

# Early Learning Council SB 909 Report

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Chair.

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## **Acknowledgements:**

The Early Learning Council thanks Jennifer Gilbert, MD, MPH, Mellisa Pensa, MD, Lynn Rosenberg, Heidi McGowan, Lynne Saxton, and Duke Shepard for their assistance with the preparation of this report.

**6 December 2011**

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## Executive Summary

Oregon's best opportunity for distinction and success in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is creating a world-class education system that starts early and produces results.

Every year about 45,000 children are born in Oregon. Roughly 40% of these children are exposed to a well-recognized set of socio-economic, physical or relational risk factors that adversely impact their ability to develop the foundations of school success. These include poverty, unstable family backgrounds, substance abuse, criminal records and negative peer associations. Moreover, Oregon's history of delivering results for children of color<sup>1</sup> is particularly disappointing, as exhibited in the well-known "achievement gap,"

Section 5 of Senate Bill 909 created the Early Learning Council, and charged the Council with formulating recommendations for the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) to merge, redesign or improve the coordination of early childhood services and align early childhood services with child-centered outcomes. The Council was also charged with establishing a plan that could be implemented by June 30, 2012.

The Early Learning Council adopted the foundational elements proposed by the Early Learning Design Team ("strawperson" report) and included elements of the recent Race to the Top Grant-Early Learning Challenge Grant Application in the creation of these recommendations. The Council also considered recommendations from the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, the Association of Oregon Counties, the Oregon Pediatric Association, the Oregon Head Start Association, and the Commission for Childcare in writing this report.

This report is organized in two sections: A) the process utilized to arrive at recommendations; and B) recommendations followed by implementation steps. The sections that address specific elements of SB 909 are highlighted throughout the document.

### Summarized Recommendations:

- In 2012, place under the direction of the ELC for policy, planning, alignment and operational efficiencies toward a common outcome the following programs and services [SB 909 5 (2b-f)]. This is not a transfer of budget authority (excepting programs of the Oregon Commission on Children and Families); the ELC is not creating an agency or seeking agency status.

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<sup>1</sup> Children or communities of color is a term intended to represent all racial and ethnic minorities

- Childcare Division (Employment Dept.)
  - Employment Related Daycare (Department of Human Services)
  - USDA Childcare Nutrition Program (Department of Education)
  - Oregon Head Start/OPK (Department of Education)
  - Home Visiting Programs (OCCF, Oregon Health Authority)
  - Programs of the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (see specific recommendation).
  - Other programs (i.e. WIC, EI/ECSE) should be studied further to determine system integration and remain on the ELC list of responsibilities for next phase (2013) system reshaping by the 2013 legislature
- The Early Learning Council should engage in a joint planning process with the State Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education to consider the unique complexities of these services and make recommendations to the OEIB and legislature related to these services.
  - Oregon statute should reflect compliance and alignment with the Federal Head Start Act. This includes re-competition for OPK in a manner that aligns with new federal processes and expectations for outcomes.
  - Eliminate the Oregon Commission on Children and Families [SB 909 5 (2a)] and transfer existing program, budget, and staff positions to the Early Learning Council.
  - Remove all statutory requirements currently imposed on Counties related to County Commissions on Children and Families, and remove requirements on state government related to the Commission system. (Nothing in this recommendation should be read as precluding local officials from appointing any advisory body that local officials see fit to appoint to meet their local needs).
  - Eliminate the Oregon Commission on Childcare from statute [SB 909 5 (2e)]
  - Designate the ELC as the Governor's Appointees to the Children's Trust Fund Board (by statute the Governor currently appoints 20% of the Board with no connection to state policy or investments).
  - The Early Learning Council integrates and aligns services and sets outcomes, standards, policies, and requirements consistent across all early childhood programs.
  - Organize the delivery of services through Accountability Hubs.
  - Organizations serving as "Accountability Hubs" may be service providers, newly created partnerships, or existing entities, provided they meet ELC statewide standards.
  - Accountability hubs should be formed through issuance of Request for Proposals (RFP) to serve children and begin using the family resource manager model.
  - Establish and maintain family resource manager function. Inventory the existing performance of Family Resource Manager functions across systems.
  - Change the name of Family Support Manager to Family Resource Manager
  - Streamline existing processes and assessments into a single, common screening tool.
  - Voluntary use of screening tool at universal access points and natural touch-points for families.

