Executive Summary

- Early Childhood Education Act (Act 3) provides an extraordinary opportunity to impact the lives of Louisiana's at-risk children:
  - *Early childhood programs have the potential to change children's lives in significant and lasting ways*
  - *Improving child outcomes should be the ultimate goal of publicly-funded early childhood programs*
  - *Families, the fundamental unit of our society, should have access to high quality options and have information to make the best choices for their children*
  - *Supporting early childhood professionals to improve will lead to positive child outcomes*

- We have increased the rate of children entering school kindergarten-ready to 54%. We must build on this progress, striving for the day when all children enter kindergarten ready.

- Act 3 mandates creation of an Early Childhood Care and Education Network that ensures children are ready for kindergarten.

- Network will be organized around four strategies that reflect our shared vision:
  - *Fair and transparent outcomes-based quality rating system*
  - *Funding based on performance and demand*
  - *Families have information and access to high quality choices*
  - *Resources and support to improve the quality of care and instruction*

- Our success in implementation will be determined by our ability to work collectively, set and meet high expectations and deliver better outcomes for children.

> **" The expectation that all children can learn and succeed should be a guiding principle of the newly-established early learning network "**
>
> **–Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families and Education's Next Horizon**

Formal Feedback on Framework

- As required by Act 3, BrightStart Early Childhood Advisory Council, Nonpublic School Commission and Child Care Association of Louisiana provided formal feedback on Framework
  - *Includes comments from membership and general public*
  - *Full comments available at http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/20783.pdf*
  - *Builds on collaborative engagement with broad set of stakeholders (see page 14)*

- Framework was well-received with specific support for:
  - One uniform network with coordinated systems and processes
  - High standards of quality for <u>all</u> children that reflect holistic view of child development
  - Research-based, developmentally appropriate standards, tools and practices
    - *Reliable, valid assessments to help professionals improve practice and families support their children's development*
  - More accountability <u>and</u> autonomy for programs
  - Streamlining and alignment of regulations, licensing and quality rating system across settings
  - Focused efforts to support and improve early childhood workforce
  - Implementation should begin with pilots and be phased in

Shared Recommendations

Recommendations represent <u>shared</u> themes:

<u>Strategies</u>

- Be thoughtful about development, roll-out and communication of quality rating system based on letter grades
- Create incentives to prioritize children in need
- Focus efforts on all ages, not just 4 year olds
- Increase equity of funding and resources
- Emphasize family education and involvement
- Strengthen supports for early childhood professionals to meet higher expectations

<u>Implementation</u>

- Use pilots to learn, increase buy-in and, ultimately, improve implementation
- Demonstrate importance of including children with disabilities and special needs at outset
- Provide time, clear processes and practical supports for improvement
- Establish formal, authentic and ongoing engagement structures
- Examine models used by other states
- Maximize existing resources to support improvement efforts

Recommendations and Responses:
Strategies

We Heard	Together We Should
Be thoughtful about quality rating system based on letter grades	• Build on key components of Quality Start that serve children well and lead to school readiness • Exercise reason and flexibility; make modifications as appropriate to circumstances (e.g. serving a small percentage of children with public funds or providing care for a few hours a week) • Use tools as designed and set appropriate safeguards to ensure integrity of assessment process • Monitor impact closely to ensure that children are not turned away or dropped by programs or that supply of quality programs is reduced
Create incentives to prioritize children in need	• Set enrollment priorities for children who are most at risk due to family income and foster care • Create incentives and encourage public recognition for programs that serve children who are at risk, learning English or who have a disability • Recognize progress over time in letter grade methodology, not only a point-in-time evaluation
Focus efforts on all ages, not just 4 year olds	• Use standards and select tools (e.g. assessments) that are appropriate for all ages birth to five • Include programs that serve younger children in quality rating system but make adjustments to letter grade methodology to be age appropriate and reflect programmatic differences
Increase equity of funding and resources	• Coordinate funding across all settings to reduce funding inequities • Encourage diverse delivery, shared services, and public-private partnerships • Increase access for all Network participants to appropriate exemptions, incentives and rates • Provide access to professional development supports across programs • Help providers develop ways to increase wages as staff attain additional education
Emphasize family education and involvement	• Align program standards on family engagement and set common guidelines • Seek support to develop communication and marketing tools to engage and educate families
Strengthen supports for early childhood professionals to meet higher expectations	• Build a data system that increases access to data to inform care and instruction • Prioritize training in critical areas such as developmental standards and assessments • Develop multiple ways to offer affordable, effective and easy-to-access professional development which includes training, coaching, mentoring and technical assistance

