



State Early Childhood Advisory Council of MISSISSIPPI

SECAC ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT: 2014–2015

Purpose of this Document

In October 2015, chairs of the five functional committees of SECAC were asked to provide a summary of the Committee's accomplishments in 2014 – 2015. They were also asked to provide input and recommendations for future activities of the committees, future areas of focus for the Council and the ongoing structure of SECAC committees. This document summarizes the responses provided by the Committee chairs.

Highlights - SECAC Committee Reports

Data Systems Committee

The Data Systems committee spent the past year gathering information and preparing MS' early childhood system for an early childhood integrated data system. The committee accomplished the following:

- The committee **identified and defined MS' current early childhood system** by developing a list of programs that provide services to children, families and providers. These programs were then organized by three domains (early learning and development, health and family leadership and support) as well as by service delivery structure and recipient of services. This information was paired with information from a survey administered to SECAC members to determine the importance of information to stakeholders in the development of a statewide early childhood data system and to identify key policy questions that will be used to organize the data in the new system.
- The committee also **supported securing funding for an integrated, coordinated early childhood data system**. A proposal was submitted and funded for \$3million. This funding will help develop MS' early childhood integrated data system. The committee supported this work by developing system-related objectives of:
 - establishing an integrated, coordinated early childhood data system that facilitates understanding of which interventions/services work best for young children and families, and access to high-quality services that are integrated across service sectors; and
 - Establishing a clear link between the early childhood data and the SLDS to analyze long term outcomes of MS' children.
- The committee worked on **drafting a work plan for a data portal** that outlines the communication plan, development strategy, capacity and resources, and initial tasks for the establishment of a data portal.
- The committee **introduced the idea of data governance** to the SECAC, through a recommendation that SECAC should be the data governing body for the early childhood data system. The committee also recommended a data council for the implementation of the grant described above.

Adopted by the SECAC in November 2015

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The Data Committee has the following recommendations for the continuation of their activities:

- Identify a broader policy framework for the organization of MS' early childhood system to support the identification of data indicators that will help improve the delivery of early childhood programs in MS. This step is critical to the development of data tools, such as dashboards, that will inform the ongoing discussions about improving early childhood in MS.
- Create system-wide data governance under the policy framework, and engage in ongoing discussions at the state agency level to determine the specific functions of the system that align with the framework developed.
- Create buy-in and commitment to include data in MS' strategy for continuous improvement and evaluation of early childhood programs in the state.

The Data Committee's priorities for the coming year are governance (for access, use, and management of data system) and data modeling around an agreed-upon framework, with clear articulation of accountability and authority. Other important activities include:

1. Adopting what will be the fundamental elements of an early childhood data system using the results of the policy question survey to inform the development.
2. Evaluating the readiness, practicality, and capacity of sources to provide desired data in an accurate and timely fashion.

KRA Committee

The KRA committee spent the 2014 – 2015 year supporting the administration of the first statewide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and the use of the resulting data. The committee accomplished the following:

- The committee **reviewed the results of the initial KRA in Fall 2014 and the follow up assessment in the Spring of 2015**. Results from the fall indicated that 34.6% of students were not ready for Kindergarten. Spring 2015 results indicated that 56.4% of students were classified as transitional readers - beginning to read unfamiliar words and easy reader material. Results from the assessment are informing professional development opportunities for 2015-2016.
- The committee **supported the implementation of professional development for Early Childhood Educators** by participating in discussions with MDE staff members about plans for professional development. Based on feedback from classroom teachers and the results of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, MDE scheduled professional development modules throughout the 2014 – 2015 school year across the state for Pre-K and K teachers, as well as other elementary teachers. Collaboration among state agencies allowed for sharing of resources and a more uniform message. Using the additional data and information from the current year's training activities, topics scheduled for 2015-2016 include the following:
 - Leading Pre-K Teachers: An Administrator's Guide
 - Math and Learning Centers
 - Differentiated Learning
 - Teaching Strategies in the Pre-K Classroom
 - Including Children with Disabilities in the Pre-K Classroom
 - Assessment in the Early Childhood Classroom
 - Kindergarten Readiness
 - Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Olds
 - Collaborating with Parents
 - Early Childhood Literacy
 - Technology and Science
 - Pre-K LETRS
- The committee **supported the implementation of training modules for parents** by participating in discussions with MDE staff members about plans engaging families.

