

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE FINAL NATIONAL MEETING

## School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Making Progress for Young Children

*The Hyatt Regency Hotel*  
Newport, Rhode Island

*May 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>, 2004*

*Sponsored by:*

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation  
The Ford Foundation

*Hosted by:*

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

***Participating States:***

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin

***Purpose:***

This is the sixth and final National Meeting of the 17-state School Readiness Indicators Initiative which aims to use child well-being indicators to improve school readiness and ensure early school success. Over the three years of the Initiative, states have worked individually and collectively to develop comprehensive sets of measures to monitor and track progress related to the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and economic well-being of young children.

Each state has selected a set of indicators that reflect state policy goals and state investments in programs and policies for young children and families as well as child outcomes. States have also put in place communications strategies to share their selected set of indicators with policymakers, opinion leaders, and the public in order to improve school readiness in their states. This final meeting of the 17-state teams will be an opportunity to celebrate achievements, share lessons learned, discuss common indicators and explore ways to sustain an early childhood agenda within states and across the nation.

**Meeting Objectives:**

- To share and celebrate each state's school readiness indicator product(s) including indicators, policy agenda and communication strategies.
- To learn from each other's work and to share successes and challenges.
- To highlight lessons learned and challenges in using indicators and communications strategies to move an early childhood policy agenda.
- To develop strategies to sustain promising approaches related to indicators, communications and early childhood policy.
- To review the indicators that have emerged in each state and explore the possibility of a common set of indicators across states.

**Wednesday, May 19, 2004**

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

**Elizabeth Burke Bryant**  
**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

Ms Burke Bryant welcomed the participants to the Final National Meeting of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative. She explained that the meeting would be spent discussing states' lessons learned in the three focus areas of the Initiative: indicators, policy and communications. Participants will also share lessons learned and discuss a common set of indicators. This final meeting of the 17-state teams is an opportunity to celebrate achievements and explore ways to sustain an early childhood agenda within states and across the nation.

The state team coordinators introduced their teams and our national colleagues and SECPTAN partners introduced themselves.

**Orientation to the Meeting**

**Catherine B. Walsh**  
**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

Ms. Walsh described the agenda for the meeting so participants would know what to expect. She noted that there would be two keynote addresses; panels, discussions, and a poster session to share state experiences; and discussion of common indicators and their use.

**Keynote Address: The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative**

**David Lawrence, Jr.**  
**Former Editor, Miami Herald**

Mr. Lawrence congratulated the participants of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative on their important and effective work. He urged the group to think of early childhood as a movement, similar to the feminist and civil rights movements of the past. In the beginning, the leaders of these movements were considered radicals, but today, their work is revered.

He acknowledged that there will be differences in how states develop quality early experiences for all children, but encouraged states to work together in one voice. There has been a flood of new information about the importance of early childhood during the past decade. We should use the momentum that has been created to move the work forward.

Mr. Lawrence discussed three lessons that all of us must learn:

- The Early Childhood Movement must be nonpartisan.
- The Early Childhood Movement must be a real marriage of public and private.
- The Early Childhood Movement must be about all children.

Mr. Lawrence described the successes that have occurred on early childhood issues in Miami. He encouraged the participants to imagine what they could do in their own communities, if advocates in Miami, a complex, fractionated community, could do so much for young children and families.

He closed by asking the participants for help in developing the early childhood movement. He asked them to provide a framework from which to build a movement and a framework to know whether we are succeeding. He thanked the group for its work on behalf of children.

***Mr. Lawrence's speech "The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative" is attached in Section 3.***

### **Questions and Comments**

Sue Wilson (Connecticut) asked Mr. Lawrence to talk more about why it is so important to include all children.

Mr. Lawrence responded that he has spent time outside his office and seen that certain parts of the population have more hurdles than others, but we are doomed if we talk about children in poverty. In Florida, the message of Janet Reno's 1998 campaign for a dedicated funding source for early childhood was "help others". It failed 2 to 1. When the message was changed to "help all children", it passed 2 to 1. Florida's universal pre-K program was also passed on the basis of "every child". Real progress is not helping 5% of a population; it is raising the quality for all children. The United States is a wealthy country that quickly found the money for Iraq. Why can't we find money to invest in children? Investing in children is both a matter of basic decency and a wise investment. We need to fix our spending priorities.

Ms. Wilson thanked Mr. Lawrence for providing nuance to his previous comments and stated that the group embraces the same message: do not necessarily provide the same services for every child, give every child the same opportunity to succeed. Mr. Lawrence agreed that we cannot have a system of one size fits all. In Florida, universal pre-K will be a blend of public, private and religious sectors. We should make high quality basics available and affordable for all children and families.

William Hollinshead (Rhode Island) asked if Mr. Lawrence could suggest a metric for measuring the public's understanding of these issues. How do we measure progress on increasing political will for early childhood?

Mr. Lawrence replied that he is counting on the meeting participants (advocates, legislators, state department staff) to do it in a way that he and others can understand it. In Florida, several methods were used to measure the understandability and effectiveness of an early childhood public awareness campaign, including hotline calls and website hits. He reminded the group that the media is looking for condensed information, the story told in less than a page.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant (Rhode Island) asked about the usefulness of public opinion polling in early childhood issues.