Recommendations and Responses:
Implementation

We Heard	Together We Should

Use pilots to learn, increase buy-in and, ultimately, improve implementation	• Run small number of pilots in 2013-14 that embody vision, objectives and key elements of Network
	    • Include programs from different settings and multiple ages in pilots
	    • Share learning and results from pilots
	• Use data from pilots to finalize timelines for scaling Network across the state

Demonstrate importance of including children with disabilities and special needs at outset	• Incorporate recommendations from disability advocates, including specific definition of inclusion • Engage individuals with knowledge and expertise of working with children with disabilities in the planning and implementation process at state and local level • Establish mechanisms within Network to ensure early detection of special needs • Set specific expectations for pilots to include meaningful percentage of children with disabilities
Provide time, clear processes and practical supports for improvement	• Use pilots to develop and test menu of supports to help providers improve • Set policy that ensures at least three years before programs face consequences • Establish process for remediation and re-instatement after public funding is removed • Partner with stakeholders to identify ways to fund or subsidize improvement efforts
Establish formal, authentic and ongoing engagement structures	• Redesign BrightStart Workgroups to include broader range of stakeholders to assist in development of details of the Framework • Incorporate local collaboration into pilots; encourage communities to establish mechanisms for co-ownership and coordination of activities at local level
Examine models used by other states	• Continue to work with public and private partners (e.g. Academic Distinction Fund) to bring in outside experts to support collective learning about models in other states
Maximize existing resources to support improvement efforts	• Highlight and learn from existing programs that serve early childhood population effectively • Balance fiscal realities of state budget while mitigating cost impact on providers • Market quality rating system to broader community to increase awareness and support

Framework Outline

I.   *Shared Challenge: Increasing Quality and Access to Information*

- Why Early Childhood Programs are Important
- Making Progress, More to Do
- Understanding the Framework

II. *Approach: Transformation to an Early Childhood Care and Education Network*

- Coordinating as a Network
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Vision

III. *Four Strategies for Success*

- Fair and transparent outcomes-based quality rating system
- Funding based on performance and demand
- Families have information and access to high quality choices
- Resources and support to improve the quality of care and instruction

