

Oregon's Early Learning System

Positive early experiences. A lifetime of learning. Results for Oregon.

The Oregon Early Learning Council was created in 2011 by the Legislature to build a coordinated, connected and outcomes focused statewide early learning system. The Council guides efforts to streamline state programs, provides policy direction to meet early learning goals statewide and provides oversight of services supporting children and families across Oregon.

The Council is committed to making measurable progress to ensure that all Oregon children enter kindergarten ready to succeed and are raised in stable families with caregivers to whom they are attached. The Council is also committed to ensuring services and systems are coordinated and aligned to support achieving these goals.

In doing its work, the Early Learning Council is committed to:

- Focusing strategies on children who are over-represented in the academic achievement gap and under-represented in accessing strong services and supports.
- Listening to stakeholders across the state and acting on what we hear and learn from them.
- Focusing on results and using data to drive decisions.
- Having the courage necessary to make change.
- Holding onto a sense of urgency.
- Focusing its message and broadening its communication.

This strategic plan acts as a guide for this important work. It is intended to work as a living document to which additional activities and strategies may be added in response to changes in the early childhood landscape. Once adopted, the Council will review progress on key strategies at each business meeting and review/update the plan in its entirety annually.

The members of the Oregon Early Learning Council are:

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Goal 1: Ready children - All children enter kindergarten with the skills, experiences and supports to succeed

