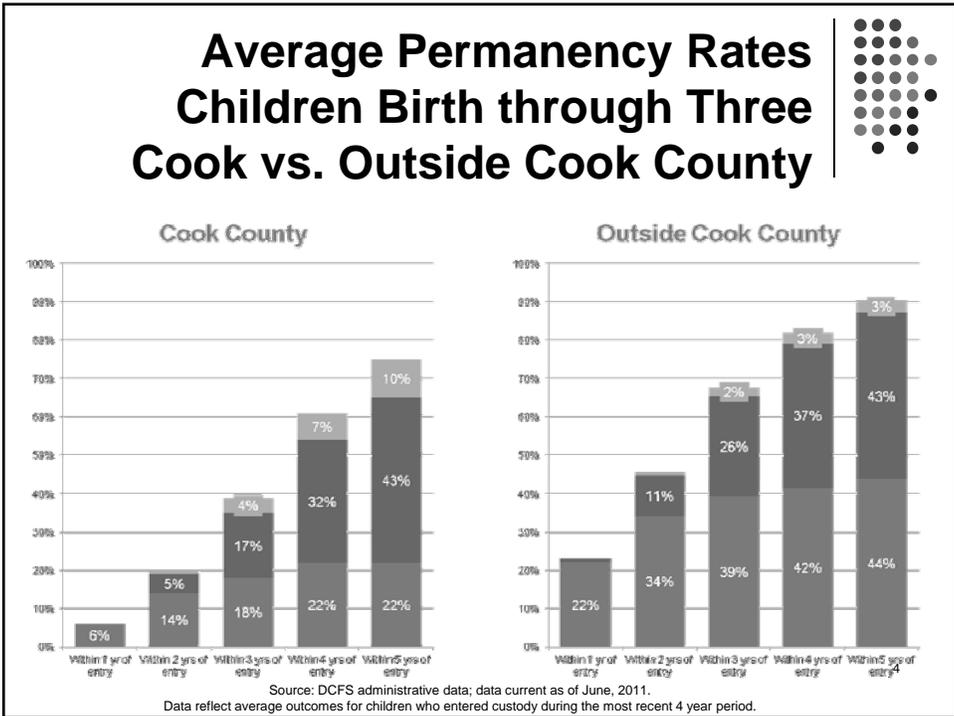
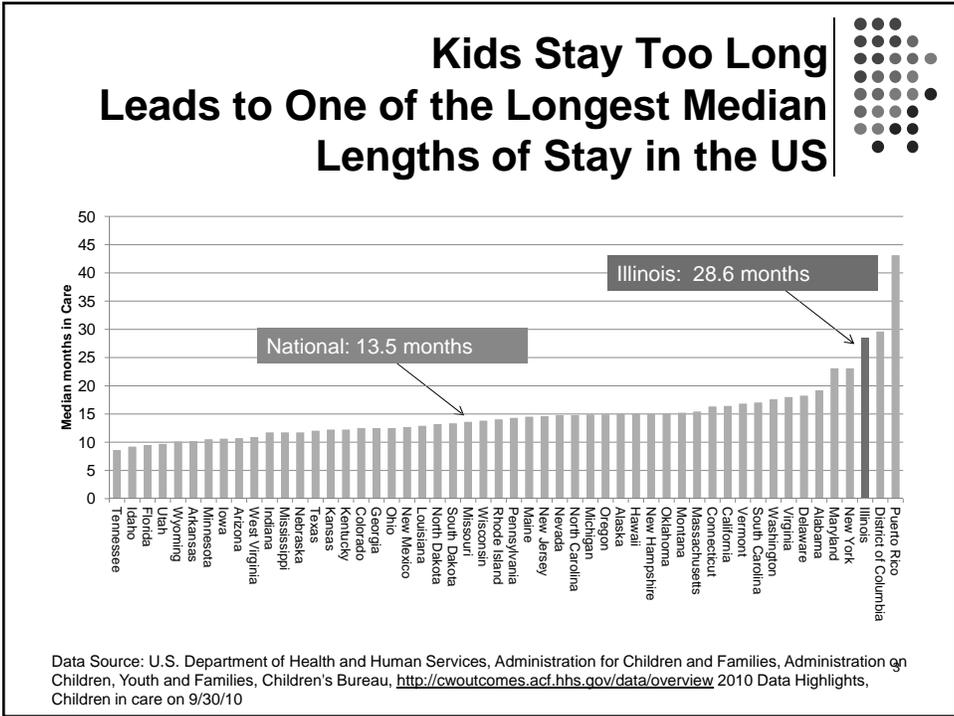
# Illinois Registers One of the Lowest Foster Care Entry Rates in the US



Rate per 1,000



Data Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb) Data current as of July 2012



## Birth Thru Three Waiver Question



Will children aged birth thru three years old, who are initially placed in foster care, experience reduced trauma symptoms, increased permanency, reduced re-entry and improved child well-being if they are provided child-parent therapy or other trauma-informed parent support programs compared to similar children who are provided IV-E services as usual?

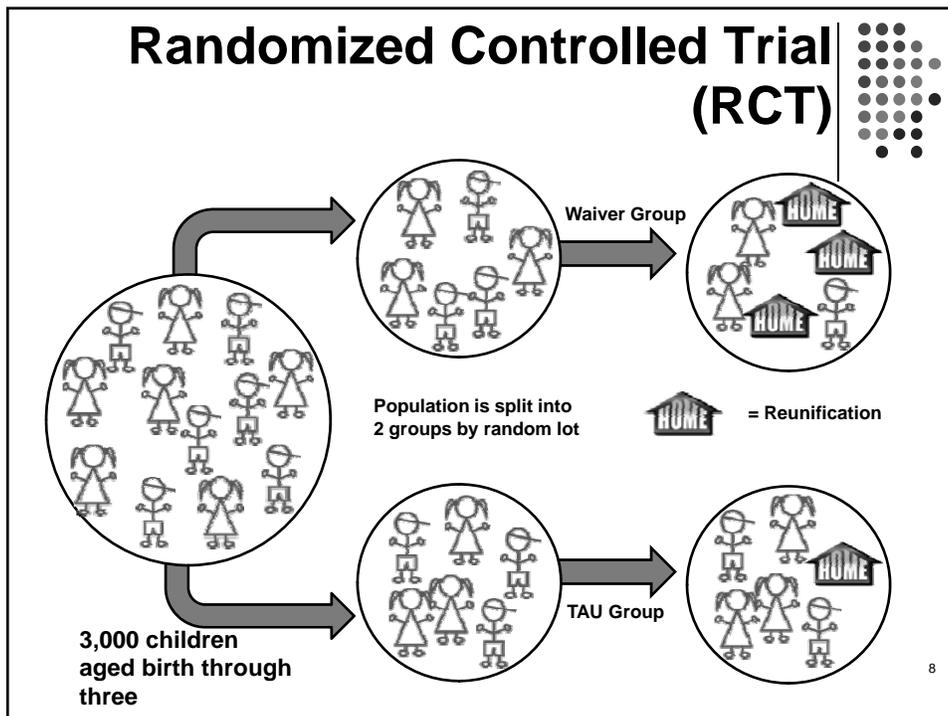
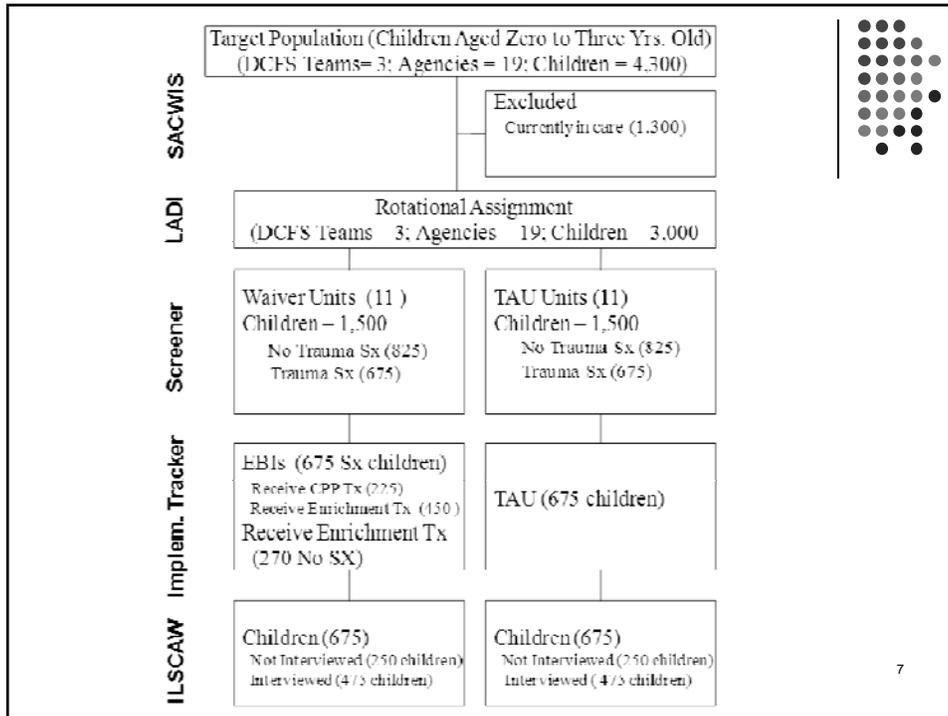
*Source:* Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2012). Title IV-E Child Waiver Demonstration Project, last accessed August 22, 2012  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs\\_fund/il\\_waiver\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/il_waiver_proposal.pdf).

