

BIRTH – THIRD GRADE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL PROGRESS
REPORT

Submitted to:
Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee,
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human
Services,
Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations

Prepared by

Department of Public Instruction and
The Department of Health and Human Services

Date: March 18, 2019

Background

Session Law 2017-57, Section 7.231.(d) requires the B-3 Interagency Council to submit a report by February 15, 2019 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, and the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations.

Section 7.231.(a) established the B-3 Interagency Council as a joint council between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Public Instruction consisting of 12 voting members and four nonvoting advisory members as follows:

- (1) The Superintendent of Public Instruction or the Superintendent's designee shall serve ex officio, with the same rights and privileges, including voting rights, as other members.
- (2) The Associate Superintendent of Early Education at the Department of Public Instruction shall serve ex officio, with the same rights and privileges, including voting rights, as other members.
- (3) The Secretary of Health and Human Services or the Secretary's designee shall serve ex officio, with the same rights and privileges, including voting rights, as other members.
- (4) The Deputy Secretary of Human Services at the Department of Health and Human Services shall serve ex officio, with the same rights and privileges, including voting rights, as other members.
- (5) Four public members appointed by the Speaker of House of Representatives who represent organizations that focus on early childhood education and development, one of whom shall be a representative of Smart Start.
- (6) Four public members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate who represent organizations that focus on early childhood education and development, one of whom shall be a representative of the North Carolina Partnership for Children.
- (7) Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives to serve as nonvoting advisory members.
- (8) Two members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate to serve as nonvoting advisory members.

Section 7.231.(a) further designates The Deputy Secretary of Human Services and the Associate Superintendent of Early Education as co-chairs of the Council.

The Council was created to establish a vision and accountability for the birth through third grade system of early education that addresses the following seven focus areas:

- standards and assessment
- data driven improvement and outcomes, including shared accountability measures
- teacher and administrator preparation and effectiveness
- instruction and environment
- transitions and continuity

- family engagement
- governance and funding

B – 3 Interagency Council Charge and Overview

Charge:

To establish a vision and accountability for the birth through grade three system of early education.

Powers/Duties:

- (1) Facilitating the development and implementation of an interagency plan for a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development services with a focus on program outcomes in satisfying the developmental and educational needs of all children from birth to eight years of age that includes at least the following:
 - a. Any recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on necessary organizational changes needed within the Departments of Health and Human Services and Public Instruction to be more responsive to and supportive of the birth to grade three continuums of early learning and development in an effort to optimize learning gains realized in the prekindergarten years.
 - b. An early childhood information system that facilitates and encourages the sharing of data between and among early childhood service providers and State agencies.
 - c. An early childhood accountability plan that includes identification of appropriate population indicators and program and system performance measures of early success of children such as the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading.
- (2) Implementing a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the educational progress of children from prekindergarten programs through grade 12.
- (3) Collaborating with the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Health and Human Services, the North Carolina Partnership for Children, and other relevant early childhood stakeholders, including members of the North Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council, to achieve the goal of a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development services for children from birth to eight years of age.

B – 3 Interagency Council Progress-to-Date

In 2018, the B – 3 Interagency Council met on the following dates:

- January 31
- March 15
- May 9
- August 13
- (October 11 was cancelled due to hurricane recovery efforts)
- December 3

Members were appointed in November 2017, and the Department of Public Instruction filled the newly established Associate Superintendent of Early Education position in December 2017. The first meeting of the B-3 Council was convened on January 31, 2018. Prior to the meeting co-chairs Associate Superintendent for Early Education at the Department of Public Instruction and Deputy Secretary for Human Services at the Department of Health and Human Services thoroughly reviewed the Birth – Third Grade Interagency Council Legislation and planned the agenda.

The initial meeting of the Council on January 31, 2018 included:

- Introduction of council members,
- Communication of the Council's charge,
- Presentations on early brain development and research on what improves birth through 3rd grade children's educational success
- Co-chairs presented on the strengths and challenges of the seven focus areas of the B-3rd grade education system from their respected departments.
- Council members engaged in a group discussion on work prioritization.

