

The Evolving Use of Web-Conferencing Technology in Childcare Practitioner Education

Rick Morgan MS
Outreach Program Manager
UW-Platteville

Linda Hurst MS
Child Care Consultant & Adjunct Instructor
UW-Platteville

Bob Streff MS
Information Processing Consultant
UW-Platteville

History of delivery of Early Childhood Credential Courses at UW-P

From June 12, 2000, forward the Office of Continuing Education, UW-Platteville, has been involved in a partnership with The Registry and T.E.A.C.H. around the issues of the training of licensed child care practitioners in the State of Wisconsin. In every instance, (we currently offer 4 credentials) the credential itself belongs to The Registry. The curriculum has been developed by The Registry, this process involves primarily child care practitioners in the state, and then approval by UW-Platteville School of Education faculty. Student funding (scholarships covering approximately 80% of the costs) has been provided by T.E.A.C.H. UW-Platteville has been responsible for marketing, finding and approving instructors (in consultation with The Registry), and then offering the credentials for either academic credit or on a non-credit basis.

Administrators Credential

UW-Platteville started offering the Administrators Credential in 2001. This credential consists of 6, 3-credit courses. To date, we have served approximately 156 individual students who have generated some 795 enrollments.

Infant / Toddler Credential

UW-Platteville started offering the Infant / Toddler credential in 2007. This credential consists of 4, 3-credit courses. To date, we have served approximately 28 students who have generated 114 enrollments.

Inclusion Credential

UW-Platteville is the only provider offering this statewide credential. We started offering the credential in 2008. This credential consists of 4, 3-credit courses. To date, we have served approximately 20 students who have generated 55 enrollments.

Pre School Credential

UW-Platteville is the only comprehensive university offering this credential for academic credit. The curriculum for this credential forms the basis for the Associates Degree in Child Care offered by WTCS (Wisconsin Technical College System.) We started offering this credential in 2009. This credential consists of 6, 3-credit courses. To date we have served approximately 14 students who have generated 39 enrollments.

In summary, from 2001 – 2010 (this is a running total, data from April 16, 2010, we have served 218 students who have generated 1003 enrollments. With the implementation of web conferencing, enrollments have shown a steady growth. We feel this is due to the convenience, low barriers to entry, and customer service afforded by a web conferencing approach.

Rationale for change/innovation in delivery style

In 2001 we began offering the credentials in a hybrid fashion using Blackboard and traditional face-to-face instruction. A program desiring statewide reach but located where Platteville is (far southwest corner of the state) cannot utilize traditional face-to-face instruction and survive. We transitioned from Blackboard to Desire2Learn (the state provider contract changed) and from traditional face-to-face instruction to a system called BadgerNet. BadgerNet is fiber-optic based interactive television. We were limited to Saturday classes in four locations, either high schools or technical colleges, around the State of Wisconsin. Students still had to travel and give up their weekends. We participated in BadgerNet over its productive life cycle (the infrastructure started to degrade and host schools started to demand very steep reimbursements) but it became apparent in 2008 that the system was in decline and that it was time to find a new technology. In conjunction with Bob Streff and the Distance Learning Center staff, we rapidly transitioned (fall of 2008 to spring of 2009) to web conferencing software to provide the programs face-to-face instructional component. As long as students have high speed internet and an inexpensive webcam, classes are now delivered directly into their homes at times that are convenient to all concerned.

Benefits and challenges of web-conferencing from the technician's perspective

There are many different web conferencing services available. The Distance Learning Center of UW-Platteville (DLC) tested several and found that WebEx (a Cisco technology product) suited our needs. The main reason the DLC chose WebEx was that it generally works well with companies that have tight firewall restrictions. In this particular instance, that is not an issue, as most, if not all of the clients are conferencing from their home computers. One thing that should be mentioned about WebEx; it is designed for business, not explicitly for education. There are other web conferencing services designed more towards education. However, we did not find them suitable for our or our customers' needs.

When we started the child care project, we tested the VOIP and video features to ensure they worked properly and at an acceptable level for instruction. When we went down to dial up connections, we experienced too much latency in receiving video, although audio only was acceptable. At that point, we determined that the students would be required to use a broadband connection (Either DSL or Cable).

The next step was Faculty training. The first set of instructors was trained as a group with individual training afterwards as required.

We also decided on an orientation meeting for the students. During the first iteration with students, we had a tech person monitor the orientation and provide tech support via phone to assist students getting their VOIP and video working. This was to ensure everyone's headset and webcam was working properly. We found many issues arose we did not plan for and we learned many things about web conferencing. As in any course, students came in with different levels of experience. In this case, their abilities with technology were just as varied. After we worked with the first couple of groups of students, we learned the following about setting up the headsets and webcams:

WebEx does not recognize wireless headsets (Bluetooth) as microphones.

Home wireless connections are prone to dropping connections. (Some variability here.)

Some webcams will work intermittently. (the usual solution is to unplug and plug them back in)

Headset microphones stay "hot" and can lead to background noise.

We also tried recording the meeting. It was determined that when you get up to around 12- attendees, recording to the network can have a very negative effect on the quality of the audio. We believe that is caused by bandwidth usage.

One of the features we like about web conferencing is the ability to record sessions. The bandwidth workaround is to record the session to the host's desk top and then upload it to Desire2Learn at a later date. Students can then download the session for review as they deem necessary.

We have also changed student orientation in that instead of trying to work with everyone on the first night of class we schedule appointments at a mutually convenient time and provide that training. It takes on average between 10 – 20 minutes to provide this service.

Benefits and challenges of web-conferencing from the University's perspective

The benefits of web-conferencing as part of an instructional package are its flexibility, convenience of scheduling and use, along with providing students with a sense of belonging to a group as they work through the course material to earn their credentials. Yet another advantage is that web-conferencing is dramatically cheaper when compared with BadgerNet or programs which rely on traditional face-to-face instruction. The amount of staff time required to schedule classes has shrunk dramatically because not only do we not have to contact high schools and technical colleges around the state searching for locations that are easily accessible to students but we also avoid using the University purchasing and payment system for 20 or more meeting sites. The downsides of web-conferencing, as we are currently using the technology, is the initial orientation of students to the system. There are other irritations, the way licenses are issued and the corporate billing procedures, but to focus on these is to forget the nightmare we went through in coordinating a home and 3 satellite sites in BadgerNet. For example, who would have thought that finding a janitor to unlock a door on a Saturday morning would have taken the amount of time and money it did?

Web-conferencing from the instructor's perspective

Web conferencing is a “happy medium” for students and instructors who have become accustomed to the “face-to-face” teaching and learning experiences of distance education. It combines the advantage of real-time audio and visual with the technological capability of internet access. Students can see and hear each other and the instructor and they can also see all the information and content shared during the session as well as annotate and present their own documents. Web conferencing offers all the standard classroom supports and more.

One advantage is being able to coach students on how to use their computer at the same time we teach the content of the credential courses. This is particularly helpful for non-traditional students with little to no computer technology experience. The student can be in the comfort of their home or office and do not have to transfer learning on a computer at a distance education site to the computer they use most often and will work from when completing course requirements.

An example is the ability to simultaneously view the D2L on-line course website with the student working from their own computer. This is particularly helpful at the beginning of a course when previewing the syllabus, assignments, and course materials. It allows the instructor to address questions and concerns in a timely fashion. Students also have the ability to print or save documents presented in a web conferencing session automatically to their own computer files.

A challenge of web conferencing is overcoming the student’s hesitancy to participate. This is not much different from other face-to-face formats. However, it is more difficult to interpret non-verbal cues and body language when you can only see what is shown on the student’s webcam. A gesture can easily be misunderstood. For example, when a student looks away from the camera, are they bored, distracted, or simply looking down at their keyboard?

We found it helpful to explain web conferencing “etiquette” with the students. (See handouts) Attending class in the comfort of their home can be a challenge as well as an advantage. Students need to learn to manage distractions such as children, pets, or telephones. Also, students may be sitting at a desk, on the couch, on a bed, or lying on the floor. If they get too comfortable they can become less attentive. Still, the greatest advantage is being able to broadcast class sessions from any location, but especially from a home office. Travel time and weather constraints are never a problem.

Web-conferencing from the student's perspective

From Student Evaluation, March 22, 2010

I loved taking this course! I cannot believe that the semester is already over. My biggest problem was feeling insecure with the technology aspect, since this was my first online course. Linda was wonderful at making me feel at ease and comfortable with any technical issues, as well as the entire course.

I agree with Linda, that at first the aspect of not being together in person made me feel like something was missing. I am a people person, and I feed off the energy in the room around me. Being on line you miss that energy, or so I thought. During the second online session I adjusted to the webcam, and I enjoyed the remaining sessions. I just needed to readjust my thinking; this is a different way of doing things so why compare it to a classroom. Just enjoy the experience, and I did.

I liked the fact that the entire semester curriculum was laid out right from the start. The information was there, and although more information on each subject was given throughout the semester you could still work ahead. I like to work when I am able to, as you never know what may happen tomorrow, i.e., work crisis, health issues, etc.

Linda was wonderful to work with. She quickly answered emails, and telephone calls. She went out of her way to help! These rapid responses made the long distance class seem not so long distance after all.

One of the problems that I encountered when I was looking for a school that offered the Credentials course was that even though they were online courses, you were still required to attend class on site. For those of us that are owners, teachers, administrators, and directors, getting away to attend class is not an option. I am so thankful that I received the information on Platteville's online program.