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## Theory of Change



- Traumatic events that led to out-of-home placement and can hinder children's development into healthy, caring, and productive adults .
- If providers can provide immediate access to EBIs to alleviate the distress experienced by children, they will be better supported to recover from adverse childhood experiences.
- If caregivers of children exposed to adverse childhood events were specifically equipped with knowledge and strategies to manage traumatic reactions, the opportunity to intervene in a supportive, therapeutic relationship would add an essential element to achieving permanency and improving the well being of children.



| TREATMENT AS USUAL [CONTROL]   | WAIVER/ DEMONSTRATION CASES   |
|--|---|
| Case is assigned to waiver or control agency   | Case is assigned to waiver or control agency  |
| <b>IA completes initial assessment using existing tools:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Denver II</li> <li>▪ Ages &amp; Stages</li> <li>▪ Ages &amp; Stage Social Emotional</li> </ul> | <b>IA completes initial assessment using existing tools:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Denver II</li> <li>2. Ages &amp; Stages</li> </ol> <b>And the following enhancements:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers [DECA]</li> <li>4. Infant Toddler Symptom Checklist [ITSC];</li> <li>5. The Parenting Stress Inventory</li> </ol> <p><i>(These 5 instruments comprise the enhanced IA).<br/>Note: Trauma experiences are identified using the CANS [2/3].</i></p> |
| Traditional Recommendations are rendered   | IA w/ ECH consult determines appropriateness of demonstration interventions & traditional recommendations as required.  |
| ECH follows up with children that pass the screening to age 3-0.   | ECH follows up with all waiver children & families with ongoing screenings @ intervals TBD.   |
|  | ECH follows up on referrals to providers and determines if treatment needs change during the life of case to age 3-11mons.  |



## Interventions to Be Used

- **Moderate Risk Families**
- The Nurturing Parent Program (Dr. Stephen Bavolek)
- The Nurturing Parent Program was developed in the early 1980's and distributed nationally by 1985, NPP is a psycho-education and cognitive-behavioral group intervention when targeted to biological parents, is aimed at modifying maladaptive beliefs that led to abusive parenting behaviors and to enhance the parents' skills in supporting attachments, nurturing and general parenting.



## The specific goals of the model are to:



- Increase parents' sense of self-worth, personal empowerment, empathy, bonding, and attachment;
- Increase the use of alternative strategies to harsh and abusive disciplinary practices;
- Increase parents' knowledge of age-appropriate developmental expectations;
- Reduce abuse and neglect rates.

## 2 Versions: PV & CV



- The demonstration will adapt a version of the Nurturing Skills for Families version of NPP for caregivers which will be considered our caregiver version (CV)
- Goal 6-8 Sessions
- 60-90 Mins.
- Parent Version targeted to the developmental needs of children 0-5
- 16 Group Sessions



## High Risk Families



- **Child-Parent Psychotherapy**
- Developed in the early 2000's and widely distributed in 2005, CPP is based on attachment theory, but combines and integrates principles from multiples theories (developmental, trauma, social-learning, psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral therapies). CPP is a dyadic (caregiver and child) intervention for children from birth through age 5 who have experienced at least one traumatic event such as the sudden or traumatic death of someone close, a serious accident, sexual abuse, exposure to domestic violence, and as a result, are experiencing behavior, attachment, and/or other mental health problems. The primary goal of CPP is to support and strengthen the relationship between a child and his or her parent (caregiver) as a vehicle for restoring the child's sense of safety, attachment, and appropriate affect.
- Purveyors: Dr. Alicia Lieberman & Dr. Patricia Van Horn

## CPP Continued

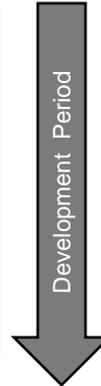


- The average length of treatment is 12-18 mos.
- Expected Target Population: High Risk infants, toddlers, caregivers and biological parents
- Proximal outcomes include a decrease in trauma symptoms and increases in regulatory capacity.
- Distal outcomes include changes in attachment categories and improved mental health of the caregiver.

# Waiver Demonstration Timeline



| Date     |  |
|----------|--|
| 10/9/12  | Term & Conditions Signed                 |
| 11/15/12 | LADI Survey Administered                 |
| 12/5/12  | Evaluation Plan Submitted                |
| 12/15/12 | Design and Implementation Plan Submitted |
| 1/15/13  | Usability Testing Starts                 |
| 3/15/13  | Formative Evaluation Starts              |
| 7/1/13   | Demonstration Starts                     |
| 7/1/13   | ISCAW Starts                             |



### Expanding School Readiness Gains in Prekindergarten

With growing public interest in children's success in kindergarten, more studies are examining prekindergarten (pre-k) classroom characteristics and their relationship to children's school readiness. These studies, for the most part, have focused on classroom environment characteristics associated with overall program quality, especially as measured by the Early Childhood Education Rating System (ECERS) and by the level of teachers' formal preparation. Recently, attention has moved to measuring teacher-child interactions, especially as assessed by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

This study, however, took a different tack. *It focused on individual children and the type of activities with which they engage during their prekindergarten day* - what the researchers call "pattern of classroom engagement." Looking beyond the environment provided for learning and delving more deeply into activities occupying children's time, this study sought to examine the relationship between four different patterns of classroom engagement and children's later success on language, literacy, and mathematics school readiness indicators.

The study had two overarching purposes: (1) To assess the relationship between children's pattern of classroom engagement and their school readiness gains during the prekindergarten year and (2) To learn if some patterns of classroom engagement promoted greater school readiness gains for low-income children.

### Delving Deeper into Classroom Dimensions Associated with School Readiness

About the study. Study participants were 2,751 children, enrolled in 701 pre-k classrooms in 11 states, who had participated in two previous studies: the National Center for Early Development and Learning's (NCEDL) Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten and the NCEDL and National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) State-Wide Early Education Programs Study. Pre-k classrooms were located in public schools, Head Start settings, and community-based programs.

