QUALITY & WORKFORCE COMMITTEE, ELC MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 4, 2024: 1:00PM-2:30PM-VIRTUAL

Committee Charge: Address the urgent need to develop, recruit and retain a qualified, diverse workforce representative of the communities served. Identify steps to mitigate the systemic workforce problems without compromising high standards, including accessible pathways and equitable compensation to stabilize the workforce and enhance the public's perception of early educators. Identify and support efforts to improve program quality using a racial equity lens.

Present

CO-CHAIRS: Bela Motè and Christi Chadwick
ISBE Staffer: Mary Kestel

MEMBERS: Brynn Seibert, Courtney Hatcher, Dan Harris, Shauna Ejeh, Josie Yanguas, Bryan Stokes, Carisa Hurley Davis, Denise Monnier, Sergio Hernandez, Sara Slaughter

OTHERS PRESENT: Beata Skorusa, Veronica Cortez, Debrah Clark, Angela Farwig, Maya Portillo, Ms. Monique, Taylor Seal, Wendy Connell, Tamara Sanders-Carter, Heather McEvers, Catherine Enright, Ann Whalen, Trich Rooney, Erica Mendez, Penelope Smith, Stephanie, Jenny Metcalf, Kathleen Wildman, Paula White, Rochelle Golliday

Welcome and Introductions

Christi Chadwick and Bela Moté welcomed attendees. Committee members and other participants put their names and affiliations in the Chat.

Minutes of April 2024 meeting

Christi asked for any corrections or discussion of the April meeting minutes. There were no corrections, and the minutes were approved.

Guest Speaker Ann Whalen ISBE

Given an update on the transition movement of the New Early Childhood Agency. The bill has not been signed. TAC has proposed equity framework. Budget information is not available currently. Town hall listening sessions have been hosted to gather input from the community and families. Invited everyone to check into Engagement Opportunities and Listening Sessions (illinois.gov) to stay updated on transition movements. The following link is the Legislation that passed. IL SB0001 | 2023-2024 | 103rd General Assembly: Summery 6.7.24 Childhood Education-Tech

Questions About the Presentation:

Beata mentioned that Legislation didn't change programs, but standards have been changed will it be possible to postpone? Ann stated that programs will have to find the in between. Bryan Stokes asked when emails are sent out, where do they go? Ann mentioned to check spam folders if you are expected to receive them. Also check the ELC website for notices of updates and meeting postings if you are not receiving emails.

Guest Speaker Trish Rooney-IDHS DEC

Shared a presentation on the Smart Start Grants Child Care: Workforce Grants and Quality Supports overview. The overview included information about the Smart Start Workforce Grants and Smart Start Quality Support. Grant funding must be spent on wages. Center Based and Home-based programs will be required to pay teachers and assistants at least an established wage floor. A pilot program showed positive outcomes of increase of credentials and lower turnover rate.

Questions About the Presentation:

Catherine Enright asked are there Gateways level credentials for home-based assistants or would this be for any home-based assistant? Any assistant could be eligible based on the average number of hours worked. There is no credential requirement. Catherine Enright also asked if individual homes need to apply for these grants, or could a childcare network entity apply for multiple homes under on grant application? This is site based and each family childcare program/site would need to apply individually and meet eligibility requirements individually.

The following questions were asked in the chat after Trish completed her presentation and were emailed to her for responses. Responses were not given during the meeting but through in email process after the meeting concluded.

Erika Méndez: Will the Quality Supports program design process include a scope for quality pay for bilingual staff? The FY25 Smart Start Quality Support does not include quality pay for bilingual. Josie Yanguas: How much has been allocated for Smart Start Workforce Grants? $110M. Ms. Monique: If you qualify and your staff meets the floor can you use funds for added teaching support staff? Like you could with the smart start transition grant? Smart Start Workforce Grant funded classrooms must pay teachers and teacher assistants at least the wage floor. Once that wage floor is met if there is additional funding left over it must be spent on wages and salaries, this could include raises for other staff positions or wages for other staff, etc.

Updates

Christi stated that ECACE is at the tip of funding. 4660 Scholarships were given. Funding is at 5million, this is something to celebrate.

