

Early Learning
Council
and State
Interagency
Coordinating
Council

2013

Addendum to:

Report on Early Intervention
and Early Childhood Special
Education Unique Complexities
and Recommendations to
Improve Service Delivery dated
September 30, 2012

Early Learning Council and State Interagency Coordinating Council Joint Workgroup Addendum to the Report on Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Unique Complexities and Recommendations to Improve Service Delivery, HB 4165(11), September 30, 2012.

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Workgroup Composition

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Executive Summary

Oregon's Education System transformation began in earnest when the 2011 Oregon Legislature passed SB 909, which called for a unified, student-centered system of education, birth through college. To transform Oregon's Early Learning System, SB 909 created the Early Learning Council to organize a "high functioning and well-coordinated system of early learning programs."

The 2012 Oregon Legislature passed HB 4165 which further defined the vision and plan for Oregon's early childhood system. HB 4165(11) included a directive for the Early Learning Council and the State Interagency Coordinating Council, which advises on Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE), to develop a joint workgroup report by September 30, 2012 that: "...shall describe the unique complexities of providing early childhood special education and early intervention services and shall make recommendations for possible ways to better coordinate and improve the delivery of those services..."

The joint workgroup reconvened in 2013 to propose implementation strategies for the following five key recommendations in the 2012 report (plus an additional sixth recommendation adopted by the workgroup during the course of the process).

1. Create collaborative learning opportunities for EI/ECSE provider professional development that connects with other early learning professional development trainings to implement common values across the Early Learning System.
2. Expand partnerships with higher education to develop and promote programs that produce graduates who are passionate about Early Learning and have demonstrated skills in providing direct services to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families.
3. Increase EI/ECSE's role in the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) to improve the overall quality of early learning opportunities for all children – opportunities that support the least restrictive environment and natural environments requirements for EI/ECSE and allow more children with disabilities to be integrated with their typical peers.
4. Create principles on how child outcomes in EI/ECSE programs can integrate into outcomes of the Early Learning System. These principles should include a mechanism to show progress for EI/ECSE students.
5. Identify required state and federal performance plans, targets and applications that can be coordinated with the Early Learning System plans, and goals.
6. Include EI/ECSE programs in the work of the Early Learning Division even though EI/ECSE rulemaking authority will not reside with the Early Learning Council.

Joint Workgroup Recommendations:

- 1. Create collaborative learning opportunities for EI/ECSE provider professional development that connects with other early learning professional development trainings to implement common values across the Early Learning System.**

Proposed Implementation Strategies: The joint workgroup recommends implementing integrated trainings between EI/ECSE programs, Head Start, mental health and the Office of Child Care. These integrated trainings are critical for effective collaboration between the related fields and increase knowledge of shared practices and terminology. The trainings should include topics common across all disciplines. In-service trainings days would be the logical place to start these collaborative, integrated trainings because in-service days can bring the professionals together to learn, share ideas and build relationships and partnerships.

Charge number three of this report also recognizes that collaborative learning opportunities are a crucial piece of increasing EI/ECSE's role in the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) to improve the overall quality of early learning opportunities for all children. Although described in greater detail below, the joint workgroup does recognize that aside from integrated, cross-discipline trainings, other strong learning opportunities include collaborative consultation and coaching provided when children receive EI/ECSE services in typical settings.

- 2. Expand partnerships with higher education to develop and promote programs that produce graduates who are passionate about Early Learning and have demonstrated skills in providing direct services to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families.**

Proposed Implementation Strategies: Include current and prospective EI/ECSE professionals in the Network of Quality Teaching and Learning created by the 2013 Oregon Legislature in HB 3233. This Network consists of the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Education Investment Board and other public and private entities for the purposes of:

- Enhancing the culture of leadership and responsibility to advance the teaching profession;
- Strengthening and enhancing evidence-based practices that improve student achievement; and
- Improving recruitment, preparation, career advancement and support of educators.

Current and prospective EI/ECSE professionals must have access to these resources to assure that EI/ECSE students and teachers have access to the most up-to-date and effective materials and methods to serve children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The joint workgroup also recommends that higher education programs work collaboratively with community based training opportunities, community colleges and other higher education

programs to ensure prospective teachers have access to a wide range of valuable pre-service experiences that will help them develop the skills and passion for a career in EI/ECSE.

- 3. Increase EI/ECSE's role in the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) to improve the overall quality of early learning opportunities for all children – opportunities that support the least restrictive environment and natural environments requirements for EI/ECSE and allow more children with disabilities to be integrated with their typical peers.**

Proposed Implementation Strategies: Increase, use and evaluate inclusive placements at the community level within Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) field test counties by:

- Preparing EI/ECSE educators to deliver specialized instruction in typical setting through collaborative consultation and coaching;
- Preparing Early Childhood educators to implement strategies and techniques to reduce referrals to EI/ECSE programs. We highly recommend the following approaches: Positive Behavior Supports and Instruction, and Response to Intervention.
- Providing cross-training to EI/ECSE and Early Childhood educators to increase knowledge of shared practices and understanding of common terminology.

