EQUITY STARTS EARLY: STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER IN PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

2:00 PM ET/1:00 PM CT/ NOON MT/11:00 AM PT
Thomas Schultz is Project Director for Early Childhood Initiatives at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and has worked on early childhood research and policy issues at the Office of Head Start, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the National Association of State Boards of Education. He has written numerous reports, book chapters and articles on early childhood policy and practice and presents frequently at national, regional and state meetings and conferences.
Jenna Conway is the Assistant Superintendent for Early Childhood at the Louisiana Department of Education. Jenna started her career as a domestic violence counselor for the New York City Police Department, administered a fund for victims of the 9/11 attack, and ran a shelter in New York City before turning to public housing. She spent three years in New York managing projects and doing strategic planning in service of one million low-income New Yorkers in public housing. In 2012, Jenna joined the Louisiana Department of Education through the Broad Residency. She holds degrees from Yale University and the Stanford University Graduate School of Business. She lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with her husband and two children.
**W. Clayton Burch** is the Chief Academic Officer for the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). He leads the Division of Teaching and Learning, which targets early learning (grades pre-K-5), middle and secondary learning (grades 6-12), assessment and special education. Burch’s leadership of the Division of Teaching and Learning has targeted initiatives focusing on school readiness, third-grade literacy, attendance, graduation rates and professional and personalized learning.

Burch previously directed the WVDE Office of Early Learning and worked with state and national leaders to ensure West Virginia’s implementation of a statewide high-quality, universal pre-K program targeting collaboration with community partners on school-readiness and third-grade literacy issues. Burch is an executive committee member and WVDE designee to West Virginia’s Early Childhood Advisory Council. He also chairs the WVDE Advisory Committee on a Comprehensive Approach to Early Learning.
Equity Starts Early:
Strategies to Promote High-Quality Early Education

Dr. Thomas Schultz - CCSSO
NCSL Early Childhood Fellows
June 30, 2016
Equity Starts Early:
How Chiefs Will Build High-Quality Early Education
Road Map

- How well are young children doing in early learning and development?

- 5 action steps for states to prevent achievement gaps in the early learning years
Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth

Gaps in Reading & Math at Kg. Entry

Percent of Kindergarteners Passing Proficiency Levels in Fall

Maternal Education

Less than HS
HS
Some College
BA

Letter Recognition
Beginning Sounds
# & Shapes
Relative Size
(NCES, 2000)
What Do You Think?

- Are educators sufficiently informed, alarmed and focused on early achievement gaps?
- Does it make sense to delay reporting on child outcomes until the end of 3rd grade?
- What can states do to prevent early achievement gaps?
Action Steps for States

- Engage families & communities
- Connect ece programs and schools
- Improve ece program quality
- Build a high-performing ece workforce
- Increase investment in voluntary, high quality early childhood education
How State Legislators Can Lead

- Track progress on how young children are doing.
- Make it easier for parents and local agencies to use multiple early childhood programs.
- Connect early childhood and K-12 goals, planning, data to build shared accountability.
Louisiana: Small State, Big Ideas

Only half of children in Louisiana enter kindergarten ready. Since the passage of a transformative state law (Act 3, 2012), Louisiana has made great progress in unifying the system to prepare all children for success.

- Louisiana requires early childhood programs that take public funding to meet **universal higher standards** – regardless of program type – with a **focus on outcomes** rather than inputs.

- At the same time, Louisiana seeks to infuse informed **choice** into the system – for families, providers and communities.

- To achieve this, Louisiana has established **local networks** in every community and **centralized state oversight** under the Board of Ed including oversight for child care licensing and funding.

- Ultimately all of this forces the question – how do we ensure that every at-risk family **can choose a quality option** that best meets their needs? And what does it take to fund this?
**Vision for Ensuring K-Readiness**

*Louisiana is unifying the early childhood system – birth to PreK – so all children enter kindergarten ready.*

- **Shared high standards for what children should learn and what excellent teaching looks like**
- **Teachers are excellent at interacting with children and guiding learning**
- **Expectations for health, safety and learning are consistent with adequate funding levels for programs that serve children well**
- **Families can easily enroll and choose the best option for their children**
Laws and policies passed since 2012 establish framework for the transformation. But Louisiana communities have led the way in implementation.