IV. *Implementation*

- Collaboration
- Timeline and next steps

Act 3:
Increasing Quality and Access to Information
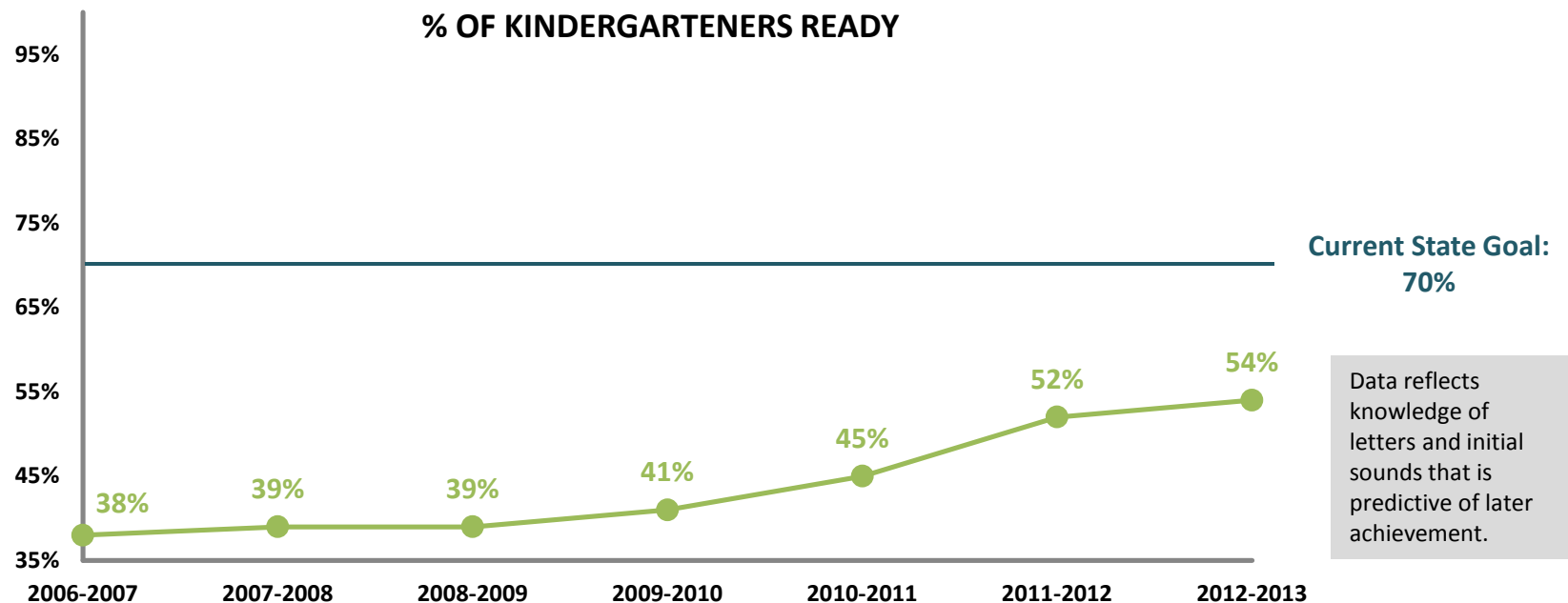
Why Early Childhood Programs are Important

- Research suggests that children who participate in high quality early childhood programs are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
  - Low income and at-risk children benefit the most from high quality early childhood programs.

- Short-Term Benefits:
  - Better performance in school (academic and social)
  - Lower retention rates
  - Fewer referrals to special education

- Long-Term Benefits:
  - Higher graduation rates
  - Increased learning potential
  - Increased participation in the labor force

> *Students who participated in high quality pre-K in Louisiana arrived at 4th grade on time at higher rates than peers who did not participate in any public pre-K program. [These children] also had significantly elevated rates of achievement on all subject areas assessed by 3rd grade iLEAP and 4th grade LEAP.*
>
> *–Picard Center Research*

Making Progress, More to Do

- Louisiana spends $1.4 billion on early childhood programs, including more than $300 million for education

- Though much progress has been made, only 54% of Louisiana children enter kindergarten ready

% OF KINDERGARTENERS READY

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
% Ready	38%	39%	39%	41%	45%	52%	54%

Current State Goal: 70%

Data reflects knowledge of letters and initial sounds that is predictive of later achievement.

Many Choices, But No Clarity on Quality

- Children do not have equal access to high quality early childhood programs.
    - Quality of programs varies across the state.
    - Availability of programs varies across the state.

- Families do not have clear, comparable information on the quality of programs.
    - Programs have different standards and measures of success which makes it difficult for families to compare the quality of programs.

- Providers are held to different standards.
    - Programs have different regulations and accountability which creates a range of quality.

Understanding the Framework

What is the framework?

- Outlines implementation approach for the Early Childhood Education Act (Act 3) passed by the Louisiana Legislature in 2012.

What programs are included?

- Early childhood programs serving children age birth to five that receive state or federal funding. This includes pre-kindergarten in public schools (LA 4, 8g, Title I), special education, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Head Start/Early Head Start, EarlySteps and Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development program.