Bela thanked Rochelle for referring a person of contact with the committee to support the movement forward of learning more about benefits.
Brynn Seibert reported out updates on budget increase from DHS division of ECE was helpful. Established committee on retirement process for Family Child Care (FCC). Starting 2025, FCC QRS or ExceleRate will have additional rating with seniority.
Angela Farwig stated that the amount of money going into Early Childhood Education is amazing. Angela reported out where the Early Childhood Block Grant Funding is streaming into.

Questions and Discussion

Angela Farwig asked if we are continuing Benefits? Bela stated that some of the recommendations mentioned benefits as one of the areas to explore. How they shape the recommendations will give us guidance on how to move forward with the transition of the new agency in mind. If workforce comes up while transition occurs, we need to be ready for the patterns emerging. We may be a little more ahead. We may help set the pace on innovated ideas.

Public Comment

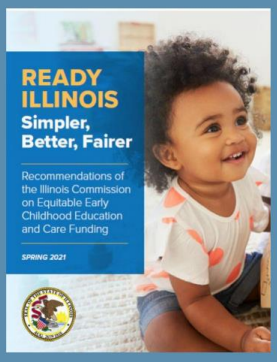
No public comments.

Next Steps and Next Meeting Date

Bela and Christi will reach out to the suggested contacts to gather information on further supporting the recommendation around benefits and workforce development. Next meeting: August 6th has been canceled and a new date will be shared.

PowerPoint Attachments:

Ann Whalen -ISBE Presentation PowerPoint



A single agency for Early Childhood will be:

- ☑ **Easier for parents**
- ☑ **Simpler for providers**
- ☑ **More cohesive and streamlined for the state**

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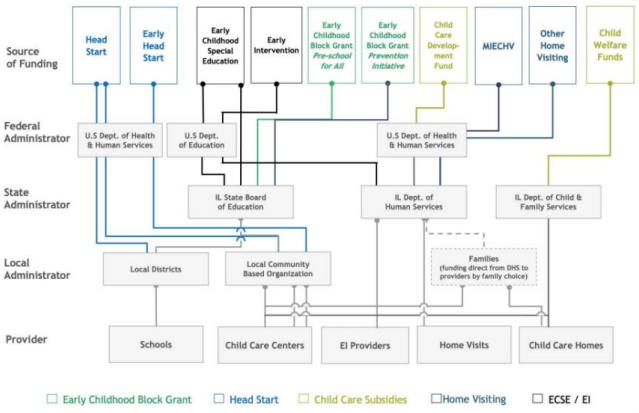
Illinois' early childhood system is too complex, which leads to inequity and inefficiency.



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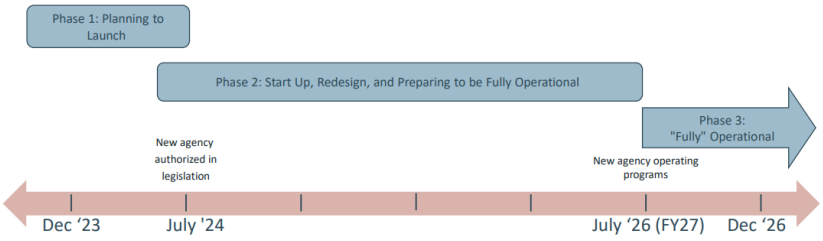
The transition to a new agency is on a multi-year timeline with three phases.



ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS continue to administer programs and lead continuous quality improvement

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preliminary and subject to change

Early childhood services will move; broader family and school supports will remain at home agencies.

IL Dept. of Human Services

- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**
- **Migrant & Seasonal Head Start**
- **Head Start Collaboration Office**
- **Early Intervention**
- **Home Visiting**
  - **State Home Visiting**
  - **MIECHV**
  - **Maternal Child Home Visiting**
- Better Birth Outcomes
- Family Case Mgmt. High Risk Infant Follow Up
- Refugee & Immigrant Services
- SNAP
- WIC
- TANF
- Etc.