- **2012**
  - BESE approves multi-year plan for implementation

- **2013**
  - 13 Early Childhood Community Network Pilots launch

- **2014 - 2015**
  - 16 more Community Network Pilots launch
  - Additional legislation is passed to unify licensing, enrollment, and funding
  - State Board passes policies on licensing, workforce, enrollment, accountability and child care

- **2015 – 2016**
  - All communities have Community Network in place
  - Statewide implementation and engagement through a Learning Year

- **2016 – 2017**
  - First year with stakes for rating and improvement system and coordinated enrollment
Engage Communities through Unification

**Community Network model ensures implementation meets local needs and enables more innovation through iteration.**

**Community Networks:**
- From 2013-2015, all parishes voluntarily established unified local early childhood Networks through pilot process
- State Board set formal expectations in 2015

**Each Community Network:**
- Has a lead agency
- Includes all publicly-funded early childhood programs (child care, Head Start, PreK)

**Activities of Each Community Network:**
- Account for every birth-to-age-5 at-risk child
- Provide 2 CLASS observations per classroom
- Implement coordinated enrollment and funding
Engage Families through Choice

Coordinated enrollment centers on parent choice and stimulates local innovation.

Families must be empowered to choose what is best for their child. Louisiana should have locally-managed enrollment systems that:

1. **Coordinate Information**: Families know of all available seats
2. **Coordinate Eligibility**: Families easily know what they qualify for
3. **Coordinate Applications**: Families indicate their top choices and apply to all programs through one application
4. **Match Based on Preference**: Families enroll their child in the highest ranked preference available and no one occupies more than one seat

*The One App Animation*
In 2015-2016, after two years of pilots, Louisiana launched a unified rating and improvement system with practice performance profiles to:

• Define and measure core elements needed for positive child outcomes;
• Provide simple, clear information about what’s happening in classrooms;
• Clearly articulate a path to improvement; and
• Give families an easy way to compare choices in their community.

Louisiana’s unified rating and improvement system has two core components:

1. Rating that relates to positive child outcomes
   • Adult-child interactions and instruction, as measured by CLASS; and
   • Access for at-risk children (Community Networks only).

2. Information on classroom best practices
   • E.g., using curriculum, maintaining low ratios, assessing children for learning

Publicly-funded programs that do not participate or fail to meet minimum standard may lose license or funding.
Accelerate Improvement through Unified Accountability and Support

Unprecedented participation in 2015-2016 indicates need to improve instruction.

Local communities observed nearly 98% of classrooms twice this year using CLASS:

- Children are experiencing very different levels of instruction across the state.
- Classrooms scored well on climate and organization
  - Classrooms are positive environments where children are encouraged and supported.
  - Classrooms run smoothly with consistent routines and clear behavioral expectations.
- Classrooms scored low on instructional quality
  - Learning activities are rote (e.g., naming a letter, color or shape) and rarely encourage analysis and reasoning.
  - Young children receive few, if any, opportunities to learn through back-and-forth dialogue and are not supported to connect concepts and ideas.
Initial results reinforce need for a close proxy to outcomes-based system.

Percent of Sites by Program Type and Overall Score in Learning Year

For 2016-2017, state will use 4-level differentiated scale; honor quality and improvement; add future consequences for very low quality sites; and increase observation accuracy, especially now that stakes will be attached.
**Build a High Performance Workforce**

Kindergarten readiness depends on a system of supports to improve teaching and learning.

With K-12 system as model, there are supports aligned to **CLASS Observations** available for every classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
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| • Curriculum reviews  
• Curriculum Funding Initiative for Child Care  
• Teacher Leader Summit  
• Online Instructional Toolbox | • Teaching Strategies GOLD available to all classrooms  
• Online training on GOLD  
• Choice for sites to use another assessment | • Prof. Development Guide  
• Teacher Leader Sessions  
• R&Rs (Foundational Training and Coaching)  
• Mental Health Consultation  
• Inclusion Pilot (Classrooms w/children w/special needs)  
• Believe & Prepare: EC (Ancillary Certificate) |
Louisiana is working to professionalize the workforce and support teachers to be effective at interactions and instruction.

- Maintain BA Degree AND teaching certificate requirement for PreK
- Establish new Ancillary Teaching Certificate as a minimum expectation for child care
  - Based on Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher
  - Starting in 2019, require that all lead child care teachers in licensed, publicly-funded programs have an Ancillary Teaching Certificate or higher
- Create new Birth to Kindergarten BA field and teaching certificate
- Support teachers to pursue credentials and reward performance through scholarships, tax credits and new preparation programs

Louisiana has made great strides in recent years to unify and improve early childhood system. Now the challenge is to increase investment and to fully level the playing field.
West Virginia has prioritized early childhood education for over three decades, resulting in the evolution of a comprehensive approach to P-3 that supports this commitment.
WVDE has prioritized early childhood education for over three decades, resulting in the evolution of a comprehensive approach to P-3 as a result of this commitment.