Using specialized statistical techniques, children were grouped into one of four patterns of classroom engagement commonly identified in the literature on early childhood education. While every child participated in each of the four activity types, the study found significant differences among children in the quantity of time spent in each of them. Here are the four patterns of classroom engagement studied:

1. During free choice play and exploration (free play), child-directed exploration of a rich array of activities chosen by the child is encouraged.
2. In individual instruction the teacher engages in direct, explicit instruction with a child. This instructional support typically involves large amounts of literacy instruction and high-quality teacher feedback.
3. Group instruction centers on the teacher providing explicit instructional support, too. It occurs in small or whole group settings, such as circle time, in contrast to individual interactions with a child.
4. Scaffolded learning occurs when teachers offer children contextually responsive comments that lift their thinking and performance to a higher level than would occur if assistance were not provided.

The information gathered. Individual children were classified as belonging to one of these four activity types or profiles based on the pattern of their classroom engagement. Each child-level profile was gathered through the *Emerging Academics Snapshot* (Snapshot). The Snapshot is a moment-by-moment observation measure that describes children's classroom experiences throughout the program day. Also assessed was each classroom's quality (environmental quality and teacher-child interactions). Beyond their two primary research objectives, researchers hoped to learn whether the Snapshot provided unique and helpful information beyond that collected by environmental rating scales - and it did, indicating the value-added of another measurement tool for studying prekindergarten classrooms.

Children's school readiness gains from fall to spring of their prekindergarten year were measured on a range of outcomes through direct assessments of language, literacy, and mathematics. To determine children's poverty status, information was obtained on whether a child's family lived below the federal poverty level. To further inform analysis of differences across school readiness gains, data were gathered on children's gender, ethnicity, household size, mothers' years of education, and children's age at the spring assessment.

#### Definitions

1. Free choice play and exploration: Child-directed exploration of a rich array of activities chosen by the child.
2. Individual instruction: The teacher engages a child in direct, explicit instruction involving literacy, high-quality teacher feedback, and teacher-led discussions.
3. Group instruction: The teacher provides explicit instructional support in a group setting.
4. Scaffolded learning: Teachers offer responsive comments that elevate children's thinking and performance.

## What the Study Found

Three of the study's findings relay the importance of teacher intentionality in supporting school readiness outcomes, especially for low-income children. Four other findings add to our knowledge of children's day-to-day experiences in prekindergarten classrooms.

### School readiness gains and different classroom engagement patterns

1. Children grouped in the free play activity profile made the smallest fall-to-spring gains across language, literacy, and mathematics compared to children in the two instructional profiles and the scaffolded learning profile. These children also showed less growth in writing their names and on number counting.
2. Individual instruction outperformed the other three patterns of child engagement in promoting children's abilities to comprehend the nature of a problem, identify relevant information, and perform simple calculations (i.e., applied problems).
3. Low-income children in the free play, group instruction, and scaffolded learning profiles made *smaller gains* than their nonpoor peers on letter-word identification, highest number counted, and applied problems. In the individual instruction profile, however, poor children made *greater gains* across all of these outcomes as compared to their nonpoor counterparts.

### Additional findings on children's classroom engagement

1. Children spent the largest amount of time in free choice (30%) and whole group activities (27%). They spent the least amount of time in individual time with a teacher (7%).
2. Children spent an average of 45 minutes of their 2.5 hour prekindergarten day in free play. In contrast, less than 8 minutes a day were devoted to literacy activities of reading, letter-sound recognition, and being read to.
3. Children in the free play and scaffolded learning profiles tended to be somewhat more economically privileged than children who were more engaged in individual and group instruction. Notably, children grouped in the scaffolded learning profile spent a large proportion of time in free-choice activities, suggesting that free play, when accompanied by scaffolding interactions with teachers, may be important to fostering learning.
4. Children who spent more time in individual and group instruction were more likely to be Latino or African American than children who spent more time engaged in free play and scaffolded learning. Children who received more individual instruction also were more likely to be of lower income.

Results from this study suggest that more quality instructional time with teachers and less free play time without teacher guidance or scaffolding would better prepare children for entering kindergarten.

## Linking Research to Practice

The literature on pre-k classroom quality has focused primarily on the arrangement of physical space and materials available to children for their exploration. This study's findings highlight that program quality can be assessed in a variety of ways. For example, pre-k classrooms may have a relatively high overall environmental rating score but have low levels of teacher-child interactions, and, as a result, may not be intentionally fostering children's school readiness. Especially for children from low income families, quality instructional time that promotes the skills needed for school success seems to be important.

These findings suggest:

- Teachers should give more attention to the amount of time children engage in various activity settings and in interaction with them, particularly as it relates to supporting their school readiness.
- While research indicates that free play and exploration can contribute to children's overall development and learning, by itself, too much free play and exploration can weaken children's preparation for kindergarten. Teachers attentive to children's school readiness become appropriately involved in children's free play by providing prompts to help them think more deeply about the content of their play, presenting questions that extend understanding and/or expand possibilities for concentrated exploration, and offering guidance that can steer children to new insights.
- To enter kindergarten better prepared, low income children may need instruction explicitly directed to developing their academic skills in language, literacy, and mathematics; this perhaps is less the case for middle-class children who typically are given opportunities to develop basic academic skills at home.

This edition of *NCRECE In Focus* was prepared by Stacie G. Goffin of the Goffin Strategy Group in consultation with the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education, based on the paper noted below and supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A060021 to the University of Virginia. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the U.S. Department of Education. Readers should refer to the paper on which this *In Focus* is based for more information.

Chien, N.C., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta, R., Ritchie, S., Bryant, D., Clifford, R., Early, & D., Barbarin, O. (in press). Children's Classroom Engagement and Gains in Academic and Social-Emotional Outcomes across Pre-Kindergarten. *Child Development*.

## Promoting Children's School Readiness: Rethinking the Levers for Change

### Classroom Characteristics that Improve Children's School Readiness

Improving children's preparation for school success has become a national priority. For decades, researchers have tried to identify the characteristics of early childhood education (ECE) classrooms that can make the greatest difference for participating children. To date, however, the research hasn't offered clear guidelines for how best to promote school readiness in early childhood classrooms.

Growing public investments in ECE, especially prekindergarten (pre-k), make understanding of how different research findings fit together increasingly important. This *NCRECE In Focus* offers teachers and administrators direction in this regard by looking at how two prominent "puzzle pieces" fit together.

### Two research strands are of particular interest

1. Most early educators are familiar with research findings indicating that children benefit most from their ECE experiences when their teachers have a Bachelor's degree and specialized training in ECE, class sizes are small, the child-to-teacher ratio is limited, and the classroom uses a particular curriculum. These teacher and classroom characteristics are commonly called *structural features*. Yet, not all studies find that these structural features contribute positively to children's learning and development.
2. A growing body of school readiness research shows the positive contributions that result from children's high quality interactions with their teachers, peers, and learning materials. Because of their consistency, these research findings have elevated confidence in the importance of well constructed teacher-child interactions as a means for promoting children's school readiness.

Different findings about which classroom characteristics most contribute to children's school readiness can leave program administrators and teachers confused about how to organize their classrooms to support children's optimum learning and development.

### Rethinking the Role of Teacher and Classroom Characteristics in Promoting Children's Learning and Development

When researchers study the effects of structural features on children's school readiness, they usually look at four teacher and classroom characteristics:

1. Classrooms with a small vs. large class size,
2. Child-to-teacher ratio,
3. The type of curriculum being used, and
4. Teachers with high- vs. low-level credentials.

Typically research tests whether variations in these four characteristics directly influence children's school readiness. Increasingly, research is showing that these characteristics *do not directly cause* children to learn more or develop faster. Additionally, in other research, there are strong findings that show a clear relationship between children's classroom interactions and their school readiness.