- Develop accountability for screening in Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) settings for their members.
- Incorporate training for early identification of risk into unified workforce development plan for all early childhood professionals.
- Adopt Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework for ages 3-5 across systems.
- Adopt the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework as a requirement for all Head Start and Oregon Pre-K programs.
- Align to K-12 Common Core State Standards to support linkage of early childhood outcomes and learning with K-12 education.
- Revise Birth to Three Standards to align with Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework.
- Implement the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System as described in Oregon's Race To The Top –Early Learning Challenge Grant Application.
- Pilot Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in 8-12 pilot districts in 2012; deploy statewide in 2013.

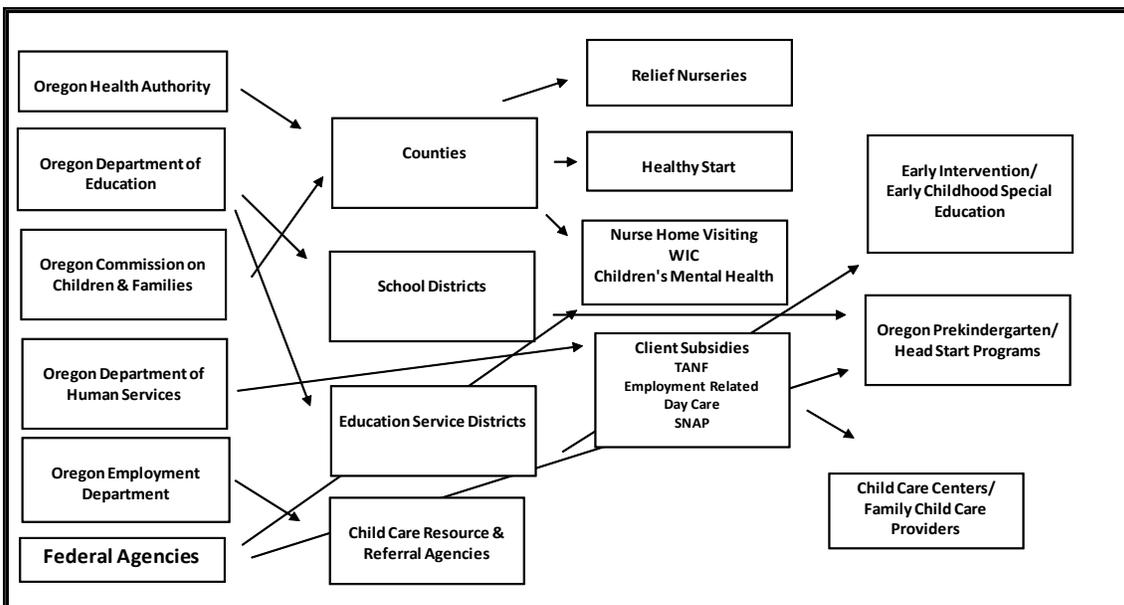
# Early Learning Council SB 909 Report

## Introduction

Oregon’s best opportunity for distinction and success in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is creating a world-class education system that starts early and produces results.

Every year about 45,000 children are born in Oregon. Roughly 40% of these children are exposed to a well-recognized set of socio-economic, physical or relational risk factors that adversely impact their ability to develop the foundations of school success. These include poverty, unstable family backgrounds, substance abuse, criminal records and negative peer associations. Moreover, Oregon’s history of delivering results for children of color<sup>1</sup>, as exhibited in the well-known “achievement gap”, is particularly disappointing. Today, Oregon spends hundreds of millions of dollars per year on services for children ages 0 to 5, not including head start, healthcare, K-12 and tertiary human services (welfare, child protection and behavioral health treatment).

There are a wide range of public, private and non-profit programs, services and organizations focused on early childhood care and education. These programs and services are organized using multiple governance systems. Although some of these programs and services are delivering very good results, our state does not consistently track these results. The programs and services do not work in concert toward a common outcome and some are disconnected from the K-12 education system in which nearly all children will eventually land. In short, our current system is neither integrated nor accountable.



Oregon’s Early Learning Initiative: A County Perspective; Presented by Commissioner Carlson to the Early Learning Council November 10, 2011

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Oregonians can and should expect a return on this investment.

