

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee
February 28, 2014
10:00am - 12:00pm**

Ounce of Prevention Fund
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Participants

In-Person: Pam Bonsu, Bernard Cesarone, Anna Colaner, Angela Farwig, Karen Freel, Lisa Christensen Gee, Dan Harris, Saleem Hue Penny, Elliot Regenstein, Bob Spatz, Dawn Thomas

Phone: David Alexander, Nancie Brown, Brenda Klosterman, Noriko Magari, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Tom Szpyrka, Joellyn Whitehead, Cindy Zumwalt

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the November 25, 2013 meeting were formally approved.

3. Federal/State Updates

Federal Update

The committee reviewed a handout from the First Five Years Fund summarizing early care and education in the FY2014 omnibus appropriations bill. The major highlight is that early childhood came out ahead in this budget when many other areas were cut. While not a huge leap forward, this is incremental progress and sends a positive statement about what Congress and the Obama administration are prioritizing.

There is new money in the FY 2014 appropriations bill for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and for another Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. Regarding the EHS-Child Care Partnerships, the Department of Health and Human Services is working to identify how this program is going to work and how can they attract high quality applicants. It is not entirely clear how the funds for the EHS-Child Care Partnerships will be distributed, but there will be opportunities for Illinois entities to apply. States are eligible grantees for the EHS-Child Care Partnership funds. We should see more information on this in the spring.

The new RTT-ELC is different than the previous competitions – it seems to be more focused on access and personnel than data systems. The Department of Education recently held an open comment period and is going to put out an executive summary of those comments, which will then itself be subject to comment. Illinois may only be eligible for certain categories of RTT-ELC funding, but the current understanding is that Illinois will be applying for the funds for which it is eligible.

State Update

Governor Quinn announced his Birth to Five Initiative at the State of the State address in January. There are three aspects to the initiative: (1) connecting expectant mothers to prenatal care; (2) access to early learning; and (3) increased family supports. At its retreat in January, the ELC

Executive Committee generated some good ideas on how the state should be thinking about these issues. In addition, some members of the DRE Committee have also been involved in helping the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) think about the data that is needed to help determine which families need which services and help them to move forward as this initiative is further developed. The governor's budget address is March 26.

4. P-20 Council Update

The Data, Assessment, and Accountability Subcommittee of the P-20 Council has been discussing assessment data and the Common Core transition. At the last meeting, a survey that had been prepared for educators about the use of assessments (among other things) was shared with the group. This survey originally included preschool teachers; however, after some discussion the group decided that it was not appropriate to include preschool in the survey because it would lead to confusion and not add much value. The survey has since been sent out, and it did not include preschool teachers.

This subcommittee has been focusing primarily on the new ISBE report card and the transitions related to Common Core and K-12 assessment. However, the group is interested in better connecting with early childhood and understanding what is going on in early childhood data, so that is a longer term objective for this group.

5. Unified Early Childhood Data Systems Update

JSI's work had been completed. The state is now moving forward with a plan to build an early childhood data system based on the JSI recommendations. The state received supplemental federal funds and was allowed to adjust timelines to complete the work. Given this opportunity, the approach is now to build an early childhood data system that aligns with the Longitudinal Data System (LDS) effort. The state is conceptualizing the early childhood data system as a component of the LDS and is focusing on the early childhood piece as a first step to building the LDS. Teams from ISBE and DHS are partnering with an analytics team at NIU to begin the child-level data matching work to produce an unduplicated count of children. This data matching work is a vital first step in building the system and it is anticipated that the lessons learned from this work will greatly assist in successfully moving forward.

6. RTT-ELC Update

The Annual Performance Report has been submitted but may not be posted for a few months. Evaluation plans for the Innovation Zones are moving forward – Dawn Thomas and Susan Fowler are leading this work. They plan to begin collecting baseline data over the next few months. The evaluation will probably begin in July.

7. Research Database Proposal

The DRE Committee's work plan includes the development of a research database that would summarize existing research and track current research in process. The committee reviewed a draft proposal regarding a web-based resource to address this work that has been a subject of discussion at the last several meetings. This proposal was developed to help the committee make a decision about whether such a website would be useful and whether the draft proposal should be advanced to the ELC Executive Committee for its input.

The committee first turned to the "Data Analysis Products" section of the proposal. This section includes the following features: (1) research gap analysis; (2) research syntheses and/or overview

and bibliography on common research questions; (3) state comparisons; and (4) evidence-based practice products.

- *Research gap analysis*: The committee work plan includes developing a “research gap analysis” as an action step related to the database. There is agreement that there is a gap here but the questions of what form this analysis should take and who would do it remain open.
- *Research syntheses*: This is based on ERIC (Education Resources Information Center). Who would do this work is also an open question.
- *State comparisons*: NIEER publishes state comparisons; IECAM can also develop these relatively easily.
- *Evidence-based practice products*: This section would include links to these resources.

The overarching theme of the proposed website was that much of it would consist of aggregated links to other resources, although a few components would require more time and effort if we moved forward with them. One of these is the research gap analysis, which would definitely require dedicated staff or committee time. The committee felt that the research gap analysis had the most value relative to the other proposed features of the website; however, it would also require the most effort and funding. If the Early Learning Council identified this as a need that this work should address, it would likely need to be pitched to funders. The committee also noted some additional issues that would need to be addressed if we moved forward with the website, such as the following: identifying the scope of research that would be included; raising public awareness of the website; evaluating the website’s usefulness; and keeping the website up-to-date. Further, it was noted that to successfully roll-out the website would entail a multi-year effort because it would take some time to pick up steam and be utilized by a large group of early childhood stakeholders.