IL State Board of Education

- **Early Childhood Block Grant**
  - **Preschool for All (PFA)**
  - **Preschool for All Expansion**
  - **Prevention Initiative (PI)**
- **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)***
- K-12 Evidence Based Funding
- Special Ed.
- Student Assessments
- Nutrition
- Title I CACFP / School Lunch
- KIDS Assessment

IL Dept. of Child & Family Services

- **Child Care (Day Care) Licensing**
- Child Protective Services
- Adoption & Guardianship
- Institution and Group Home Services
- Investigative Services

Programs Moving

Programs Staying

*Program not included in the initial legislative package. Additional discussions with USDOE and state stakeholders are needed to identify the best approach to support children and families moving forward.

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Senate Bill 1 passes out of the Illinois General Assembly!

- **Introduced in Senate Committee** — SB1 passed out of Senate committee with bipartisan unanimous support
- **Introduce in House Committee** — SB1 passed out of House committee with bipartisan unanimous support
- **Governor signs Bill into Law**
- SB1 passed out of the Senate with bipartisan unanimous support — **Floor Debate and Vote in Senate Chamber**
- SB1 passed out of the House 93-10 with bipartisan support — **Floor Debate and Vote in House Chamber**

Initial Legislation Overview (SB1)

What the initial legislation does...

- ✓ Does propose the establishment of the new Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2024
- ✓ Does propose to move early childhood programs and services from legacy agencies to the Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2026
- ✓ Does propose to add the Department of Early Childhood to applicable State advisory councils
- ✓ Does propose the new Department to designate a body by 7/1/26 to advise the Department on an ongoing basis
- ✓ Does propose to add the Department of Early Childhood to applicable Illinois code (e.g., Civil Administrative Code of Illinois, etc.)

What the initial legislation doesn't do...

- Does not propose any policy changes to existing programs or services
- Does not propose any implementation changes to existing program or services (other than to move them to the new agency in 2026)
- Does not make any substantive adjustments to advisory groups or committees (e.g., Early Learning Council, Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention)

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Phase 2: Transition work begins by centering equity, family and provider voice in both the process and outcomes.

- **Starting with parents and providers least centered in the current system**
  - **to advance racial and regional equity**
  - **to center families/parents with young children with special needs**
- **Establish a goal to build a better system for multilingual family services and supports for children receiving special education services**
- **Create multiple and ongoing opportunities and modalities for parents and providers to engage and help redesign the system**
- **Engage in qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and use**

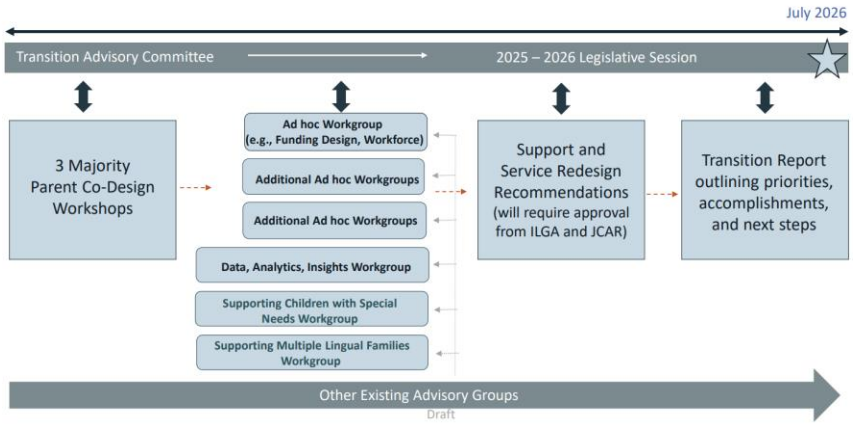
Early Childhood Transition
TAC Charge

The state has established the **Transition Advisory Committee (TAC)**, comprised of representatives with diverse perspectives from across the state, to serve as an external advisory committee as the state moves toward a single ECE agency.

The TAC will **seek and help the state make meaning of stakeholder input** in preparation for the transition, with a **particular emphasis on understanding families' goals and needs** from a comprehensive ECE system for Illinois children.