Strategy	Success Metric(s)	Tactic(s)	Operational guidance	Timeline	
Strategy 1.1 Develop and fund a supply of high quality, community based, early learning programs, that support the diversity of family values and experiences in our state, across a variety of settings.	40% of providers licensed; % at C2Q; % at 3 star, % at 4 star, % at 5 star	Support the roll out and implementation of a Quality Rating Improvement System for licensed early learning and development programs in Oregon.	Complete data analysis and report back to ELC (who is accessing, rate increases etc.)- no later than January 2015 Complete broader community engagement in the conversation about how different communities and cultures define and value quality - and adjust approach and (potentially standards/evidence collection accordingly.) Expand Develop continuous improvement approach and a way to map standards onto what we learn from communities re: Complete validation studies to ensure quality standards map to stronger outcomes at kinder entry Standards revision following validation study - do overlay of standards with equity lens and strong community Bring Head Start/OPK and school based programs into licensing and then into the QRIS	Full implementation by June 2017; with perpetual/continual improvement	
	Increase number of providers in focus communities/serving focus communities on QRIS.	Deepen community based supports to help develop quality early learning development programs	hub focus networks Adjust current CCR&R approach to ensure we're addressing equity and implementing the best possible provider supports - provide analysis and recommendation to the ELC on this no later than March 2015. Incorporate licensing specialists more explicitly into quality improvement work.	Full implementation by June 2017	
	Strategies are developed and implemented	Develop a clear set of community and culturally appropriate strategies and supports for "family friends and neighbor" providers who wish to strengthen the quality of their work and interaction with children in care.	Complete literature review of best practices for FFN across cultures. Broad community engagement - build on what's working in communities Re-engage HB 2013 work group on the topic. (Currently run by DHS.) Finalize a recommendation including an implementation plan and cost model Revise strategic plan to reflect recommendation	Develop in 2015; implement 2016-2017	
	Standards are developed and implemented.	Develop and implement one set of Oregon Early Learning Standards for early learning and development programs.	Look at and reporting back on current ELDP standards/framework implementation standards of the QRIS and our licensing standards...	Jan-16	
Strategy 1.2 Ensure equitable access for children and families to quality early learning and development programs, overcoming traditional barriers of race, culture, income and geography.	More children in high quality early childhood programs.	Focus on developing a supply of high quality ELDPs in areas of the state that are currently "child care and pre-school deserts" and/or where educational outcomes at kindergarten entry and third grade reading are lagging for our focus population. Develop and fund an expanded model for pre-k available to all four year olds up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, available through family and center based child care, existing Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs, community based organizations and public schools.	Analyze where in the state there is little to no access to child care or pre-k for families in our focus population. Analyze supply of ELDPs in catchment zones for focus and priority schools. In partnership with Hubs and community based providers, develop focus networks to increase the supply of ELDPs Public/private partnerships that support and fund the development of child care networks in high priority areas	December 2016 (with ongoing improvement)	
	Increased number of children in focus population on subsidy in 3,4, and 5 star programs	Connect Oregon's "Employment Related Day Care" child care subsidy program to quality early learning and development programs through tiered reimbursement. (This is a major 2015 legislative ask.) Create stability for providers willing to accept subsidy (and increase the number of providers who are) through a statewide contracted slots program.	Applied for federal funding to pilot test If federal funding is not awarded, develop a longer term plan to look at how to fund and develop community based Look at current subsidy enrollment practices and ensure that families in focus population have equitable access to Work with DHS to streamline enrollment and make more accessible and family friendly. Continue to look at and refine subsidy policy over time so that it meets the needs of families and providers. Continue to refine contracted slots program based on pilot.	June 2017 (for full implementation - pilot in fall) Jan-16 Jan-16	
	System exists	Develop a statewide early learning services referral and enrollment system to ensure that families can connect with the services they need when they need them.	Look at current family referral call lines/pathways across all systems (CCR&R; DHS; 211; etc.) and develop a more cohesive statewide approach - recommend to ELC no later than March 2015. Develop clearer referral pathways from call line through Hubs Develop clear way to follow up on referral to ensure service was received	Full implementation by June 2016	
	Campaigns are implemented and reaching x% of parents and caregivers for focus	Implement public access campaigns that engage parents and caregivers in the specific actions they can take to support early learning and child development.	VROOM StORy Time Statewide literacy grants	Ongoing	
Strategy 1.3 Provide parents with the information and support they need to meet the developmental and educational needs of their children and the child care needs of their families.	% increase in children in focus population screened	Regularly assess children's developmental progress from birth through school entry	Statewide implementation of the ASQ in a variety of settings/natural touch points for children.	Ongoing	
	% increase in families in focus population screened.	Regularly assess families needs prenatally and through school entry, screening for and addressing potential risk factors.	Statewide implementation of a family well being screening tool across a variety of settings/natural touch points for families.	Ongoing	
	Strategy 1.4 Create and support more robust educational and certification pathways for early learning providers	40% of early learning workforce is "career ready" (has a certificate or credential within Career Lattice system; 40% of workforce has an AA; 20% of workforce has a BA.	Create and sustain "portable" "stackable" and transferable degrees/pathways to degrees for early learning programs	Finalize logic model for what this looks like and convene a meeting with HECC for further discussion.	Dec-20
			Make pathways accessible, affordable and supportive of non-traditional students	Use Race to the Top Scholarships as an opportunity to learn more about the needs of non-traditional students - engage with this cohort regularly - and summarize findings to be used for both policy making and future scholarship	
Create a statewide system of online degrees at community college and 4 year-college/university level that is accessible regardless of geography.			Fully scope what it would take to get to this and share with both ELC and HECC for policy direction.		
Establish a statewide apprenticeship program for early childhood assistance, early childhood teachers and program or center directors.			Fully scope what this program would look like and identify partners for a pilot.		
Strategy 1.5 Increase alignment between early childhood education and K-3 education	More children in schools that connect with early learning and development programs. % increase in kindergarten assessment performance across each More children in schools that have aligned curricula and expectations among K-3 classrooms and early	Continue to improve the implementation of the statewide kindergarten readiness assessment	Convene researchers to address the floor effect on the literacy measures and to look at how to improve implementation.	Ongoing	
		Develop a shared strategy between early learning and development programs, Early Learning Hubs and elementary schools for strong kindergarten transition and summer before kindergarten programs.	Using historical kindergarten assessment data, ASQ data, data available on family risk factors and EI/ECSE data, identify cohorts of children in focus geographies and communities who would benefit from additional supports in Use lessons learned from kindergarten partnership and innovation grant and take transition program to scale. Focus in communities that choose to implement full day kindergarten and the K-3 reading initiative	Jun-16	
		Develop shared plans between early learning and development programs and elementary schools/school districts for aligned professional development.	Work through Early Learning Hubs	Jun-16	
		Connect and align standards and instructional practices from early learning and development programs through the early grades of elementary school.	Scale what's working in the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation grants Scale what's working in the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation grants	Jun-16	

Goal 2: Stable and Attached Families - Families have the information and support they need to nurture and prepare their children for school.

