

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

May 8, 2014  
10:00am - 12:00pm  
JRTC  
100 W. Randolph, Room 9-034  
Chicago, IL

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Participants**

*In-Person:* Alex Baum, Carie Bires, Jenna Chapman, Anna Colaner, Angela Farwig, Eboni Howard, Larry Joseph, Elliot Regenstein, Bob Spatz, Teri Talan, Dawn Thomas

*Phone:* David Alexander, Bernard Cesarone, Tahney Fletcher, Dan Harris, Brenda Klosterman, Felicia Malloy, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Leah Pouw, Erni Pun, Pam Reising Rechner, Cindy Zumwalt

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the February 28, 2014 meeting were formally approved.

**3. Updates**

**a. RTT-ELC**

The Annual Performance Report received good feedback from the federal government. ExceleRate will be launched in July. The family child care standards are moving forward. Applications for the QRIS RFP are due next week.

**b. Unified Early Childhood Data System**

The data matching work to produce an unduplicated count of children and sites across preschool and child care is proceeding. The system will eventually include all early childhood services in DHS (e.g., Early Intervention), but the first step that is currently underway is linking the CCMS system in DHS with ISBE's Student Information System (SIS). NIU is the lead and is partnering with DHS and ISBE. They are close to finalizing a data-sharing agreement, and it is anticipated that this data matching work will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

The initial infrastructure work for Head Start/Early Head Start data is also underway. This work is in its beginning stages but eventually this data will be integrated into the data system as well. City of Chicago data should be moving forward in the system the same as other state data. It is important to note that only one state (Pennsylvania) has an unduplicated head count so this is very exciting work.

**c. Longitudinal Data System**

This effort is a collaboration among ISBE and several state agencies. The goal is to facilitate the sharing of information across state 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. To address this, a central demographic data administrator is being set up. This freestanding entity would receive data requests and per a preexisting data-sharing agreement between the necessary agencies, collect and provide this data to the requester. The state is in the process of determining which agency would house this function. This work is not about creating one enormous database; instead it is focused on facilitating data sharing and governance. This group has produced an annual report that provides more detail. It is intended that the audience for the central demographic data administrator would include agency staff and researchers, among others.

Committee members raised concerns about being able to easily access more recent basic program data. This project is not aimed at this necessarily but it should provide a better avenue to access this information when it is up and running. Agencies currently do not have the capacity to do some of the day-to-day data administrative work that they used to do. This effort is in part a recognition of the fact that state agencies don't have the individual resources to analyze and provide data in a timely manner. The committee would like to be helpful in this work. It will consider how it can potentially assist with these efforts at the next meeting. It was also noted that the City of Chicago's data will be included in this system as well.

**d. ISLE**

ISLE (Illinois Shared Learning Environment) is being piloted in two districts. The pilot will be scaled up to a maximum of 17 districts next school year. Feedback on whether ISLE applications will be beneficial to early childhood teachers will be gathered over the summer, and a decision on whether to move forward with an early childhood ISLE pilot or re-purpose the funds will be made in the fall. This funding is through RTT-ELC, so if a decision is made to re-purpose the funds, the committee would have an opportunity to provide feedback on how the dollars would be spent.

InBloom was always optional for school districts in Illinois, so its folding does not impact ISLE. The ISLE point person at ISBE has left, but ISBE is looking to fill that position. Committee members were encouraged to contact Jon Furr if they were interested in working on ISLE.

**e. REL Midwest Project**

Eboni Howard provided the committee with an overview and update on the REL Midwest early childhood data systems project. REL just received official approval to move forward with the project, although this approval came a little later than anticipated. This project will look at other states' efforts to build early childhood data systems, with a focus on processes used and where states are in their processes. It will consist of a comprehensive literature review, a 15-state scan, and interviews with up to nine states. The state scan is focused on more advanced states, but these states are advanced in different ways. For example, some states may have a more robust governance structure but are not as far along in the technical assets, and vice versa. Seven of the fifteen states are REL states. The project is due at the end of the year; REL plans to share a draft of the final paper with the DRE Committee to gather feedback by the end of the summer.

REL is also doing some work on QRIS developments in other REL states. REL submits its plans for the next year at the end of the summer, so the committee should think about ideas it may have for REL projects.

**f. Ad Hoc Committee**

As part of the Early Learning Council strategic plan, an Ad Hoc Committee was created by the ELC Executive Committee to study the possibility of creating a dashboard of key indicators that would reflect the health of the state's early childhood system. Child Trends prepared a report with recommendations on dashboard metrics. The Ad Hoc Committee met to review the report and there is general consensus on most metrics; a few are still being informed by the relevant ELC committee. Moving forward, the Ad Hoc Committee will develop a proposal that will go to the ELC through the Executive Committee. It will not come through the DRE Committee.

The next step on this Ad Hoc Committee's dashboard is to think about how the indicators included in the dashboard can be reported and regularly updated. Another issue to grapple with is the geographic levels at which data will be reported. The goal is to drill down as much as possible.