I have always enjoyed going to school, and Platteville has been a wonderful experience, I enjoyed every aspect of it.

April 7, 2010 Email

Hi Rick...This is Name Withheld...First of all I hope all is well and I wanted to say Thank you so much for this opportunity...I didn't realize I could learn so much.....and be so excited about school at my age.....and all of the teachers have been wonderful....I cant remember school being so much fun.....Which brings me to the next point...I just spoke with Kaye Ketterer (T.E.A.C.H. counselor) a few minutes ago and I let her know that all is well....I finished the 4th course and I aced it.....She stated to me that she has already done the billing for the 5th class and will also do the direct billing for the 6th class...I let her know that I want to enroll in the Associates Degree program...and she thought that it was a magnificent idea....and she said that I could probably go right into it after the 6th course....Just one problem...I don't know who to talk to about enrolling...Will you be so kind to help me.....Thank you so much Rick...

Potential for future innovation

There are all kinds of wrinkles that can be added to this approach. By using Skype instructors are able to have office hours with students from across the state and well as spend "face" time with students who are having problems. Skype can be and is used by instructors both within and across the various credentials to meet and problem solve. As someone figures out a new thing that is possible on the conference platform it can be shared this way, or by calling an "instant" meeting. I am also fairly sure we are not using the conferencing software to its full potential and that it, like everything else, is always being upgraded and made more powerful.

As I look at our product and delivery system, the portion most in need of upgrading is our basic Desire2Learn websites. They have an "old" look and need the introduction streaming audio and visual

content. This concerns me because as our child care students become younger they will start demanding that our site look like the other sites they frequent. We also need to explore how the social technologies, especially Facebook, can be utilized.

As far as other uses within Continuing Education for conferencing software, have I told you about the across the state parent training we have initiated using this technology? No?? Well, that is probably another session.

Authors Summary

Rick Morgan is an Outreach Program Manager in the Office of Continuing Education, UW-Platteville. Rick has been at UWP for 10 years and actively involved in offering continuing education opportunities for child care providers for 9 years. Prior to working for UWP, Rick worked for HospiceCare, Inc. in an outreach education / professional development capacity. He was also Vice President-Conferences for Collegiate Conferences, for 11 years.

Address: Continuing Education, 1 University Plaza, Platteville, WI 53818
E-mail: morganr@uwplatt.edu
URL: www.uwplatt.edu/cont_ed/
Phone: 608-342-1347
Fax: 608-342-1454

Linda Hurst: B. S. in Communications from University of WI-Green Bay, Elementary Education major and Early Childhood minor. Ten years as classroom instructor of undergraduate courses in Early Childhood Education. Six years as distance education instructor in Early Childhood Administration. Instructor and trainer for the Wisconsin Professional Recognition System for the Child Care and Education Profession, CDA Advisor and presenter at conferences for Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Association, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association/Department of Early Childhood, Wisconsin Head Start Association and video conferences for Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners.

Address: 18380 N. 600th Rd., Adair, IL 61411
E-mail: llhurst51@yahoo.com
Phone: 309-254-3298
Fax: 309-254-3298

Bob Streff is currently an information processing consultant at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Bob has a Masters in Training and Development. He has worked for five years as an instructional designer and LMS administrator for several universities and taught online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses at the university level. He also has ten years experience designing and delivering training programs for the military and private sector.

Address: Distance Learning Center, 1 University Plaza, Platteville, WI 53818
Fax: 608-342-1454
Phone: 715-505-1932
E-mail: bob.streff@gmail.com

Early Learning Listening Tour—Standards and Assessment
May 11, 2010
Diane Trister Dodge

Introduction

Good afternoon. I am Diane Trister Dodge, president of Teaching Strategies, Inc., a company I founded in 1988 with the mission of providing the most effective early childhood education resources. My work in early childhood education began in the mid-1960s as a preschool and kindergarten teacher, and then as an education coordinator for Head Start. My entire professional career has focused on developing comprehensive, research-based curriculum and assessment resources to support early childhood teachers. Our curriculum, *The Creative Curriculum®*, is widely used in Head Start, child care, pre-k programs, and all branches of the military. I address the topic of standards and assessment from this perspective.

Standards

Standards are not new to early childhood educators. My colleagues and I have been involved in developing early learning standards for Washington, D.C. and the Army, and we have reviewed and aligned our curriculum and assessment systems with the early learning standards of every state as well as with the Head Start Outcomes Framework.

The current initiative lead by the National Governor’s Association and Council of Chief State School Officers to develop Common Core Standards for K–12 is an important step in ensuring that all children, no matter where they live, have access to high-quality education guided by challenging but achievable standards. We appreciate the work that has been done thus far to develop common standards, but we think more work is necessary to ensure that the standards for young children take into account the unique developmental needs of children under age 8.

Developing universal standards for all children in our nation is a challenging task for a number of reasons:

- If defined too broadly, standards give teachers little guidance about what to do.
- If standards are too narrow, they lead to a curriculum filled with isolated facts that make it “a mile wide and an inch deep.”
- When the standards are too specific, teachers tend to focus on minute skills and miss the big ideas and major concepts. This discourages children from developing a passion for engaging topics and interests. The research on engaged learners is very clear: Children who are engaged in their learning tend to be more successful academically.
- By failing to include standards for social–emotional development and approaches to learning, we run the risk of focusing only on academics and not the foundational skills that are essential to children’s success in school and life.

It is unfortunate that early childhood educators had very little involvement in developing the Common Core Standards. If knowledge about the unique way young children learn is not taken into consideration adequately, Common Core Standards could have a negative impact on early learning. We will see less time for play-based learning, more of a focus on isolated academic skills, and less of an emphasis on the physical and social–emotional skills essential to children’s success. Additionally, if Common Core Standards are developed for children birth through 5, we must ensure that they are vertically aligned with the K–12 standards and that they address the “whole

child.”

As developers of high-quality early childhood curriculum and assessment systems, we welcome appropriate and clear standards to guide our work. However, if standards are to be used well, teachers need to understand why the standards are important; the research behind them; and how to take cultural, linguistic, and special needs into account.

Assessment

Standards define teaching and learning in terms of *what* and *when*; curriculum explains *how*; and ongoing, classroom-based assessment is the critical piece that connects standards and curriculum. Assessment should not be conducted only several times a year to see how much children have learned. Ongoing assessment should take place every day as teachers purposefully observe children in order to find out what each child knows and can do.

There are many purposes for ongoing assessment:

- To observe and document children’s development and learning over time
- To support, guide, and inform program planning and instruction
- To identify children who might benefit from special help or further evaluation
- To report to and communicate with family members and others

There are also secondary purposes:

- To collect and gather child outcome information as part of a larger accountability system
- To provide reports to administrators who guide program planning and professional development

For assessment to make a difference, teachers must appreciate its value, understand how to do it, and see how it links to their curricula. They must know how to use what they learn about each child to plan instruction and support children’s development and learning. This is where teachers struggle most.

At Teaching Strategies, we listened carefully to what teachers and administrators told us and used this information to build and refine an assessment system that better supports good teaching.

- For example, early childhood educators know that development is a continuous progression, so we designed a system to assess children from birth through kindergarten. It is a powerful way to teach child development, include all children, and show the connection between preschool and kindergarten.
- Teachers do not want to spend all of their time documenting what children are doing; they want to spend more time interacting with children. We therefore created a system that enables teachers to record “on-the-spot” observations of certain physical, literacy, and mathematics objectives.
- Teachers cannot always observe certain skills during the normal course of a day’s activities, especially some literacy and mathematics skills. As a result, they either do not assess these skills, or they make decisions without any evidence. We have designed small-group classroom activities that take place during the natural course of the day. These activities enable teachers to focus their observations and gain greater insight about each child’s literacy and mathematics skills. They help teachers gain confidence in their assessment of each child and encourage them to teach more intentionally.

- Teachers and administrators want to know that they are focusing on what matters most, so we developed an assessment system that measures the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are most predictive of school success.
- One of the criticisms of ongoing, observation-based assessment is that teachers do not mark children's progress reliably. For this reason, we build interrater reliability into our training. This is important, especially when data is used to identify children who need further assessment or used for accountability purposes and program planning.

Conclusion

Standards and assessment play critical roles in helping teachers focus on the important skills and knowledge that matter most, learn what each child knows and can do, and plan instruction that builds on each child's strengths and provides the support each child needs to progress. We must be vigilant in ensuring that the standards are comprehensive, appropriate, and achievable, and that teachers' curriculum resources address the standards in an engaging, integrated, and developmentally appropriate way. This can only happen if teachers have—and know how to use—ongoing, observation-based assessment to plan instruction.

Thank you for taking the time to tour the country and hold these Listening and Learning sessions. I know both of you are experts on these topics, and I'm sure I have only confirmed what each of you knows and fights for each day. Our field and the children and families we serve are all benefiting from the leadership you are providing.

Good afternoon. My name is Tonja Rucker and I am representing the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families, a Washington DC-based organization that works to help municipal leaders take positive action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities. I want to thank you for the opportunity to learn alongside you at this valuable meeting, and for the opportunity to share with you a bit about the local level perspective on standards and assessments.

Standards-based education for K-12 grades has been in place for quite some time and has guided schools in selecting their curriculum and assessment tools. In recent years we have seen a tremendous progression in developing Early Learning Standards that now address what preschool children should know and be able to do before entering kindergarten. Assessments are a vital and growing component of high-quality early childhood programs. They play an important role in understanding and supporting children's development and they are critical to documenting and evaluating program effectiveness.