Strategy	Success Metric(s)	Tactic(s)	Operational guidance	Timeline
Strategy 2.1 Strengthen supports for family health and well being	More families connected to supportive networks	Increase access to home based services through better home visiting system coordination so that children and families have access to the best program for their needs.	Developing approach for blending and braiding funds available for home visiting.	2016
			Ensure state is maximizing Medicaid match for these funds.	
			Consolidate services and state staff for services.	
			Streamline service requirements for each HV program.	
			Consolidate screening and service referral for programs based on family need.	
			Create one core set of outcomes the HV programs in Oregon are responsible for achieving.	
	Fewer families living below the poverty level	Explore state level policy changes that support family well being and stability, including FMLA, sick leave, and eliminating the cliff effects in public assistance.	As a first step, connect with advocates doing this work in Oregon to learn what the agenda looks like and bring information back to the ELC.	2018
			Work with ELC to further develop an action plan in this area.	
	More families connected to supportive networks	Increase access to resources focused in children age 0 - 3 and their families that builds social and emotional development and attachment.	Develop a true infant/toddler for the state of Oregon with the ELC by fall 2015 and use that to update the ELC strategic plan accordingly.	2015
	Lower substantiated rates of child abuse and neglect	Support/advocate for implementation of a statewide pay-for-prevention model for child welfare.	Child Welfare and the Center for Evidence Based Policy taking the lead, but ELC and ELD should support as appropriate.	pilot in 2015-2017 biennium
	Family stability is included as a lens in policy making.	Develop a "family stability lens" and systematically include "family stability" in all policy and resource allocation decisions and apply needed flexibility.	Identify family stability measures.	2015
	More families with access to information about child development and brain building.	Launch ongoing messaging campaign for families related to key actions at each stage of development (first 2000 days) as well as critical importance of health and well being pre-conception. Launch statewide campaign(s) aimed at supporting families around child development and wellbeing.	Develop clearer plan for campaign and bring back to ELC for consideration and adoption into strategic plan.	2015
Launch VROOM through a mix of Hubs and community based organizations, as well as statewide resources tied to StORy time.			2015	
Coordinated pathways and reduced costs	Operationalize the Family Resource Manager	Work with DHS and OHA to establish joint expectations, job descriptions and care coordination pathways using Family Resource Managers.	2015	
		Establish common care coordination requirements and referral protocols.	2015	
Fewer low birth weight births; fewer teen births; fewer women receiving late or no prenatal care	Develop a preconception/prenatal agenda including but not limited to education on epigenetics, education on parenting, one key question/contraception access, family well being screening, nutrition.)	Explore partnership with DOHAD researchers to provide information to women of child-bearing age and families with young children about the developmental origins of health and disease.	2015	
		Work with the Oregon Health Policy Board and OHA to further develop what would go into this agenda and bring a proposed plan of action back to the ELC for consideration by summer 2015 - then update strategic plan accordingly.	2015	
Strategy 2.2 Engage communities in supporting children's health, development and learning	More families connecting to the services they need when they need them.	Publicize ways for families to connect with programs and services.	Look at and suggest changes to current service referral practices.	2015
			Implement changes to referral practices based on recommendations. (Includes making changes in contracts to agencies that do referrals.)	
		Develop a financial set aside for Hubs to collaborate with CCOs, DHS and community partners, challenging state partners to establish similar set aside for collaboration with Hub.	Establish shared indicators for success and release of funds (also see strategy 3.1 under Goal 3.)	2015