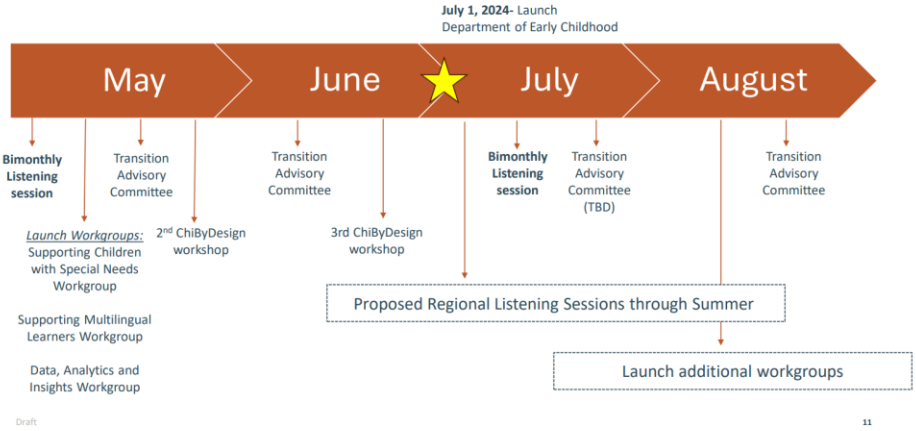
The Transition Advisory Committee will work with the State's Early Childhood Transition Director, Ann Whalen, to **release a report by December 31, 2025**.

Phase 2 Approach to Redesign & Engagement



Draft

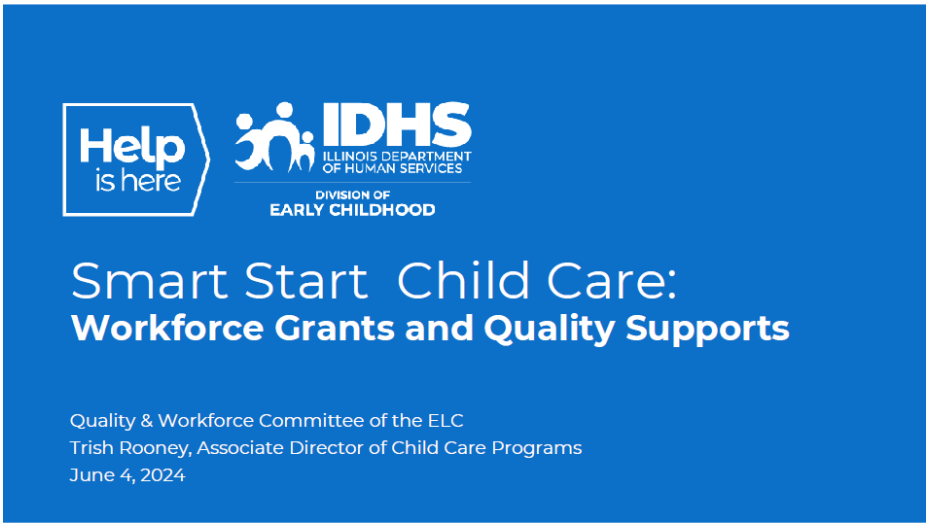
Summer 2024 Engagement



Early Childhood Transition Updates

- Website:
  - https://oecd.illinois.gov/early-childhood-education-and-care-transition-planning.html
- Listening & Feedback and sign-up forms:
  - Survey Link (English): https://forms.gle/8fRk9Hv7tdZ9DaGY6
  - Survey Link (Español): https://forms.gle/UbYhkd641ZjPgUnN8

Trish Rooney-IDHS-DEC Presentation PowerPoint



Today's goals and agenda

GOALS

- Smart Start Workforce Grants
  - Share the Guiding Principles for Decision Making
  - Share the Grant Parameter
- Smart Start Quality Supports
  - Share the background / history
  - Share future goals / direction

AGENDA

- Share overview of the following programs:
  - Smart Start Workforce Grants
  - Smart Start Quality Support

Smart Start Illinois

There several components of Smart Start Illinois, administered by IDHS and ISBE

IDHS: Smart Start Child Care	• **Smart Start Workforce Grants:** Help child care providers meet a new, higher wage floor for their staff • **Smart Start Quality Supports:** Invest in increased staffing and compensation for educator credentials • Illinois **Early Childhood Apprenticeship Pilot**
IDHS: Home Visiting	• Expand **Home Visiting** so more families can receive this support
IDHS: Early Intervention	• Invest in **Early Intervention** to enhance services for families and give providers a raise
ISBE: Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG)	• Increase funding for ECBG to create new preschool seats and improve overall access and care quality

