



Preliminary Gap Analysis Overview to the  
Nevada Legislative Commission on Education  
March 15, 2018

- I. Preliminary policy gap analysis framework using “OECD Starting Strong III - A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care” Report
  - A. Background<sup>1</sup>
    1. An increasing number of OECD countries have made considerable efforts to encourage quality in ECEC
    2. Some countries are still focusing on other aspects of ECEC, such as access and affordability.
    3. Five policies, based on findings from international literature reviews, have been identified as key levers to encourage quality in ECEC
    4. Intended to present “practical solutions” for anyone with a role to play in encouraging quality in ECEC. The toolbox will present five policy levers that are likely to enhance quality.
- II. Policy Levers
  - A. **Lever 1: Setting out quality goals and regulations**
    1. OECD Policy Development Recommendations for Goals<sup>2</sup>
      - a) Quality goals should be developed focusing on children’s early development, well-being and learning, involving all early childhood services. Institutional performance should be strengthened for improvement purposes with core public funding.
      - b) Roles and responsibilities at the central, regional and local levels of government should be clearly defined for system-level reform to successfully move towards the same goals. Central authorities can delegate responsibilities to local or center-based authorities, while supporting their capacity to exercise the delegated responsibilities to the full extent. Municipalities and ECEC provisions can better coordinate with parents and communities to

<sup>1</sup> "Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - How to Use the Quality Toolbox"  
<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49380552.pdf>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: ECEC Quality Goals Matter". Retrieved March 5, 2018, from  
<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360354.pdf>

determine the appropriateness of quality goals and adapting these goals to local needs.

- c) A more integrated approach to ECEC quality goals allows government bodies to combine resources for ECEC services; regulations and other aspects of ECEC provision can be made more consistent; variations in access and quality can be lessened; and links at the service level are more easily created.
- d) Among various quality aspects, such as curriculum, workforce, family and community engagement, and monitoring, prioritisation and consideration of political, technical and financial feasibility are key in setting out quality goals.

#### **Nevada Currently:**

- There are no current statewide goals or vision for complete implementation of ECEC or what Nevada's specific vision for implementation of ECEC is. There is also no time frame for when any specific goals would be implemented. There have been policies proposed and adopted in the area of ECEC such as State Pre-K, administration of Head Start, establishment of Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, etc.

#### **Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendation(s):**

- Set a timeline for implementation for state funded academically focused ECEC programs to serve a specific percentage of students.
- Set up a committee or leverage the existing Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (or some combination thereof) to work to develop ECEC specific goals for the state of Nevada. Have that committee present recommendations to legislature for policy recommendations and adoption.

#### **2. OECD Policy Development Recommendations for Standards and Regulations<sup>3</sup>**

- a) Minimum standards and regulations should apply to all ECEC settings, whether they are publicly or privately operated, and should cover provisions for very young children, as well older children, recognising that different settings and age groups may require different standards.
- b) Providers need to be supported by well coordinated national, state and local mechanisms with adequate public investment levels assure a good level of quality provision as well as to offer parents consistent and affordable ECEC options.
- c) Affordable access for all children to ECEC with minimum standards should be ensured by governments, as universally covered ECEC systems generally organise services more

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<sup>3</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: Minimum Standards Matter". Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360354.pdf>

equitably, observe higher standards and employ more qualified personnel. At the same time, it is important to recognise that there are variations in needs and demands regarding ECEC.

- d) Defining and assuring quality should be a participatory and democratic process, involving different stakeholder groups, such as parents, families, professionals and children. The enforcement of standards is more likely to succeed when the authorities engage in consultative policy making and build up a consensus about the needs and relevance of minimum standards.

**Nevada Currently:**

- Nevada State Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a voluntary program through the Nevada Department of Education open to all child care centers in Nevada that seeks to be a systemic approach to improve and assess the level of quality in child care centers. There is no cost for the rating or for families to look up ratings of facilities.

**Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendation:**

- Transition the Nevada State Stars QRIS to a non-voluntary program for childcare centers of all kinds.

