



ESSA IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

ESSA Subcommittee Meeting – Early Learning

Date, Time: Thursday, September 15, 2016, 1:00 p.m.

Location: 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

ALSDE Facilitator: Karen Porter

Members present: Secretary Jeana Ross, Shanthia Washington, Deborah Love, Sandy Little (DECE), Tracye Strichik (DECE), Jennifer Stephens, Jean Scott

Members absent: Barbara Cooper, Hope Zeanah

Summary: Jim Squires with the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) presented to the subcommittee. Following the presentation, the subcommittee discussed: how to align early childhood learning with kindergarten to third grade, Head Start standards, the First Class Pre-K program, and indicators for early learning.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 5, 10 a.m., 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

Detailed Notes

All notes below are comments with committee members and the ALSDE facilitator.

Jim Squires with CEELO, Presentation

What is CEELO?

- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education
- Provides technical assistance to the state on early childhood education
- CEELO works with other centers – southeast comprehensive regional center
 - Regional center works with the Alabama State Department of Education and the superintendent to look at the full spectrum of education. For example pre-K through 12.
- Jim was at USDOE for 20 years
- How to tell if an early child care program is good – it does not matter where the program is set up (child care, public school, Head Start, etc.)

ESSA and Early Learning

- Shifts in Pre-K (ESSA vs. NCLB): currently Preschool Development Grants (PDG) are co-administered with more authority given to the human services side with the grant being in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Pre-K is an area where there may be push and pull in regards to ESSA
 - Early Learning opportunities can be found throughout Title I and other sections of the law including accountability
- Title II: key opportunities with Title II (Part A, State Grants) with school leader certification and licensing
 - Look at requirements with principals in regards to early childhood; principals are less familiar with early childhood
 - North Carolina wants to make sure principals have a course in early childhood—examine licensure in Alabama
 - John Pruitt from North Carolina is a great contact
- CEELO is having a conversation with Pennsylvania to make a toolkit to make sure that states are taking advantage of early learning opportunities with ESSA
- Family Resource Centers and Campaign for Grade Level Reading, how do these programs fit in with ESSA?
 - ESSA helps to promote the continuum. Developmentally, children have a shift around age 7 or 8 where they move into more abstract thinking and curriculum takes a shift.
 - Campaign for Grade Level Reading - legislative action to support reading with early screening, identification, and supports – all to assist the birth to 3rd grade continuum
- Parent Engagement: parents having more choices for where their child attends school and what kind of school
 - Look at strengthening home school coordination: how can communication improve so that the family and school are equal partners, or supporting each other?



CEELO Presentation Continued...

- Dual Capacity Framework for family school partnerships (this is a tool used by Head Start)
- Obvious partners: Head Start, child care, QRIS.
- Assessment in Early Childhood: readiness for kindergarten –are there indicators for school readiness and community readiness?
 - NGA and National Education Goals Panel have both done research in readiness, documents are available online
 - Alabama Partnership for Children has done some of this work as well
- Reflect and come up with more questions:
 - What areas is the subcommittee interested in addressing? – Tell Jim Squires

Subcommittee Discussion

States must identify a strategy for promoting pre-k – 3rd grade alignment and supporting district and elementary school capacity

- On Family Engagement piece will local implementing agencies have to follow Head Start program performance standards? (question for Jim Squires)
- Concerning ESSA framework, we first have to determine how we will work:
 - What kind of performance management measures will determine parental and community involvement?
 - What are overarching goals and how will they be measured? Recommendation: look for something to put into the plan that ties into other components such as accountability plans
- Arizona and Illinois are the only states that actually have a draft of their state plans; Illinois says they want to use family engagement framework
- Subcommittee member concerned that what is being discussed is invasive and feels that the family role should not be involved with the school
 - Opposes cradle to career or home visitation
 - Feels like monitoring school/ parent engagement is invasive
- Another member explained that the school is not tracking children nor the progress of families and their roles
- Concerning developing a strategy, will the committee provide several things that an LEA can choose from in making their plans? The subcommittee needs to first do some homework to see what the goal should be
- How will the committee inform local systems? Education/professional development provisions?