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Smart Start Workforce Grants proposed use of funds

Smart Start Workforce Grants will invest in programs to pay attractive wages without raising costs for families

- Eligible child care providers will receive Smart Start Workforce Grants to support higher wages for their staff members
- Those who participate in the program must pay teachers and teaching assistants at or above a required wage floor
- All grant funding must be spent on wages
- Illinois is the first state in the nation to implement this type of workforce compensation program

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Draft parameters are subject to appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.

Smart Start Workforce Grants decisions align to guiding principles

Smart Start Guiding Principles	Smart Start Workforce Grants Decisions
Decisions must be grounded in equity, prioritizing programs with limited access to funding	Grants focus on **programs serving children receiving CCAP** *and* account for **raising wages** for home-based providers and their assistants.
Decisions must be informed by child care providers and educators who stand to be most impacted by them	Smart Start Workforce Grants were informed by **community engagement** with over 1,800 programs providing input on costs associated with running their programs.
The program must stay within the allocated budget and meet the Governor's stated goals	Smart Start Workforce Grants require programs to **serve more children with CCAP** than Smart Start Transition Grants. With a lower overall budget for SSWG, eligibility criteria increased.
Grants should maximize program reach while also setting a wage scale that creates competitive wages for the field	Smart Start Workforce Grants are estimated to reach approximately 4,000 programs, which is **62% of full day licensed child care programs in Illinois**.
Grants must provide eligible programs with enough funding to cover the costs associated with requirements	The **cost model was updated** and accounted for the cost for an average program to raise starting wages by at least $2-$3 to the wage floor.
We recognize that we need to make decisions on a timeline with the best information we have.	Smart Start Workforce Grants decisions reflect a **year of planning**.

Smart Start Workforce Grants proposed eligibility compared to Smart Start Transition Grants

Eligibility for Smart Start Workforce Grants will be similar to Smart Start Transition Grants with a few differences

	Smart Start Transition Grants	Smart Start Workforce Grants
Who qualifies	Licensed centers and licensed family child care Open and operating by 1 month prior to application Full-day, full-year program	Same as transition year grants
CCAP Requirements	Must enroll 10% or more of licensed capacity with children receiving CCAP	**Centers:** At least **15%** of program's current licensed capacity enrolled and funded by CCAP **Homes:** **1** or more CCAP-enrolled children **Group Homes:** **2** or more CCAP-enrolled children
Revenue sources	Less than 75% of total revenues from other public funding streams (e.g., Head Start, Preschool For All)	Classrooms with **only** CCAP and private tuition funding and that meet classroom enrollment criteria

Draft parameters are subject to appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.

Smart Start Workforce Grants proposed use of funds for center-based programs

Center-based programs will be required to pay teachers and teacher assistants at least an established wage floor*

	Region		
Role	Group 1A	Group 1B	Group 2
Wage floor for lead teachers	**$19.25 per hour**	**$18.50 per hour**	**$18.25 per hour**
Current median wage	*$17 per hour*	*$16 per hour*	*$15.40 per hour*
Wage floor for assistant teacher or floater	**$18 per hour**	**$17.25 per hour**	**$17 per hour**
Current median wage	*$15 per hour*	*$14 per hour*	*$14 per hour*

A **wage floor is a minimum required wage but is different from the legally required minimum wage. For SSWG, the wage floor is a requirement that programs agree to when they accept the grant.*

***Group 1A:** Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties.*
***Group 1B:** Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties.*
***Group 2:** all counties not listed in Group 1A or 1B*

Draft parameters are subject to appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.

Smart Start Workforce Grants proposed use of funds for home-based programs

Home-based programs will be required to pay teacher assistants at least an established wage floor*

	Region		
Role	Group 1A	Group 1B	Group 2
Wage floor for home-based assistants	**$18 per hour**	**$17 per hour**	**$17 per hour**
Current median wage	*$15 per hour*	*$14 per hour*	*$14 per hour*

A **wage floor is a minimum required wage but is different from the legally required minimum wage. For SSWG, the wage floor is a requirement that programs agree to when they accept the grant.*

Home-based provider/owners may use the rest of their grant funds for their own compensation, or to invest in their home-based business.