The KRA Committee has the following recommendations for activities related to the KRA:

- Continue to review and use KRA data to inform multiple discussions to help children be ready for kindergarten.

- Continue to keep professional development for teachers as a central component to improving outcomes. It should be focused and ongoing in content and delivery.
- Continued engagement of parents as essential for creating opportunities for high-quality early childhood experiences in Mississippi.

In their report, the KRA Committee noted that the collaboration among state agencies and stakeholders has expanded in recent years, which contributed to the successful work of the KRA committee. This unified effort was identified as a key component for future success.

PD and Workforce Committee

The PD and Workforce committee spent the past year assessing the current early childhood workforce in MS and identifying strategies for improving personnel preparation and articulation across programs. The committee accomplished the following:

- The committee worked on ***developing and conducting a workforce assessment*** of early the childhood field. As a part of this activity, the committee gathered information about:
 - the current resources for early childhood development professional development,
 - data with directors' and teachers' credentials, and
 - data on the number of graduates from ECE 2 year and 4 year programs from LifeTracks.

The data with directors' and teachers credentials was presented to SECAC in a map. The data from Lifetracks was reviewed and the committee determined additional data was needed before interpretation could be completed. Data from T.E.A.C.H. was also considered; however, T.E.A.C.H. lost funding in the state, so this data will not be a part of the ongoing workforce assessment.
- The committee ***completed a state policy scan on articulation agreements***. This document was used to assess possible resources and models for MS articulation agreements. The committee opted to consider the model that Texas is currently using.
- The committee ***created a sub-committee including representatives from 2 and 4 year institutions*** to advise and guide improvement of the alignment of the articulation from 2 to 4-year institutions and to support the development of a seamless curriculum. This group had its initial meeting in August 2015. A pilot of an inverted curriculum, or 2+2 program, was recommended and is in the planning stages.

The PD and Workforce Committee has the following recommendations for its activities:

- When the additional data has been collected, create another map to finish this year's assessment.
- Update the workforce assessment on a regular basis to support planning and decision making.
- Create a tool-kit for providers and students to use to navigate the current articulation from 2-t o 4-year institutions.
- Continue to investigate placement status of the ECTE technical degree graduate (recommendation from the August sub-committee meeting).
- Support the pilot process for the inverted curriculum or 2+2 programs.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee spent the past year developing an engagement plan around the MS Early Learning Standards and Guidelines to expand their use statewide. The committee accomplished the following:

- The committee ***completed a survey of providers*** to gather information about how child care providers and child care directors are accessing and using the statewide early childhood standards and guidelines. The survey was developed, administered and distributed the survey for the committee, and conducted follow up to get complete answers from the respondents. Results indicate that 82 percent of the surveyed providers reported using the standards and find them to be helpful. The 18 percent who don't use the

standards reported that they didn't use the standards because they weren't required to do so. A full report is in process and will be delivered to SECAC up on its completion.

- The committee began the process of **creating a "report card" template** for students moving into kindergarten. The intent of this template was to support the transition of an individual child from an early care setting into a public school setting by sharing information from one program to another. The committee discussed this template during the year, but ultimately opted to focus on the survey and return to this discussion at a later date.

The Standard Committee has the following recommendations for its activities:

- Use the survey results to develop a plan for how to distribute the standards in a way that reaches all providers in multiple ways. The plan should include a component of sustainability to ensure that the standards and a curriculum guide are being utilized.
- Consider additional recommendations when the full survey report comes out.
- Reconsider the report card template, including method of use, once the full survey report is complete.