The National League of Cities has had the privilege of assisting a diverse number of cities in supporting standards and assessments of early care and education programs and PreK-3rd grade alignment efforts. Through our work in the early childhood and preK-12 fields, we have seen that local elected officials and city staff can and do play a critical role in this work. City leaders are also uniquely positioned to spearhead or support community initiatives that strengthen quality education for young children. They make spending and policy decisions at the local level, can use their "bully pulpit" to raise public awareness and support for issues, and have the leverage needed to convene diverse stakeholders across the birth to eight spectrum.

In the District of Columbia (Mayor Adrian Fenty) within the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) the Division of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is responsible for coordinating early childhood education services to District of Columbia children and their families. The city worked hard and convened several work groups and community meetings to develop city-wide standards that passed in 2008. The year-long process involved gathering input from a broad cross-section of individuals in the District of Columbia to build a strong foundation for school success and lifelong learning. The mayor submits to the Council and gained approval to contract with an independent evaluator to evaluate Pre-k programs. The approved evaluator performs a baseline quality assessment for a sampling of Pre-k classrooms in District of Columbia Public Schools, public charter schools; and CBOs.

The City of Seattle (Mayor Mike McGinn) Families and Education Levy, first passed in November 1990 was a voter approved a groundbreaking initiative for the future of the city's children. Accountability for success is a centerpiece of the Levy and continues to be supported by residents. Targets for results in school readiness, academic achievement, and dropout reduction have been established for all Levy programs. An annual report to citizens identifies annual progress towards these results. Along with targeting academic results for students in all programs, interim indicators are being tracked. Trends in attendance, grade retention, disciplinary actions, and other measures correlate with



improved academic performance and can give important mid-course information to program providers. Additionally, the city and four of five Head Starts have entered into a formal MOU. There are aligned assessments across all Seattle Early Education Collaborative (SEEC) programs including all five Head Start grantees. Assessment data is used for joint accountability and professional development.

In Boston (Mayor Thomas Menino) the city partnered with Harvard University to conduct a longitudinal study to measure the impact on preschool programs on kindergarten. The results will be used to build a database that will help measure impact of programs prior to public schools. It will help answer whether kids from each program are progressing. The hope is to link the data to the school system's database so they can measure programs, and administer school readiness data. They will be able to determine what are the best predictors of outcomes for school readiness.

Standards and assessments are high on the agenda of leaders here in Chicago. Collaborative efforts between city government and the public schools are quite evident and have led to model initiatives for local governments around the country. Under the leadership of Commissioner Mary Ellen Caron (Department of Family and Support Services) and her Deputy Vanessa Rich and Chief Officer Dr. Barbara Bowman (Office of EC Education) and her Deputy Paula Cottone standard based education and evaluation are central components to local initiatives.

Efforts like this happening at the local level can play a vital role in informing both current and future programming and policy around standards and assessments. The best practices that emerge from city work can help create "bottom up" designs that are scalable, effective, and tailored to a variety of unique community needs. On behalf of the National League of Cities, I commend and thank you for convening this forum of expert thought leaders and practitioners in this field and encourage you to remember the important role cities play as you move forward with this work.

2

May 11, 2010 U.S. Department of Education Meetings on Early Learning

**Comments of John Lybolt, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Director of GLSpeech Associates, Ltd. and Research Director of Leap
Learning Systems**

Leap Learning Systems (LLS) is a not for profit (501c3) dedicated to closing the education gap through language, emergent literacy, literacy and oral/written communication programming in underserved communities of Chicago.

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP's) receive intense and academically rigorous preparation for the assessment and evaluation of the language skills most needed for school success, regardless of home language. Their skills in evaluating student scores, implications for learning processes and classroom functioning arise from coursework, mentoring, and practical experience. In recent years, SLP's supported by the initiatives of the American Speech/Language Hearing Association (ASHA), have been in the forefront of classroom based, collaborative interventions and teaching. SLP's have been trained to rigorously plan, take data, and examine academic outcomes.

These skills differentiate SLP's from classroom teachers, psychologists, and reading teachers. SLP's have knowledge of the assessment and management of neurolinguistic processes that may challenge one or more students in a class, as well as of the curriculum content being taught by a teacher. SLP's are able to analyze patterns of performance on scientifically valid test instruments and map out the potential academic difficulties and strengths of students. The coursework in developmental language, linguistics, learning theories, bilingual/bicultural learning, emergent literacy and reading, prepare SLP's for effective collaboration and support of school personnel who teach children to decode sounds and letters.

ASHA, through its certification and standards based professional development programs has created a cadre of SLP's in the schools who are already influencing building level policies and collaborative teams. The issues of appropriate assessment of academic readiness are addressed in the rigorous tests and assessments that have been developed and are in common use in schools. ASHA supports recruitment, education and retention of multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-cultural professionals. Within our classroom preparation, continuing education opportunities, and multiple levels of certification, the speech-language pathologist stands out as a provider of services of excellence in the areas of emergent literacy and learning skills that underlie academic success.

Schools in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse linguistically, culturally, and racially. In one elementary school in a near Chicago suburb, more than 25 countries and 30 native languages are represented. This school has implemented a successful, building wide program to reach these English Language Learners and their families. Their speech-language pathologists are an integral part of this endeavor, ensuring that student areas of weakness and ability are evaluated and managed. Working together, this building team is meeting AYP goals. They have determined that in order to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of all children,

assessments and services will consider the child and family's native language. This building practice is consistent with the Department of Education's regulations in 34 CFR part 100, implementing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which precludes explicit or implicit discrimination on the basis of national origin and other elements as well.

I am speaking in support of several issues: multi-lingual assessments that are appropriately standardized with respect to the cultural experiences of the students being tested, educational decisions made on the basis of testing completed by speakers of that students language, and finally, multilingual assessment procedures that shed light on curricular and learning needs of multi-lingual students. Current assessments can be used only to identify disability, using scores that appear to inform us about aptitude rather than identify future learning needs. Students whose test scores infer deficits often have not been exposed to the materials that make up the questions, skills, or content being assessed on that test. Students from other language and cultural backgrounds should be assessed as part of a benchmarking process, identifying how to map students' current skills and achievement to the school curriculum. Test results should be used to identify student learning skills that can be utilized to make up content area needs.

I advocate including provisions (in legislation and regulations) that

- recognize the importance of providing assessments and evaluations in a child's native language. Evaluators must evaluate test performance in light of what is to be learned rather than what has not been presented. Consider how language usage in the home environment by the child and family may support school performance. The implicit and explicit bias in many assessment and evaluation tools should be carefully considered in decision making.
- school personnel should provide culturally competent services that are responsive to cultural differences in family values and child rearing practices.
- map procedures to avoid undue delays in assessments and evaluations.

In summary, I am speaking in support of testing and educational planning that specifies: competence in examiners, competence in benchmarking test selection, and competence in educational planning that supports student progress in the classroom, avoiding over-identification of deficits while highlighting avenues for student progress.



May 11, 2010 U.S. Department of Education Meetings on Early Learning

Comments of Catherine H. Gottfred, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
2008 President of American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
President and Founder of Leap Learning Systems; Leap Learning Systems (LLS) is a not for profit (501c3) dedicated to closing the education gap through language, emergent literacy, literacy and oral/written communication programming in underserved communities of Chicago.

Good communication and literacy skills are fundamental to academic achievement, social well being, and lifetime opportunities. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play important roles in ensuring that all children gain access to appropriate instruction in spoken language, reading, writing, and spelling. SLPs provide early identification, assessment, evaluation, and intervention in language and literacy. They develop and implement literacy programs in school settings. School administrators should capitalize on the expertise of SLPs in implementing their literacy programs.

SLPs have extensive education and experience recognizing and understanding individual differences in typical language development and disorders. This knowledge base, combined with skill in using diagnostic-prescriptive approaches for assessment and intervention, is particularly valuable in the pre school setting.

Specifically, SLPs possess the foundational knowledge of language and its subsystems—phonology (speech sound systems), morphology (word structures), syntax (grammar), semantics (vocabulary), and pragmatics (social language use). Consequently, SLPs are instrumental in designing emergent and early literacy programs in phonological awareness, sound-letter correspondence, word recognition, and vocabulary development, skills fundamental to a child's ability to read. SLPs use their knowledge and expertise to prevent, identify, assess, evaluate, diagnose, and intervene with individuals confronted with literacy problems.

There is a well-established connection between spoken language and reading and writing. Spoken language provides the foundation for the development of reading and writing. Spoken and written language has a reciprocal



relationship that builds on the other to result in general language and literacy competence. Instruction in spoken language results in growth in written language, and conversely instruction in written language can result in improvement in spoken language. SLPs are often the first professional to identify the root cause of reading and writing problems through a child's difficulty with spoken language. SLPs help children build the literacy skills they need to succeed in school and in life.

Effective communication skills are directly linked to success in major life activities—thinking, learning, literacy, problem solving, getting along with others. The ability to read and write advances higher-level language and communication in areas such as vocabulary, figurative language, and complex syntax.

We at Leap Learning Systems have been dedicated to Language Wellness for all children for over 25 years. Our preschool programs and other language intensive programs around the country have been instrumental in preventing later reading difficulties by enriching the language experience of children from low print/low verbal households. Response to Intervention is designed to also prevent children from being diagnosed as disabled when their true diagnosis should be ABTT (Ain't Been Taught That.)