Section 5 of Senate Bill 909 created the Early Learning Council, and charged the Council with formulating recommendations for the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) to merge, redesign or improve the coordination of early childhood services and align early childhood services with child-centered outcomes. The Council was also charged with establishing a plan to implement the early childhood services that could be implemented by June 30, 2012. The Early Learning Council adopted the foundational elements proposed by the Early Learning Design Team (“strawperson” report) and included elements of the recent Race to the Top Grant-Early Learning Challenge Grant Application in the creation of these recommendations. The Council also considered recommendations from the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, the Association of Oregon Counties, the Oregon Pediatric Association, the Oregon Head Start Association, and the Commission for Childcare in writing this report.

This report is organized into two sections: A) the process utilized to arrive at recommendations and B) recommendations followed by implementation steps. The sections that address specific elements of SB 909 are highlighted throughout the document.

## **A. Process**

Immediately following his election, Governor Kitzhaber convened transition teams to launch his key policy agenda priorities for consideration by the 2011 legislature. The Early Childhood and Family Support Transition Team was convened to provide recommendations based on the Governor’s direction to deliver a new focus on early learning as the foundational element to improving Oregon’s long-term educational, economic, and budgetary trajectory. Governor Kitzhaber charged the Transition Team with delivering recommendations for a child centered, accountable, coordinated system focused toward a common goal of ensuring that at-risk children arrive in kindergarten ready for school.

With this direction, a survey was sent to over 80 organizations with a stake in early childhood wellness that requested their input on both the current system and potential characteristics of a more coordinated approach. Recipients were asked to forward the request to individuals on their mailing lists and additional organizations for feedback. A second, targeted request was sent to organizations representing communities of color. A total of 175 individuals responded. The Transition Team report and summary of feedback is included as Attachment A. The Transition Team report formed the basis for many of the deliverables called for in Senate Bill 909.

Concurrently with the 2011 legislative process, Governor Kitzhaber convened an Early Learning Design Team (ELDT). This group consisted of 31 individuals representing a wide variety of experiences, perspectives, and interests, including four members of the

Oregon legislature. The group was charged with building upon the preliminary recommendations and issues identified by the Transition Team, to keep the development process moving forward, and suggest the basic architecture for a newly coordinated approach. The Early Learning Design Team met eleven times between March 14 and June 20, 2011; all were public meetings, including an all day retreat on Saturday May 21. Public comment was taken at the conclusion of each meeting, and organizations were invited to provide information about their programs and to make recommendations for ELDT consideration. Materials were shared with the Design Team and posted online (all of these materials remain online at:

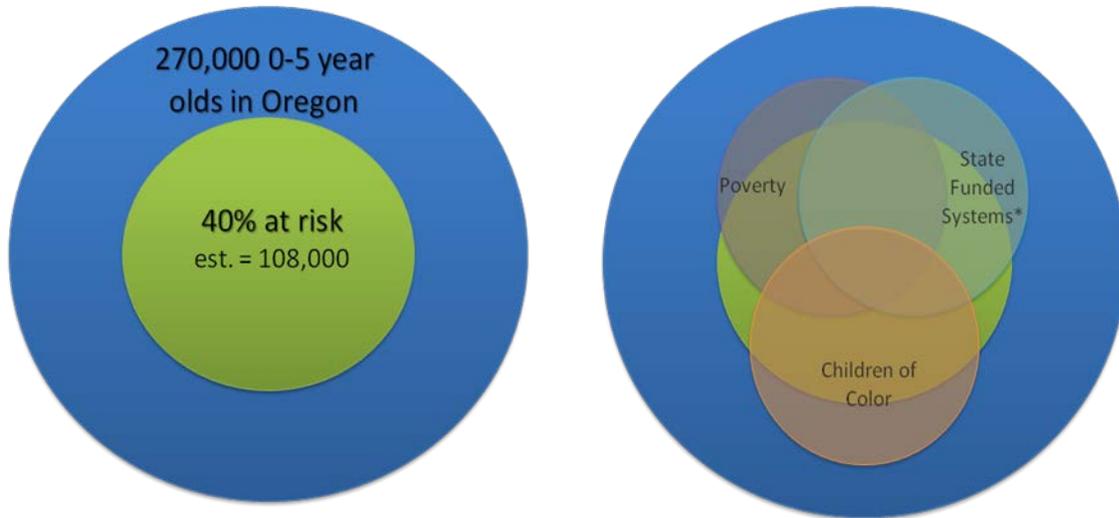
[http://www.oregon.gov/Gov/OEIT/OregonEducationInvestmentTeam.shtml#Early\\_Learning](http://www.oregon.gov/Gov/OEIT/OregonEducationInvestmentTeam.shtml#Early_Learning)). In total, 36 organizations and over 50 individuals made presentations to members of the ELDT (See Attachment B). The result of the ELDT process came to be known as the “strawperson” document, a report with structural recommendations and considerations to inform the work ultimately called for in SB 909. The strawperson was widely distributed and comments accepted through June 30, 2011. Comments came largely from counties and individuals employed in the existing system. These comments informed the final product that was adopted by the Early Learning Council.