What programs are <u>not</u> included?

- Act 3 does <u>not</u> apply to early childhood programs that:
  - Receive public funds solely for food and nutrition assistance.
  - Are licensed by the state but do not receive public funding.

Approach:
Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network

Coordinating as a Network

- Recent examples of coordinating efforts to improve quality include:

  o *BrightStart promoted quality through collaborative development of current quality rating system and School Readiness Tax Credits*

  o *Advocacy organizations convened stakeholders and elevated issues of readiness*

  o *Multiple entities called for quality improvements, better coordination and more emphasis on child outcomes, resulting in Early Childhood Education Act (Act 3) in 2012 Legislature*

- LDOE, DCFS and DHH will create an Early Childhood Care and Education Network that:

  o *Sets high expectations across publicly-funded programs;*

  o *Establishes a rating system with letter grades that recognizes programs for preparing children for school;*

  o *Maximizes public funding to support high quality programs for children in need;*

  o *Provides clear information to empower parents to make informed choices; and*

  o *Will be fully implemented by the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.*

> " *Make the systems easier to negotiate. [There needs to be] cross training between agencies and departments, coordination, and some type of comparison chart of services for parents to use when making decisions.* "
>
> *–Survey*

Partnership and Collaboration

- Planning effort has required close collaboration with stakeholders:
  - 9 regional public forums, done in collaboration with Education's Next Horizon
  - Numerous meetings, presentations and conference calls
  - Focus group with early childhood leaders
  - Stakeholder survey, done in collaboration with Education's Next Horizon, with 500+ online responses and 30 pen and paper responses
  - Parent/guardian survey, done in collaboration with Stand for Children
- Implementation effort will require increased participation and communication

" Gain input and engagement from the practitioners who are providing care, the parents who are served and the other key stakeholders in the community (nonprofits partnering with network members, foundations, business and higher education)...on an ongoing basis and in person. "

–Survey

Vision

Publicly-funded early childhood programs will:

- Continually improve classroom interactions and children's progress

- Be evaluated on a common scale:
  o *Programs that do well will receive public recognition and greater opportunities*
  o *Programs that do poorly will have support and time to improve; however, they will face consequences if they do not improve*

- Collaborate as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education Network

Families will:

- Have information that helps them make the best choice for their children

- Easily apply for high quality programs

- Be engaged to support their children's early development

And children will:

- Attend high quality, high-performing and developmentally-appropriate early childhood programs

- Arrive at kindergarten ready for success

Four Strategies for Success

STRATEGY   **ACTIVITIES**

Fair and transparent outcomes-based quality rating system
- Set common Early Learning and Development standards
- Assessments are piloted and then phased in over time
- Program and child assessments determine letter grades

Funding based on performance and demand
- Prioritize children in need
- Coordinate funding and align with letter grades
- Recruit and fund alternate providers as needed
- Reduce barriers and encourage collaboration

Families have information and access to high quality choices
- Provide meaningful information on program quality
- Easy-to-use common application process
- High level of family communication and engagement

Resources and support to improve the quality of care and instruction
- Strengthen workforce talent and pipeline
- Continuous improvement through coordinated support, tools and data
- Targeted workforce improvement as needed

BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Strategy 1:
Fair and Transparent Outcomes-Based Quality Rating System

(1) FAIR AND TRANSPARENT OUTCOMES-BASED QUALITY RATING SYSTEM
Common Early Learning and Development Standards

What we will achieve:

- **One set of Birth to Five standards that outline path to kindergarten readiness**

- **Continuum of developmental milestones (Birth to Five) that includes standards for each age level with the four-year-old standards as the "anchor"**

- **Standards that are applicable to all children including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency**

What we have done so far:

- BESE approved kindergarten readiness definition that includes multiple domains of child development in 2011

- Integrated Birth-Three Early Learning Guidelines and Pre-Kindergarten Standards into one set of standards

- Reviewed with national experts and local stakeholder group consisting of child care and infant/toddler experts, Head Start personnel and public and private pre-kindergarten coordinators

- Aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Math

- Published draft standards on BrightStart website in November with link for feedback

What to expect in 2013:

- Feedback will be incorporated into final version of standards which go to BESE for approval by Spring 2013

- Program and child assessment tools will be aligned with standards

- Standards will be disseminated and used as part of professional development

> ❝ *Address the whole child across developmental areas, including social and emotional development in addition to the academic areas of language, literacy, math, and numeracy* ❞
> *–Forum Report*

(1) FAIR AND TRANSPARENT OUTCOMES-BASED QUALITY RATING SYSTEM
Program and child assessments determine letter grades

What we will achieve:

- **Fair and transparent approach for holding programs accountable for quality in two ways:**
  1) *Positive interactions and instruction in classrooms or centers*
  2) *Children are making progress towards kindergarten readiness*
- **Successful transition of Quality Start to outcomes-based quality rating and improvement system**

What we have done so far:

- Set criteria to be considered as system is developed (e.g. children with disabilities are not excluded, risks of high-stakes at young ages, factors such as few children per program)
- Identified research-based program assessments (e.g. ITERS, CLASS) based in part on current QRS and recommended practices
- Prepared Request for Proposal to select a child assessment tool that must:
  o *Be developmentally appropriate, easy to use and is predictive of school success*
  o *Accommodate children with disabilities and those who are English Language Learners*
  o *Inform instruction, interactions/activities and routines as well as to communicate child progress to parents*
- Determined need for pilots and phase-in periods:
  o *Start with a "learning year" in which tools are introduced, staff receive training and data is gathered*
  o *Letter grade methodology will be based on data gathered during pilots and learning year*
  o *Methodology will be shared with all programs before it is used to determine letter grades*

What to expect in 2013:

- Program and Child assessment tools selected
- Contractors identified for implementation of program assessments
- Trainings on program and child assessment tools as they are rolled out

"We need to make sure that any assessment tool is valid, reliable, research based, and appropriate to the age group."

–Survey

Strategy 2:
Funding Based on Performance and Demand

(2) FUNDING BASED ON PERFORMANCE AND DEMAND
Prioritize children in need and coordinate funding

What we will achieve:

- **LDOE coordinates funding at state level to prioritize public dollars for children in need**
- **High performing programs will be recognized and rewarded**
  - o ***Letter grades will encourage public recognition of quality***
  - o ***Tax credit incentives support high quality programs***
  - o ***High-performing programs are supported to compete for federal funding***
- **Programs that receive failing grades will receive supports but, if outcomes do not improve, state will recruit and fund alternate providers**

What we have done so far:

- Review of current incentives and consequences has been completed
- Stakeholder feedback has helped determine need for a "learning year" as well as ensuring programs have at least 3 years to improve outcomes before consequences are incurred

What to expect in 2013:

- Greater coordination of funding allocation on a parish basis
- Gaps are identified and partners work together to identify alternate options as well as develop strategies to build pipeline in hard-to-serve areas
- Finalize model that indicates how many years programs have to improve and what supports to expect
- Plan for revision of tax credit incentives while ensuring changes are phased in during transition

> ❝ *Ensure and monitor that [Act 3] does not result in fewer high-risk children attending high quality early childhood education programs, especially for children under 4, by increasing standards without increasing resources.* ❞
> *–Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families and Education's Next Horizon Recommendation*

(2) FUNDING BASED ON PERFORMANCE AND DEMAND
Reduce barriers and encourage collaboration

What we will achieve:

- **Aligned program standards that reflect recommended practices**

- **Rules, regulations and licensing are streamlined to hold providers accountable without imposing undue regulation**

- **Streamlined licensing standards for providers participating in outcomes-based quality rating system**

- **Policies encourage collaboration, consolidation and cost-effectiveness at local level**

What we have done so far:

- Review of common program standards to identify ways to make it easier to combine funding

- Review of current licensing in progress that holds health and safety of very young children as a guiding principle and is mindful of cost to providers