The reality of Response to Intervention (RtI), appropriateness of workload vs. caseload service delivery, and push-in vs. pull out intervention model in the schools demands that the speech-language pathologist use his/her knowledge and skills to help children achieve their best in language and literacy. Speech-language pathologists' skills as language experts can serve children falling within the Tier Two paradigm in an RtI implementation. Partnering with the classroom teacher to focus on language (vocabulary, problem solving, listening and comprehension, and narrative skills) can support the emergent literacy skills of preschoolers and kindergarteners (Montgomery & Moore-Brown, 2006 and Wedl, 2005). They note that there is increasing awareness by general education teachers, reading specialists, and school administrators of the valuable knowledge the speech/language pathologist brings to the literacy/emergent literacy team. Classroom play and teacher prompted activities directly engage conceptual language knowledge that is the area of expertise for the speech-language



pathologist. The conceptual language available in early childhood science activities underlies the symbolic behavior later involved in phonological awareness and decoding for the beginning reader (Sample, 2003, Leitao, 2005).

RECOMMENDATION:

Involve SLPs in the provision of services to children in the general education setting (under ESEA), including pre-referral and consultative services. These services are in addition to SLP's more traditional role in the provision of special education and related services (under IDEA).

SLPs have a critical role to play in enhancing and assessing not only the speech and language capabilities of the child but the emergent literacy, cognitive, and social skills of ALL children. Assessment of a preschoolers abilities in any of these areas is always seen through the filter of his/her language skills. The speech-language pathologist can help teams understand the link between spoken and written language, demonstrate how language weaknesses affect literacy, and plan goals and strategies to addresses these weaknesses, as well as assessing and evaluating children with speech and language differences or delays.

Assessments Considerations for English Language Learners;

In addition SLPs have the knowledge and expertise to provide the basis of assessment for speakers of dialects and languages other than academic business American English.

In order to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of all children, assessments and services should be provided in the child and family's native language or within best practices using translators. This requirement is consistent with the Department of Education's regulations in 34 CFR part 100, implementing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that "no person in the United States shall; on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be



otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.”

Native language assessment is the only valid way to determine the presence of a speech or language disability or difference, which may lead to reading difficulties. Assessments and evaluations should be conducted in a way that will yield the most accurate information for all children regardless of the language they speak. Assessments and evaluations must a) be conducted by qualified personnel; b) be administered in the child and family’s native language (by qualified bilingual personnel or with the assistance of professional interpreters); and c) be selected and administered so as not to be racially, culturally, or linguistically discriminatory. Assessment tools that have been developed to assess only English speaking children carry an inherent linguistic bias.

In addition SLPs are aware of and can make distinctions in responses of children using dialects of American English. Thus helping the teacher understand if a linguistic difference is indicative of a potential speech, language or reading problem or dialectally correct.

There is a wealth of information about best practices in early childhood assessments and interventions from researchers in language development and emergent literacy.

Therefore, I urge you in considering the creation of policy, standards and assessments in early childhood the addition of the expertise of researchers in communication sciences and speech-language pathologists will make a vital addition to your work. And since each school in the country has a speech-language pathologist connected with it, this valuable resource is at the ready.

4



The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)

Standards and Assessment

May 11, 2010

The following comments are provided on behalf of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC). DEC is a professional membership organization whose mission is to promote policies and advance evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at-risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

DEC recognizes no one size fits all children and their families; likewise no one model or practice will support all children. Thus, it is critical that we do not push down reforms from evidence-based practices for older children, or worse yet, practices without evidence. Rather, we should continue to support the research of effective practices for this very unique population of young children and their families.

Practices that meet the needs of all children are not those designed for children whose development is on track and then adapted or modified for a child with a diverse ability; rather, practices that meet the needs of all children are universal, do not require adaptations or modifications, and recognize that all young children have diverse abilities.

DEC requests consideration of the following recommendations related to **standards and assessment** as policies are developed and funding decisions made related to ensuring that **all** young children have the supports and evidence-based services necessary to be successful in quality early learning settings within their community.

STANDARDS

- **Revise program and professional standards so inclusion is foundational.**
 - Because existing early childhood program standards primarily reflect the needs of the general population of young children, improving the overall quality of an early childhood learning environment is necessary, but might not be sufficient, to address the individual needs of each and every child.
 - Inclusion should be used as the foundation for identifying high quality programs and the professional standards and competencies of all practitioners who work in these settings.

- **Implement standards that are grounded in contemporary theoretical constructs and that anchor the interdisciplinary field of early childhood and evidence-based practices.**
 - We recognize that comprehensive assessment systems are increasingly tied to standards, thus clear and direct linkages among recommended practices and state or federal learning standards must be made.

ASSESSMENT

- **Implement and promote assessment practices that involve shared experiences between families and professionals.**
 - The assessment process must be designed to facilitate family inclusion at multiple levels in response to family-identified preferences and with sensitivity to family values, needs, language, and culture.
 - The assessment process should involve the family and professionals working together to capture the child’s way of learning about the world and the child’s developmental status.
 - Assessment teams should implement a child- and family-centered, team-based, and ecologically valid assessment process.
 - Ultimately, the assessment process should support the family’s decision-making on behalf of their child.
- **Young children are individuals, so, their programs and performance data must be individualized.**
 - Developmentally appropriate data must be used only to improve program quality and practices not to sanction teachers or their programs.
 - Metrics for profiling child progress and program impact must be sensitive to small increments of individual child performances.
 - The assessment of young children requires an **individualized** and appropriate multimodal assessment model to generate and confirm findings.
- **Conduct assessment in the every day environments in which children play and participate.**
 - Assessment practices should be conducted in familiar settings, with familiar people and objects, doing familiar things.
 - Evaluating the child within the context of play, social interactions, and care-giving routines requires that the assessment process focus on the demands and expectations of the environments where children live, learn, play, and work rather than merely children’s relative standing in a normative group.
 - Assessment results should be acceptable and understood by families and lead to promoting children’s full potential and should not lead to the delay of services.
 - Ongoing assessment and progress monitoring create an integrated assessment system whereby initial assessment decisions are monitored and evaluated through an integrated loop of assessment that is continuous, ensuring that services are meeting the child’s current and relevant needs.

Overall, there is a need to further conversations as well as opportunities to develop and evaluate the quality, appropriateness, and impact of early learning standards on programming and services for young children.

There is also a need for further research and development regarding various assessment approaches, tools, and alternative assessment practices for children with disabilities, particularly for young children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups and for those with particular types of disabilities (e.g., autism spectrum disorders, low-incidence populations such as deaf-blind, children who have or are at-risk for learning disabilities, mental health, children who are hurt and vulnerable, or those with serious emotional disorders).

Once again, DEC appreciates the opportunity to comment. We offer our assistance as policies are developed to support each and every young child and their families. Leaders within our organization can offer you expertise across a variety of research and practice areas impacting very young children with diverse abilities and their families as well as feedback and input on policy as it is developed.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment. For further information please contact:

Virginia Buysse, DEC President, 919-966-7171 virginia_buysse@unc.edu
Sarah Mulligan, DEC Executive Director, 406-543-0872 sarah.mulligan@dec-sped.org



5

Testimony submitted by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)
Presented by Amy Schuster, Director of Retention Initiatives
aschuster@wecanaeyc.org
608-240-9880, extension 7239

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Amy Schuster and I am speaking on behalf of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, or WECA, a non-profit organization supporting early care and education professionals in Wisconsin. For almost 40 years WECA has been working to improve the quality of Wisconsin's early childhood programs and provide professional development, membership and advocacy opportunities for the child care workforce. WECA is the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a founding member of the Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition, and member of the First Five Years Fund Peer Advocacy Roundtable.

The main content issue before us today – adhering to standards that truly reflect best practice in our field, and assessing individual children as a foundational element of curriculum development – are two of many critical components that we all expect an under-resourced, under-valued, and under-educated workforce to engage in. However, because it is impossible for us to focus on these content areas without addressing the professional development needs of child care workforce, this will be the focus of my comments today.

Reflecting on what is currently in place in Wisconsin, what is on our horizon, and where we've been in terms of supporting high quality early childhood education, Wisconsin could be viewed as either on the precipice of greatness or on the slippery slope of decline. To name a few things on the side of greatness: We have sound licensing standards in our state. Our Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards were designed for children birth through age 5 to guide programs in designing appropriate curriculum. We have a 10-year successful history awarding T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin scholarships and a partnering compensation initiative called R.E.W.A.R.D.™ Wisconsin, neither of which cannot keep up with the demand for credit-based education and improved compensation for the workforce. All 16 colleges that comprise the Wisconsin Technical College System have worked together to create and implement "core competencies" within the early childhood associate degree programs, and there are completed articulation agreements with seven UW campuses and one private four-year institution. On our horizon is a new quality rating and improvement system for Wisconsin child care programs, known as YoungStar that recognizes and will eventually reward programs for meeting high quality indicators. Most importantly we have dedicated professionals in our state with a vision for a comprehensive system of high-quality early care and education for ALL children.

All of these initiatives are encumbered by an inadequate public investment in improving the quality of care and education for young children, and this is the story of the slippery slope. Over the past ten



years, Wisconsin's state budgets have included smaller and smaller pockets of funding for programs that improve the quality of child care. In fact, quality investments are less than one third of what they were ten years ago, from \$38 million in 2001 to \$11 million in 2010. Whereas Wisconsin once spent as much as 16% of their CCDBG dollars on quality initiatives, we now spend only the required 4%. We've seen reductions in funding for our T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program from a high of \$6 million in 2002 to \$3.5 million now, as well as reductions in support for our resource and referral system from \$1.7 million in 2000 to \$1.3 million at present. A program that awarded quality grants to local communities who designed their own quality initiatives responsive to community need has been eliminated altogether.