In trying to figure out how these two research strands fit together, two possible scenarios have been identified for understanding how children's direct interactions with their teachers, peers, and learning environment relate to class size, child-to-teacher ratio, curriculum type, and teacher qualifications. These two scenarios focus on the *supportive and magnifying roles* that teacher and classroom characteristics can play in furthering the outcomes gained from effective teacher-child interactions. While subtle in their distinctions, they suggest that teacher and classroom characteristics can exercise their influence on child outcomes in two different ways: one by creating conditions for more effective interactions and the other by boosting or "bumping up" the impact of the interactions.

## Two Scenarios

Early childhood educators have long valued the importance of children's relationships with adults, peers, and classroom materials. Now, research is affirming this perspective, indicating that *the quality of children's daily classroom interactions with teachers, peers, and learning materials seem to provide the mechanisms through which children's early childhood education experiences promote development of school readiness skills*. While more research is needed to test these scenarios and help them become more descriptive and specific, they open the way to thinking about how these two research strands fit together and how children's development and learning can be better fostered in ECE settings.

### Scenario #1: Creating a Supportive Context for Children's Classroom Interactions

Findings show that structural features associated with program quality do not consistently produce positive outcomes for children. Their positive contribution may depend on the "right conditions," and the right conditions might be *when these teacher and classroom characteristics can create the conditions for improving the quality of children's classroom interactions with their teachers, peers, and learning materials*.

Early childhood teachers with higher levels of education and specialized training in ECE, for example, may facilitate children's faster learning and development by providing better-organized and more instructionally-rich experiences. A small class size or low child-to-teacher ratio may influence the development of social skills by creating less chaotic classrooms and permitting children to be part of more emotionally-supportive interactions. Using a particular curriculum may provide children with opportunities to interact with learning materials in a more focused way and engage in higher quality instructional interactions with their teachers and peers.

### Scenario #2: Boosting the Positive Impact of Children's Classroom Interactions

Teacher and classroom characteristics such as teacher qualifications, class size, child-to-teacher ratio, and curriculum may also promote a stronger context for learning by *intensifying* or "bumping up" the positive impact of high quality interactions.

For example, research shows that emotionally-supportive interactions between teachers and children have a direct, positive effect on children's social skills. These effects may be even more potent in classrooms bolstered by lower child-to-teacher ratios and smaller class sizes by maximizing for children the benefits of teachers' focused interactions.

Instructionally-rich interactions also positively impact children's academic skill development. This impact may be made greater--i.e., may be maximized--in classrooms that use a curriculum that promotes children's focused and instructionally-oriented interactions with classroom materials.

Children's learning and development seem to occur through the direct and consistent interactions they have over extended periods of time with their teachers, peers, and learning materials. Certain teacher and classroom characteristics may enhance the impact of these interactions on school readiness, either (1) by creating the conditions for more effective interactions or (2) by escalating the benefits derived from the interactions.

## Linking Research to Practice

The most important next step from these new insights is to redefine what it means for an early childhood education program to be of high quality.

- Definitions of high quality early childhood classrooms should focus on children's emotionally-supportive, instructionally-rich, and well-organized interactions with their teachers, classmates, and learning materials.
- Classroom structural features such as teachers with a Bachelor's degree and specialized training in ECE, small class sizes, low child-to-teacher ratios, and using a particular curriculum need to be recognized for their potentially important role in supporting and magnifying the presence and impact of teacher-child interactions.

Teacher-child interactions should become a classroom priority.

- School policies, professional development programs, and program improvement initiatives should prioritize efforts to strengthen the quality of classroom interactions that children experience on a daily basis.
- Teachers and administrators should become more selective in their choice of teacher development opportunities, choosing options explicitly designed to improve the quality of teachers' emotional, instructional, and organizational interactions with young children.

Teachers and administrators should focus on making teaching more effective.

- Teachers should try to become more intentional about, attentive to, and reflective on their direct interactions with children and the learning environments they create for children's interactions with peers and with organized learning experiences.
- Administrators need to be sensitive to teacher and classroom characteristics that may support and escalate the effects that teachers' interactional efforts have on school readiness.

This edition of *NCRECE In Focus* was prepared by Stacie G. Goffin of the Goffin Strategy Group in consultation with the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education, based on the chapter noted below and supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A060021 to the University of Virginia. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the U.S. Department of Education. Readers should refer to the paper on which this *In Focus* is based for more information.

Mashburn, A. & Pianta, R. (in press). Opportunity in Early Education: Improving Teacher-Child Interactions and Child Outcomes. In volume A. Reynolds, A. Rolnick, M. Englund, & J. Temple (Eds.), *Cost-Effective Programs in Children's First Decade: A Human Capital Integration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Learning How Much Quality is Necessary to Get to Good Results for Children

### How Much Quality is Needed to Achieve School Readiness Outcomes for Children?

How good does an early childhood program have to be in order to achieve school readiness outcomes for children? This is known as the “threshold question,” and policy makers and others have wanted an answer to this question since the onset of public investments in early care and education (ECE) programs. With expansion of Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs for three- and four-year-old children, this question is getting even more attention.

Policy and other decision makers want this information so they can craft policies and direct resources to those factors that make the most difference to children’s school readiness. While we know that higher quality ECE programs and better results for children tend to go hand-in-hand, we don’t know the level of quality or quality indicators that are necessary for achieving learning outcomes that help children be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

In an attempt to fill this knowledge gap---to try and identify the minimum level of program quality required to attain positive results for children---this study examined academic and social outcomes for children from low income families. For the purposes of this study, low-income was defined by household income of less than 150% of the federal poverty level. The study focused on these children because, as a group, they are the target of most policy decisions related to program quality and access by families.

The study used data on teacher-child interactions and instructional quality from an 11-state pre-kindergarten (pre-k) evaluation. The findings show that achieving positive child outcomes require higher-quality, publicly-funded pre-k programs than typically are available.

### A Description of the Study

Study Participants. Participants were 1,129 children enrolled in 671 pre-k classrooms in 11 states involved in two previous studies: the National Center for Early Development and Learning’s (NCEDL) Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten and the NCEDL and National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) State-Wide Early Education Programs Study.

The pre-k classrooms were located in public schools, Head Start settings, and community-based programs. Demographic data, such as pre-test scores, children’s gender, race, and mother’s education, were collected. Having this information allowed researchers to compare findings across the classrooms in the 11 states.

Measures of Classroom Quality and Child Outcomes. To determine the level of quality in each of the classrooms studied, teachers’ interactions with children were assessed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This assessment tool is based on a seven-point scale that measures teacher-child interactions in two areas: (1) instructional support and (2) emotional support. A growing body of research demonstrates the relationship between higher scores on these two domains and positive effects on children’s academic and social outcomes.

These outcomes were assessed through tests of children’s academic and language skills at the beginning and end of the pre-kindergarten year. The battery of tests for this purpose measured children’s receptive language, expressive language, rhyming, applied problem solving, and letter naming, all of which are linked with children’s academic success. Teachers also completed a behavioral rating scale to measure children’s social competence and identify problem behaviors.

## What the Study Found

The study focused on ten child academic and social outcomes related to children's school readiness. To find out whether a specific level of classroom quality had to be in place to achieve these academic and social outcomes, the study identified each classroom's level of quality in terms of whether the quality was low, moderate, or high. Then, based on differences between children's fall and spring test scores, researchers looked at the relationship between the classroom's level of quality and the strength of the ten academic and social outcomes.

Here are the findings:

- When teachers were more responsive and sensitive and were rated as providing high-quality emotional support, children showed better social adjustment and fewer behavior problems.
- In classrooms where teachers were rated as showing lower levels of emotional and instructional support, children experienced no benefits from the interactions with their teachers.
- Children showed more advanced academic and language skills when their pre-k teachers provided instruction rated in the moderate to high-quality range.

Thus, moderate to high-level classroom quality seems necessary for improving low-income children's social skills, reducing behavior problems, and promoting reading, math, and language skills. This means goals for pre-k may be achievable only if programs ensure high-quality teacher-child interactions and mid-to-high-quality instruction.