- Early identification of potential changes in certain licensing standards for providers who participate in quality rating system

- National experts provided recommendations on approaches to encourage local collaboration

What to expect in 2013:

- Roll out of common program standards

- Rulemaking for changes to licensing; launch of streamlined licensing standards for providers who participate in quality rating system

- Policies to encourage diverse delivery, shared services and public-private partnerships at local level

"[Reduce the] amount of paperwork that is usually created with accountability. We don't want teachers and aides to have to spend more time filling out paperwork than working with children!"
–Survey

Strategy 3:
Families have information and access to high quality choices

(3) FAMILIES HAVE INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY CHOICES

What we will achieve:

- **Families have information on program quality to help them make best choice for their children**
- **Families are able to apply for programs through easy-to-use common process**
- **Families are aware of child assessments and use information to support their children**
- **Social service providers and community organizations use information to support families**

What we have done so far:

- Partnered with organizations (Stand for Children, Education's Next Horizon) to conduct surveys to inform collaborative approach for communicating with and engaging families
- Application processes are being integrated
- BrightStart Taskforce designed common data system proposal to include one-stop website where families could access information about program quality and apply online
- Identified opportunity to build common application process on current state system for programs such as food stamps (DCFS CAFÉ)

What to expect in 2013:

- More unified application process at local level for programs in pilot(s)
- Sharing of design for online application system and testing
- Collaboration with partners on family engagement plan

> " *…We must also make strides in encouraging and fostering parent involvement and training. We can have the most highly qualified early childhood professionals in the nation, but if we don't have parents and families on board, we're simply not going to see results.* "
>
> *–Survey*

Strategy 4:
Resources and Support to Improve Quality of Care and Instruction

(4) RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE AND INSTRUCTION
Strengthen workforce talent and pipeline

What we will achieve:

- **Early childhood professionals are aware of and meet professional standards**
- **Early childhood courses cover material that helps professionals improve their practice**
- **Courses are sequenced such that professionals can earn a CDA and build toward an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree without wasted time, credits or money**
- **Tax credit incentives help attract and retain quality staff**

What we have done so far:

- BrightStart Taskforce drafted 2012 Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competencies
- BrightStart Taskforce created approach for coordinating courses for early childhood professionals

What to expect in 2013:

- Collaborate with stakeholders to finalize Workforce Knowledge and Competencies and distribute
- Joint development of higher education course sequence led by BrightStart Taskforce
- Redesign of Pathways system to support credit-worthy trainings in sequence
- Develop plan for transitioning tax credits

" *…Create clear paths for early childhood professionals to expand their knowledge, skills, and credentials as they work with young children in early learning and development settings.* **"**
–BrightStart Taskforce

(4) RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE AND INSTRUCTION
Continuous improvement through coordinated support, tools and data

What we will achieve:

- **Professionals receive support to improve through one coordinated system led by early childhood experts from agencies and resource and referral systems**
  - ○ *Network of supports provide ongoing training and feedback while also helping program leaders to set individualized long-term goals and develop improvement plans*
- **Common online resources available to all professionals, including example lessons/units/ approaches aligned with Early Learning and Development standards and best practices**
- **Professionals use child data to provide instruction and care based on children's individual needs**

What we have done so far:

- Begun identifying useful online and distance learning tools
- BrightStart Taskforce designed data system proposal to support ongoing learning and development

What to expect in 2013:

- Cross-agency plan for coordinating regional support structures
- Training on assessment tools
- Launch of online repository to support professionals
- Programs have access to classroom and child outcomes data during pilots

" Provide training and continuing education for professionals...outside of normal delivery methods (e.g., online, weekend/evening options, mentoring program) "

–Forum

(4) RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE AND INSTRUCTION
Targeted workforce improvement as needed

What we will achieve:

- **Targeted approaches for improvement for current professionals who may not meet new standards:**
  - *Help professionals increase skills by financially supporting additional training/credentials (i.e., CDAs)*
  - *Continue and expand coaching and mentoring for struggling providers*
- **Targeted approaches are accessible and affordable to diverse workforce**