The second meeting of the B-3 Interagency Council was held on March 15, 2018. This meeting began with a review of the Council's charge and focused on a summary of the charge's seven focus areas:

- standards and assessment
- data driven improvement and outcomes, including shared accountability measures
- teacher and administrator preparation and effectiveness
- instruction and environment
- transitions and continuity
- family engagement
- governance and funding

The meeting on May 9th included the following topics of discussion, as identified areas the Council sought to learn more about, and focused on next steps to set up working groups.

- **Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS) Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS):** A web-based data system that provides a snapshot of how all students are performing across large areas of risk.
- **Overview of NC's Early Childhood System and Data Driven Improvements and Outcomes:** There was

a discussion of the various early childhood programs available in the state, such as Head Start, NC Pre-K, Childcare Subsidy through private centers, and Exceptional Children programs, as well as the relationships between what state agencies oversee which programs.

- **Teacher and Principal Preparation and Effectiveness:** The discussion revolved around limitations in the principal and administrator preparation process regarding the lack of any specific early childhood training required in North Carolina.
- **NC Pathways to Grad-Level Reading Measures of Success:** The Measures of Success Framework was developed by a Data Action Team through the NC Early Childhood Foundation. The framework includes indicators in the three goal areas impactful to end of third grade reading proficiency: Health and Development on track, beginning at birth; Supported and Supportive Families and Communities; High Quality Birth to Eight Learning Environments and Regular Attendance.
- **Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Activities:** In response to 2016 legislative requirements, DCDEE and DPI have begun pilot efforts in Davidson County, Iredell County, and Craven County.
- **B-3 Interagency Council Vision and Goals**
- **Discussion of work groups and assignments**
 - Council members prioritized their top three focus areas which were:
 - 1) Data driven improvement and outcomes,
 - 2) Teacher and administrator preparation and effectiveness, and
 - 3) Transitions and continuity

The meeting on August 13th included the following topics of discussion:

- **Approval of Council Vision and Goals, building on previous meeting's discussion**
- **Presentation on NC Early Childhood Action Plan by DHHS Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen:** Early Childhood is a top priority for the department this year, and accordingly is developing a statewide plan to target critical outcomes for young children aged 0 – 8 across the state.
- **Childhood Matters, Minutes Count:** A discussion on the importance of children's positive experiences in early years of academic interactions, and the power that teachers can have.
- **Presentation NC Preschool Pyramid Project:** Within the NC Preschool Pyramid Project, teachers are being taught evidence-based practices to differentiate positive behavioral interventions focusing on social-emotional supports.
- **Work Group Progress Reports and Next Steps**

The October meeting was cancelled at the request of the co-chairs, given the statewide focus on hurricane recovery efforts.

The December 3rd meeting focused around:

- **NC Early Childhood Action Plan:** Updates since the last meeting, including revisions to the draft.
- **Recommendations:** A detailed discussion and approval of each of the three work group's set of recommendations

B – 3 Interagency Council Recommendations

From August 13 through December 3rd, three work groups met approximately three times each to discuss and draft visions and legislative and administrative policy recommendations in the following three areas, as directed by the Council:

- Transitions and Continuity
- Data Driven Improvement and Outcomes
- Teacher and Administrator Preparation and Effectiveness

The recommendations below came from work group discussions and research, with the lists of work group members including Council members, as well as recommended leaders from NCDHHS and NCDPI, and other organizations.

Of note: the recommendations listed by the Data Driven Improvement and Outcomes group were since funded and will be implemented in 2019 through the federal Preschool Development Grant.

Transitions and Continuity

Tracy Zimmerman (council member), Elisha Freeman (council member), Rep. Josh Dobson (council member), Kristi Snuggs, Karen McKnight, Dan Tetreault

Vision Statement

In North Carolina, all young children birth through age 8 and their families are engaged and supported as they transition between home, early care and education programs, and schools. This is accomplished when early care and education programs and schools are ready to support all children effectively and engage with families within the context of the community to plan transitions that meet the diverse needs of all children and families. Collaborative transition planning results in a system that builds upon the strengths of families and provides continuity in care and education from year-to-year and across programs to positively impact growth and success.

Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

[G.S. 115C-105.41](#) addresses the identification of “students who are at risk for academic failure and who are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation, beginning in kindergarten” and directs local boards of education to “adopt policies that direct school improvement teams to develop plans to include successful transition between elementary and middle school years and between the middle school and high school years for students at risk, as defined by the State Board of Education.”

The work group recommends that this law be amended to include a requirement for LEAs to work with community Early Care and Education partners to develop a plan for transitioning all children into kindergarten. State Board of Education policy defining the Transition to Kindergarten Plan is addressed in Recommendation 2.

(The work group recognizes that fiscal and human resources will be required to implement this change.)

Recommendation 2

In order to create shared responsibility for cross-programmatic planning for transitioning all children into kindergarten, this recommendation has five parts:

1. Establish an MOU between state partners that:
 - a. identifies what role each partner will take in providing the implementation supports needed (ex. DPI, DHHS, NCPC, Head Start).
 - b. identifies a process and timelines for horizontal and vertical alignment of education, programmatic, and learning standards (including the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development and the K-12 standard course of study) between Early Intervention, Head Start, Title I Preschool, Preschool EC, NC Pre-K, child care subsidy, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade).
 - c. establishes common terms and definitions.

Challenges:

- a. The capacity of each state partner to provide support varies
- b. Education and programmatic standards are defined by the funding source for Early Care and Education programs.

- c. The North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development are for children birth through age 5 and do not extend into kindergarten, first, second, and third grades.
 - d. The standard course of study for kindergarten, first, and second grades do not include all 5 domains of learning and development found in the North Carolina Foundations for Early and Development.
2. Revise the State Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan to include strategies to further support meaningful alignment and coordination between early care and education and K–12 such as:
 - a. Guidance for the development local agreements between LEAs, Head Start, and other early childhood providers addressing requirements in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 along with best practices. Guidance should include procedures for data and records sharing; establishing channels of communication and coordination of services; engaging families in transition; joint professional development; and linking standards, curriculum and instruction and other educational services horizontally and vertically between early education programs and LEAs.
 - b. A requirement for Local Education Agency decision makers to coordinate with local Early Care and Education programs (NC Pre-K contract administrators, Head Start Grantees, local Smart Start partnerships, private childcare providers, etc.) families, and other community partners to develop a plan. The plan should include strategies and practices for successfully transitioning all children and their families into kindergarten and create a shared understanding between early childhood programs, schools, administrators and families of what children should experience between early childhood programs and schools and between kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade.
 - c. LEA outreach into the community to identify children who are not being served in regulated care settings to engage their families in planned transition processes and activities.
 - d. The provision of ongoing joint professional development between Pre-K and Kindergarten educators including administrators.
 3. The development of a State Board of Education Policy under the “Kindergarten/Early Childhood (KNEC)” section that defines LEA requirements for transition planning for all children from Pre-K into kindergarten.
 4. Revise NC Pre-K policies related local transition planning for transitions from NC Pre-K programs in to kindergarten to require that NC Pre-K Contract Administrators coordinate with Local Education Agency decision makers, Head Start Grantees, local Smart Start partnerships, private childcare providers, families, and other community partners to develop a community plan for kindergarten transition as described above in 2b.
 5. Identify revisions to child care rules and/or QRIS to include language related to collaborative planning for transitioning children from four-year-old programs receiving childcare subsidy into kindergarten.

Challenges:

- a. In the current system, programs are supported and monitored by different agencies.
- b. The capacity of each state partner to provide support varies.

Recommendation 3

The B-3 Interagency Council submit a request for funding through a fiscal note for a data system to facilitate the sharing of child and family information between programs serving 4-year-olds and LEAs as well as funding for human resources to support statewide scale-up and implementation to all programs serving 4-year-olds and all elementary schools.