Mr. Lawrence responded that he is slightly cynical about opinion polls in general, but they can be useful in this work. For example, polling in Florida that indicated support for universal pre-K helped advocates decide to pursue it. Doing this work is like fighting a war, and the more information you have, the better. Be careful though, because the media do not always fully understand the issues. They might do a story on child care, but not give the full early childhood context.

Lawrence Pucciarelli (Rhode Island) asked for Mr. Lawrence's opinion on Georgia's pre-K program, which is not linked to child care or comprehensive services. He noted that in Rhode Island, the full-day kindergarten system was built on child care.

Mr. Lawrence responded that we need to acknowledge that child care is a huge part of people's lives. We also need to acknowledge that all child care cannot be provided publicly; faith-based choices are very important for some people. In Florida, we passed a bad bill and the Governor chose to sign it with an agreement with the legislature to fix it. The important thing is that it got done, just like in Georgia.

Kristie Kauerz (Education Commission of the States) noted that Georgia is working on a new combination of universal pre-K, child care and Head Start.

Mr. Lawrence responded that the world is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. For example, Georgia's Governor changed the universal pre-K legislation before it became a law. Subsequent governors have all made their changes as well.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) asked Mr. Lawrence about two comments he made. The work is local and needs to be. We will not get the work done if we only affect 5,000 kids with each initiative. How can we balance the local focus with the necessary state-level work?

Mr. Lawrence replied that his policy is to start with what he has "to say grace over", issues in his community. Doing local work well provides an example that others can follow. In Florida, the Governor would never have supported universal pre-K, but saw a successful example of it and became interested. The idea of taking the best from others' work is critical in this field. Some issues belong at the federal or state levels, but we have to be careful that these do not take energy from the local work.

Kristie Kauerz (Education Commission of the States) asked Mr. Lawrence how often he speaks to people like himself, business groups, and how we can create more leaders like him.

Mr. Lawrence responded that much of his job is selling the story. He sees it as "evangelical missionary work", but it is more than a moral imperative. There are many people in the community that understand the issues now, and we need to build on them. Many business people have grandchildren or daughters with children who work outside the home and we can tap into that connection to early childhood. We should also tap into elected officials' need to create a legacy and suggest their legacy be early childhood.

## **Sharing Successes**

### **Moderator: Catherine B. Walsh, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

In a quick, upbeat round-robin discussion, each state highlighted key successes of their work together over the last few years. The session provided a sample of the information states shared more fully during the Poster Exhibit Showcase that followed.

#### **Arizona**

- No funding cuts for early care were proposed in the legislature
- The Governor focused on early care in her State of the State address
- Ran a successful media campaign against cuts in child care subsidies

#### **Arkansas**

- Held a social-emotional development roundtable
- Kindergarten indicators were put in place by the state Department of Education, including a process to gather parent input
- A special study urging legislators to invest in pre-kindergarten programs for low-income children was successfully supported by a coalition of organizations

#### **Colorado**

- Held seven forums across the state on draft indicators and a statewide summit to review the results and provide additional feedback
- Selected school districts are meeting to discuss how they can use the school readiness indicators
- Formed an agreement with the Department of Health to launch a data website and update it annually

#### **Connecticut**

- Established a prevention council that led to commissioners adopting the team's early childhood indicators work

#### **Kansas**

- The school readiness team has involved a variety of state agencies and has become an important table for the coordination of other early childhood efforts and activities
- The Governor introduced legislation to create full-day kindergarten
- Smart Start Kansas received a significant increase in funding

#### **Maine**

- Linked the indicators project to Maine Marks
- Retained the same dedicated team members throughout the project
- Developed a strong link to the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems initiative
- The new Education Commissioner is interested in developing universal pre-K

### **Massachusetts**

- Held six well-attended regional meetings in March to get feedback on indicators
- The state Early Care and Education Council issued a report on reducing fragmentation in the child care system through quality improvement, standards and professional development
- State legislators voted in favor of a Board of Early Education and Care

### **Missouri**

- The initiative helped keep early care on the state agenda and maintain child care funding
- Consensus on indicators was reached by state agencies, Head Start and other partners
- Their school readiness publication was released by the Governor and received good press coverage
- The school readiness bill passed the legislature on the last day of the session

### **New Hampshire**

- Released their school readiness report at a major legislative caucus
- Used a rolling release to continue to develop a buzz around their report
- The Director of Education quoted their publication at a statewide education reform conference

### **New Jersey**

- The Governor's proposed budget expanded preschool funding by \$15 million despite pressure to spend money on mandated DYFS reform
- A backlash against the Abbott decision is being addressed by a plan for universal pre-K by 2010

### **Ohio**

- Held several well-attended county forums to get input on indicators and found significant consensus among the regions
- Renewed a partnership with the Families First Council and are collaborating on indicators

### **Rhode Island**

- The Governor's budget did not cut RIte Care and only proposed cut backs to child care at the top eligibility levels; these are likely to be restored
- Used the initiative as an reason to start talking about improving child care quality
- Developed Early Learning Standards through an interdepartmental, inclusive community process

### **Vermont**

- Developed an online resource that includes all indicators down to the school district level
- Consolidated services and developed a Children's Cabinet and a Division of Child Development within the Department of Children and Families

### **Virginia**

- The team's main success is its system development work, but individual successes include increased funding for health care, child care and mental health
- Held a bipartisan roundtable that included the Governor and Republican leadership

## **Wisconsin**

- The Governor adopted a “Kids First” agenda with an emphasis on early care and created a partnership with the superintendent of education

## **Poster Exhibit Showcase**

At the evening reception, participants shared food and conversation while visiting the poster exhibits highlighting each state’s work. Posters included each state’s final indicator list, Progress and Highlights, and Lessons Learned and Challenges. State team members made themselves available to answer questions and share stories. State teams used the time to talk with each and celebrate a job well done.