The committee then explored the utility of developing a curated research agenda as an alternative to the website. The research, policy and practice communities would benefit from having information about what research is currently underway to inform choices about what future research should occur. Another major driver of this work is the need to be able to articulate what we are thinking as a state. One option to move this work forward in the short-term is to produce a research agenda for the ELC that isn’t dependent on determining what specific research exists or is in process. This would not require the same level of staffing and budget as keeping up with current research.

Proceeding in this way would probably consist of two distinct and related activities, which would have an ongoing relationship to one another:

- Spearheading the creation of an ELC research agenda with input from the other ELC committees. This would articulate research needs for policy and practice in our state that would inform the early childhood community. This work could be undertaken by the DRE Committee staffer and OECD, with feedback from the DRE Committee.
- Seeking dedicated funding to determine what early childhood research currently exists so as to undertake a gap analysis.

This course of action set forth above would align with two activities in the work plan: developing a research gap analysis and tracking research in process. It would also align with the overarching purpose of the DRE Committee, which is to assist the other ELC committees with their research needs.

The committee agreed that it would proceed with the creation of a research agenda instead of a website and develop a proposal for this work that, if approved by the committee, would be submitted to the ELC Executive Committee. The DRE Committee has developed Key Policy Questions that can serve as the basis for the initial draft of the research agenda. The committee may also want to refresh these Key Policy Questions in the course of creating the research agenda, as they were developed a number of years ago.

8. Early Childhood Indicators Dashboard

As part of the ELC strategic plan, an ad hoc committee was created to study the possibility of creating a dashboard of key indicators that would reflect the health of the state's early childhood system. Through Race to the Top, OECD was able to contract with Child Trends to more fully develop recommendations regarding this dashboard based on the initial work by the ad hoc committee. Child Trends has finalized its report and recently hosted a webinar on it. The report identifies six primary indicators along with some secondary indicators that help fill out the data. It also makes recommendations on the metrics to be used to determine these indicators. Some of the indicators are still being more fully developed by various committees that have the relevant expertise.

There are multiple efforts currently underway to create early childhood "dashboards," including a dashboard developed by McCormick and similar efforts such as Voices for Illinois Children's *Kids Count* report and Advance Illinois' *State We're In* report. There has been discussion of the need to coordinate these efforts and come to an agreement on the top-level indicators and metrics that all of the various dashboards should include. It is not entirely clear how these conversations are going to move forward, but the goal is to come to an agreement on some shared key indicators that are measured the same way that can be included in the various reports and dashboards that are being developed and published. Committee members suggested some potential partners in this work, such as ISBE, Advance Illinois, and Boston Consulting Group.

9. Early Childhood Data Collaborative Report

The Early Childhood Data Collaborative's (ECDC) *State of States' Early Childhood Data Systems 2013* report was distributed to the committee for review. This is the second time this report has been issued; the first time was in 2010. This report is meant to be analogous to the Data Quality Campaign's K-12 report.

One issue with the information in the ECDC report is that it is self-reported, and states may have different standards in terms of reporting where they are on early childhood data systems development. Committee members were encouraged to contact OECD if they had questions on the Illinois-specific information contained in the report, and Elliot Regenstein indicated he would follow up with ECDC if there were specific questions on other parts of the report. ECDC is also hosting a webinar on this report; this information will be forwarded to members of the committee.

10. REL Midwest Proposal

Pam Bonus provided the committee with an update on the early childhood data systems concept paper that was submitted by REL Midwest following the last DRE Committee meeting. REL received the green light on the concept paper and since then has expanded on the concept. REL is looking to expand the work of ECDC and identify not just where states are in their efforts to develop early childhood data systems, but how states are actually doing this work. REL plans to conduct

interviews focused on governance and explore the steps states have taken in forging partnerships and developing the necessary structures to implement their early childhood data systems plans.

REL will do a “scan” of 15 states, but will only conduct seven interviews due to federal requirements and timing constraints. The 15 states included in the scan were chosen based on an analysis of state applicants for federal early childhood data systems funds. States located in the REL Midwest region were also included in this group, as well as states recommended for inclusion by the DRE Committee. All 15 states will be profiled in the project, but REL is still determining which seven states will be selected for interviews. It was suggested that REL could potentially profile a few more states in addition to the 15 if they are reducing the number of interviews from the number originally planned. REL Midwest hopes to begin this work in March.

REL Midwest is also holding a webinar in collaboration with REL Southwest on what states in the REL Southwest region can learn from Illinois. This webinar is tentatively scheduled for March.

ACTION ITEMS FROM 2/28/14 MEETING

- **DRE Staffer will begin developing a draft research agenda proposal that will incorporate the Key Policy Questions developed by the DRE Committee. This proposal will be circulated to the DRE Committee in advance of the next meeting so that committee members have an opportunity to provide feedback before the committee discussion. At the next meeting, the DRE Committee will consider whether to advance the proposal to the Executive Committee.**
- **DRE Staffer will circulate the Child Trends memo re: Illinois Early Childhood Indicators Dashboard to the DRE Committee.**
- **DRE Staffer will forward information regarding the REL Midwest webinar on building early childhood data systems to the DRE Committee.**