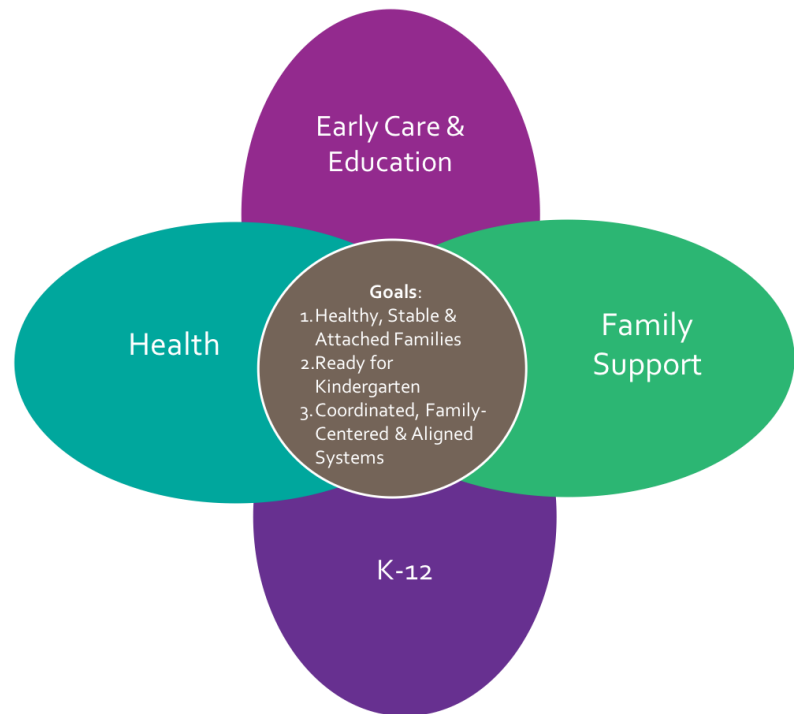


# Child Care & Education Committee: Strategic Planning Engagement

## Overview of Oregon's Early Learning System Strategic Plan

- **Captures what is most strategic to advance an Oregon early learning system for children ages prenatal to five and their families** toward the vision or system goals over the next five years that:
  - Children arrive ready for kindergarten
  - Children are raised in healthy, stable & attached families
  - Coordinated, family-centered & aligned systems
- **Identifies shared interest and focus on child and family outcomes** and corresponding strategies, not individual programs
- **Keeps accountability and commitment** across sectors
- **Captures current momentum** - drives early childhood agenda– lifts up what sectors are doing
- **Identifies critical areas for cross-system efforts**



## Who is Receiving Work from the Strategic Plan

- Early Learning Council
- Individual sectors/state agencies: ELD, Education/K-12, Human Services, Health, Housing
- Partnerships/collaborations among state agencies where cross-sector work is needed
- Early Learning Hubs

## Activity Review

Over the summer, the Child Care & Education Committee voted on multiple themes that resonated most with committee members, resulting in two themes to focus on – Workforce and Family-Centered Systems. CCEC is also charged with supporting families' access to affordable, quality child care and has expressed strong support for recognizing parents as their child's first teachers. With that, the following objectives (and related strategies) have been identified for review and discussion:

- Families have access to affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive early care and education that meets their needs.
- Build and retain a high-quality, culturally-responsive and diverse early care and education workforce.
- Support parents as children's first teachers.
- Improve the alignment and capacity of the cross-sector early learning workforce to support young children and their families across the system.
- Strengthen state-community connections to create streamlined local systems that are aligned, coordinated, and family-centered.

The Committee will have 10 minutes review each objective and their corresponding strategies, reflecting on the following questions:

1. Are the objective and strategies clear?
2. Will the objective and strategies work to support the System Goal?
3. Do you have any concerns about the proposed objective and strategies?

The Committee will discuss these questions and share possible solutions or areas for improvement to be incorporated into the next draft of the early learning strategic plan.