A threshold for classroom quality does, in fact, seem to exist. You can think of the continuum from moderate to high-quality as the "threshold range."

### What the findings mean for early childhood programs

You might expect that children would simply get fewer benefits from low quality programs. But this study shows that programs need to function at least at the mid-level of quality and often times higher to get to good results for children. Lower levels of quality do not help children develop socially or academically.

## Linking Research to Practice

So, what does this mean for program administrators and teachers? These findings confirm that the level of classroom quality matters. But there's more: the findings indicate that when the level of classroom quality goes below a certain level, children do not appear to gain school readiness benefits from their participation in the program.

Children are more likely to develop good social and academic outcomes when the quality level of their classrooms is in the threshold range: i.e., from the moderate- to high-range of classroom quality. Unless state-funded pre-k classrooms function within the threshold range, participating children will not be well served.

Results of this work suggest the following implications and recommendations:

- The finding that there are not associations between quality and child outcomes in low quality programs provides further evidence that state or federal funding or vouchers for lower quality programs should be ended if the goal is to enhance children's cognitive and social development.
- Furthermore, the presence of threshold effects suggests that quality enhancement programs should focus on improving lower quality programs only if those enhancement programs (e.g. professional development) have demonstrated impacts that improve quality to the active range of effects on child outcomes.
- And these results suggest that making small improvements in quality may have positive effects on child outcomes if they move low-quality programs into the moderate-to-high quality range.
- Given the very high numbers of programs in which quality is below the threshold for impacts on child outcomes, it is imperative to attend to all three of these recommendations in any comprehensive quality improvement strategy.

This edition of *NCRECE In Focus* was prepared by Stacie G. Goffin of the Goffin Strategy Group in consultation with the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education, based on the paper noted below and supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A060021 to the University of Virginia. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the U.S. Department of Education. Readers should refer to the paper on which this *In Focus* is based for more information.

Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (in press). Threshold Analysis of Association between Child Care Quality and Child Outcomes for Low Income Children in Pre-kindergarten Programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.



# PFA Program Quality

Erikson Institute • SRI International • Illinois State Board of Education

*This fact sheet summarizes findings from the Illinois Preschool for All (PFA) program evaluation conducted by Erikson Institute and SRI International. PFA programs are funded by the Illinois State Board of Education to provide early education opportunities for children between the ages of three and five, with priority given to children from low-income families and those who are determined to be “at risk.” The evaluation took an in-depth look at PFA programs throughout the state (excluding the city of Chicago) from 2008 through 2010 to provide a picture of PFA program quality, children’s school readiness, and the characteristics of program participants.*

## What is the quality of Illinois’s Preschool for All (PFA) programs?

In fall 2009, trained staff observed PFA classrooms using two observational tools: the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Scores on both the ECERS-R and the CLASS can range from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). Generally, classrooms that score 5 or above are considered to be high quality, 3–4.9 are moderate quality, and below 3 are low quality.

## Illinois’s PFA programs are of moderate to high quality.

Observations using the ECERS-R and CLASS tools found that, in general, PFA programs are of moderate to high quality. As the table below shows, the vast majority of programs were of high or moderate quality when measured using the ECERS-R total score and the emotional support and classroom organization dimensions of the CLASS. Programs showed lower quality on the instructional support subscale of the CLASS, which is consistent with results from evaluations of publicly funded preschool programs in other states.

### ECERS-R

Provides a total quality score and scores in six subscales, which assess aspects of classroom structure and activities:

- Space and furnishings
- Personal care routines
- Language-reasoning
- Activities
- Interaction
- Program structure

### CLASS

Comprised of three dimensions that assess interactions between teachers and children:

- Emotional support
- Classroom organization
- Instructional support

Distribution of ECERS-R and CLASS Quality Scores for PFA Classrooms

|                        | Low | Moderate | High |
|------------------------|-----|----------|------|
| <b>ECERS-R</b>         |     |          |      |
| Total                  | 11% | 65%      | 25%  |
| <b>CLASS</b>           |     |          |      |
| Emotional support      | 2%  | 20%      | 79%  |
| Classroom organization | 2%  | 31%      | 67%  |
| Instructional support  | 48% | 32%      | 10%  |

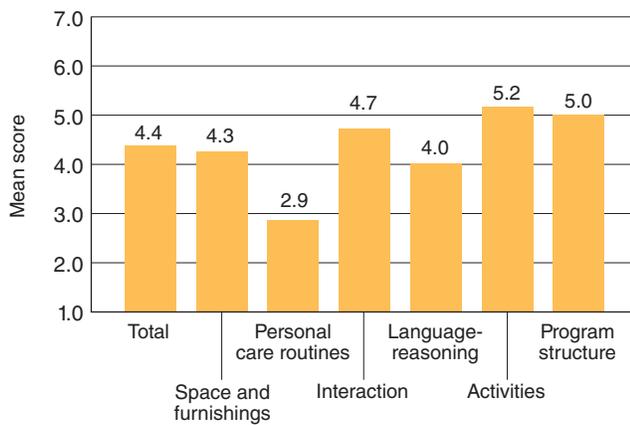
### ECERS-R Scores

Observations using the ECERS-R found the following:

- The average total quality score for PFA programs was 4.4, which is considered medium or moderate quality.
- About two-thirds of PFA programs (65%) had overall scores in the medium range, and 25% of programs scored in the high-quality range.
- PFA programs scored in the medium to high range on most subscales; however, they scored in the low range for personal care routines.

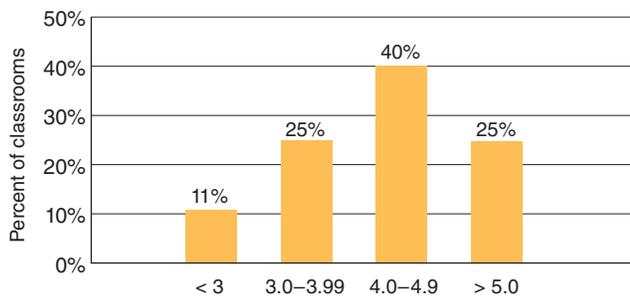
#### Average ECERS-R Total and Subscale Scores for PFA Classrooms

Source: Observations of 179 PFA classrooms



#### Distribution of ECERS-R Total Scores for PFA Classrooms

Source: Observations of 179 PFA classrooms



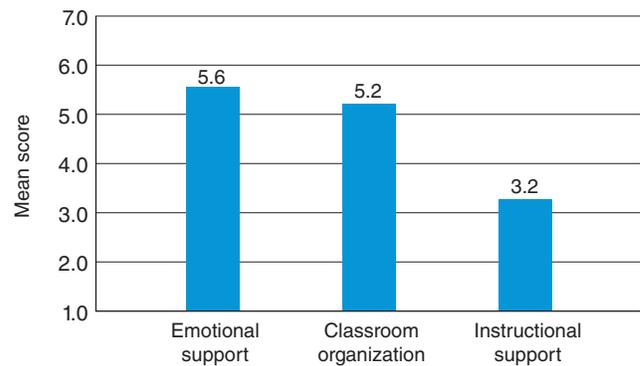
### CLASS Scores

Observations using the CLASS found the following:

- The average scores on the emotional support dimension and classroom organization dimension were 5.6 and 5.2 respectively, indicating a high level of quality in these areas.
- The average score on the instructional support dimension was 3.2, indicating a moderate level of quality in this area. Only 10% of programs were scored as high quality in this area.