This decrease in funding for quality initiatives has affected early education professionals, and the children and families across Wisconsin in measurable ways. A 2002 study by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership found that 50% of children subsidized through Wisconsin Shares, our child care subsidy program, were receiving care by providers that received lower wages, were less likely to have a degree, and more likely to turnover than the Wisconsin average. In other words, children from low-income families, who could most benefit from high-quality child care, are less likely to receive it in Wisconsin due to inadequate funding of quality professional development initiatives. According to a series of workforce studies, Wisconsin has seen a steady decline in the percentage of early childhood teachers with a higher education degree. In 2004, only 14% of Wisconsin's providers had a 4-year degree and less than 30% had a 2-year degree or higher. In comparison to other early education sectors like 4-year-old kindergarten, Head Start, and Birth to Three, Wisconsin child care field lags far behind in terms of educational qualifications, compensation and infrastructure supports. This inequality of care across sectors is especially harmful as the majority of children in early childhood settings in Wisconsin are in child care. Moreover, according to a 2004 latest workforce study, the turnover of staff in child care programs in Wisconsin is higher than the national average. Child care providers leave the field at an alarming rate- sometimes as much as a 40% turnover rate for the field- because of the inadequate professional development support and low compensation found in the field. We are currently analyzing a new workforce study and hope to gain some insight into how the recent economic downturn is impacting the field.

I am confident that this Administration understands that education begins at birth, and that all children deserve to have high-quality early experiences that build a solid foundation for future success. As more parents have entered the workforce, many of these early experiences are offered by professionals in the early care and education field. Therefore, it is critical that early educators provide high-quality care that will benefit children, families, and the general workforce across the nation. We all know what quality looks like and know what it takes to move in that direction. It is critical that there is funding for initiatives that create and support well-educated and fairly compensated providers and encourage them to remain in the field.



Because of this, I am here to ask the administration to substantially increase investments in programs that enhance the quality of early education. In Wisconsin we are working hard to stretch our 4% of quality dollars, but have found year after year that it isn't enough to substantially improve quality for children and provide meaningful support to the workforce. Please increase the percent of CCDBG dollars that must go towards quality initiatives so that Wisconsin, and other state, can make noticeable, widespread improvements in the early education field. I recommend that you also require states to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to address the education, compensation and retention of the early education workforce, including child care, Head Start, early intervention and Pre-K. Please also define elements of the Early Childhood Professional Development System that must be addressed within the plan for ELCF and require states to address issues of access, quality, articulation, diversity and inclusion, compensation parity and career pathways.

More importantly, I urge you to create a set aside within the reauthorization of CCDBG for professional development and compensation initiatives. Dedicated funding for these initiatives will create and support high quality early education professionals and will encourage them to remain in the field. Dedicated funding for these initiatives will change the current landscape in Wisconsin and will help ensure that the children most in need of high-quality care will have it available and accessible to them. Finally, dedicated funding for these initiatives will highlight your belief in the importance of this too often undervalued profession.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I look forward to working with you in the future.



Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children

4755 Kingsway Drive, Suite 107, Indianapolis, IN 46205

PO Box 20686, Indianapolis, IN 46220

6

Contact Person: Dianna Wallace, Executive Director
Phone: 37-356-6884

Date: May 11, 2010

Time: 10:00 am - 3:30 pm (Central)
Erikson Institute - The Polk Bros. Lecture Hall
451 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60654

Early Learning Listening Tour - Standards and Assessments

The Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, Inc. (Indiana AEYC), Indiana's leading voice for early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of children from birth through age eight, is pleased to provide testimony related to Standards and Assessments and the early childhood workforce.

The importance of high-quality developmental support and learning experiences for all young children, beginning at birth and continuing through the early grades, are better known and appreciated than ever before. Public policies and investments, however, have not sufficiently changed to match our new knowledge. Our recommendations are grounded in research and other evidence that a continuum of developmentally appropriate and challenging standards, curriculum, and assessments, as well as comprehensive services and meaningful parent/family engagement from birth through the early elementary grades, can support better development and learning at each stage, more effective transitions among early learning settings, and consistent shared expectations among settings in which children are served.

The recommendations provided below are based on the following principles:

- State content standards must reflect the understanding that each domain of development and learning influences and is influenced by progress in other domains; that is, development and learning do not occur in neat content compartments, especially for children younger than third grade.
- Teaching practices and curriculum must be evidence-based and appropriate for the age and development of the child, and should include both teacher-led instruction and child-initiated activities and play.
- Assessments of children in the early grades and younger must be used to inform and improve instruction and should not be used for high-stakes purposes.
- To be effective, early childhood professionals, teachers, principals and other administrators must be knowledgeable about all domains of child development,

Phone: 317-356-6884

Fax: 317-259-9489

1-800-657-7577

content areas, and how to support each classroom and each child in meeting expectations for achievement.

- Schools and early childhood programs must be engaged with families and communities in order to support children's well-being, development and learning.

Recommendations

1. States should be required to review and revise pre-kindergarten through grade 3 standards to ensure that they address all domains, including social and emotional development and approaches to learning, in order to ensure that assessments are consistent with expert recommendations concerning special issues in assessing young children and are aligned to the standards. Emphasis must be placed on the alignment of state standards, Head Start performance standards, Quality Rating and Improvement standards, and all other sets of standards in a state that focus on young children and the linkage to the various assessments. In Indiana, we continue to hear early childhood professionals sharing horror stories of the endless hours spent with children being assessed and the lack of concrete connection to their daily instruction or the lack of connection with those standards and assessments to the next phase of a child's life. Children deserve, and families need, a consistent set of standards and assessment from their youngest years through third grade.
2. For programs to be maximally effective with standards and assessments there must be ongoing professional development for all early childhood professionals, including school, child care, Head Start personnel and Early Interventionists. Teachers must have specialized knowledge and skills for teaching and learning across all domains. We recommend that states be required to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to address the education, compensation, and retention of the early childhood workforce, including those in Child Care, Head Start, Early Intervention and Pre-kindergarten settings. The Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, Inc. has administered the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® INDIANA project for the past ten years. We have watched over 100,000 children be affected by increased quality resulting from the over 10,600 scholarship recipients completing over 76,000 credit hours. We recommend a set aside within the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant for professional development and compensation.

As stated before, the importance of high-quality developmental support and learning experiences for all young children, beginning at birth and continuing through the early grades, are better known and appreciated than ever before. We thank you for the opportunity to share our recommendations and thank you for joining with us to ensure that every child in Indiana and in our nation has the content knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge, as well as the creativity, initiative, and motivation for lifelong learning and life success.

IACS Comments for Early Childhood Listening and Learning Tour
May 11, 2010
Brian Keith, Illinois Association of Christian Schools

My name is Brian Keith and I am a school administrator of Romeoville Christian Academy here in the Chicago suburbs, and am also the legislative advisor for the Illinois Association of Christian Schools, which is the state-affiliate of the American Association of Christian Schools.

First, I would like to say thank you to Jacqueline Jones from the Department of Health and Human Services for organizing the forum today to discuss the early education initiatives of the Administration and for giving the opportunity to make public comments.

The Illinois Association of Christian Schools is made up of around twenty-five schools around the State of Illinois as part of the approximately 800 schools that make up the American Association of Christian Schools. Many of these schools offer early education opportunities in both urban and rural areas of both Illinois and around the country, meeting the needs of low-income families, those with higher incomes, and everyone in between. These schools provide excellent programs because of their commitment to two specific goals: (1) supporting parents in their vital role as the primary caregivers of their children, and (2) providing top-quality care and education to every child that darkens the doorway of their respective schools. We join the rest of the non-public community in our strong interest in the area of early education, as the majority of existing early education programs are non-public.

I want to share with you a couple thoughts on this current early education initiative and its effect on our current societal climate:

1. ***The autonomy of a non-public preschool enables the school to maintain the high standards and curricula that lend to the academic success of their students.*** A government-run preschool program could hinder this autonomy and success. Because of their autonomy, non-public schools can provide a continuance of education from pre-school to elementary school, onto junior high and high school, preparing their students to be college-ready. This seamless transition from grade to grade allows the teachers to work together and collaborate on the best methods to meet the needs of each child as the child progresses to each new level.

A specific threat to this autonomy is the call for standardized requirements and curricula. Requirements for federally aligned standards and curricula could, as a result, diminish the freedom that private providers have in directing instruction. Along the same lines, mandated licensing and certification requirements could put an unnecessary strain on participating private early education providers, and the difficulty of current early education workers returning to school to obtain a bachelor's degree or early childhood certification may be prohibitive for many. The research shows that credentialing often has little to no impact on the academic achievement of three-year-olds and four-year-olds. Requirements for bachelor's

degrees and certification in early childhood education will only serve to further crowd out the private preschool market by burdening providers with unnecessary regulations.

2. **Universal preschool will facilitate the unfortunate and unintended result of giving parents less choice to meet the varying needs and desires of their preschool-age children.** Children need much more than their “ABC’s and 123’s” early in one’s life; there are basic emotional and developmental needs that must be met before academics should be introduced, and no one knows better what those needs are than a child’s parents. Any early education that a child receives beyond the home can serve to enhance a child’s experience but should *never supplant* the parent’s role in providing the education and direction for these young children. It is with that in mind that our main focus is a commitment to support parents and work with them in the education of their young children if they choose to enroll, and I believe that commitment to parents is a major factor to the success of the non-public pre-school centers and schools around the country.