## SYSTEM GOAL 1: CHILDREN ARRIVE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

**Objective 1: Families have access to affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive early care and education that meets their needs.**

Children who attend high-quality early care and education (ECE), i.e., infant toddler care and preschool, are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and to thrive through their school career and into adulthood. This is especially true for children furthest from opportunity, who tend to participate in ECE programs less often than their peers. Achieving a supply of accessible, high-quality ECE takes sound policy, resources, and the engagement of families. Oregon has made a number of improvements and investments in this system. However, in order to ensure that more children benefit from participation in high-quality ECE, we must first ensure the early learning system includes a strong foundation (i.e., child care licensing), supports and finances programs to progress toward higher quality practices, and ensures communities have resources to scale in a way that supports the different needs of families and children.

### **Strategy 1. Build the state's capacity to ensure children are healthy and safe in child care.**

- Improve child care licensing standards and support to implement standards, including risk-assessed rules, strengthening technical assistance and monitoring.
- Coordinate investigations into serious violations in child care at the state and local level.
- Identify and address gaps in current licensing authority, including who is subject to licensing.

### **Strategy 2. Build the supply of affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive *ECE* that meets the needs of families**

- Improve the state's licensing program and Spark to support pathways to licensure for informal settings and new programs, including business education.
- Significantly increase the number of programs, across ECE settings, that are highly rated in Spark, serve infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and children the furthest from opportunity.
- Use Early Learning Hubs to create community capacity to assess existing supply and expand supply that meets the community's linguistic and cultural context by using housing, K-12, and human services programs and public-private partnerships to improve and provide new ECE facilities.
- Enable integration of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education with other funding streams so that children are served in inclusive ECE settings.
- Create shared service networks within communities to better scale infant and toddler care. ♿
- Facilitate the opening of high quality family child care and child care centers within affordable housing units and housing developments, through intentional facility design built to specifications that support quality child care environments and include funding for start-up costs and/or other operational incentives.

### **Strategy 3. Increase families' access to affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive ECE.**

- Create, scale and sustain a state-wide high-quality infant and toddler child care program (i.e. Baby Promise for Infant Toddler care) with a focus on children furthest from opportunity. ♿
- Expand preschool programs (i.e. Oregon Pre-K Program, Preschool Promise, Early Childhood Special Education) to serve more children, especially those furthest from opportunity.

- Integrate quality into child care assistance (e.g., ERDC, TANF child care, and contracted child care slots) by improving payments so that they meet the cost of providing quality by highly rated Spark providers, and incentivize parents to use these quality opportunities.
- Ensure ECE programs meet the cultural, linguistic, and scheduling needs of families.
- Ensure subsidy policy results in continuity of care for infants and toddlers. 🧒
- Secure paid family leave to ensure all babies have care in first weeks of life. 🧒
- Define quality across ECE settings (i.e. SPARK, Preschool Promise), incorporating cultural and linguistic considerations, and use these definitions in program standards and implementation.
- Ensure that resources that incorporate the cultural and linguistic needs of families are incorporated in provider recruitment and support as well as through training and technical assistance.
- Ensure that the scheduling needs of families are incorporated into all quality ECE programs (e.g. Oregon Pre-K Program, Preschool Promise, EI/ECSE, SPARK).

#### **Strategy 4: Strengthen Child Care Assistance programs.**

- Create a unified policy making mechanism for child care assistance programs, including ERDC, TANF child care and contracted child care assistance, to ensure that programs both meet the needs of working families by providing assistance that adequately covers the cost of quality care and provides access to a broad range of providers and provides strong developmental experiences for the children of families receiving assistance.