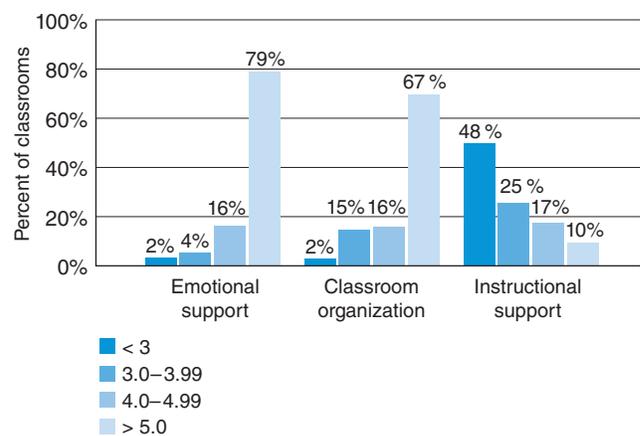
#### Average CLASS Dimension Scores for PFA Classrooms

Source: Observations of 179 PFA classrooms



#### Distribution of CLASS Dimension Scores for PFA Classrooms

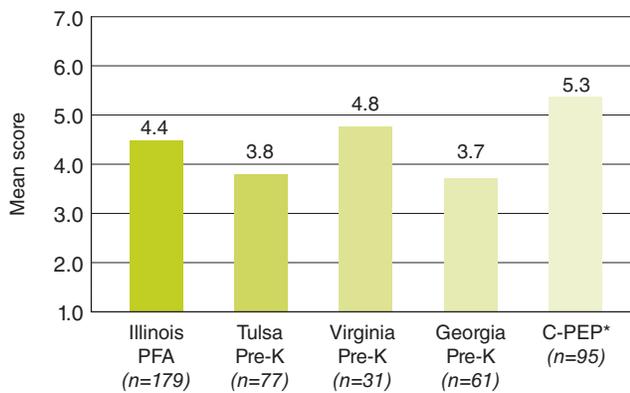
Source: Observations of 179 PFA classrooms



**The quality of Illinois’s PFA programs was similar to the quality found in evaluations of other publicly funded preschool programs.**

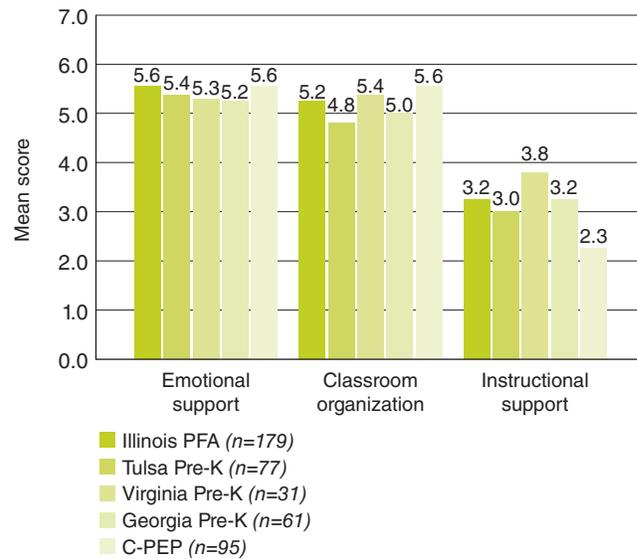
- The average ECERS-R total scores for Illinois’s PFA programs were comparable to those found in other publicly funded preschool programs.
- The average CLASS scores on the emotional support and classroom organization dimensions for Illinois’s PFA programs and for other publicly funded preschool programs show similar levels of moderate to high quality.
- The average CLASS scores on the instructional support dimension for Illinois’s PFA programs and for other publicly funded preschool programs show similarly low levels of quality.

**Average ECERS-R Total Scores from Evaluations of Other Publicly Funded Preschool Programs**



\*The Chicago Program Evaluation Project (C-PEP) was conducted between 2005 and 2008 and studied the impact, strengths, and weaknesses of Chicago’s school- and center-based early care and education programs, including PFA programs.

**Average CLASS Dimension Scores from Evaluations of Other Publicly Funded Preschool Programs**



About the data: *The evaluation team collected data from multiple sources, including a web-based survey and interviews with program administrators, interviews with parents, teacher surveys, classroom observations, and direct assessments of children. The evaluation took an in-depth look at 120 programs and nearly 700 children and their families throughout the state (excluding the city of Chicago).*

**For more information about the Illinois Preschool for All (PFA) Evaluation, visit [www.erikson.edu/PFAevaluation](http://www.erikson.edu/PFAevaluation).**

**Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy at Erikson Institute**

Lead Evaluator

Erikson Institute advances the ability of practitioners, researchers, and decision makers to improve life for children and their families through its academic programs, applied research, and community partnerships and initiatives.

The Herr Research Center conducts original research, evaluations, and analysis to inform, guide, and support effective early childhood policy.

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**SRI International**

Subcontractor

SRI International is an independent, non-profit research institute conducting client-sponsored research and development for government agencies, commercial businesses, foundations, and other organizations. The Early Childhood Program is part of SRI’s Policy Division.

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**Early Childhood Division**

**Illinois State Board of Education**

Funder

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) administers public education in Illinois. The Early Childhood Division focuses on children from birth to 8 years old.

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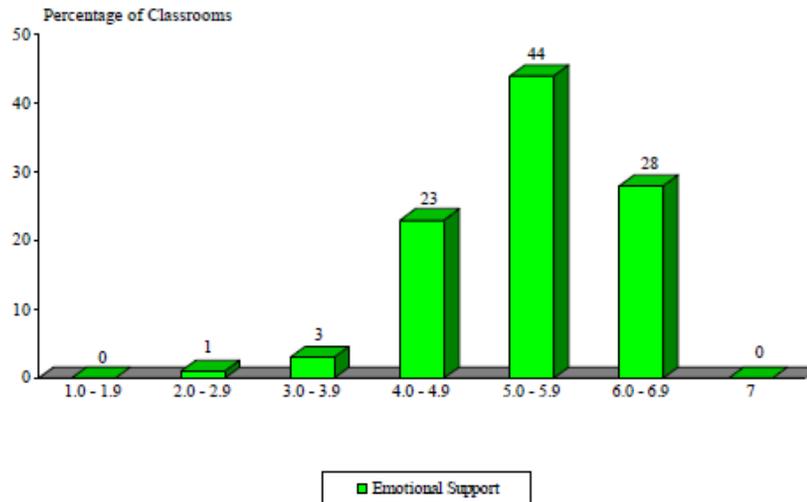
Illinois State Board of Education



Chicago Program Evaluation Project (2006-07)

FIGURE 13

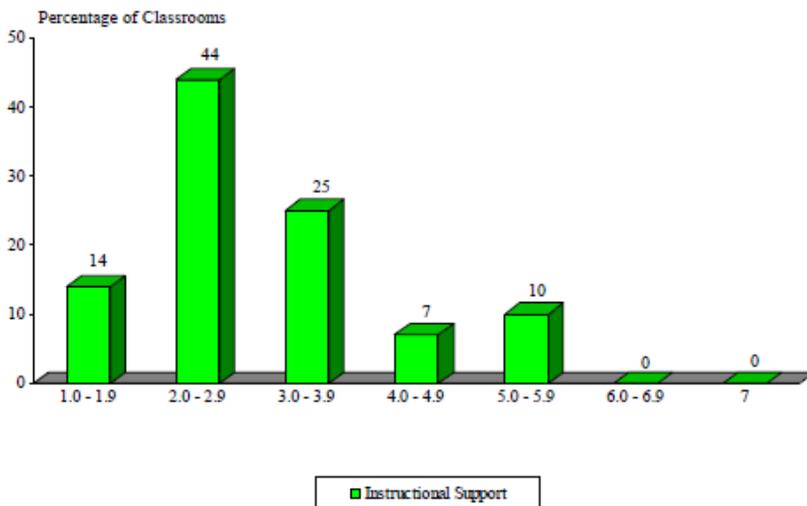
MOST CLASSROOMS WERE IN THE MIDDLE TO HIGH RANGE OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



Source: Authors' tabulations from Chicago Program Evaluation Project Classroom Observations.