Challenges:

- a. Early Care and Education programs use different data systems that are not connected between programs or with the K-12 system.
- b. The responsibility and capacity to provide professional development varies from program to program.
- c. Currently, information that is generated in the Pilot is more often not shared with the kindergarten teachers.

Data Driven Improvement and Outcomes

Susan Gates (council member), Rebecca Planchard, Vivian James, Carla Garrett, Mandy Ableidinger, Whitney Tucker, Cindy Dewey, Kim McCombs-Thornton

Vision Statement

Educators, policy-makers and stakeholders will be able to make data-driven decisions for children and families through access to a coordinated, integrated data system including, but not limited, to early care, education and child development, focused on children from birth to age eight. They will understand and be able to track shared “whole child” accountability and outcome measures, such as indicators and goals set forth in the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Measures of Success Framework and the NC Early Childhood Action Plan. An integrated data system that tracks and reports both individual child-level data and population-level data will allow stakeholders to determine policies, practices, programs and services that result in positive educational and developmental outcomes for young children. The birth through third grade data system will be aligned with other statewide data systems, facilitating data sharing and the ability to make data-informed decisions as children progress through the birth through 12 education system, and beyond.

Policy Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Undertake an analysis and assessment of the 0-8 data landscape, (e.g., health, education, child welfare, etc.). This analysis will include, but not be limited to, data quality, data ownership, data governance, data access, data systems, and data gaps. This analysis should include an evaluation of strengths and limitations of each relevant data system.

Recommendation 2

Conduct a broad survey among teachers, administrators, policy-makers, governmental agencies, organizations and other stakeholders of the 0-8 data to which they would like to have access on a regular basis and what types of questions they would like to have answered.

Teacher and Administrator Preparation and Effectiveness

Tracy Zimmerman (council member), Sharon Ritchie (council member), Kevin Campbell (council member), Elisha Freeman (council member), Nancy Brown (council member), Susan Gates (council member), Linda White (council member), Julie Kowal, Lorie Barnes

*Representatives from NCDHHS DCDEE did not participate in the survey process that was administered by the work group in order to finalize recommendations.

Vision Statement

North Carolina's children, especially those with the most roadblocks to opportunity, have well-trained, high-quality, diverse teachers and school leaders from birth through third grade who support all aspects of children's development, including literacy and language development, cognition, approaches to learning, physical well-being and social-emotional development

Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Undertake a study of the licensure system to determine changes needed to align with the birth to 8 continuum, along with the research from P2P, Pathways, the NAM report on Transforming the Workforce and the work underway with the Professional Education Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC). This study could be completed by direction provided by the General Assembly.

Recommendation 2

Professional development related to early childhood education specific for elementary school principals be developed, and there be incentives provided for them to complete. North Carolina should look at a program such as in Washington State as a viable model

Recommendation 3

The Council submit to the Child Care Commission a recommendation that the requirements for Pre-K teacher assistants be amended to require all teacher assistants, regardless of setting, have a minimum of a CDA and be working towards an AAS in Early Childhood, and complete at least 15 hours of annual in-service professional development.

Recommendation 4

The Council recommend to the General Assembly that additional funds be allocated in order to increase the NC Pre-K reimbursement rates to reflect the cost for hiring high-quality educators, as defined in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance.

Future B – 3 Interagency Council Meetings

Over the next meetings of the B – 3 Interagency Council, members will prioritize which recommendations they would like to take action on, and will determine appropriate sets of next steps in order to move forward on those recommendations. As each of these recommendations moves forward, the Council continues to deliver on its charge, moving North Carolina closer to a more coordinated system of birth through third grade early care, education, and child development across the state.

Future meetings of the B – 3 Interagency Council will be held on the following dates, with all locations currently being finalized:

Spring:

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

2PM – 4 PM

Summer:

Thursday, July 18, 2019

10AM – 12PM

Fall:

Thursday, September 26, 2019

10AM – 12PM

Winter:

Thursday, December 12, 2019

2PM – 4PM