In conjunction, universal early education lacks in its recognition of the vital role that parents play in the education of young children, beginning at birth. Parents in charge and parents with choices typically make for parents with happy children.

In conclusion, when discussing plans for the expansion of early education, the fact must be considered that the majority of American preschoolers are already enrolled in some form of early education program. With nearly 80% of four-year olds already attending a preschool program, and with quality choices including private schools, public schools, faith-based schools, and Head Start, there is very little need to burden the American people with its cost, which most likely will be higher than expected, and its potential strain on the existing highly-successful programs when evidence of the need is so vague and the results so uncertain. A new pre-school program established by the federal government would jeopardize not only the autonomy of the many non-public preschools that are offering a high-quality education to these young children, it would also reduce the choices for parents as they look for the best place to meet the educational needs of their children.



Early Learning Listening Tour - Standards and Assessments

May 11, 2010, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, Erikson Institute - The Polk Bros. Lecture Hall

Thank you for organizing this series of events and allowing for public attendance and comment. I'm Diana Rauner, Executive Director of the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

As a representative of early childhood education researchers, advocates, and providers, I know that my colleagues and I are in agreement on the need to raise the quality of early learning programs in order to deliver children and families that are positioned to not only sustain the gains made in early childhood, but ultimately benefit from continued high quality instruction throughout their education careers. The ongoing use of coordinated standards and assessments is an integral part of raising the quality bar.

For the **most** high needs young children, we need to prevent gaps in the quality and quantity of their learning opportunities in order to prevent the achievement gap from forming. We do this by enrolling these children very early and providing them with learning environments that ensure high quantities of interactions that are responsive, jointly shared and language based. We make sure no 1 teacher is attempting to interact with more than 2-3 high needs infants and toddlers at given time.

To accelerate learning birth to kindergarten for high needs children, we have to raise teacher effectiveness. Teachers must be supported to implement with fidelity evidence-based interactions and practices found effective with promoting the growth and achievement of high needs young learners.

That support comes in a cycle of assessing children's growth and teachers' practices, and then intensively coaching teachers with understanding the links between their instruction and children's response and how to use the information to make decisions about their curriculum, instruction and intervention. We make sure teachers are coached and supported with a cycle of assessment-to-practice-to-implementation that raises the quality of early learning and results in the intended outcomes for young children.

To sustain into K-3 the gains high needs children make in early learning, we know two things are required:

- 1) We must keep, rely on and develop parents to be in the equation. The relationships, engagement and specific learning supports parents provide to their child is a critical component of keeping the achievement gap closed and sustaining child's learning into K-3;
- 2) We must align educational strategies, birth through third grade (minimum).

We need standards to be the guide posts of the content of instruction. We need appropriate and formative assessment of children and teachers' practices. And, most importantly, we must embed regular coaching supports to teachers focused on their understanding and use of this data to inform instructional decisions and interventions.

The lack of a uniform funding stream for birth to kindergarten high needs learners consistently inhibits our employment of uniform standards and assessments. Funds are currently dispersed throughout various federal and state offices with separate, and daunting, accountability foci. ESEA reauthorization offers a national opportunity to correct this deficiency.

Finally, by not aligning contracting and performance measurement and management systems with standards and assessment, we are at best not maximizing our resources, and at worst not accessing reliable, consistent, and comparable data. Alignment at all levels –curriculum, teacher training, professional development, and standards and assessments – is integral to the success of any high-quality early childhood system. Individual practices, operations, and locations may differ, but alignment of standards and assessment will yield the comparable data necessary to understand the implications of our investments.

10



The Illinois Subdivision of the Division for
Early Childhood (IDEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

To: Office of the Secretary, Department of Education
Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Resources

From: Robin Miller Young, Ed.D., NCSP
President, Illinois Division for Early Childhood (IDEC)
Robin_MillerYoung@ipsd.org, RRMMYoung@aol.com

Re: Early Learning Listening Tour: Standards and Assessment; Chicago, IL
"Implementing Innovative and Successful Approaches to Improving Early Learning
Outcomes for Children, Birth through Grade Three"

Date: May 11, 2010

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Robin Miller Young, President of the Illinois Division for Early Childhood (IDEC) a subdivision of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). I am here today to share with you perspectives from the collective experiences of preschool principals and assistant principals, early childhood program coordinators, early childhood center directors and other Illinois "in-the-field" leaders who are developing, implementing and sustaining innovative practices that are improving learning outcomes for young learners across our state and across our nation. These practices are aligned with NAEYC position statements, and the "Recommended Practices" of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC).

For 12 years, I have held a variety of positions and I currently serve in a leadership role like that of an assistant principal at Prairie Children Preschool, an inclusive EC/Pre-K "at-risk"/ECSE blended program. Our preschool is operated by the Indian Prairie School District # 204 in Aurora, IL, a pre-K through 12 unit district, as a "community" preschool within our Early Childhood Education program. We educate approximately 750 children between the ages of three and five; many of those children are typically developing and pay tuition to attend our preschool, some are at-risk of developing disabilities and their preschool experiences are paid for with state of Illinois Pre-K "at-risk" grant money or Title I preschool dollars. Some children have identified disabilities under Part B of IDEA and they participate in several levels of classroom programming, individually designed to meet their needs. Program components and operations are congruent with the recently developed NAEYC and DEC "Inclusion" position statement. What are we, and other programs like ours, doing that allows us to state we are linking innovative and successful approaches to improving early learning outcomes with standards and assessments? To answer that question, let me describe for you some of the activities members of our program staff have been engaged in over the last few weeks. Although the following specific illustrations come from Prairie Children Preschool, they represent the

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

“Treatment Integrity” employed across a variety of interventions at the student-, classroom- and program-level sponsored by I-ASPIRE.

4. Creating university and field-based collaborative partnerships: Last week, Dr. Lynette Chandler of Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, IL and Dr. Robin Hojnoski, of Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, and I watched three of our Prairie Children Preschool teachers engage their children in a variety of instructional activities. The purpose of their visit and our collaboration was to further develop an observation system to gather data on environmental, curricular, and instructional factors that would enhance development of early math skills; it would be similar in function to the ELLCO rating scale. Mini-grant funding for the initiative was provided by the Illinois Alliance of Administrators in Special Education (IAASE). We started the project by looking to achieve concurrent validity and inter-rater reliability on a preschool numeracy measure (PNIs); then, other collaborative opportunities arose in our project. Linking field-based work to the resources and expertise at the university level is another initiative that links standards and assessments to improved learning outcomes for children.

5. Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum (LINC): A number of prominent Illinois early childhood educators worked to develop a policy document, sponsored by the McCormick Foundation, to promote the benefits to children when we arrange systems and programs around a seamless continuum between the pre-K and elementary years. Further efforts are underway to create staff development modules that can be used as part of graduate-level leadership development programs to train principals to effectively lead Pre-K and Early Childhood schools and programs, allowing the trainees to meet the new “Principal” performance standards that have been developed.

Time does not permit me to share more on the many other initiatives that are underway in Illinois. To summarize, the following initiatives were described as innovative and successful approaches to improving early learning outcomes for children supported by the Division for Early Childhood (DEC):

1. delivering services in an inclusive/ blended preschool operated by a unit school district;
2. shifting service delivery to a Response to Intervention (RtI) system’s initiative;
3. embedding practices from the DEC concept paper on the “Developmental Delay” Category into IDEA eligibility procedures;
4. participating in staff development linking decision-making on standards-based instruments to effective and efficient instruction;
5. creating university and field-based collaborative partnerships; and
6. supporting leadership efforts to create a seamless continuum from the pre-k through elementary years.

Thank you so much to the panel members and the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services for this opportunity to comment during this Listening Tour.

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

Selected References:

- American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (1999). *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Washington, DC: AERA.
- Barnett, D. W., VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Witt, J. W. (2007). Achieving science-based practice through response to intervention: What it might look like in preschools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17*, 31-54.
- Batsche, G., Elliott, J., Graden, J. L., Grimes, J., Kovaleski, J. F., Prasse, D., Reschley, D. J., Schrag, J., & Tilly III, W. D. (2005). *Response to intervention: Policy considerations and implementation*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).
- Bricker, D., Squires, J., & Clifford, J. (2010). Developmental screening measures: Stretching the use of the ASQ for other assessment purposes. *Infants & Young Children, 23*(1), 14-22.
- Bursuck, W. D., Smith, T., Munk, D., Damer, M., Mehlig, L., Perry, J. (2004). Evaluating the impact of a prevention model of reading on children who are at-risk. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*, 303-313.
- Chandler, L. (2009, October). Measurement in early childhood RtI: Lessons learned from the field. Paper presented at the First Annual RtI Early Childhood Summit, Albuquerque, New Mexico. www.crtiec.org/rti_summit/documents/chandlerCRTIEC.pdf.
- Chandler, L. (2009, October). *Response to Intervention in Illinois pre-kindergarten webinar*. www.thecenterweb.org/ec/pdfs/rti102209.ppt
- Chandler, L., Miller-Young, R., Nylander, D., Shields, L., Ash, J., Bauman, B., Butts, J., Black, K., Geraghty, P., Hafer, M., Lay, A., Mitera, B., Richardson, D., Steffen, K., & Summers, D. (2008). Promoting early literacy skills within daily activities and routines in preschool classrooms. *Young Exceptional Children, 11*, 2-16.
- Chandler, L., & Young, R. M. (2009, October). *Leadership skills for implementing preschool RtI and problem-solving*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- Chandler, L. K., Young, R. M., & Cirincioni-Ulezi, N. (in press). Early childhood special education methods and practices. In C. Groark, S. M. Eidelman, L. Kaczmarek, & S. Maude (Eds.), *Early Childhood Intervention: Programs and Policies for Special Needs Children*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC – CLIO.
- DEC/NAEYC. (2009). *Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.
- Coleman, M. R., Buysse, V., & Neitzel, J. (2006). *Recognition and response: An early intervening system for young children at risk for learning disabilities. Executive Summary*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG CD Institute.
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2006). *Basics of DAP: An introduction for teachers of children 3 to 6*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Dodge, D. T., Colker, L., & Heroman, C. (2002). *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc.