Related definitions:

Early Childhood Educator: Early childhood personnel providing instruction to children and their families. This includes but is not limited to teachers, child care providers, teaching assistants, parent educators.

EI/ECSE Educator: EI/ECSE personnel with training and skills to provide specialized instruction to children with disabilities, their families, and to other educators. This includes but is not limited to EI/ECSE specialists, EI/ECSE teachers, teaching assistants, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.

Inclusive Placements/Typical Settings: Places that young children access for everyday activities. This includes, but is not limited to, general early childhood programs such as child care, preschool, family home, and Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten.

Positive Behavior Supports and Instruction (PBIS): PBIS is a Response to Intervention (RTI) strategy (see definition, below) used to teach and learn social-emotional skills and to design environments that maximize development of social-emotional competence. It follows the same core principles of RTI.

Quality Rating Improvement System: A systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. QRIS awards quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program, practitioner and child outcome standards.

Response to Intervention (RTI): High quality teaching and responsive caregiving with the following core principles:¹

- Specification of a multi-tiered system of supports;
- Early provision of support or intentional teaching/caregiving with sufficient intensity to promote positive outcomes and prevent later problems;
- Use of child data to inform teaching and responsive caregiving practices; and
- Use of research-based, scientifically validated practices to the maximum extent possible.²

Specialized Instruction: The types of unique instructional services needed by a child with a disability to accomplish Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) goals and objectives. These services include alterations, modifications, and adaptations in instructional methods, materials, techniques, media, physical setting, or environment.

4. Create principles on how child outcomes in EI/ECSE programs can integrate into outcomes of the Early Learning System. These principles should include a mechanism to show progress for EI/ECSE students.

Proposed Implementation Strategies: EI/ECSE outcomes should be considered and integrated when the Early Learning Council Subcommittee is creating measurable outcomes. Oregon reports EI/ECSE outcomes to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These reports include EI/ECSE data for three major Outcome Areas: 1) improved outcomes in positive social-emotional skills; 2) improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; and 3) improved use of appropriate behavior to meet needs. Under each Outcome Area, the EI/ECSE provider reports an individual child's progress in one of five categories that range from "did not improve functioning" to "maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers." This allows Oregon Department of Education (ODE) staff to compile the number of children in each category for a particular outcome area.

After ODE staff determine the number of children in each category of an Outcome Area, they create two summary statements: 1) of those children who entered the program below age expectations in the Outcome Area, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they exit the program; and 2) the percent of children who are functioning within age expectations in the Outcome Area by the time they exit the program.

The summary statements are reported separately for children in early intervention (birth to age three years of age) and for ECSE eligible children (three to five years of age).

¹ Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC); National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and National Head Start Association (NHSA)(February 2013). *Frameworks for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood: Description and Implications*.

² Batsche, G., J. Elliott, J. Grimes, J. Kovaleski, D., Prasse, D. Tilly, et al. 2005. *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

5. Identify required state and federal performance plans, targets and applications that can be coordinated with the Early Learning System plans and goals.

Proposed Implementation Strategies: Federal and state plan requirements mandate that the Early Learning Council be included in the EI/ECSE state plan creation. EI/ECSE will include the Early Learning Council in the process of writing the state performance plan and setting targets for EI/ECSE. The Early Learning Division team, which includes EI/ECSE representation, will create opportunities to develop common language across federal funding streams and associated federal plans and reports.

6. Additional recommendation adopted by the workgroup: Include EI/ECSE programs in the work and planning of the Early Learning Division even though EI/ECSE rulemaking and budget authority will not reside with the Early Learning Council.

Proposed Implementation Strategies: Include EI/ECSE programs and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the statewide Early Learning System.

The Early Learning System includes all of Oregon’s children from birth to kindergarten entry, including children with developmental delays and disabilities who access EI/ECSE programs. Children in EI/ECSE programs are currently in all early learning settings, including those settings governed by the Early Learning Division. Additionally, many of the children and families receiving EI/ECSE services have other risk factors and needs that the Early Learning Division can address. It is only through collaboration with EI/ECSE programs that the Early Learning System can truly include and address the needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The joint workgroup recommends that EI/ECSE programs be included in the initiatives and activities of the Early Learning Council and System, including but not limited to:

- Professional development
- Program standards
- Outcomes
- Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
- Developmental Screening
- State performance plans

The joint workgroup views as essential a close working relationship between EI/ECSE program and the Early Learning Division. This is essential to ensuring that Oregon serves all of its young children.

Conclusion:

Although this report details implementation strategies for only five of the recommendations of the 2012 Early Learning Council and State Interagency Coordinating Council joint workgroup report, all the recommendations from the 2012 report should be considered and monitored throughout the Early Learning System transformation. The joint workgroup has agreed to meet

periodically in the future to offer implementation strategies as opportunities arise. An important component to implement these strategies is to look at shared resources to support the work.