***Copies of the State Posters are attached in Section 4.***

**Thursday, May 20, 2004**

**Lessons Learned: Indicators and Data Challenges**

**Moderator: Theresa Hancock, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

**Panelists:**

**Suzanne Clark Johnson, Virginia**

**Joyce Cussimano, Kansas**

**Susan Wilson, Connecticut**

**Respondents:**

**Dianne Jenkins, Wisconsin**

**Jaci Holmes, Maine**

In the first of three similarly formatted sessions, panelists responded to questions about the development of their state's indicator list, the policy goals that influenced their indicator selection, and indicators they wanted to include but lacked data. A facilitated discussion about the states' indicator work followed.

**Panel Remarks**

**What was the process for choosing a short list of indicators?**

Suzanne Clark Johnson: Virginia has a one-term governor and senior policy folks close to the governor were involved in the School Readiness project close to the time of the product release. These individuals did not come to the National Meetings, so they do not have knowledge about why health and economics are important to school readiness. Because the governor had a stake in the release, he took great interest in the product. We have 14 indicators that were approved by the governor and another 16 that were outside the governor's process.

Joyce Cussimano: Determining a useable list was influenced by data availability by county and by year, whether or not the indicator incorporated all the domains, how the indicators affected other indicators, and whether the indicators were moveable (particularly around quality). Kansas has decided on 15 priority indicators.

Susan Wilson: Connecticut has a tangible product, but did not have the help of those in high positions so we are lacking political in-roads. Having the information readily available is key to picking indicators. We must look at the broad/multi-dimensional picture. Connecticut also wants to highlight the difference between the number children who are in accredited programs and the number of accredited programs. The indicators we chose showed populations of need and are helping facilitate discussions on what needs to be done.

**Which policy objectives influenced the selection? How will you use the indicators to shape policy?**

Susan Wilson: We tried to hold on to what we had. The subsidy program, school readiness (pre-k), SCHIP and Medicaid all took hits, so we incorporated indicators around those issues. There has been a thrust to promote universal kindergarten, so we included information to boost that. We also attempted to scrutinize foster care for younger children. In Connecticut, DCYF is under court order, but the focus is on older children.

Suzanne Clark Johnson: There has been progress with health insurance and lead poisoning, but right now Virginia is in the process of interagency collaboration. There have been policy changes in how the state agencies communicate and work together. When working with a one-term governor the plausibility of the cabinet is tenuous, but there is more awareness about the fractured nature of a system.

Joyce Cussimano: The emphasis on health insurance has been ongoing, as well as the need for quality child care. Narrowing down indicators has helped us look at where we wanted to go and what issues we could make a difference with. We would like to get to the point where communities can use their own measures to see how well they are doing. As far as systems are concerned, it is not just about where you are, but how you act.

**Which indicators did you want to include but could not because of data limitations?**

Joyce Cussimano:

- Mental Health: We need measures that represent all children.
- Parent Support: What is it? How do we define it on a local level and retrieve data?

Sue Wilson:

- Mental Health (social-emotional development)
- Child Welfare/protection
- How many children were identified with developmental delays upon reaching first grade and why they had not been diagnosed earlier?
- What developmental screenings are being done in the early years?

Connecticut is planning a publication similar to the one Zero to Three published with question mark where data is not available.

Suzanne Clark Johnson:

- Data on which parents are employed, rather than focusing on teen sex and high school drop-outs
- We would like to have the kindergarten assessment tool become a better form of measuring developmental appropriateness.
- There is no good way to talk about quality in early care and education, no strong resource and referral base and little data. Virginia would like to develop a waiting list on subsidy to measure unmet need focusing on quality, cost, paid employees and education employees.

## Questions and Comments

Jaci Holmes (Maine) suggested that we look at sustainability to transcend political parties. Maine's School Readiness Team looked for indicators with 3-5 years of data and decided to use only asset based indicators to move forward positively. The team also used the multi-dimensional approach to find what indicators supported each other and where they were connected. Using good data sends a strong policy message to the public and legislators. We need to think about how we are embedding this to move forward.

Dianne Jenkins (Wisconsin) noted that Wisconsin obtained a lot of technical data and used what was already being done to move and integrate with KIDS COUNT. On the policy aspect, we needed more time, but we have allowed all state agencies to be at the table with equal footing. Currently, the indicators are technical and a bit tough for the public.

Phil Baimas (Massachusetts) mentioned that his team started with 60 indicators we all thought were important. We narrowed it down to 30, but we only have data for 10. The other 20 are on a list to keep in mind to convey the school readiness picture as a whole. Ten measures across departments helped build collaboration/connections. We are trying to articulate that this is a starting point and asking if it is a full enough picture.

Frances Duran (Connecticut) noted that her team will report on additional indicators in their longer Factbook to fill in gaps.