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

- Dodge, D. T., Colker, L., & Heroman, C. (2005). *The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum*. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc.
- Early Childhood Research Institute on Measuring Growth and Development (ECRI-MGD). (2000). *Individual Growth and Development Indicators for preschool children*. Available online from Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Website: <http://www.ggg.umn.edu>.
- Fox, L., Carta, J., Strain, P. S., Dunlap, G., & Hemmeter, M. L. (2010). Response to Intervention and the Pyramid Model. *Infants & Young Children*, 23(1), 3-13.
- Floyd, R. G., Hojnoski, R. L., & Key, J. M. (2006). Preliminary evidence of technical adequacy of the Preschool Numeracy Indicators. *School Psychology Review*, 35(4), 627-644.
- Gettinger, M., and Stoiber, K. (2007). Applying a response-to-intervention model for early literacy development in low-income children. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 27, 198-213.
- Gischlar, K.L., Hojnoski, R.L., & Missall, K.N. (2009). Improving child outcomes with data-based decision making: Interpreting and using data. *Young Exceptional Children*, 13, 2-18.
- Harbin, G., Malloy, W., & Neal, P. (2006, October). *Developing effective leaders for improved service delivery*. Paper presented at the meeting of the CEC Division for Early Childhood (DEC), Little Rock, AK.
- Hojnoski, R. L. & Missall, K. N. (2010). Social development in preschool classrooms: Promoting engagement, competence, and school readiness. In M. R. Shinn & H. M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for Achievement and Behavior Problems in a Three-tiered Model including RTI* (3rd ed.), Bethesda, MD: NASP.
- Hojnoski, R. L. & Missall, K. N. (2006). Addressing school readiness: Expanding school psychology in early education. *School Psychology Review*, 35, 602-613.
- Hojnoski, R. L., Gischlar, K. L., & Missall, K. N. (2009a) Improving child outcomes with data-based decision making: Collecting data. *Young Exceptional Children*, 12, 32-44.
- Hojnoski, R. L., Gischlar, K. L., & Missall, K. N. (2009b) Improving child outcomes with data-based decision making: Graphing data. *Young Exceptional Children*, 12, 15-30.
- Ikeda, M. J., Paine, S. C., & Elliott, J. L. (2010). Supporting Response to Intervention (RTI) at school, district, and state levels. In M.R. Shinn & H.M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for Achievement and Behavior Problems in a Three-tiered Model including RTI* (3rd ed.), Bethesda, MD: NASP.
- Jimerson, S. R., Burns, M. K., & VanDerHeyden, A. M. (2007). *Handbook of Response to Intervention: The Science and Practice of Assessment and Intervention*. New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Linas, M. W., Carta, J. J., & Greenwood, C. R. (2009). *Taking a snapshot of early childhood RTI implementation*. University of Kansas: Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood (CRTIEC), Kansas City, KS.
- Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum (LINC). (2009, March). Building a seamless learning continuum: The role of leadership in bridging gaps between early childhood and K-12 education systems. Bloomington, IL: LINC.
- McCormick, C., Throneburg, R., & Smitley, J. (2002). *A sound start: Phonemic awareness lessons for reading success*. New York: Guilford Press.

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

- Missall, K., Reschly, A., Betts, J., McConnell, S., Hiestad, D., Pickart, M., Sheran, C., & Marston, D. (2007). Examination of the predictive validity of preschool early literacy skills. *School Psychology Review, 36*, 433-452.
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). (2009). *Early Childhood Assessment* (Position Statement). Bethesda, MD: Author.
- National Early Literacy Panel (2006). <http://www.familit.org>
- National Reading Panel Report. (2000). National Institute for Literacy. NIH Pub No. 00-4754.
- Notari-Syverson, A., O'Connor, R., & Vadasy, P. (2007). *Ladders to literacy: A preschool activity book (2cd Ed.)*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Sandall, S., Hemmeter, M.L., Smith, B., & McLean, M. (2005). *DEC Recommended Practices*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Shields, L., Laubenstein, P., & Young, R.M. (2009, August). *Shared leadership . . . Opportunities discovered: Leadership that benefits ALL young learners*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Illinois State Board of Education Special Education Directors' Conference, Peoria, IL.
(<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/SPEC-ED/conf/2009/default.htm>).
- Shields, L., Snow, L., & Young, R. M. (2009, February). *Developing and implementing a preschool RtI/problem-solving model*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), Boston, MA.
(<http://www.nasponline.org>; Convention 2009, Session MS087)
- Smith, M., Dickinson, D., Sangeorge, A., & Anastasopoulos, L. (2002). *Early language and literacy classroom observation toolkit*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Snyder, P. A., Wixson, C.S., Talapatra, D., & Roach, A.T. (2008). Instruction-focused strategies to support Response-to-Intervention frameworks. *Assessment for Effective Instruction, 34*, 25-34.
- Squires, J. (2010). Designing and implementing effective preschool programs: A linked systems approach for social-emotional early learning. In M. R. Shinn & H. M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for Achievement and Behavior Problems in a Three-tiered Model including RTI* (3rd ed.), Bethesda, MD: NASP.
- VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Snyder, P. (2006). Integrating frameworks from early childhood intervention and school psychology to accelerate growth for all young children. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 519-534.
- VanDerHeyden, A. M., Snyder, P. A., Broussard, C., & Ramsdell, K. (2007). Measuring response to early literacy intervention with preschoolers at risk. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 27*, 232-249.
- Walker, H.M., & Shinn, M.R. (2010) Systemic, evidence-based approached for promoting positive student outcomes within a multi-tier framework: Moving from efficacy to effectiveness. In M .R. Shinn & H. M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for Achievement and Behavior Problems in a Three-tiered Model including RTI* (3rd ed.), Bethesda, MD: NASP.
- Young, R.M. (2009, October). *How will RtI work in early childhood education?* Paper presented at the First Annual RtI Early Childhood Summit, Albuquerque, New, Mexico. (http://www.crtiec.org/rti_summit/documents/)

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

- Young, R. M. & Chandler, L. K. (2007, October). *Leadership strategies and a change process for improved early literacy practices*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), Niagara Falls, Canada.
- Young, R. M., Chandler, L. K., & Shields, L. (2010). *Response to Intervention (RTI) in early childhood settings: A leadership initiative to educate ALL young learners well*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Young, R.M., Chandler, L.K., Shields, L., Laubenstein, P., Butts, J., & Black, K. (2008, May/June). Project ELI: Improving early literacy outcomes; An early literacy and language initiative that works, *Principal*, 14-20.
- Young, R. M., Schrubbe, B., Snow, L., Herrell, K., & Chandler, L. K. (2009). *Preschool response to intervention (RtI) and problem solving (PS): Intervening early, effectively and efficiently with young learners to promote early academic success for all children*. Paper presented at the meeting of Illinois ASPIRE, Dekalb, IL. Sessions M100D, M230D www.illinoisaspire.org/north/document.php?folder_id=241.
- Young, R. M., Shields, L., & Chandler, L. K. (in press). The emerging early childhood (EC) RtI movement: Promoting early schooling successes for three to five-year-olds. [Monograph Lucky 21 #4]. *Response to Intervention (RtI): 21 questions and answers*. Warner Robins, GA: Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE).

OUR MISSION

The Division for Early Childhood promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children birth through age eight who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

11

Good Day! My name is Linda Hurst. I am a Content Coach for Wisconsin's Model Early Learning Standards and I teach the Early Childhood Administrator Credential Courses for the University of Wisconsin at Platteville. The Early Childhood Credential Courses at UW-Platteville are a blended format of online courses supported with web-conferencing. I have also had the opportunity to be directly involved in the development of the Early Learning Standards in Wisconsin and also in the design and implementation of the training to integrate the Standards into practice in the early childhood workplace.

Currently we are in the process of updating the training to include the developmental continuum for children from birth through age five. I am one of four state Early Learning Standards Coaches. We work in collaboration with Approved Trainers who are forming "Communities of Practice" in each of five regions across the state. Candidates who wish to offer this training "shadow" and meet with "mentor Trainers" and others from the Community of Practice who collectively determines their readiness to become Approved Trainers. This infrastructure supports the training of trainers as well as their ongoing work to bring the Early Learning Standards to participants across early childhood settings.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Training provides the context from which early care and education providers, legislators, advocates and families can develop an understanding of the developmental domains, developmental expectations, performance standards, and program standards for all programs that serve young children. It provides opportunities for participants to learn how to use the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards to guide the determination and planning of developmentally appropriate curriculum, daily teaching and learning activities and assessment of children and of practices in their early childhood programs.

