

New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council

Initiatives Update

March 14th, 2012

BUILD Initiative – New York became a BUILD state in 2009. Since the beginning, BUILD funding and technical assistance has been used to support the ECAC. Prior to New York receiving federal funds, BUILD contributed financial assistance to ECAC for meeting costs and for staff contributed by the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy to support the ECAC and its work groups. BUILD technical assistance has focused on various aspects of system-building, including providing information about other states' experiences in developing statewide initiatives and strategic planning, as well as assistance in addressing more specific issues such as quality rating and improvement system development and developmental screening .

Last year, technical assistance focused on supporting our efforts to implement QUALITYstarsNY, including our participation in a BUILD-led learning collaborative specifically around ensuring cultural sensitivity within standard interpretation and implementation. Funding during the past year has been used to support meeting costs, meeting facilitation, QUALITYstarsNY, and a shared services project. Technical assistance for the coming year will assist our efforts to increase business support for early childhood and continue the learning collaborative on cultural sensitivity within QUALITYstarsNY implementation.

Communications Contract – The Communication Consultant contract with Advocates for Human Potential has been finalized. The Advocates for Human Potential team has begun working with the ECAC to develop and implement a communication plan for the ECAC. This contract will allow the ECAC to develop a consistent and professional logo and materials that will be used to increase support for early childhood and publicize QUALITYstarsNY and other projects.

Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant - A consultant has been chosen to work with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group on a variety of activities designed to support the social-emotional development of young children. The focus of this work is to promote partnerships between early care settings and community health and mental health providers to promote the social-emotional development of young children; take steps to establish a screening system that is built upon routine developmental screening of all young children in New York State and includes but is not limited to social-emotional development screening and maternal depression screening; develop a web-based clearinghouse on social-emotional development as part of the ECAC website; assess and promote Early Childhood Mental Health Social-emotional Consultation Projects and related supports in early care settings throughout New York State; investigate ways to sustain funding for these activities.

Work Group Updates

Data Development Work Group

The Data Development Work Group was established to design a cross-early childhood program longitudinal data system that helps state and local agencies and others identify trends, answer policy questions, and plan for program development. Given the scope of the initiative, current efforts have been focused on establishing an early learning portion of what is hoped to be a much larger data system. Plans are to extend this effort to other early childhood service systems and to link each of these data systems to the P-20 student tracking system being developed by the New York State Education Department. When this data is combined and then connected to the New York State Education Department data, there will be a much fuller picture of the early childhood education system in New York State, including the program and providers, staff members and the children and families they serve.

Staff to the work group participates on the Steering Committee and Project Team of New York State Education Department's P-20 Data System Project, which has recently decided to include available early childhood data in the P-20 Data System.

A Data and Research Sub Group has been created, which will investigate early childhood data that is currently available to help answer policy and program questions which were identified by the Data Development Work Group in spring, 2011. The Sub Group has selected three program and policy questions and will attempt to follow the questions through the analysis phase, thinking through the process and scoping out the possible barriers and threats to the validity and reliability of findings. The subgroup will be considering issues such as source differences, coding issues, missing variables and covariates, and issues concerning external validity.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Continue planning for the development of the New York State Early Learning Data System
- Investigate the legal ramifications of such a project
- Investigate what type of infrastructure is needed for the system
 - Where it could be hosted
 - How much it will cost (initially and long-term)
- Determine what research and policy questions can be answered with existing data.

Finance Work Group

The Finance Work Group continues to work with the firm of Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) to develop the New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model. The model has been defined by domains (Early Learning, Strong Families, Healthy Children, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems) which are consistent with the ECAC focus areas. Cost elements have been identified for each focus area (e.g., early learning program, home visiting program) and are supported by program and service funding/data information. The cost model will provide information and analysis for determining the costs of the service elements that together comprise a comprehensive system of supports and

services for young children and their families. Once these estimates are developed the work group can then use this information to determine financing strategies.

ECAC staff and representatives from APA are in the process of finalizing the data that will be used to support the cost model. There remain some minor programs that have yet to provide funding and population data. ECAC staff will continue to work to gather the outstanding information.

Recent activities of the Finance Work Group include:

- Finance Work Group Meeting: On December 16th the Finance Work Group members met to discuss the development of the cost model. During the meeting, APA representatives provided a demonstration of a prototype of the cost model. The demonstration allowed members to provide input on the development and make important decisions on the use of the model.
- Finance Work Group Conference Call: During the January 31st conference call, Finance Work Group members focused on decisions that needed to be made in order to develop the cost model. The major decisions were :
 - ✓ Access to the Cost Model: The group decided to allow the public to have access to the cost model along with support within the Council on Children and Families.
 - ✓ Pilot the Cost Model: The testing period will run for approximately two weeks (based on participants' availability). Thus far, pilot participants include Finance Work Group members and staff from the Office of Children and Family Services.
 - ✓ Return on Investment: The group decided to move forward with developing a plan that would produce a return on investment function. It is anticipated that a return on investment component will be added to the cost model as a way to identify the return on investment for programs and services administered within New York State. Initially the return on investment component will work in tandem with the cost model.
 - ✓ Finance Work Group Work Plan: Work group members reviewed and approved revisions to the work plan. The work plan was updated by including the work that will be done to develop a return on investment component. The work plan has been posted on the ECAC web site.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Pilot the Cost Model: Test the New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model and make final adjustments.