#### **Objective 4: Build and retain a high-quality, culturally-responsive and diverse early care and education workforce.**

Responsive caregiver-child relationships serve as the foundation for brain development in the earliest years of life. The early care and education (ECE) workforce serve this critical role for children in child care and preschool programs, and are the single most important ingredient toward high-quality care. Yet, Oregon's early childhood educators make between \$25,000 and \$35,000 annually. The state has made some progress by requiring compensation parity for educators in its Preschool Promise program, but this is the only program with compensation standards for educators. In addition, we know that professional compensation is a necessary, insufficient condition: educators also need ongoing professional learning supports and positive, supportive work environments in order to implement best practice. As we seek to improve the conditions for the ECE workforce, we must ensure that we maintain and build upon the racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity of the current field and honor the often decades of work that our current educators have contributed toward making the lives of Oregon's youngest children better.

#### **Strategy 1. Increase understanding of the value of ECE educators.**

- Articulate a statewide vision for a linguistic and culturally diverse ECE workforce in partnership with early childhood educators.
- In collaboration with Early Learning Hubs and other partners, create understanding of the role and impact of early childhood educators among policymakers and the public.
- Add: business community

#### **Strategy 2. Improve professional learning opportunities for the full diversity of the ECE workforce.**

- Implement a competency-based professional learning system that is culturally and linguistically relevant for educators.
- Ensure communities have data needed to design and evaluate effectiveness of professional learning.
- Increase the relevance and effectiveness of professional learning through job-embedded supports.
- Create better two-way communication between the full diversity of the ECE workforce and policymakers.

- Create competencies and professional learning opportunities that speak to the unique role of infant and toddler educators. 🧑🏽

### **Strategy 3. Build pathways to credentials and degrees that recruit and retain a diverse ECE workforce.**

- Partner with higher education institutions to ensure degree programs meet the needs of the current workforce, equitably addressing cultural, language and learning needs, and curriculum addresses the P-5 continuum.
- Improve connectedness between credentials, trainings, and degrees.
- Build upon existing scholarship programs to support more educators to attain AA and BA degrees in early childhood.
- Expand opportunities for ECE preparation in high school that can be leveraged in higher education.

### **Strategy 4. Compensate early childhood educators as professionals.**

- Create educator compensation mandates to align with kindergarten educator compensation across all publicly-funded ECE programs (i.e. Oregon Pre-K Program, Preschool Promise, ERDC child care, TANF child care, contracted slots, SPARK).
- Fund and implement educator compensation mandates.
- Add: public investment

### **Strategy 5. Improve state policy to ensure ECE work environments guarantee professional supports.**

- Create competencies and professional learning supports for program leadership.
- Ensure ECE program standards address program structures associated with better retention and quality of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce.
- Collect and use data to improve professional supports (e.g., paid planning time, paid professional development time, compensation, benefits).

### **NEW Objective 6: Support parents as children's first teachers.**

#### **Strategy 1: Build capacity to engage families as key partners in children's learning and development.**

- Develop a P-12 family engagement policy framework and implementation strategy, which will highlight promising practices, identify opportunities for training and provide targeted technical assistance to support local communities—through Early Learning Hubs, providers of early learning services, school districts, and elementary schools-- to deepen and improve their practice in relation to systemic and culturally responsive family engagement.
- Leverage ODE's Division 22 Assurance of Compliance to ensure that effective, culturally responsive family engagement practices are taking place at the local level.

#### **Strategy 2. Empower families as partners in affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive ECE.**

- Ensure communities have resources to support family choice in selecting high-quality care that meets their needs.
- Provide clear expectations and supports across ECE settings to implement authentic, two-way family engagement.

- Foster partnerships between ECE programs and community organizations to offer culturally- and linguistically-relevant supports to families.

### **Strategy 3: Expand parenting education.**

- Expand availability and access to community-based parenting education by building off of the philanthropic investment in the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC).

## **SYSTEM GOAL 3: THE EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM IS ALIGNED, COORDINATED, AND FAMILY-CENTERED**

### **Objective 2: Improve the alignment and capacity of the cross-sector early learning workforce to support young children and their families across the system.**

Despite working in different settings, the early learning (EL) workforce – consisting of health, human services, K-12, and the early care and education sector – serves young children and their families largely toward the same end: ensuring children’s health and development is on track. This also requires some common knowledge and skills, as well as partnerships with one another. In order to support families and children in a consistent way, key areas of shared knowledge and competency must be identified and supported in a way that is shared across the entire system.