**B. Lever 2: Designing and implementing curriculum and standards**

1. OECD Policy Development Recommendations for Designing and Implementing Curriculum and Standards<sup>4</sup>
  - a) Ensuring that curricula are well-aligned for children from ages zero to six years and beyond ensures a more holistic and continuous child development.
  - b) Recognising the virtues of complimentary curricula models, which include cognitive and social elements of development and staff- and child-initiated activities, better facilitates a child-centred environment where learning builds on existing knowledge from the child perspective while stimulating the academic and socio-emotional development of children.
  - c) Considering national characteristics and center-level factors provides insight into the appropriateness of a curriculum: when, for example, staff education is low, a more concrete curriculum with added guidance might be useful.
  - d) Sufficient and appropriate staff training and education in curriculum implementation and in current emerging elements, such as ICT and multicultural child development, is highly relevant in ensuring equitable and high-quality ECEC environments.

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<sup>4</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: Curriculum Matters". Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360372.pdf>

- e) Adapting curricula to local circumstances can reinforce the relevance of ECEC services and enhance the appropriateness of curriculum aims and objectives.

**Nevada Currently:**

- Pre-K Standards
  - Have been finalized since December 2003
- Early Learning Guidelines for Infant and Toddler Learning
  - Finalized in 2011
- Nevada Registry
  - Established in 2009
- Office of Early Learning and Development (ELD) in the Nevada Department of Education
  - Established in 2014
- Silver State Stars Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)
  - Effort to establish began in 2008

**Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendation(s):**

- Progress has been made in Nevada in each of the OECD policy recommendations for Policy Lever 2. That said, the extent to which the progress is impacting children at scale is difficult to assess. It would be beneficial to have a report that considers each of the above (a-e) recommendations). Nevada Succeeds recommends working with the Office of Early Learning, the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the Nevada Registry, and other related organizations and groups to map out the extent to which Nevada is working toward the recommendations.

**C. Lever 3: Improving qualifications, training and working conditions**

1. OECD Policy Development Recommendations for Qualifications<sup>5</sup>
  - a) Raising qualifications of ECEC practitioners can boost quality provision and provide more stimulating learning opportunities, which yields better academic and social outcomes. However, considering the costs of doing so, it is important to bear in mind that it is not necessary that all staff have the same qualification levels. Of particular importance are the types of education leading to the qualifications.
  - b) Staff with lower levels of initial education could also be given opportunities to enhance their pedagogical quality by working alongside those with higher qualified staff.

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<sup>5</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from “Research Brief: Qualifications, Education, and Professional Development Matter”. Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360398.pdf>

- c) Improving quality provision also requires a broad range of professional development activities. Professional training should be available for all ECEC practitioners and preferably be a requirement to stay or grow in the profession. The key to effective professional development is identifying the right strategies to help practitioners stay updated on pedagogical methods and curriculum subject knowledge while ensuring that staff needs are met.
  - d) Training with a specialised focus on early education or child development is considered beneficial since educating young children requires particular skills and specific content knowledge.
2. OECD Policy Development Recommendations for Working Conditions<sup>6</sup>
- a) Governments can consider introducing equal working benefits (salaries, benefits and professional development opportunities) for equivalent qualifications across the early childhood and primary education fields to improve recruitment and quality.
  - b) In terms of children's experiences, evidence suggests that there are benefits from focusing on better staff-child ratios and low staff turnover rates.
  - c) Providing financial and non-financial support and incentives for well-trained practitioners to remain working in the ECEC sector, such as giving overtime compensation in additional pay or holidays, and improving their knowledge and practices by, for example, financing training opportunities improves staff well-being and staff professionalism.
  - d) Raising awareness among managers of the importance of favourable working conditions and how to facilitate these is important for raising ECEC quality and key to improving provision.
3. Research gaps
- a) The evidence base for the impact of working conditions on child outcomes has not been fully explored. Research on the relationship between working conditions and child development and how work conditions affect child outcomes could shed new light on the importance of working conditions.
  - b) Little is known about which aspects of working conditions affect which groups of children most.
  - c) There is a need for further research on which aspects of working conditions have the largest impact on improving the quality of ECEC services (and which aspects of ECEC services).