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- Professional development should be offered prior to selection of specific areas to inform districts and assure they make selections based on knowledge
 - Ensures that both parents and teachers have voice
 - Member suggested the need to operate from the assumption that parents are the ones who care the most about their children- terminology- “human capital” is dehumanizing
 - The intent of the law is to have broad goals around partnering with parents and community through a two-way communication:
 - “How is my child being taught?” “What are extended learning opportunities?” “What options do I have as a parent?”
 - Keeping topics general to ensure open communication so parents are aware of their child’s progress in school
 - Member concerned about when we talk about the application of a policy, we have to be very careful that we consider parental rights; data privacy is one issue, but there is a need to make sure engagement doesn’t turn into regulation
 - Would there be consideration for an LEA to select different parent engagement models for different grade levels? Does this look different at the upper levels?
 - Referenced Illinois and Arizona: “conduct family engagement services in their language; allow time for parents to visit school for conferences,” etc. – focus on overarching goals that are non-negotiables for schools
 - Equally important is assuring the voice of the parent in what their role can be
 - For example: Ensure parents are part of Title I development team
 - Develop a model so that Alabama districts can learn from one another
 - Go to places where parents are instead of having them visit the schools
 - Explore how to do a needs assessment that authentically listens to families
 - This may just be a matter of figuring out the best mode of collaboration from using things that are already working; for example, every county has a children’s policy council

States must identify a strategy or strategies for helping districts satisfy Head Start programs’ performance standards, including providing technical assistance for district and school leaders and learning professions:

- First Class Pre-K programs satisfy Head Start standards
- Have a Head Start task force that will need to be consulted in this process
- If an LEA uses funds for pre-k, they must use Head Start standards, so how will we prepare them? Will we offer professional development? Will we offer technical assistance? Will we encourage programs to partner with local Head Start agencies?
- Does early childhood only include pre-K or elementary grades?
- How do we help the elementary schools?



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- So what will we do to educate LEAs on performance standards? Head Start performance standards range to age 5. Through face to face trainings, web sites, brochures, memorandum etc.
 - Can be included in existing training: knowing what Head Start is doing is important for higher grades so that teachers know where a child stands coming in
 - Educating elementary school principals for awareness: consider MEGA 2017 as a venue for awareness sessions
 - Transition plan of a student, it is good for all educators and administrators to have background about what students are being held to achieve – open dialogue to let the pre-k teacher know what is expected in kindergarten and first grade
 - Helps in transition to do vertical planning so all teachers have conversations about what the learning needs to look like and the teaming should be on-going
 - Conduct intentional plan for meetings and discussions
 - For the early childhood programs crosswalk, only have information on aggregate child outcomes, not individual data

Implementing curricula aligned to state's early learning standards:

- Department of Early Childhood Education does have standards for pre-k and birth to 3; DECE does not endorse a particular curriculum
- There is a need for a strategy to ensure alignment of Early Learning Standards, Head Start Performance Standards, and standards utilized in early learning classroom – include professional development; that would be included in technical assistance and professional development on performance standards

States identify strategy to meet the quality indicators for early learning:

- QRIS: ask for assistance from The University of Alabama on aligning QRIS with pre-k
- DHR has quality indicators at different levels
 - Currently in Alabama it is voluntary, and there is not an incentive for making different STAR levels
 - If is voluntary and not for all, would we have an overarching goal? Do we need to tackle this one, and what are other states doing? (May be an item we need further clarification on)
 - If funds are used, can we make this mandatory?
 - In Alabama, early learning, Head Start, and QRIS are the same—the Head Start standards and Office of School Readiness and First Class Pre-K framework are all aligned with QRIS
- On state report card, early childhood must be recorded – this will be an additional item on federal report card; it is up to the Early Learning work group as to how it appears on the report card



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- Are the number of pre-school grants included? Yes, but all public, not private-state, federal, or local money for public program

What do we want to bring back to discuss for our next meeting?

- As a teacher, perspective on professional development:
 - Professional development is planned months in advance and is purposeful, and we have everything we need to take back to the classroom
- Does professional development center around Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs)?
 - There are organizational goals and academic goals; we want to remind schools/LEAs that their ESSA plans should be part of their CIPs
- Work with Carol Tingle (UA) on format for presentation of recommendations
- When the committee puts this in writing, consider adding language about Alabama's First Class Pre-K model as a proven, nationally recognized model to strengthen the connection between the two departments
 - A new component of coaching has recently been added; can we streamline the different entities that are providing coaching? Look into coordinating coaching and integrating systems

Next Steps

- Subcommittee will complete recommendations for the key decisions to present to the full ESSA Implementation Committee

Next subcommittee meeting: Wednesday, October 5, 10 a.m., 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