- 55 individual counties that also serve as the LEA – local school district
- About 20,000 children per grade (age) level
- Free, full-day Kindergarten (since the 70’s, required as of 1995), Universal Access to Pre-K (required access to all 4 yr. olds as of 2012-13)
- A state Early Childhood Advisory Council, Pre-K Steering Team, WVDE Office of Early Learning and a WVDE Advisory Committee on a Comprehensive Approach to Early Learning (P-5)
- 2002 legislation served as a catalysts for early education reform for West Virginia as well as the WVDE – resulting in state model for early childhood governance

http://wvde.state.wv.us/ready-set-go/
http://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/
Catalyst for Change

West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2525 –
West Virginia’s Universal Access to a Quality Early Education System

• W. Va. Code §18-5-44 passed in 2002, which required the state to expand access to preschool education programs, making prekindergarten available to all 4 year old children by 2012-13.

• In order to support counties in the effort to maximize existing resources, 50% of the classrooms were to be collaborative with community partners. By 2014-15, 79% of the classrooms were in collaboration with community partners, including childcare centers and Head Start programs.

• Funding for Universal Pre-K is part of the State School Aid Funding Formula. As enrollment increases, funding to implement increases. FY2015 Total State Aid funding generated by Pre-k was over 91 million (in addition to Head Start and childcare funding).

West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2525
State to Local Structures and Supports

• WVBE/WVDE and WVDHHR – created the state Pre-K Steering Team

• Local county collaborative teams required for key programmatic design and pre-k decision making (2003-2013 tied to state aid dollars)

• As time passed, strengthened quality indicators, such as teacher/assistant teacher credentials, professional development, comprehensive data management, meals – continuous quality improvement of collaborative program oversight and resource management.
The Journey: Selected Milestones

- 2008: State Board of Education establishes comprehensive definition of School Readiness
- 2008: Equal state-aid funding for all Universal Pre-K students, regardless of setting
- 2010: WVDE Office of School Readiness established
- 2012: WVDE Office of Early Learning (Pre-K through 5) established
  - Participation in the National P-3 Institute (Harvard Grad. College)
  - In-depth study of Kristie Kauerz’ P-3 Buckets
  - Review of national landscape around P-3
  - Assistance from CEELO and ARCC
  - Supportive leadership
  - Advisory committee on a comprehensive approach to early learning established
A New P-3 Approach 2012

10 years of developing the WV Universal Pre-K System established a culture of early childhood throughout the state, a true sense and understanding that pre-k was part of a much bigger complex puzzle of P-3. This has led to a strong foundational view that unless we target the whole system, it’s all for not.

- **3rd Grade**
  - WV’s Campaign for Grade Level Reading
    - (P-3 Work 2012, Governor’s Initiative 2013, HB 4816 2014)

- **School Readiness**
  - Ready, Set, Go! WV

- **Universal Pre-K**
  - WV Universal Pre-K
    - (WV Code 18-5-44 – WVBE Policy 2525)

- **B-3**
  - Foundations for school readiness – a comprehensive view leading to WV definition of school readiness and foundation for achievement gap work (WV ECAC)
Identification of “Buckets”

- WV Universal Pre-K
- School Readiness
- 3rd Grade Literacy Proficiency
- Instruction and Learning (P-5)
- Early Learning Workforce Development
- Advocacy and Public Engagement
Recent Milestones

- 2014: WV State Board policy designates Kindergarten as an early learning readiness grade (alongside Pre-K)
- 2014: The final benchmark for NIEER’s 10 quality indicators is written into legislation and policy (assistant teacher credential). Kindergarten assistant teachers are included in legislation/policy.
- 2014: Legislation and policy written is to support a comprehensive approach to closing the 3rd grade literacy achievement gap.
- 2015: All 55 WV counties join the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, emphasizing local and state commitments to
  - Early childhood attendance
  - School readiness
  - High-quality extended day- and extended-year learning programs
  - High-quality classroom instruction and interventions
- 2016: WV is slated to meet all 10 NIEER quality benchmarks
What was required?

• Political and leadership will
• Experts at the table
• Multi-level collaboration
• Transparency
• Commitment to a cycle of continuous quality improvement
QUESTIONS?
STAY CONNECTED

• An archived version will be available shortly, please visit: www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/equity-starts-early-strategies-to-consider-in-promoting-high-quality-early-education.aspx

• Learn more about NCSL’s Early Care and Education project: ncsl.org/research/human-services/early-care-and-education.aspx

• Learn more about NCSL’s Early Learning and Support project: http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/early-learning.aspx

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