- Finalized cost model: Provide APA representatives with the changes identified during the pilot test and re-test the cost model. Provide user training to Finance workgroup members and key stakeholders.
- Cost Model User Guide: Share New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model User Guide with the ECAC membership and relevant agencies.
- Cost Model Demonstration: Provide a demonstration of the cost model to the ECAC members.
- Return on Investment: Develop a plan to implement a return on investment function that will include:
 - ✓ Collecting data on program effectiveness through a review of existing research in the field.
 - ✓ Develop a methodology of computing return on investment estimates based on existing New York State programs and research on program effectiveness.
 - ✓ Testing and finalizing the methodology to determine user options and modify existing cost estimation model to incorporate the return on investment functionality.
- Cost Model Updates and Maintenance: Develop a plan to maintain the information in the cost model.
- Access to the Cost Model: Develop information that can assist users (i.e. user manual, assumption table, disclaimers, etc.).
- Financing Strategy: Retain a consultant to develop strategies for maximizing funding and developing new financing strategies which would include a mix of public and private resources to increase investments in a comprehensive system. Develop recommendations for implementing new financing strategies.

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group

During this reporting period, the Promoting Healthy Development (PHD) Work Group has been engaged in a variety of projects that continue to incorporate health and social-emotional development into the overall work of the ECAC. The work group has met by phone monthly to discuss and receive reports about on-going work group projects as well as receive updates and reports on projects and events that can impact the work of the group.

The PHD Work Group has looked closely at the pieces of the state's Early Learning Challenge Grant application that can be included in the group's work plan and has begun to prioritize those items. The PHD Work Group is also looking at how it can best assist in the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. To

advance the work in these areas, the PHD Work Group has re-formed the Ad Hoc group on Social-emotional Development and the Ad Hoc group on Nutrition and Obesity Prevention that were convened last summer.

The PHD Work Group has also been invited to participate in a national learning collaborative on early childhood mental health being coordinated by the National Center on Children in Poverty. Mary McHugh is coordinating this work and is joined by Evelyn Blanck, Regina Canuso and Susan Perkins. The learning collaborative evolved from a webinar in November where Mary McHugh and Evelyn Blanck presented on the work that the ECAC had done on the Early Childhood Mental Health tool developed by the National Center for Children in Poverty. Participating in the learning collaborative and using the Early Childhood Mental Health tool has been beneficial in coalescing the work group's efforts to engage the state further on social-emotional development planning. The Ad Hoc group on Social-Emotional Development will assist in this work.

The PHD Work Group is also spearheading efforts on expanding early childhood screening. An event was held in November with "prototype communities" who have advanced innovative screening initiatives around the state. Additional follow-up work is planned.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Prepare and organize tasks for, and select, a Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant and begin working on gathering resources that can be used for training professionals in social-emotional development, including researching screening tools for children and parents.
- Continue obesity prevention activities and expand activities within early learning and development programs in the state through the Ad Hoc group on Nutrition and Obesity Prevention. The Ad Hoc group will also consider ways to assist in the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY health promotion program standards.
- Continue work with state agencies to complete the Early Childhood Mental Health tool and continue discussion on how to address issues (gaps in services, etc) identified by using the tool. The subgroup will also develop mechanisms for state level systems use of the tool to assess activities and to drive planning. It will also seek to develop a mechanism for the ongoing use of the tool for state planning. The Ad Hoc group will also consider ways to assist in the implementation of social-emotional pieces of QUALITYstarsNY.
- Develop a plan to work with existing efforts to expand and promote the use of Health Care Consultants for regulated child care providers. Consider new ways to work with early learning and development programs to integrate health promotion into settings.
- Advance work on developmental screening by addressing the need for physician practice support, parent engagement, and policy changes.

Quality Improvement Work Group

The Quality Improvement Work Group has finalized revisions of standards for both center/school-based early learning and development programs and family-based programs. During the revision process, changes were made based on the field test results and a series of focus groups with former field test participants conducted around the state. A small group is continuing work on draft standards for programs which serve school-age children in before and after school programs. This latter subgroup includes volunteers from various membership organizations which represent this segment of the field.

A general informational brochure describing the elements of QUALITYstarsNY to a variety of audiences was completed. In addition to posting the document on the ECAC and QUALITYstarsNY websites, print copies will be disseminated to various stakeholder groups. The brochure will also be used at several conferences of early learning and development program providers.

The ECAC has registered the QUALITYstarsNY logo as a service mark with the NYS Department of State which will help develop project identity and assure appropriate use of the logo in all publications and resources.

The ECAC is sponsoring, and the Early Care and Learning Council is managing, the delivery of “QUALITYstarsNY Readiness Activities”, a series of three professional development trainings begun in January, 2012. The three modules (Introduction to QUALITYstarsNY, First Steps to Quality, and Self-Assessment) are offered at no cost to early learning and development providers across the state. It began with a two day “train-the-trainer” session in January.