FIGURE 14

TEACHERS ARE CHALLENGED IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO OFFER HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT, SIMILAR TO NATIONAL PATTERNS



Source: Authors' tabulations from Chicago Program Evaluation Project Classroom Observations.

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**Early Learning Council - Executive Committee Meeting  
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee  
Committee Update for 4/8**

1) Unified Early Childhood Data System

- The DRE Committee met on 3/5 primarily to discuss and provide feedback on the latest deliverables from John Snow, Inc. (JSI).
- During the meeting, JSI provided an overview of its key findings and preliminary recommendations related to 1) a system design and technical architecture for the unified system; 2) promoting collaboration between Head Start and the State in support of data sharing; and 3) interagency governance and organizational requirements necessary to support the unified system.
- For more information about the content of these deliverables, please visit the Early Learning Council website. All of the documents are posted on the DRE Committee's page.
- The next step is to undergo a RFI/RFP process, which will lead to structured proposals from qualified vendors that could build and deliver the unified early childhood data system.
- There is currently between one and two million dollars from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant that will be used to begin building the system. Although it will not be enough to build the entire system, it is enough to begin the process.

2) Collaboration with ELC Committees and Other External Advisory Bodies

- DRE Committee is continuing to work on formalizing the communication process between ELC Committees and other external advisory bodies to further promote collaboration.
- Conversations have begun between the co-chairs of the DRE Committee and the Hard to Reach Subcommittee of the Family and Community Engagement Committee to support work related to defining hard to reach/serve populations and identifying data sources that would provide information about these populations.
- Co-chairs from the Hard to Reach Subcommittee are planning to provide a short presentation on this work and solicit feedback at the next DRE Committee meeting.

3) Development of Recommendations for Early Childhood Research Agenda

- Co-chairs continue to meet with IECAM to develop a database that will allow members to collect and share information about relevant research and evaluation projects. This information will help to inform the work of the ELC, as well as be used to inform the development of recommendations for a comprehensive early childhood research agenda.
- As a part of this effort, IECAM has created an initial plan for the overall design of the database. IECAM will share this information and gather feedback from the larger group at the next DRE Committee meeting.
- Co-chairs also continue to coordinate efforts with Illinois Collaborative of Educational Policy Research (ICEPR) as they begin their work around developing a K-12 focused research agenda for the state. The first in-person meeting for ICEPR will be on 4/4 to discuss the state longitudinal data system and the research agenda supported by it.

**Next DRE Committee Meeting  
May 14<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 - 12:00pm  
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60603**

**Family & Community Engagement Committee**  
**Executive Committee Update**  
**March 28, 2013**

The Family & Community Engagement Committee met on March 28, 2013. Prior to the meeting each subcommittee met to discuss their ongoing work. The Committee meeting focused on the subcommittee updates, summarized below. Our next meeting will be on April 22, 2013 from 10:00-1:00.

Practices & Principles Subcommittee

The Practices & Principles Subcommittee met prior to the Committee meeting on March 28, 2013. The conversation focused on coming to a consensus on the wording of the five buckets or principles for family engagement. The subcommittee sought out to define the buckets in order to develop measurements for the future. The group decided that each of the principles should be supported by practices (i.e., intentional strategies to promote the principle). The subcommittee will explore what good principles are, for example, Parents as Learners. The Subcommittee will next meet April 22nd, which will be devoted to two presentations on family engagement and QRIS. Presenters include Nick Wechsler from Ounce of Prevention and Juliet Bromer from the Erikson Institute.

Capital/Infrastructure Subcommittee

The Capital/Infrastructure Subcommittee met on March 28, 2013. The group discussed the results of the Head Start Transportation Survey. The survey asked respondents about the services they provided, the proportion of children they provided transportation services to, and the costs associated with services. The results will be used to help develop a needs assessment to target providers. The subcommittee received feedback from all, but 9 Head Start providers (not including Cook County). One finding in the survey was that these costs varied greatly from program to program. The subcommittee also discussed follow-up questions for the needs assessment. One in particular was *'are programs providing transportation for full day and/or half day programs?* A transportation survey has also been drafted for Preschool For All providers, and may go out to district liaisons pending approval. The next subcommittee meeting will be held on April 2, 2013.

Hard to Reach Subcommittee

The Hard to Reach Subcommittee met on March 26 and March 28, 2013. The group is developing a recommendation report that defines hard to reach families and identifies demographic data sources that are consistent with the definition. The co-chairs reviewed the updated categories (or population groups) for the report. The subcommittee members provided co-chairs with feedback on the population groups identified. For example, DCFS involvement was expanded to child welfare involvement, in order to capture the role of private providers. Comments will inform the next steps of the report. The group will convene on April 18, 2013.

For more information on the upcoming meetings or committee work, please contact Natalie Tucker at [ntucker@air.org](mailto:ntucker@air.org).

**Home Visiting Task Force  
ELC Exec Update  
April 8, 2013**

The full Home Visiting Task Force last met on January 29<sup>th</sup>. The meeting included:

- An introduction of the new staffer, Anna Torsney-Weir from the Ounce of Prevention Fund, who is replacing Rebecca Bunn;
- Updates on what we know about the state and federal budget processes and how they may impact home visiting funding, including a call to our members to be on the lookout for opportunities to advocate for sustained funding;
- An update on the implementation of our MIECHV grants from Teresa Kelly and her team, including a successful site visit from our HRSA federal project officer;
- A report from our colleagues at Chapin Hall, who recently completed their Year 3 evaluation of our federal Strong Foundations EBHV grant, finding that collaboration and communications have increased and professional development is effective, but that there are still some remaining challenges in ensuring training opportunities are available statewide; and
- An update from one of our 6 pilot MIECHV communities, the Southside Early Learning Network, on what they have learned since the beginning of the grant and how it has changed their practices in ways that could be applicable to the statewide home visiting system. They are experiencing growing collaboration and trust among the partner agencies as well as members of the community, and see it as a model of collective impact. The update generated a lot of excitement, and so we plan to continue having the pilot communities provide updates at our future meetings so we can all stay engaged in the work on the ground and think about how MIECHV can be used as a vehicle to leverage statewide improvements in the home visiting system.

Before the meeting, the Home Visiting Task Force Executive Committee, Sustainability Workgroup, and Health Connections workgroup met several times. The next full Task Force meeting is April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Sustainability Workgroup:**

The Sustainability Workgroup, co-chaired by Mike Shaver from Children's Home + Aid and Teresa Kelly from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and staffed by Anna Torsney-Weir from the Ounce of Prevention Fund, has been meeting regularly since September. The charge of the workgroup is to explore sustainable state and federal financing mechanisms specifically for home visiting, applicable to both MIECHV and the larger statewide home visiting system. Since September, our work has focused mostly on:

1. Creating a statewide picture of what home visiting programs are currently being funded and through what funding; and
2. Investigating the potential of using Medicaid to fund home visiting (especially given the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act).

We are also exploring other funding mechanisms, and have been collaborating with the Braiding, Blending, and Sustainable Funding sub-committee of the Systems Integration and Alignment committee co-chaired by Samantha Aigner-Treaworgy and Gina Ruther. We will continue to update the Early Learning Council on our progress as we work towards recommendations. Our next meeting is April 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Health Connections Workgroup:**

The Health Connections Work Group is currently in the process of drafting its recommendations to the state for improving coordination between home visiting and maternal child health systems. For the past several months, small groups have been reporting out findings and proposed recommendations for

**Home Visiting Task Force**

**ELC Exec Update**

**April 8, 2013**

discussion on select health areas (oral health, medical home, breast feeding, etc.) at each meeting. The Work Group is planning to meet again in early [May](#) to review and finalize the compiled recommendations. Once final revisions have been made to the recommendations, the Work Group will submit the recommendations to the HVTF for approval.