Since its formation in September 2011, The Early Learning Council has held four public meetings, including public testimony at three of the meetings. This testimony informed this report as well.

Throughout these efforts, research into recommendations also included consultation with experts and review of efforts underway in other states. Two analysts from the Budget and Management Division of the State Department of Administrative Services supported budget related work.

### **Characteristics of the Desired System**

Input over the past year has described a vision for a coordinated system that is child-centered, family friendly, community-based, and technology supported. The coordinated system should be available to all children, but must particularly ensure that the needs of high-risk children and their families are addressed. Approximately 40% of children (0-5) in Oregon are at high-risk, and among them, the Early Learning Council recommends prioritizing those with three overlapping characteristics: children who are touched by existing publicly funded systems, are children of color, and are economically disadvantaged. This is not an exclusive list of characteristics and should not be viewed as such. It is instead a set of the largest, overlapping characteristics. For example, a recent US Census report shows that 49.3% of African-American children in Oregon are in poverty; simultaneously, Oregon Department of Human Services data for November 2011 shows that 116,218 children ages 5 and under received SNAP food assistance.



Other risks include, but are not limited to:

- In or near poverty
- Inadequate or unsafe housing
- Inadequate nutrition
- Domestic conflict, disruption, or violence
- Substance abuse and/or mental illness
- Neglectful or abusive care-giving
- Unsafe child care or care that does not meet developmental needs
- Health problems

A well-functioning coordinated system is one in which the needs of at-risk children and families are identified as soon as possible, and offered useful assistance quickly, effectively and efficiently. In addition, the system should be one in which:

- There is seamless integration across the service delivery system;
- There is comprehensive view of the child/family—real-time, integrated; information and supporting service delivery, and program management;
- Processes, system, and tools align to improve outcomes and enhance operational efficiency;
- Accountability and performance through use of evidence-based practices, shared measurement, and an integrated data system.

## Principles

In order to redesign and integrate existing early childhood services into a coordinated and high functioning early learning and education system, adaptive change across multiple sectors will be required. Oregon needs to transform our collection of early childhood

programs from a focus on programs and structural perpetuity, to one of direct service delivery and a focus on achieving real results for children. This transformation will require change management and organizational support throughout the implementation process. Those who work in early learning in our state are committed to the well-being of children and families, but a change in the system will require change by people. To be successful, people must be able to envision change in their own work, must think outside of the framework of their current organization, and must be supported through the change process. Moreover, a broader view of Early Learning is required, one that encompasses more than narrowly defined traditional pre-school environments, but rather includes all settings where children are or should be well served from childcare to health and human services.

In short, **results for children and families should be the focus of Oregon’s early learning system.** System renovation will require delivery of needed services efficiently, and with minimal navigation required of the parent/family. The intent of the Early Learning Council is to hold children and parents harmless in the transition to an integrated system while focusing on better directing services to the targeted populations and achieving better outcomes.

To meet this goal, the Early Learning Council recommends adhering to the following principles:

1. Outreach and service delivery will be sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity.
2. Workforce training, coaching, and support will be provided to those delivering early childhood services; coordination, integration, accountability and efficiencies will be a consideration in aligning various workforce development systems into an integrated system.
3. Achieving state-determined outcomes and accountability will be strengthened when persons involved in delivering services understand the vision in order to deliver services locally.
4. The early childhood system will operate as a learning organization in which challenges, mistakes, and course correction are expected and the system will incorporate the principle of learning into its accountability and operations.
5. Children/parents can access the system at multiple entry points. Services will be timely. Necessary assessments will be done rapidly without delaying receipt of needed services. There should be “no wrong door”<sup>2</sup>.
6. Once connected to services, other needed services will be accessible without re-entry and when possible without going to other service providers.
7. Services are best delivered in a family’s own community.
8. Although change will start immediately, full change and implementation will occur over time and improvement must be continuous.
9. The new system will be efficient, cost-effective, and provide a return on early childhood investments.
10. The status quo is not an option.

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<sup>2</sup> Recommendation 3.5, Association of Oregon Counties Early Learning Initiative: A County Perspective