The State Education Department has committed Race to the Top grant funding for the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. Planning is underway to use these funds to expand QUALITYstarsNY to early learning and development programs located in geographic areas with schools that have been identified as Persistently Low Achieving.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Revise point distribution of QUALITYstarsNY standards, based on recommendations from the evaluator who reviewed the field test of QUALITYstarsNY standards that was done in 2010.
- Review a draft set of standards for school-age child care programs for inclusion in QUALITYstarsNY.
- During the second quarter of 2012, recruit early learning and development programs that are located in areas with Persistently Low Achieving school communities to participate in QUALITYstarsNY. This work will be funded by the New York State Education Department’s Race to the Top initiative.
- Engage the technical assistance services provided by BUILD and the QRIS National Learning Network to explore ways in which QUALITYstarsNY standards can effectively meet the needs of children and families from all cultural and linguistic groups.
- Disseminate information about QUALITYstarsNY to continue the momentum to support implementation statewide.

Strong Families Work Group

The purpose of the Strong Families Work Group is to incorporate the principles of strengthening families, promoting resiliency, and enhancing protective factors into a framework for all health, education, and human services. That framework informs the efforts of the Work Group to ensure that appropriate services and supports are provided to families. Those services/supports include parent education, screening and assessment of children and families, and voluntary home visiting for all expectant and new families. Jim McGuirk was recently appointed co-chair of the Strong Families Work Group.

Major activities this period include:

- **New Parent Kit** - Work has begun to develop a New York State Parent Guide as the main component of the New Parent Kit. The New York State Parenting Education Partnership has formed a task group, which includes a professional writer with years of experience in producing early childhood and parenting materials as well as an Education Consultant with the NYS Parents as Teachers Program and experienced parenting educator. The task group will regularly seek feedback on the content and design of the Parent Guide from experts in the field of parenting education and family support as well as parents served by these programs.
- **New York State Home Visiting Coalition** – Through its relationship to the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, the Work Group played a supporting role to the New York State Department of Health in its application for federal home visiting funding. All involved were disappointed to learn that New York State did not receive competitive funding. The Department of Health is currently gearing up to submit an application for the second round of federal funding. The Strong Families Work Group will continue to support and promote the work of the Coalition, which is now focused on maintaining existing state funding while expanding funding to be inclusive of more programs. The Work Group also supports the Nurse-Family Partnership’s submission to the Medicaid Redesign Team to allow Medicaid to cover services provided by that program.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Continue to work on refining contents and determining distribution of the New Parent Kit.
- Become more actively involved with the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, particularly in regard to systems-building.
- Work with the QUALITYstarsNY initiative on developing strategies for family engagement, with a particular focus on the programs identified in Persistently Low-Achieving (PLA) districts.

Workforce Development Work Group

The Workforce Development Work Group is organized to advance the components of an Early Learning Workforce Professional Development System and respond to related issues such as coordination of pre-service education in early childhood (i.e., articulation agreements among institutions of higher education); recruitment, staff retention, continuing education and compensation. Work group members

have been working to create and implement a competency-based professional development system through a variety of related activities, including these three priorities:

- Revision of the Core Body of Knowledge;
- Development of a Career Lattice and Registry; and
- Promotion of high quality learning opportunities for active professionals and students entering the early care and learning profession.

The revised Core Body of Knowledge, now a comprehensive and competency-based document in a clearer and more user-friendly format, is scheduled for release in April, 2012. In addition, the work group, has completed the first edition of New York State's Early Learning Guidelines. The Early Learning Guidelines will provide educators, policymakers and parents with a comprehensive document that describes typical development of young children from birth through age five. The document also includes a foreword that helps professionals know how to use the document to increase their understanding of the children in their care.

Recent work on the development of the Career Ladder and Registry has focused on defining acceptable educational alternatives to early childhood coursework/majors, referred to as 'related fields.' The framework for the registry is complete and about to be piloted.

A Trainers' Institute is being organized for the pre-conference day at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children conference which will be held in Buffalo on April 19-21. This Institute will provide a continuing professional development opportunity for credentialed trainers and for those working to obtain this credential. Participants will be introduced to the revised Core Body of Knowledge and the new Early Learning Guidelines. In addition, during the opening plenary session of the conference, all conference attendees will be introduced to and receive a copy of the Core Body of Knowledge and the Guidelines.

Copies of these publications will be widely distributed, as well as posted to the ECAC website when they become available.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Introduce the revised Core Body of Knowledge and the Early Learning Guidelines to the early childhood field through a variety of forums, including at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children conference in April, 2012, and begin use as the core elements for the training and education of the early childhood workforce.
- Hold a Trainers' Institute at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children pre-conference. This Institute will provide a continuing professional development opportunity for credentialed trainers and for those working to obtain this credential.
- Refine the elements in the New York State Early Learning Professional Development Registry, including linking with the QUALITYstarsNY database.

- Develop a training plan to ensure the use of the Early Learning Guidelines and Core Body of Knowledge by providers, trainers and leaders in the field.