### **Nevada Currently:**

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<sup>6</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: Working Conditions Matter". Retrieved March 5 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360381.pdf>

- Licensure for Early Childhood Birth Through Second Grade exists through the Nevada Department of Education
- Professional training is not available or required all ECEC practitioners and is not a requirement to stay or grow in the profession.
- Early Childhood Education and Training is a Career and Technical Education Focus in High Schools
- The Nevada Registry “the host of Nevada’s Early Care and Education Professional Career Ladder, the Registry collects, validates and warehouses the professional and educational achievements of early childhood educators throughout the state and highlights those accomplishments through Career Ladder placement. Providing a single point of access, the Registry provides professional development planning tools, including an online Professional Development Plan, and hosts a comprehensive website containing an online calendar of approved training, an industry-related blog, statewide job board and community resources/information. The Registry also operates the statewide training approval system for all informal, community-based training (not-for-college-credit) in Nevada.”<sup>7</sup>
- There is no assessment or report of working conditions for ECEC workers generally or related to the type of care setting
  - Nationally there have been reports about the implications of low pay for ECEC workers

#### **Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendation(s):**

- Work with the Office of Early Learning, the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Nevada Registry, and other related organizations and groups to map out the extent to which Nevada is working toward and making progress toward the OECD recommendations.
- After finding out what gaps and needs exist, consider state funding and/or scholarships for ECEC licensure and/or PD for professionals already working in the field.

#### **D. Lever 4: Engaging families and communities**

1. OECD Recommendation Policy Recommendations for Engaging Families and Communities<sup>8</sup>
  - a) Since the Home Learning Environment (HLE) has a large impact on child development, close partnerships between ECEC centers and parents concentrating on improving the HLE in the early years is of particular importance. Focus on development or stimulation of

<sup>7</sup> (n.d.). About The Nevada Registry. Retrieved March 15, 2018, from <http://www.nevadaregistry.org/about>

<sup>8</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from “Research Brief: Parental and Community Engagement Matters” . Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360363.pdf>

implementing a home curriculum, conducting home visits, and raising awareness among practitioners and parents on the importance of the HLE are effective measures in raising the quality of the HLE.

- b) Including parental engagement as a benchmark for quality ECEC services encourages ECEC providers to more frequently involve and cooperate with parents.
- c) Recognising parents and wider communities as strategic partners for integrated ECEC services helps to ensure broad public support and a multi-perspective contribution to decision making.
- d) Because leadership is critical in family and community engagement, ECEC workers might need special or additional training to help them develop the skills needed to promote family-centre partnerships and community involvement.

(1) Research gaps

- (a) Sound research on effective parental and community engagement approaches and the effects of engagement on child development or ECEC quality from non Anglo-Saxon countries is needed.
- (b) Effects of targeted strategies regarding parental/community engagement on hard-to- reach groups is needed.
- (c) Evaluations on the impacts of community initiatives, especially non-formal initiatives, to strengthen ECEC services are rarely conducted.
- (d) The effects of parental and community engagement on neighbourhoods (e.g., incidences of violence or the socio-economic situation of the neighbourhood) remain largely unknown.

**Nevada Currently:**

- The Nevada Registry offers professional development for ECEC professionals in this area.

**Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Consider funding parent and family engagement classes and/or ongoing professional development for ECEC workers in the state.
- Work with the Nevada Registry to understand the extent to which licensed (and unlicensed if there is data) ECEC professionals already engage in initial certification of and/or ongoing professional development related to parent and family engagement strategies.

**E. Lever 5: Advancing data collection, research and monitoring**

1. OECD Policy Recommendations for Data Collection & Monitoring<sup>9</sup>
  - a) Governments need to define the purpose, scope and critical policy questions. Policy questions determine the purpose of monitoring and consider potential uses for collected data. Without a clear understanding of the purpose and scope, governments run the risk of collecting data for purely compliance reasons instead of tapping into the potential of data to inform continuous improvement.
  - b) Setting up a unified data system and linking data on children, programme characteristics and workforce across multiple programmes and governance structures provides more complete and useful information for policy makers, providers, researchers and other stakeholders. This can be accompanied with national quality monitoring practices.
  - c) Collecting and monitoring financial data helps formulate government objectives and policies for children across various sectors and determine the appropriateness of universal or targeted policies.
  - d) When efforts are orchestrated towards developing cross-national data on quality in ECEC, countries can be compared and best practices shared, which can contribute to improving ECEC internationally.
    - (1) Research gaps
      - (a) Internationally, data is lacking across all areas of ECEC provision, which makes evidence- based policy making difficult to conduct.
      - (b) There is no permanent, regular source of information about the quality of provisions, financing or costs of ECEC in particular.
      - (c) More research is needed on the impacts of data and data systems on quality and children's learning and development.
      - (d) There is a lack of coherent, cross-national information and data for international comparisons of programmes and their outcomes.
2. OECD Policy Recommendations for Research<sup>10</sup>
  - a) Governments should create and financially support research frameworks to support long- term policy goals. Systematic

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<sup>9</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: Data Collection and Monitoring Matter". Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360407.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> (n.d.). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Highlights from "Research Brief: Research in ECEC Matters. Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49360416.pdf>



research programmes designed to collect data over time on policies and programme features are particularly useful.