The trainings are typically attended by classroom teachers, infant and toddler caregivers, family child care providers, early childhood special education teachers and service providers. In the trainings, these early childhood professionals learn to use the Early Learning Standards as a guide to design care and learning environments and to support adult/child relationships that enhance optimal learning experiences for young children. They engage in rich discussions about issues and challenges related to integrating the Standards into their work with children and families. However our trainers often receive feedback from participants who are eager to put their learning into practice, but find it challenging to follow-through for two primary reasons. They frequently lack ongoing, onsite assistance and administrative support.

We have found that comprehensive Early Learning Standards and training on how to integrate the Standards into assessment, planning and implementation of developmentally appropriate practice is only the foundation for the work early care and education professionals do. They need continuous support from knowledgeable administrators as well as onsite mentoring and coaching to accomplish the goal of achieving a lasting shift in performance and practice which will lead to higher levels of quality and better outcomes for children and families. This is the point at which Standards and Assessment intersects with Professional Development and support for the early childhood workforce.

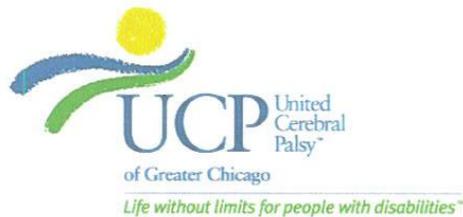
I have witnessed the power of Early Childhood Administrators to make continuous improvement in their programs as they work and learn together in the Administrator Credential Courses. Frequently administrators progress through the credential courses as a cohort and I believe what sets the program apart from other credit-based training is the lasting relationships they develop as a result. The content of

the courses and the knowledge and expertise of the instructors is augmented by the mentoring and coaching we encourage and support. They return to their programs with confidence and resources to establish a supportive environment for their staff as well as for the children and families they serve and, in addition, they have the ongoing support of a network of peers.

Scholarship programs such as T.E.A.C.H. give administrators and their staff support and guidance to overcome some of the hurdles to accessing professional development. Funding for training on Standards and Assessment will provide important information about best practice. In addition I encourage you to consider funding ongoing, onsite mentoring and coaching to ensure the implementation of early learning standards and ongoing assessment practices.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you today.

13



United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago

Standards and Assessment

May 11, 2010

The following comments are provided by Ted Burke, Director of the Illinois Early Intervention Training Program at United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago (UCP Chicago). Since 2002 the Illinois Early Intervention Training Program has conducted over 1500 statewide training and education programs and served over 50,000 early intervention workshop participants in cities across Illinois and through access to over 100 hours of online learning opportunities. In addition to training, we also provide consultation and technical assistance to the Illinois Early Intervention system regarding the state's process for measuring and reporting child outcomes.

On behalf of UCP of Greater Chicago, I want to thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. I speak to you today representing an Illinois perspective on assessment in Part C programs, but understand the Illinois' concerns around assessment are not unique to just Illinois. The face of early intervention has changed over the years, yet the players have much remained the same: families, children and service providers. Over the years we've trained providers we continue to ask and answer the questions:

- How do we make assessment meaningful and use it to build intervention strategies and supports that help children and families in their everyday routines and activities?
- What is global assessment and how does it help us understand a child's unique skills, abilities, and strengths so that IFSPs can be developed that are truly individualized and meaningful?
- What are the different factors, such as culture and environment, which can impact assessment?
- How can we help providers of all disciplines understand the key principles and best practices for meaningful assessment of very young children and their families?

Some of the barriers we come across in answering these questions for the field include:

- The results from most current assessment instruments do not easily convert to state criteria for determining eligibility. For example, in Illinois we use percent delay to determine eligibility, yet most of the instruments used by providers in the field do not provide for a method of conversion of the information to percent delay.
- The results from most assessment instruments are not divided into the three functional child outcomes required by the Office of Special Education Programs which each state has to report upon. The information from the assessment instruments is usually separated into developmental domains and needs to be converted into the functional outcomes.
- In states like Illinois, where a vendor model is used in Part C, the difficulty in determining the effectiveness of early intervention is even more magnified than in states using more traditional program models for service delivery. The lack of provider supervision and administrative supports makes it difficult to assess, with any sort of consistency, the effectiveness of early intervention on a statewide system level.

To address these barriers UCP of Greater Chicago supports the recommendations of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children recommendations that all assessments:

- Implement and promote assessment practices that involve shared experiences between families and professionals. Any decisions impacting the child or the family should be based on multiple sources of information, including that obtained from observations and interactions with children and their family members.
- Must be individualized. Young children are individuals, and therefore, their programs and performance data must be individualized.
- Must be conducted in the everyday environments in which children play and participate in an effort to lead to beneficial outcomes. Assessment practices should be conducted in familiar settings, with familiar people and objects, doing familiar things.

Additional recommendations we would like to see include:

- Support and funding for the research of current assessment tool and possible development of new assessment tools which are tied to evidence based practices, help providers develop appropriate intervention plans which support child development based on the unique characteristics of families and their visions and priorities, and document program effectiveness.
- A federal focus for additional research, training and guidance for early intervention professionals on using informed clinical opinion as a part of the assessment process to promote family and professional partnerships. Rather than relying on a single assessment tool or approach, data gathered from multiple

methods including observations, tools and different routines should be used to determine how best to support a child's learning and development.

- Support and continued funding of projects like the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center to give states the support and technical assistance needed to best implement the current OSEP requirements for reporting the developmental progress on the three functional child outcomes in order to determine the effectiveness of early intervention. Additionally, continued research into additional methods and/or tools to help states determine the effectiveness of their early intervention programs is strongly encouraged.
- Adoption of a universal set of assessment standards to be used as a guide for all Part C early intervention professionals. These standards must be developed within a collaborative framework including representation of key stakeholders and representatives of the professional organizations which represent the early learning workforce (e.g. DEC, CEC, NAEYC, ZERO TO THREE, ASHA, AOTA, ITCA, APTA), policymakers, and families.

UCP of Greater Chicago hopes you take into account our input and recommendations as policies are developed and funding decisions made related to ensuring that young children and their families have the supports necessary to be successful in within their community. We thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback.

Contact Information:

Ted Burke, Director
Illinois Early Intervention Training Program
UCP of Greater Chicago
7550 W. 183rd Street
Tinley Park, IL 60477

Early Learning Standards and Assessments **Comments from the City of Chicago's Department of Family & Support Services**

The City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services, provider of Head Start and Child Care programs to over 20,000 young children, believes that Early Learning Standards should span developmental domains and assessments should be used as roadmaps in helping children reach developmental goals. These standards should not be too prescriptive and our assessments must strike a balance between being quantifiable and being sensitive to the uniqueness of each child's experience.

We endorse the movement for universal learning standards that are domain-based and developmentally appropriate as adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education. We embrace the four principles of effective early learning standards that 1) emphasize significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes; 2) are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes; 3) are implemented and assessed in ways that support all young children's development; and 4) require a foundation of support for early childhood programs, professionals and families.

Assessments are a powerful tool. When used properly, they help teachers and providers understand where a child is developmentally and individualize lesson plans to meet his or her unique needs. When used indiscreetly, they can result in teachers and administrators pigeon-holing children, and, in worse case scenarios, teaching to the test.

Our goal as the caregivers of young children should be to cultivate the conditions we know lead to the development of critical thinking skills. The City of Chicago believes that we must ensure that assessments do not become a barrier to the development of these skills or that assessments become the goal in and of themselves.

That said, we believe that comprehensive assessments thoughtfully used may be one of the most valuable tools we have for understanding a child's story—where he is coming from and what she needs to thrive. And for understanding how we as caregivers can help each child reach his or her potential. Assessments should be comprehensive, strength-based, culturally relevant and sensitive. Their real value is to tell us about the developmental trajectory of an individual child, not about how he or she compares with peers.

Again: comprehensive, ongoing and multiple. We need to be careful that in the search for a quick fix, we do not look to only one tool to give us that whole story. Each tool gives us only a snap-shot of a particular part of a particular child. Only through the use of multiple assessment tools used across modalities, that assess cognitive, social-emotional, health, and physical development, tempered by observational insight, can we begin to get a three-dimensional understanding of a child.

And that understanding must take into account the family. Young children are inseparable from and enmeshed within their families. In assessments as in all aspects of our work—evaluating, planning, service delivery -- the family must be part of the process. And families and children are enmeshed in culture.

Every early educator believes that all children deserve equitable, quality early care and education. To accomplish this, the tools used to determine learning and developmental needs must be fair and inclusive.

We know that culture affects what we value and what we respond to; it affects how we interact with others, how we take direction, and how we give direction. It affects what and how we learn. We must always be careful that in our desire to help children meet early learning standards, in our desire to see children succeed in the classroom and beyond, that we do not eliminate the inclusion of cultural differences.

We all know the oft told story about what happened during the norming of the Denver: when asked the question – If your mother is to woman then your father is a . . . and the child's response was an SOB. This story usually gets a laugh and stimulates a round of discussions among professionals about culturally relevant practices. We know that young children are a treasure trove of opportunity and their every action and reaction points us in the direction of limitless possibilities and potential.

Snow and Van Hemel make the case in the book *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*: "Since the

first assessment tools were developed, there has been long-standing concern that test scores may not necessarily reflect differences in ability or developmental milestones among children and the populations they represent, but rather demonstrate problems in the construction, design, administration, and interpretation of the assessment tests that lead them to be unfair and untrustworthy.” We must ensure that the construction and design of the assessments we use are indeed fair and trustworthy.

It should always be remembered that our job, whether we are working with 6 months old babies, seven year olds, or high school students, is to help children learn how to learn. We are best able to do that when we understand a child’s strengths and cultivate those strengths.