### **Strategy 1. Promote shared core knowledge across the family- and child-serving early learning workforce.**

- Create and implement opportunities for shared professional learning across sectors in key areas of need – trauma-informed practices and family-centered referral pathways – across all sectors
- Analyze existing core knowledge and competency frameworks or standards across disciplines for the family- and child-serving workforce to identify commonalities and gaps across sectors
- Address gaps in core knowledge through professional learning, including creating shared, cross-sector professional learning
- Add: higher ed – work with relevant higher education to incorporate ^^ in relevant preparation their giving

### **Strategy 2. Improve cross-sector recruitment and retention.**

- Through the Children’s Cabinet, require state agencies to report on the diversity of race/ethnicity, language, compensation and working conditions of front-line staff within each sector.
- Analyze data across the early learning workforce to determine common strengths and shared challenges regarding diversity, compensation, turnover, qualifications and professional learning pathways in each sector.
- Use data analysis to create and implement a plan based on the common strengths and shared challenges.

### **Objective 4: Strengthen state-community connections to create streamlined local systems that are aligned, coordinated, and family-centered.**

Oregon has programs and resources addressing the different needs of families across the state. However, many do not work together. Vulnerable families who have been historically underserved may become overwhelmed in understanding what they qualify for and accessing those supports successfully. Early Learning Hubs’ unique role, in partnership with the other sectors, is to build coherent local systems where families can easily connect with needed

supports and services. Each sector has local structures to support the delivery of specific services and programs. However, the Early Learning Hubs are a significant vehicle for how the sectors can come together and have shared impact in improving outcomes for children, families and communities. Over the next five years, the focus of this work is to advance the three system goals at the local level and ensure a shared vision and expectation for improving the outcomes of young children and their families through developing, strengthening and streamlining local systems and developing feedback loops between the state and communities to improve service delivery, address gaps, and tailor resources to the different needs of communities across Oregon.

### **Strategy 1: Further develop the local Early Learning Hub system.**

- Ensure all sectors are committed to the role of the Early Learning Hubs as the infrastructure of local efforts needed for building the state early learning system and making progress toward the three system goals.
- Require all sectors be represented on the Early Learning Hub Governing Boards to ensure shared goals, policy and programming are invested in and implementation is coordinated across a region.
- Strengthen the Hub role in providing community needs assessments that meet the requirements of each sector, as well supports coordinated and aligned community planning and shared problem solving.
- Develop a continuous quality improvement process that Early Learning Hubs and their partners can use to identify ongoing learning, improve local system development, and to identify and adapt to emerging shifts in community trends over time.
- Create ongoing feedback loops between the state sectors and communities to improve understanding of policy, foster collaboration around shared goals, and address barriers to implementation in order to make progress toward the three systems goals.

### **Strategy 2: Ensure family voice in systems design and implementation.**

- Increase authentic input of family voice in the design and implementation of state policy and programming.
- Work with Early Learning Hubs and their partners in developing local systems that welcome all families and support their access to programs and services.
- Develop centralized local system to coordinate eligibility of services across sectors.
- Increase the capacity of the Early Learning Hubs to facilitate culturally responsive family engagement activities across their communities.
- Ensure children and families have access to culturally responsive family support services. Strategy 1: Create ongoing, bi-directional community engagement with families and community stakeholders.
- Build and connect with preexisting regional parent and community stakeholder groups to create venues to seek feedback and input on current and future work of the system.
- Incorporate culturally responsive community engagement practices to engage communities furthest from opportunities that have not yet been engaged.
- Create a parent compensation model for their cost of attendance to these meetings so that parents and their families can attend for zero out of pocket cost.

Note: The 🧒 is used to denote strategies that are specific to infants and toddlers. Strategies are designed to benefit infants, toddlers and preschoolers in general.