***Group 1A:** Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties.*
***Group 1B:** Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties.*
***Group 2:** all counties not listed in Group 1A or 1B*

Draft parameters are subject to appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.

Smart Start Quality Support: Background

Smart Start Quality Support Program began as the ExceleRate Child Care Center Pilot Program in 2020

Initiated by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development as part of Illinois' **Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five.**

Designed to test:

- Contract funding method
- Additional supports for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)
- Execution of new standards

Includes:

- 34 Licensed child care centers
- CCAP Region 2
- At least 40% of enrolled children participating in CCAP

Smart Start Quality Support: Background, cont.

In FY 24, the ExceleRate Child Care Center Pilot became the Smart Start Quality Support Program

The Smart Start Quality Support Program intended to:

Pay staff members wages that honor their credentials	Participating centers are paid fixed rates based on the highest credential earned by each member of the teaching staff*
Improve staffing patterns	Participating centers may use funds to hire additional staff above minimum licensing standards
Offer activities to support continuous quality improvement	Activities include 1-1 coaching and a community of practice for directors, using tools like Environmental Rating Scales and Plan-Do-Review processes

**For Smart Start Quality Support in SFY24, "teaching staff" is defined as directors, teachers and assistant teachers*

Smart Start Quality Support: Pilot outcomes and findings

Several evaluations have examined the outcomes of the pilot.

- The number of staff at participating sites grew.
- Teaching staff at participating sites earned additional credentials.
- Turnover at participating sites decreased, particularly for those individuals who earned a new credential.
- Qualitative feedback identified overall positive impacts of the program, as well as opportunities for improvement.

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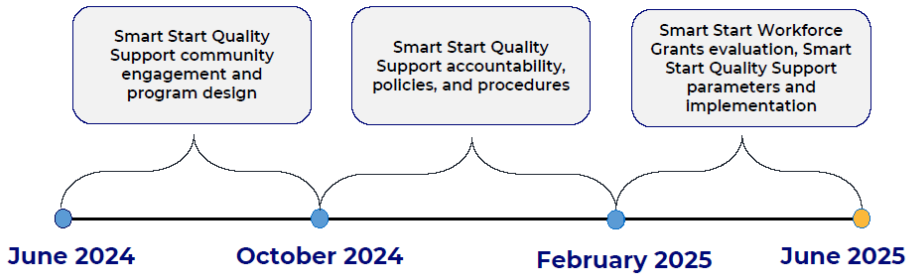
Smart Start Quality Support planning year for Quality Support expansion



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Questions or Comments?

To learn more about Smart Start Workforce Grants visit:

https://www.ilgateways.com/smart-start/smart-start-workforce-grants

We envision Illinois as a place where every young child – regardless of race, ethnicity, income, language, geography, ability, immigration status, or other circumstance – receives the strongest possible start to life so that they grow up safe, healthy, happy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn.

Racial Equity Definition: A racially equitable society values and embraces all racial/ethnic identities. In such a society, one's racial/ethnic identity (particularly Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Asian) is not a factor in an individual's ability to prosper.

An early learning system that is racially equitable is driven by data and ensures that:

- Every young child and family regardless of race, ethnicity, and social circumstance has everything s/he/they need to develop optimally.
- Resources, opportunities, rewards, and burdens are fairly distributed across groups and communities so that those with the greatest challenges are adequately supported and not further disadvantaged; and
- Systems and policies are designed, reframed, or eliminated to promote greater justice for children and families.

Racial Equity Priorities:

1) Align and standardize race/ethnicity data collection and reporting.
2) Evaluate and identify whether processes for distributing resources exacerbate racial disparities, including agency contracting.
3) Address race/ethnicity disparities in terms of workforce compensation and advancement.
4) Eliminate racial/ethnic disparities for children participating in all programs that contribute to school readiness and life success by addressing racial disparities in enrollment in preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds and in prenatal to age 3 services.