Jaci Holmes (Maine) noted that Maine Marks denotes three levels of data, represented by:

- tree: complete data
- sapling: have a little bit of data
- pine cone: developing the indicator

Carol Kamin (Arizona) suggested tying indicators to outcomes (e.g. reading scores at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade). It is a difficult process, but it is useful to tie a number of different issues together in a conservative state.

Lisa Usselman (Ohio) stated that because the state is fairly new to the initiative, they decided to combine the states' indicators into a set to present and refine at regional forums.

Rachel Hutson (Colorado) mentioned that her team keeps developmental indicators on the page as place holders. The Department of Health is developing a MCH survey and asking questions about social/emotional issues.

Valerie Ricker (Maine) remarked that each state's maternal and child health department is required to do comprehensive assessment under Title V. In Maine, each department is required to come up with a set of indicators to be used as performance measures that they must then report out. Early care and education indicators will be included in some of these sets.

Charles Bruner (SECPTAN) said that transparency is the key to getting at data. Each indicator contains layers of information that must be sifted through (e.g., race, age, etc.)

Jane Knitzer (NCCP) remarked that the work of the Initiative is adding a new challenge to get away from a single policy focus toward a public health model. Visual mapping by community really does make a case for intervention.

Martha Moorehouse (DHHS) stated that mental health data is lacking nationally. Research is beginning to be used to get information and there are now two points of data for some measures.

### **Common Indicators: Making Progress for Young Children**

#### **Catherine B. Walsh Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

Ms. Walsh highlighted the common themes that have emerged as the state teams have selected key indicators to track progress over time. Indicators were placed in the following categories:

- Ready Children
- Ready Families
- Ready Communities
- Ready Early Care and Education
- Ready Schools

Ms. Walsh identified several areas that need further consideration by the group, including developmental assessment indicators, special education indicators, and quality child care indicators. The presentation primed the participants for the Friday morning session which addressed critical early childhood issues and sustainability more fully.

***Ms. Walsh's presentation "Common Indicators: Making Progress for Young Children" is attached in Section 5.***

#### **Questions and Comments**

David Schorr (Ohio) commented that rather than a beginning set of common indicators, the group has a mess. We do not know if we want the indicators to go up or down and there are serious gaps. In order to motivate policymakers, we need to compare states to each other. To do that, we need a set of indicators that are comparable and common across states.

Valerie Ricker (Maine) noted that many states chose indicators of child abuse. That indicator is not on the Maine list because it is not clear whether we want the numbers to go up or down. We realized that it would take a lot of explain the indicator and provide context. Why did other states choose child abuse indicators?

Kerrie Ocasio (New Jersey) stated that her team did not choose child abuse and neglect as an indicator because of data problems and the political climate resulting from a recent court case. She also noted that New Jersey's indicators may not be fully reflected in the tallies of common indicators because they divided them into two sections: Conditions that Support School Readiness and Context Indicators. The Context Indicators deal with deficits, including low maternal education and teen pregnancy.

Deborah Scott (Missouri) said that she was excited to see the list of common indicators. All of the indicators chosen as common were part of Missouri's process, so the list is very validating.

Catherine Walsh (Rhode Island) noted that at the first meeting of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative, many states did not have a list of indicators. Other states had long lists of 60-100 indicators. The indicator selection process has been very important for both types of state teams.

Diane Bennett (Ohio) suggested the inclusion of indicators for ready systems. We need to find a way to measure state department-level progress towards collaboration.

Martha Moorehouse (DHHS) stated that we need to consider the alignment between these indicators and the goals of the current Administration. The Administration believes that language can make a difference, so we need to identify practices in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten to improve language skills. The scientific research support reading skills as a predictor of future academic success.

Charles Bruner (SECPTAN) commented that we should focus on systems rather than what children know and can do. In particular, we should stress the Ready Communities indicators and rely on the research that affirms the importance of social capital and that communities value young children.

Lisa Klein (Hestia Advising) reminded the group that the list presented was just the beginning. The indicators represent current state priorities and may change over time. The power of the Initiative is the development of a common set of indicators and a common way of saying which things are important for young children and families.

## **ECS Update**

### **Kristie Kauerz Education Commission of the States**

Ms. Kauerz provided an update on the technical assistance conference calls organized by the Education Commission for the States to share components of the No Child Left Behind Act that inform school readiness work.

***A copy of the Education Commission of the States' "No Child Left Behind Policy Brief: Implications for the Early Learning Field" is attached in Section 6.***

### **Major Points:**

The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act is being closely tracked by the Education Commission of the States. We need to be careful to use our energy to take advantage of the act rather than arguing about its merits. Conference calls were held on three aspects of the Act to explain the law and to facilitate discussion on obstacles and benefits. The topics included Adequate Yearly Progress, Highly Qualified Teachers, and Reading/Literacy.

The *No Child Left Behind Policy Brief: Implications for the Early Learning Field* was written as a result of the discussions and will be shared state governors, education commissioners and other audiences.

### **Questions and Comments**

Valerie Ricker (Maine) suggested sending the report to state health directors and Title V Coordinators, child welfare directors, and child care coordinators with a cover letter that explains how No Child Left Behind connects to their early childhood work.