There are also multiple efforts currently underway to create various early childhood data dashboards, and the thinking is that these dashboards should be analyzed and consolidated in such a way as to develop an agreed-upon set of key metrics. This work will be getting underway this summer.

**4. Pending Federal and State Legislation**

Several student data privacy and security bills were introduced in the General Assembly this session that could impact data systems and education research in our state. The first is HB4558, sponsored by Representative Drury, and the second is SB3092, sponsored by Senator Delgado. The higher ed/research communities mobilized against the bills and it appears that at least some of their concerns have been addressed in the proposed legislation. However, these bills will also impact early childhood data and research efforts. One potential outcome is to continue this conversation over the summer. It has been suggested that the P-20 council convene a group to work on this issue. The committee will seek to ensure that early childhood is represented at any tables that take on this issue.

On the federal side, the Education Sciences Reform Act is up for reauthorization. This legislation governs federal funding opportunities that states have used to build early childhood data systems. The House Education Committee put together a bi-partisan reauthorization bill and got it out of committee. The bill is currently pending on the House floor. The House bill is silent on early childhood data systems. Elliot Regenstein is working on a draft letter to key members of the Senate and staff that seeks to educate them on the importance of state-federal partnerships in the development of early childhood data systems and requests that early childhood data systems be included as a priority in the bill. The REL Midwest project will be helpful in informing IES about where states are in their efforts to build early childhood data systems and what they need to continue to make progress in these efforts.

## 5. Research Agenda Proposal

The committee reviewed a draft research agenda proposal. This 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 committee initially explored the development of a web-based resource but determined that this would not be the most effective way to meet these objectives. At the previous meeting, the committee decided to pursue the development of a curated research agenda that would articulate research needs for policy and practice in our state. This agenda would inform the early childhood community and help identify and assist with the research needs of the other ELC committees.

The draft research agenda proposal is a starting point and is based on the Key Policy Questions that the committee developed several years ago. The goal at this meeting is to finalize a proposal that will be brought to the Executive Committee at its June 2 meeting. Should the Executive Committee support this work, the DRE Committee would then collaborate with the other ELC committees to further develop the draft research agenda, which would then be approved by the DRE Committee and brought back to the ELC Executive Committee for consideration.

The committee agreed with moving forward as described above. It then turned to providing feedback on the content of the draft agenda. The following items were discussed.

- Adding *Program Funding* as a separate Area of Inquiry, including the following recommended research questions:
  - What are the trends in funding over time?
  - What impact does program funding source have on program quality?
  - What has been the impact of funding choices that have been made at the federal, state, and local level?
  - How are programs combining funds to provide service, and what impact does that have?
  - How does the stability of funding influence programs?
  - What are the incremental costs of additional program dosage?
  - What is the impact of using contracts rather than vouchers on program quality?
- Adding *Cross-System Collaboration* as a separate Area of Inquiry, including the following recommended research questions:
  - Are MOUs effective in creating successful collaborations?
  - How do we measure collaboration, and what makes collaborations more or less effective?
  - What impacts do successful collaborations have?
- Adding in more questions that target the “supply” side of early childhood programs, including the following:
  - *Program Access*
    - Which types of programs are located in which geographic areas? What are our major gaps?

- *Program Impact*
    - How many hours a day of service are children receiving? What is the impact of changes in program dosage?
    - How do program goals vary by program type and/or funding source? How do program providers accessing multiple streams reconcile those different goals?
  - *Program Quality*
    - Which unit of analysis is most predictive of child outcomes?
  - *Family Supports and Service Alignment*
    - What are the costs associated with providing additional services?
    - How do programs ensure services are provided after making a referral?
- Further developing the recommended research questions under the *Program Access* Area of Inquiry by:
    - Incorporating the priority populations identified by the Family and Community Engagement Committee
    - Including demographic profile as a data element to be included in the question “What gaps in services exist for early learning programs?”
    - Adding the following questions:
      - What happens to at-risk children who do not access programs?
      - How do successful programs recruit participants?

The committee noted that some of the questions included in the proposed research agenda are descriptive and that different kinds of research methodologies will be needed to address different questions. However, it is anticipated that all of these research questions will be pursued with the ultimate goal of determining how they relate to outcomes for children. It was also noted that research does not just occur at the state level but at the local level as well.

Further, the committee noted that while the agenda is envisioned as a comprehensive inventory of research questions, it is anticipated that specific research areas or questions will be prioritized over time. Many of these research questions will be easier to answer with a unified early childhood data system, and the research agenda can also help inform the development of that system in the next few years.

The committee approved the research agenda proposal pending the changes discussed above. A revised proposal will be sent to the committee before it is sent to the ELC Executive Committee so that committee members have an opportunity to review the revised proposal and provide additional feedback.

#### **ACTION ITEMS FROM 5/8/14 MEETING**

- **DRE Staffer will re-circulate the Child Trends memo re: Illinois Early Childhood Indicators Dashboard to the committee**
- **DRE Staffer will send information on the anticipated timeline for the dashboard work to the committee**
- **DRE Staffer will send the revised research agenda proposal to the DRE Committee so members can review it and provide additional feedback before it is sent to the Executive Committee**