QRS Committee

The QRS committee spent the 2014 – 2015 year completing a series of listening sessions to learn more from providers about the implementation of the MS Quality Stars program. The committee accomplished the following activities:

- The committee **planned and launched a Listening Session Tour**. The QRS Committee determined that in order to better understand provider needs related to the current QRS, a statewide Listening Session would provide the opportunity to hear from providers first hand. The committee planning activities included determining the questions to ask, developing the format of the sessions, structuring the role of the SECAC members, and securing dates and locations for the different listening sessions. An important part of planning was a "Pilot Session" in Tupelo during October. This pilot provided necessary information to fine tune the process for future listening sessions. The tour took place from October 2014 to January 2015.
- The committee **conducted listening sessions in 8 locations across MS**. From January 2015 until July 2015, Listening Sessions were held in Biloxi, Jackson, Hattiesburg, Oxford, McComb, Greenville, Meridian, and Vicksburg. The format was semi-structured Q&A. Providers were prompted to respond to the list of questions developed in Committee. The information gleaned from these sessions is the substance of the report delivered to Council regarding provider needs and expectations related to QRS.
- The committee created a **summary of the input from the listening sessions to SECAC**. Each session was recorded, the conversation transcribed, and the text coded for analysis. A report describing the findings was developed by the Technical Assistance team and presented to Council.

The QRS Committee has the following recommendations for the continuation of its activities:

- Findings from the listening sessions should inform the decision-making of the Council as the revision to the QRS proceeds.
- The Council should consider naming individuals (as key stakeholders) to be involved in the QRES revision process.

Moving Forward: Looking at Priorities and Structure for 2015 – 2016

The Focus of MS' Early Childhood System

Each committee chair was asked to provide their opinion about major focus areas for Council activities in the coming year. The following is a summary of suggested priorities for the coming year.

- Bridging early childcare with early education. There is the erroneous assumption that early education has always been 0-8. That is not the case. For many years, we have had early care 0-4 and then early education as part of the pre-K-12 system. It is very important that we make it clear that we have to be able to bridge

the world of early care with the world of early education. The goal should not be to replace early care with early education. The key is to create a framework that fits the needs of Mississippi so that the two worlds can be brought together effectively through emphasis on intentional transition and alignment activities.

- Creating a more formal structure for MS' early childhood system. The lack of a formal structure to the state's early childhood efforts have been noted as a negative factor in grant applications.
- Creating a sustainable and educated work force.
- ECE completely funded.
- Mississippi needs to seriously consider the possibility of 4 year olds joining the compulsory education system. Mississippi should be building an EC system that is sustainable and would support this mandate in the future.

Priorities for Council Activities

Overall, Committee chairs indicated that having clear Council goals with clear indicators of success would support the development of committee goals that are attainable in one year. Additionally, Committee chairs offered the following priorities for recommendation areas in 2015 – 2016:

- Developing a well-defined statewide system supported by legislation and resources. Exploring a more cohesive system or structure for Mississippi's early childhood work.
- Funding for statewide pre-k collaboratives and funding for a similar program to T.E.A.C.H. and Wages.
- Working to establish more cohesiveness amongst the early childhood establishments.
- Supporting the professionalization of the EC workforce.

Recommendations for Committee Structure

Lastly, Committee chairs were asked to provide their ideas for how committees of the Council should be structured and function.

- Change the structure so is limited to two or three functional committees.
- Continue to having representatives from across agencies and offices on each committee.
- Consider having committees meet every month instead of the Council meeting monthly.
- Keep the structure of a chair and two co-chairs.
- Committees should meet bi-monthly rather than monthly.
- Continue technical assistance support.
- Have fewer committees with more accountable committee chairs.
- Consider having Council meetings every other month and working committee meetings in between; still mandatory and structured, in the same time and place as larger Council meetings.

For more information, please contact:

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