Jane Knitzer (NCCP) noted that the National Center for Children In Poverty has just launched a research connections section on its website and will post the policy brief there.

### **Keynote Address: School Readiness Indicators**

#### **Lisbeth Schorr Pathways Mapping initiative**

Ms. Schorr thanked the participants for their hard work on the complex issue of school readiness. Identifying 17 sets of school readiness is a very useful thing, but taking the 17 sets and developing a single common set of indicators that can be explained and used widely will be a magnificent accomplishment.

The Pathways Mapping Initiative struggled with the same issue and winnowed a list of 2,000 indicators down to a smaller set: 19 Outcome Indicators to be measured at school entry and 23 Interim Indicators that measure progress toward the preconditions of school readiness. This set is valuable to communities that are struggling to assess progress, but we could accomplish a lot more with a list of school readiness indicators agreed upon by 17 states.

There are many obstacles to overcome in the process of agreeing on indicators:

- The gap between what we want for children and what can be measured
- Controversies about which indicators are the most significant and reliable
- Extracting reliable, comparable data from a patchwork of systems
- Getting data at the local and neighborhood levels
- Obtaining data from agencies in a useful form
- Dealing with the confusion between outcomes and processes

Despite these obstacles, it is very important to develop consensus on outcomes and outcome indicators. Using outcomes makes policy planning and program development rational. It facilitates agreement among disparate stakeholders and helps identify factors that impede progress.

Over the past few years, we have learned a few lessons about figuring out what to measure. We need to make sure that people do not focus on just one measure because it distorts the picture. We need to only measure things we can use and the public can understand. In addition, we need to avoid measuring things that do not matter just because they are countable.

There is an enormous potential to be realized by the new vertical alliances between program people who know what needs to be done and policy people who can change the rules that govern accountability, funding and regulations. No one system can do it alone and programs alone are not enough. A long-term vision is more essential than ever.

***Ms. Schorr's speech "School Readiness Indicators" is attached in Section 7.***

**Questions and Comments**

Lisa Usselman (Ohio) asked about the role of state government in indicators work.

Ms. Schorr replied that some people think, at least in states we can make progress. We need to make sure that state legislators and administrators are aware of the difference they can make.

Carol Kamin (Arizona) asked how to strategically pursue public investment in programs for young children and families.

Ms. Schorr responded that it is not as easy to get funding as it was a few decades ago. As a result, indicators are more important than ever. They are essential to provide evidence of the worth of interventions, their effectiveness, and their ability to improve conditions for children.

Sue Wilson (Connecticut) asked about the role of state government structure. What structural change can we use to de-fragment planning and programs? Is structural change a solution?

Ms. Schorr suggested that the work be organized across boundaries. Tell your state government that sectors need to make decisions together. There are various ways to accomplish that, but you can start by listing the people who need to be at the table.

Jane Knitzer (NCCP) stated that we must do as much fiscal strategy work as we do program strategy work.

## **Lessons Learned: Policy Successes and Challenges**

**Moderator: Ann Segal, Action Strategies**

**Panelists:**

**Carol Kamin, Arizona**

**Deborah Scott, Missouri**

**Bruce Atchison, Colorado**

**Respondents:**

**Kathy Stegall, Arkansas**

**Erin Joyce, Ohio**

In the second of three similarly formatted sessions, panelists responded to questions about critical policy issues, successes and challenges in building a school readiness policy agenda, and indicators they think will be particularly useful for specific policy goals. A facilitated discussion about the states' policy work followed.

### **Panel Remarks**

#### **What are the critical policy issues in your state?**

Bruce Atchison: We are dealing with a restrictive tax code (TABOR)-1992. TABOR limits state spending based on population growth and inflation. Every time a budget decreases it cannot be increased. It is required that a budget be balanced and if it is not, the program will be cut. In addition, a 1991 Amendment limits state spending on education to inflation plus 1%.

Deborah Scott: In Missouri, we have the Hancock amendment on revenue, which is similar to but less restrictive than TABOR. We are also dealing with:

- Infrastructure for collaboration across systems
- Access/ financing for early care and education to give equal access to all children
- Supporting quality and communicating to the public.

Carol Kamin: Fiscal issues are driving policy issues. Arizona tried to pass TABOR, but it doesn't account for growth in programs. The State Fiscal Analysis Initiative (sponsored by the Ford and Casey Foundations) gave the state a better understanding of tax and spending and TABOR was defeated. In addition the legislature requires a 2/3 majority vote for tax increases; only a majority is required for tax cuts. Politicians are using diminishing revenue to justify not funding programs.

#### **What success/challenges have you had in building a school readiness policy agenda in your state?**

Bruce Atchison: This work transcends political climate. It establishes an early childhood comprehensive blueprint of nine goals with an overarching outcome of school readiness. One success we have had is a paradigm shift as evidenced by the ECCS grant that focuses across domains.

Deborah Scott: As a result of this initiative, the group has thought about who needs to carry this forward to do policy work. We need a group encompassing all three branches with help from this group to bring policy recommendations to the governor. Everyone wants to own this legislation and have it passed. Developing a Coordinating Board on Early Childhood has been a challenge. We continue to work to make sure it is effective.