What we have done so far:

- BrightStart Taskforce outlined path for professionals who do not plan to obtain college degrees but need to acquire similar knowledge and skills
- Begun identifying partners to develop and offer programs; partners may include universities, community colleges, technical colleges and distance learning providers

What to expect in 2013:

- Resource and Referral Agencies begin preparing child care professionals for transition to outcomes-based quality rating system
- Continuation of current Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) resources to support options for professionals to pursue a CDA or complete credit-worthy trainings
- Free resources and information on program and child assessments

"There needs to be an avenue for professional development for staff working in child care centers that is accessible and affordable to them."
—Survey

Implementation:
Collaboration Moving Forward

Collaboration Moving Forward

- Agencies and stakeholders work together to transition to implementation
  - *Finalize and roll out key components such as Early Learning and Development Standards*
  - *Redesign BrightStart Workgroups to include broader range of stakeholders*
  - *Create incentives for and support local collaboration through pilots*
- Learning occurs continuously as effort moves forward; close communication can help ensure course corrections
- Areas for collaboration:
  - *Advocacy for policy changes*
  - *Investment through public-private partnerships*
  - *Community-based needs analysis*
  - *Convening for community-based planning*
  - *Family communication and engagement*
  - *Organizing for shared services and consolidating training and technical assistance*

"Letters or stars? Makes no difference to me. Change the standards, but don't stop there. Change the situation that keeps them from being met. Change the situation that keeps my child from reaching his potential early on, that keeps several children from entering elementary schools unprepared. Stand behind our [providers] and help them make success a reality for my child, and our community alike. "

–Survey

Implementation Timeline (1 of 2)

	Next Steps through Summer 2013	2013-2014 School Year	Summer 2014	2014-2015 School Year	2015-2016 School Year
Fair and transparent outcomes-based quality rating system	• Finalize standards • Identify tool(s) and select contractor(s) for program assessments • Select child assessment tools • Start trainings on assessments	• Roll out of program and child tools through pilots • Conduct training on assessments • Collect data on all programs in Spring 2014	• Use data to inform roll out for programs • Share results with providers	• Learning year for using assessments • Collect data on in Spring 2015 to finalize methodology • Share results with providers	• Results of assessments are used to determine letter grades
Funding based on performance and demand	• Alignment of common program standards • Coordination of funding on a parish basis • Plan for revision of tax credits • Rulemaking on licensing	• Implementation of common program standards • Launch of new licensing standards	• Coordination of funding on a parish basis • Gap analysis	• Implement strategies for building pipeline	• Coordination of funding on a parish basis • Gap analysis

	Next Steps through Summer 2013	2013-2014 School Year	Summer 2014	2014-2015 School Year	2015-2016 School Year
Families have information and access to high quality choices	• Develop common application process pilot • Partner on family engagement to develop communication tools • Share design for online application	• Develop pilot version of online application process • Family engagement on child assessment data	• Revise design to integrate with letter grades • Develop communication tools and strategies to broadly engage families	• Launch full version of online application process for 2015-2016	• Common online application in place • Families have information about program quality
Resources and support to improve the quality of care and instruction	• Workforce competencies disseminated • Joint development of higher education courses • Develop plan for transitioning tax credits • Develop cross-agency plan for coordinating regional support structures • Develop targeted approaches and begin to repurpose funds	• Training on assessment tools through regional support structures • Launch of program pilot(s) • Access to performance data for pilots • Launch of online repository • Use higher education curricula to align institutions	• Continue to develop improvement options based on learning year data	• Supply and demand analysis • Revisit incentives to ensure alignment	• Support data-based improvement options

> **"...Changes to the current system should be piloted and then phased in with time for parents to understand the new approach and for early childhood programs to make the necessary changes and meet the new standards "** *before grades are published and penalties are applied.*
>
> *–Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families and Education's Next Horizon*