- b) By more carefully choosing the design and methodology of research, and better coordinating different research initiatives, the quality of studies can be advanced.
- c) Policy design and decision making should rely on an entire body of reliable research. To ensure that there are enough high-quality studies that can be useful for policy makers, the number of rigorous studies that are (financially) supported must be increased. National support for, e.g., practitioner research can facilitate local, participatory research that can improve practice.
- d) Research and practice can be integrated by adopting an experimental approach to policy and programme development where innovations or new programmes are systematically pilot tested before being adopted system wide.
- e) Expanding research agendas to include other disciplines, such as sociology or anthropology, and methods currently underrepresented is needed, as this broadens knowledge and perspective on early development.
- f) It is important to train policy makers, administrators and ECEC staff in the interpretation of research and in explaining research results in non-technical language. Research can guide practitioners' behaviour only if the research is well understood.
- g) Research should be widely disseminated in order to aid access to new findings, facilitate constructive criticism and feedback, inform stakeholders, and improve methodologies and future research design.
- h) Advancing co-operation in an international context regarding research can contribute to useful findings for different countries and guide practice.

(1) Research gaps

- (a) Further research on how to optimise ECEC effectiveness, and not just merely the effects of quality or quality indicators, can greatly contribute to improving policy and practice.
- (b) Additional research on the benefits and rates of return of targeted versus universal ECEC interventions could clarify the more useful approaches to stimulate early development and general societal development.
- (c) Research on effective ECEC interventions for children with diverse backgrounds is important and needed; for example, research on how to integrate

diverse populations or the best approaches to language development of immigrant children could be very useful for policy makers and ECEC professionals.

Nevada Currently:

Nevada Succeeds Preliminary Recommendation(s):

- LCE and/or a stakeholder group should work together to define the purpose, scope and critical policy questions the state needs to answer in order to develop a comprehensive and aligned system of ECEC efforts. These policy questions determine the purpose of monitoring and consider potential uses for collected data.
- Work with NDE (and appropriate committees and councils within), Office of Workforce Innovation, Governor's Office of Economic Development, NSHE, Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, and school districts to determine how a unified data system linking data on children, programme characteristics and workforce could be developed collaboratively and the extent to which a comprehensive data system exists to serve the development of a high quality ECEC system in Nevada based on the OECD 5 Policy Levers.
  - Formulate a plan with these stakeholders for how Nevada will develop such a data system.

### III. Nevada Succeeds Overall Preliminary Recommendation(s)

Pre-Kindergarten and overall ECEC efforts are interdependent of one another. The Washington Center for Equitable growth earlier this month reported on a February 17th essay found in the *The Washington Post*. Researchers from the University of California-Irvine and Duke University used data on literacy and math achievement from nearly "70 high-quality prekindergarten programs targeted toward low- and lower-middle income families" and found "short-term boosts from preschool participation, followed by a quick dissipation of the gains". Additionally "the meta-analysis of cognitive skills by the end of the programs shows that within one year of attending an early childhood education program, the effect sizes across programs were halved, and by two years, they were halved again"<sup>11</sup>.

Nevada Succeeds recommends that the LCE and other state stakeholders, work together to develop a 10-15 year strategic plan for education improvement overall with a specific plan and rationale for how and when Nevada will address quality ECEC specifically. Nevada Succeeds does not believe that the state is well positioned enough yet to implement at scale the types of quality ECEC policies that have demonstrated success elsewhere. That said, we definitely believe that quality ECEC is ultimately

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<sup>11</sup> "Sustaining preschool gains can help the benefits of early childhood endure." 1 Mar. 2017, <http://equitablegrowth.org/equitablog/value-added/sustaining-preschool-gains-can-help-the-benefits-of-early-childhood-education-endure/>. Accessed 9 Mar. 2018.

essential to the overall success of Nevada's education system. We preliminarily recommend that the LCE fund several of the data gathering and planning suggestions in this preliminary gap analysis related to quality ECEC.