Carol Kamin: The legislature established a cross-partisan Children's Caucus which includes a broad range of Republicans and Democrats. The budget this year was not bad overall and it was good for child care and subsidies. The Republican caucus passed the Governor's budget over the House budget, which opened the door for thoughtful discussion on quality. There are high fiscal challenges on Full Day K, subsidies, etc. because they are the big dollar programs. A continuing challenge is trying to overcome the values debate.

**Give an example of one indicator on your list that you think will be particularly influential in shaping policy.**

Bruce Atchison: Colorado ranks last on immunization and this fact produces huge media hits, alerts, etc. This was the first year ever that money was put into a bill for immunization. It was only a small portion of money, but it was the first time. Colorado's percent of full-day kindergarten (70%) is the lower than the US average, but we only have 1,000 funded slots.

Deborah Scott: Missouri is in the bottom (49%) when it comes to child care subsidies, which is used to shame legislators into not cutting funding. The percent of eligible children able to access Early Head Start and Head Start is another indicator we would suggest.

Carol Kamin: Quality in child care centers is the Governor's priority. We will use provider's salaries relative to pre-school and elementary salaries and percent of child care centers NAEYC accredited. We have also been watching health insurance. A change in determination for Medicaid from 12 months to 6 months has resulted in decreased enrollment because people have not been reapplying. This form of insurance may never be restored.

**Questions and Comments**

Kathy Stegall (Arkansas) stated the most challenges Arkansas faces are with tax issues and early childhood advocates understanding tax issues. We also face challenges with quality ratings and settings as well as a voucher system which does not pay well.

Erin Joyce (Ohio) said that there are similar political and fiscal issues in Ohio. K-12 constitutionality issues drain funding. Investing in children early will hopefully stop a decline in higher education achievement. One success our team has had is great energy around the work. A challenge we face is finding leadership in the legislature in the midst of strict term limits.

Christine Downey-Schmidt (Kansas) noted that the group talked about people who get it and people who do not. In the November election in Kansas, all state legislators are up for reelection and it is a good opportunity to get better policymakers. If advocates make their issues prominent, then it is the candidates' choice to get on board or not.

Lawrence Pucciarelli (Rhode Island) asked about using EPSDT to help build the health support system. Health should be a civil right for children.

Carol Kamin (Arizona) responded that we need to make health insurance as accepted a right for children as Medicare is for the elderly. She also remarked that it is very difficult to educate new legislators, and to work with those who oppose you ideologically. In Arizona, we have made children a campaign issue and have been pleased with the incremental change that has resulted.

Marilou Hyson (NAEYC) commented that the NAEYC accreditation standards are being revised to be more specific on program content. In particular, there will be specific requirements around language and literacy. States using NAEYC accreditation as an indicator or tying it to tiered reimbursement will have a more comprehensive measure under the new standards.

### **Lessons Learned: Communication Strategies**

**Moderator: Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

**Panelists:**

**Phil Baimas and Lisa Silverman Pickard, Massachusetts**  
**Nicholas Donohue, New Hampshire**  
**Kerrie Ocasio, New Jersey**

**Respondents:**

**Cheryl Mitchell, Vermont**  
**Karen Pucciarelli, Rhode Island**

In the third of three similarly formatted sessions, panelists responded to questions about lessons learned from communicating about indicators, public-private partnerships, and the use of strategic communications to sustain public interest in early childhood issues. A facilitated discussion about the states' communications work followed.

### **Panel Remarks**

#### **What lessons did you learn from communicating about indicators in your state?**

Kerrie Ocasio: The data on the benefits of pre-school that was presented in the courts gave 32 districts pre-k. The legislature expanded to an additional 102 districts. Pre-school in New Jersey is a wonderful communications opportunity because it gives the ability to build on early care and education messages. One challenge that we deal with is keeping the early childhood discussion broader than just pre-school. We also learned to be very clear about what our indicator list is and what it is not. We chose a very strategic list for work with the legislature, but state department want larger lists.

Phil Baimas: There are only so many indicators you can measure. At the forums we hosted, people were as impressed with the process as they were with the indicators. We also learned that there must be communication across agencies.

Lisa Pickard: We asked the United Ways across the state to host meetings with commissioners and local stakeholders. We framed the meetings by asking the following questions:

What do you like about the indicators/products?

What do you dislike?

How will you use this product?

How should we communicate the message?

Moving forward, United Way is considering a public awareness campaign.

Nicholas Donohue: There is a sense of cluelessness within the political world. The Children's Alliance is getting the early childhood message out there, but more messaging around these issues is needed this election year. There are 17 districts without public kindergarten in the United States and all of them are in New Hampshire. We need to finish the kindergarten challenge while moving forward on ECE and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) needs to be embraced. We have learned to connect data to policy but tell the story about people. Do not just talk to each other; the time has come to build relationships with other people. In addition, money talks, but it is hard to win an election on savings ten years from now.

### **How has your state used public-private partnerships to communicate about indicators?**

Kerrie Ocasio: The Campaign for Kids, a public/private partnership, was used to educate and campaign, as well as build accountability. New Jersey also plans to have a forum on indicators that will give politicians an opportunity to demonstrate what they have done this year. Investment in language and communication is key. Having billboards, an issue brief series, web-site, listservs and handouts all disseminate the message.

Lisa Pickard: we will work with other United Ways across the state by presenting information and leading a call to action. We also got involved in an effort by the Boston public schools and museums to work together on a project to bring together pre-school and kindergarten teachers. Another key strategy is to get funders at the table and educate them about outcome measurements to find common ground.