**Illinois Early Learning Council Executive Committee Report**  
**Program Standards and Quality Committee**  
**April 8, 2013**

**Program Standards and Quality Committee**

The Program Standards and Quality (PSQ) Committee structure continues to evolve. Cross-sector membership includes leadership of key state advising bodies, identified agency/entity representatives, and self-nominated colleagues. The PSQ Committee is building on aligning work underway at various agencies and through advising bodies in order to streamline and avoid duplication of work. A conscious effort is being made to maximize collaborations and partnerships.

- IELC webinars dates were shared with all committee members as a tool for communicating updates.

**Work Plan**

The PSQ Work Plan format will be revised by splitting the timeframe/status column to allow for actual real-time work status updates. Advising bodies were asked to review their strategic plans for alignment, ascertain status of current work, and identify priorities for inclusion within the PSQ Work Plan. Advising bodies strengthen communication between their members and PSQ through cross-walking of their strategic plans with the PSQ Work Plan and provision of regular updates. Information collected will be used to update the PSQ Work Plan.

**Advisory Body/Agency Cross-sector Updates**

- **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) Licensing Advisory Committee – Carol Morris**
  - IDCFS has received the final recommendations from the Healthcare Subcommittee regarding childhood obesity prevention (nutrition, and the amount of screen time and movement).
  - There will be two more rounds of amendments to Section 407 Day Care Center Licensing Standards. Phase 2, which encompasses the HealthCare Subcommittee's recommendations, will be out for comment within the next few months. The large, over-reaching work of Phase 3 will include the Infant/Toddler Subcommittee's recommendations and a line-by-line Review of the Rule and development of accompanying Procedures.
  - Infant Toddler recommendations will be reviewed in the next phase of work on Rule 407.
  - Procedures 406 has finished internal comments, the review will be done by the end of March.
  - Review of Procedures 408, Group Day Care Homes, will not take long since much of the language will mirror Procedure 406.
  - Tests of the data exchange that is part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant: Phase II have gone smoothly.
  - In the process of revamping computer system within Licensing.
- **Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) – Deb Widenhofer & Cass Wolfe**
  - Gateways Annual Higher Education Forum will be April 4 and 5, 2013. Held in partnership with Illinois State Board of Education Illinois Resource Center, Early Childhood Division and OECD. Topics to be addressed include:
    - Best practices in Cultural and Linguistic integration into coursework.
    - Professional Educator Licensure, Common Core and relevance to early childhood, Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTs), Response to Intervention, Website Resources, and Gateways to Opportunity Credentials.
  - PDAC Strategic Plan Phase VI will be ready for implementation. July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2015.
    - New PDAC Committees include: Workforce Development and Pathways, Information Analysis and Trends and Special Focus: Registry.
  - Infant Toddler Credential Level 6 Pilot (Graduate level) completion summer of 2013.
  - PDAC Annual Meeting Date: November 8, 2013.

- **Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention - Amy Tarr**
  - Actively working to ensure quality practices and programming across systems serving birth to three (Goal 5 of the PSQ work plan).
    - Zero to Five sub-committee will meet as long as there is work to complete.
      - Focusing on child screenings and transitions.
  
- **Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Advisory Council – Judith Walker-Kendrick**
  - Focusing on increased collaboration and communication among the three IDHS committees:
    - Collaboration and Integration
    - Quality Assurance and Capacity
    - Program Administration
  - Work concentrating on:
    - Blending sustainable funding in the area of special needs.
    - Economic impact on families.
    - Early Math – committee formed to determine how to best support practitioners statewide. Identifying supports need for professional development as well as teacher preparation.
  
- **Illinois Head Start Association – Lauri Morrison-Frichtl**
  - Head Start received a five percent cut in federal funding due to sequestration.
    - No guidance from Office of Head Start on how to administer these cuts. Programs will need to cut the number of children served, reduce staff, furlough days, etc.
    - Currently working with University of Illinois to build a data infrastructure to connect with other state systems.
  - Need to identify more coursework/ professional development to prepare the workforce on how to use data to inform curriculum.
  
- **Illinois State Board of Education – Cynthia Zumwalt**
  - Professional Educator Teacher Licensure Early Childhood Advisory Group (ECAG) meets March 25, 2013 to review preparation programs for the birth to second grade licensure.
  - Early Learning Development Standards are currently being field tested and will be finalized at the end of May 2013, with a Train the Trainer set for the end of July 2013.
  - Common Core has been part of the discussions as to what is appropriate and how it links to younger ages.
    - Preschool and Pre-K program staff need to know what skills are expected within the Kindergarten Common Core.
  
- **Chicago Public Schools**
  - No representation to share updates.
  
- **Advocacy: Illinois Action for Children – Sessy Nyman**
  - Child Care Assistance Program will receive \$10 million (reinstate funds).
  - Overall \$400 million cut in education, but the ECE Block Grants have been flat funded.
  - Home Visiting and Early Intervention Programs did receive a slight increase in funding.
  - Please visit the Illinois Action for Children ([www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)) website for information on the state budget and the April 9 and 10, 2013 Spring into Action Conference.

**Next Meeting Dates:**

- **Program Standards and Quality (PSQ) Committee WEBINAR**
  - **Monday, May 13, 2013- 11:30 AM-1 PM**

**System Integration and Alignment Committee (SIAC)**  
**Updates for Early Learning Council Executive Committee – 4/8/2013**

**Health Subcommittee**

- DCFS staff has accepted the Health Subcommittee’s obesity prevention recommendations for Rule 407 and its accompanying procedures. All recommendations have been incorporated into the current draft of the rule (draft still needs to undergo internal review before going out to JCAR and then out for public comment).
- Health Subcommittee plans to develop oral health recommendations for consideration by DCFS to include in Rule 407 and its accompanying procedures
- Health Subcommittee is developing a cross walk of how health is generally addressed within various components of the early childhood system

**Community Systems Development Subcommittee**

- Community Systems Development (CSD) Subcommittee shared a revised Work Plan and Subcommittee charge at March 13, 2013 meeting
- New co-chair, Joanna Su from OECD, has been identified
- Illinois Early Childhood Community Partnership profiles (2008) will continue to be updated
- CSD Resource Toolkit revisions are almost completed
- CSD Subcommittee will make a recommendation on a definition for “high quality community system” for the IL Early Childhood Dashboard
- CSD Subcommittee will make a recommendation for what a community collaboration must be held accountable for and will identify the state and local support (including funding, coaching and mentoring) that collaborations need in order to function well
- CSD Subcommittee will research and recommend strategies for how government bodies can effectively engage and seek input from community collaborations in the creation and implementation of state policies
- Illinois Action for Children will provide updates and solicit feedback from CSD Subcommittee on ECAP project (ending April 2013) and RTTT Community Systems work

**Special Education Subcommittee**

- Special Education Subcommittee convened on March 8, 2013
- Special Education Subcommittee is seeking volunteers to co-chair and staff the subcommittee
- Possible work priorities related to RTTT include the Special Education Level 5 award of excellence recommendations for QRIS, QRIS quality indicators for developmental screening, and potential new trainings and higher education curricula

**Braiding Blending and Sustainable Funding Subcommittee**

- Braiding Blending and Sustainable Funding Subcommittee (BBSF) is developing “Cost of Quality” recommendations to OECD and will prepare one-pager to explain why cost of quality is important
- BBSF is planning a round table event to investigate barriers to braiding, blending and sustainable funding for early childhood programs. Research to be completed includes:
  - Examples of current use of Title I dollars to support early childhood services and partnerships within Illinois and nationally.
  - Interviews with ISBE staff responsible for reviewing PFA and PI budgets to draft possible recommendations on overcoming challenges to braiding and blending
  - Identification of administrative and operational barriers to braiding, blending and sustainable funding