Goal 3: Early Learning Services and Services are Coordinated and Aligned

Strategy	Success Metric(s)	Tactic(s)	Operational guidance	Timeline
Strategy 3.1 Strengthen birth through 3rd grade policy, planning and service coordination.	Hubs make meaningful progress on accountability metrics.	Support and continually improve locally system building work through the Early Learning Hubs.	Define a set of core metrics and incentive metrics that Hubs will be held responsible for.	Ongoing
			Develop a clear model for how to operationalize the Family Resource Manager Function.	
			Update and develop a plan to make use of the Children's Comprehensive Budget locally - identifying state level barriers to blending/braiding funds and systematically working to over come them.	
			Work with state agencies (OHA/ELD/DHS/ODE) to develop consistent messaging template about the wok for local partners.	
	Contracts and state dollars aligned to both statewide and local goals.	Direct ELD to develop an approach to contracting and contract administration for programs it runs directly that aligns with equity goals, system coordination goals and is supportive of local early learning Hub work.	Conduct needs assessment from family/child perspective to understand current and unmet needs of the programs ELD runs directly.	2015
			Examine all current contracts and recommend ways to strengthen focus on outcomes/results, equity, cross sector coordination and coordination with Hubs for contracts in the 2015-2017	
	MOUs implemented and working.	Increase state level coordination, partnership and accountability to results at the state agency level.	Develop agency level shared metrics across health, human services, early learning and K-12.	2015
			State agencies agree to funding hold backs of incentives for local partnerships just like we are recommending for Hubs. (see next strategy)	
			Recommend/require shared policy and planning efforts across agencies. Require MOUs between agencies detailing partnership actions.	
	EI/ECSE services become part of ELD	Incorporate EI/ECSE into ELD.	Figure out ideal approach and issues such as federal compliance with IDEA/regulatory components.	2017
Passport exists and is operational	Create a child level developmental passport that shows the progressive path of early learning services/development ending at 3rd grade with 3rd grade reading score.	Scope out the requirements and design of the passport (data sources, data owners, users).	2020	
		Research how other states have approached this kind of effort.		
		Work with OEIB to understand how this passport could interact with the "personal achievement record" they are working on. Report findings back to ELC by fall 2015 and adjust plan accordingly.		
Coordinated pathways and reduced costs.	Improve referral/shared services to build culturally responsive pathways between early learning and it's partners.	Hold back 3% of Hub allocation [and have state partners do same with local partners?] earned back in increments for creating common screening and referral pathways across DHS self sufficiency and child welfare, early learning, public health, CCOs and EI/ECSE. Earn back 1% for screening, 2% for referral, 3% for care coordination.	2016	
		Develop MOUs with cross agency partnerships to enable the above idea to have impact - so that all agencies and local provides have the same expectations and commitments.		
Strategy 3.2 Strengthen systems that support cost-effective results driven services	Budget is actually driving policy and action on the ground and within state agencies.	Biennial development of comprehensive children's budget.	Use to develop model for blending/braiding program funds.	Ongoing
			Use to identify barriers to blending and braiding funds and then work through agency partners to remove.	
	Data system exists and is operational.	Develop early learning data system	Continue to support ELD work in building and linking facilities level data system (Early Learning Information System) and professional/provider data system (Oregon Registry Online.)	Jul-05
			Identify core sets of system policy questions that we need data to answer and use to identify a starting point and develop scope. Create a home-based services data module as a starting point/test case for system that would cross agency lines (include home based services for children age 0-6 plus CaCoon - which goes to age 21.) Recommend to the Governor that DAS oversee development of a statewide "person level" database.	

Goal 4: The Early Learning Council is accountable/accessible to its constituents

Strategy	Success Metric(s)	Tactic(s)	Operational guidance	Timeline
Strategy 4.1 Ensure implementation of the equity lens across the ELC's work.	ELC has defined the populations it seeks to serve and sees those populations overrepresented in early learning programs. Through survey, advocates report ELC's increased focus on equity.	Clearly define focus population	For each hub region, define and collect data on underserved populations with guidance from hub leadership.	By January 2015
		Identify and analyze service disparities for focus populations by hub region	Understand current proportionality of services for underserved populations.	Data by March 2015, Targets set by August 2015
			Require hubs to set targets for increasing service to underserved populations	
			At regular intervals, check hub progress toward service equity and collect best practices to share	
		Evaluate the equity strategy for each ELD program	Ensure each state-managed program has a strategy in place to serve underserved populations across the state	Report on equity lens implementation by August 2015
Evaluate how each state-managed program is applying the equity lens				
Ensure perspectives from underserved communities are regularly heard at ELC meetings and those perspective influence decision-making	Commit to regular focus groups and listening session, the results of which will be relayed to the Council	Map perspectives heard though focus groups to ELC decisions. For major decisions, clearly articulate the assumed impact on underserved communities on-the-record	Ongoing.	
Strategy 4.2 Empower communities to co-create a robust early learning system and engage in policy decisions	Through survey, stakeholders acknowledge opportunities to offer feedback and inform early learning policy.	Develop consistent approach for listening to communities/incorporating feedback/vetting resulting action.	Find opportunities for ELC members to visit early learning hubs and early learning providers.	Plan by January 2015 (with ongoing improvement)
			Develop clear feedback processes with timelines for when and how feedback will inform decision making	
			Provide regular opportunities to learn from the field about successful practices	
	Develop a community engagement campaign to elevate early learning resources	Create broad and engaging messages about early learning that will attract target audiences to learn more and utilize resources	Co-create communications strategies with the early learning hubs to spread messages and engage geographically diverse parents and providers	December 2016 for initial engagement
				Encourage the use of parent engagement tools (such as Vroom) that appeal to a broad audience, have a low bar for engagement and can serve as a tool to connect a families to additional resources.
	Survey shows that the public is understanding our message better. (Use pre/post survey.)	Identify and engage thought leaders in each community	Ask leaders in each hub region to identify the 5-7 key community leaders that drive action and support in the area.	By February 2016, identify thought leaders
Sharpen ELC messages and broaden communications		Create messaging guides for ELC, ELD, Hubs, kindergarten assessment, quality early learning environments, etc.	Ongoing.	
				Implement regular partner and external communications tools to keep stakeholders informed and demonstrate the value of the work
				Revise and update the Early Learning and Office of Child Care websites to reflect current information and invite individuals to engage in the work.