Phil Baimas: we are trying to get state agencies to work top-down with the United Ways. We are also trying to work bottom-up using the same language.

Nicholas Donohue: We need a complement of skills and approach. Typical strategies don't affect change fast enough. Those with other agendas are winning the battle. Hearing the message from an unlikely messenger (military, police, doctors, etc) is also very helpful. We need to market early learning as the solution to low performing schools under NCLB. Learning does not start in kindergarten or first grade.

### **Questions and Comments**

Cheryl Mitchell (Vermont) said that we have heard several people suggest "tell the story". Perhaps we should have a session on indicators for businesspeople. In Vermont, we have targeted different audiences with different formats and venues. Legislators are invited to tour early childhood programs and talk to parents. Businesspeople receive the Story of a Child e-newsletter every month. We need to develop more forums for parents.

Karen Pucciarelli (Rhode Island) noted that her team has learned that packaging is very important. By designing several different eye-catching forms of the state's Early Learning Standards, they have been able to reach a variety of audiences. The book can be found in offices across the state and the standards chart can be seen on the wall at child care centers. When we asked parents about the format of activity suggestions, they asked for anything other than a book; we designed a set of cards.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) suggested matching the messenger to the audience. For example, Dave Lawrence spoke many times in Virginia to different audiences and he was most effective when he spoke to a group of personally invited businesspeople.

Cindy D'Ercole (Kansas) described her team's public education campaign. The same message was presented in several different formats: TV ads, postcards, briefs, and an event at the capitol. They also created a "Campaign Board" made up of former famous people to garner additional support. The most successful message of all communicated that the money at stake is for local communities.

**Friday, May 21, 2004**

**SECPTAN Update**

**Charles Bruner**  
**State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network**

Mr. Bruner shared key findings from a recent report prepared by the Child and Family Policy Center and several states that are members of Voices for America's Children: *Early Learning Left Out: An Examination of Public Investments in Education and Development by Child Age*. He also outlined critical components for aligning for action, including gaining awareness of need; recognizing value of meeting need; identifying credible solutions; and eliciting political action.

SECPTAN's next steps include continued technical assistance, development of additional resource materials, coordination with other initiatives, and publicity of the work of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative.

***Mr. Bruner's presentation "The Role of SRII and SECPTAN in State School Readiness Agenda Building" is attached in Section 8.***

**Questions and Comments**

Martha Moorehouse (DHHS) asked about the conflict that sometimes arises when investments are made in programs, but the indicators do not improve. For example, the Florida welfare administrator worked hard to increase funding for child care, but then advocates complained that the problem had not budged. In the same way, the federal government is interested in specific age groups that have been targeted by their policies. How can we show that change has occurred?

Mr. Bruner replied that the federal government made a major investment in child care and some analysis says that the gap has closed. A detailed 5-state analysis reveals that increased investments in child care were outpaced by the growth in the need for child care, thus masking improvements.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant noted that we can get to the bottom of this question if we also ask about changes in TANF spending. When the child care and TANF figures are added together, the decrease in TANF spending may be greater than the increase in child care spending, resulting in a savings.

Ms. Moorehouse replied that these types of analyses are very important to give policymakers a sense that what they did mattered.

## **Toward a National Set of School Readiness Indicators: What Have We Learned?**

**Lisa Klein**  
**Hestia Advising**

Ms. Klein discussed the context surrounding early childhood today, including our increased knowledge about child development and the education field's focus on accountability. She described the many uses and purposes of indicators and how they apply to the school readiness equation. Key principles in choosing indicators include:

- Indicators need to address all five dimensions of child development
- Indicators are meaningful if people care about the issue and understand the need for change
- Indicators must be measurable and tracked annually at a variety of levels
- Expectations of how indicators can and will move must be realistic
- Indicators must be tied to a policy agenda

Ms. Klein also discussed the importance of choosing common indicators. Common indicators can leverage the power of the collective, be used as a learning tool by other states, and will help the early childhood cause develop into a movement. Possible selection criteria, such as consistency with other research and compatibility with national priorities, were also presented. Ms. Klein then facilitated a roundtable discussion that explored states' interest in developing a common set of indicators for the Initiative and the possible uses of a common set.

***Ms. Klein's presentation "School Readiness Indicator and Policy Initiative" is attached in Section 9.***

### **Discussion**

Cheryl Mitchell (Vermont) suggested using the common indicators that were presented the day before as a starting point. (See Section 5)

Ms. Klein asked how to get from the long list of common indicators to just one indicator per dimension.

David Schorr (Ohio) said that the group needs a better understanding of the communications power of the indicators on the list before choosing. We need to know which indicators are the most powerful and which resonate with policymakers and the public.

Carol Kamin (Arizona) suggested that the group could probably agree on three or four indicators today. Some common ones seem to be poverty, health insurance, prenatal care, and accredited child care, all of which can be measured now by all 17 states.

Jaci Holmes (Maine) suggested that we use indicators that have at least 50% agreement. We need to know which indicators would have that percentage if we used states' long lists. We also need to know which indicators we agreed on in the long lists that are not reflected because they did not make it to the short lists.

Joyce Cussimano (Kansas) suggested spending ten minutes discussing the indicators in groups. Kansas might want to change its short list to align with what the group agrees on.

Charlie Bruner (SECPTAN) noted that the Casey Foundation is developing a 50-state survey on TANF reauthorization. The School Readiness Indicators Initiative could inform what gets collected at the national level and have a base of common indicators.

Rachel Hutson (Colorado) offered that their team gets input from other groups and constituencies when deciding on indicators. We know what we mean, but do the indicators resonate with policymakers? I think we need to do the same thing on the national level. We need to get input from national policymakers.

Ms. Klein suggested that we develop an initial list and get their feedback.

Deborah Scott (Missouri) said that we need to think about the third Mark Friedman test: proxy power. To what degree does the indicator reflect what we're trying to change? If we change the indicators, will it make a difference for school readiness? Does it matter to school readiness?

Valerie Ricker (Maine) proposed that states should take advantage of the upcoming Title V strengths-needs assessment. If we decide on indicators today, we can try to get them included in our 17 individual state assessments.

William Hollinshead (Rhode Island) suggested that we should continue to respect the process but add new information.

Catherine Walsh (Rhode Island) reminded the group to think of this as the beginning of the conversation. We know we need to fill in holes around developmental screening, special education, etc. There will be opportunities to send lists out to the group for comment and further discussion.

Ms. Klein suggested that the next steps are to look at what is happening in the states, finalize a core set, and disseminate the core set.

### **Group Activity: Prioritizing Common Indicators**

**Moderator: Lisa Klein, Hestia Advising**

Participants worked as state teams to choose their priority indicators from the list of common indicators that was presented the day before. (See Section 5) Teams were asked to choose their two top indicators from each of the six categories. After their discussion, states reported their selections and a list of common indicators denoting how many states chose each indicator was developed.

***The prioritized list of common indicators is attached in Section 10.***

## **Lunch, Wrap-Up and Next Steps**

### **Elizabeth Burke Bryant Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

Ms. Bryant thanked everyone for coming. She praised their hard work, energy and stick-to-it-ness. She reminded participants that they should not hesitate to contact any of the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT staff members with questions. She then opened the session for group discussion and comments.

Christine Downey-Schmidt (Kansas) shared her perspective as a state legislator. She told participants to remember the following:

- Legislators are under very short time frames
- Although legislators are public servants, it is a very self-serving job
- It is very important to give credit where credit is due.

When talking to legislators, it is important to frame issues in economic terms. Remind them that if we do not do it now, we will pay for it later. Legislators receive a great deal of information, so be simple and to the point.

Mary Jane Wallner, a legislator from New Hampshire, also shared her thoughts on working with legislators. She suggested bringing all of the early childhood advocates together. Develop a message and present a unified front to the legislature. Never fight with each other in front of the legislature.

Catherine Walsh (Rhode Island) identified next steps for the work.

States will:

- Submit a completed product with a short list of indicators
- Finalize a policy agenda and communications strategy
- Develop a product dissemination strategy
- Complete work under the TA subcontracts
- Edit posters
- Continue to provide input on the core set of indicators

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will:

- Prepare a summary of posters
- Develop a final report on the residency roundtables
- Develop a final collective product with state work and national core set of indicators, including state and national policy implications
- Develop a product dissemination strategy
- Explore the possibility of a convening in May 2005

Peter Lindsay (Maine) said that the process of selecting core indicators was very useful. We should continue to look at social-emotional development and transitions and develop indicators to address those issues.

Sue Wilson (Connecticut) noted that her state is writing another publication that will be presented to many audiences, including early care providers and policymakers. She anticipates feedback on the indicators over the next year. Initially, her team resisted creating a publication because they were not sure they had the authority to make recommendations, but having the publication has opened many doors to expand the work.

Vicki Stearns (Arkansas) said that her team plans to develop smaller publications that include indicators as well as real life stories. These will be emailed to legislators and early care professionals to keep the issues on the table.

Cheryl Mitchell (Vermont) noted that the data work her team has done is now being used in other places and on other projects. The state now has the information to begin to do better by kids.

Carol Kamin (Arizona) said that her team will continue to use the data and will develop its connection to the Department of Education, which houses the information. She also plans to explore the Initiative's connection to Kids Count and find ways to develop partnerships between more projects.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant (Rhode Island) stated that the variety of Kids Count configurations has been noted. Some states have very tight connections with data sources. We need to collaborate to avoid duplication and not have multiple sets of indicators.

William Hollinshead (Rhode Island) suggested that the group take up Dave Lawrence's challenge. To create an early childhood movement, each state needs to develop alliances with influential people who they are not allied with now.

Phil Baimas (Massachusetts) suggested that each national partner organization should assess where its mission overlaps with that of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative to begin forming a dissemination strategy.

Cindy D'Ercole (Kansas) stated that her team plans to develop campaign materials and toolkits that connect the various dimensions of child development to academic success.

Lisa Usselman (Ohio) mentioned plans to align indicators with other initiatives in the state. The team also needs to better mobilize the community and inform parents about the importance of school readiness.

Suzanne Clark Johnson (Virginia) suggested making the Getting Ready website interactive.

Cathie Walsh (Rhode Island) closed the meeting by asking national partners and states to contact her to share their ideas on dissemination to key audiences. A list of national partner organizations and state team coordinators is in Section 11.