



December 2, 2021

2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Google Hangouts: meet.google.com/phy-uief-cor

Or by phone: 650-489-1593, PIN: 613 001 909#

Meeting Materials:

www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org/eclc-meeting-information

AGENDA

Meeting Objectives:

- Approve the November 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Discuss Universal Preschool Recommendations
- Hear comments from the Early Childhood Community

2:30-2:35pm	Welcome, Introductions and Approve Minutes (Tom Massey) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACTION: Approve the November 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes
2:35-4:15pm	Universal Preschool Recommendations Discussion (ECLC Commissioners)
4:15-4:25pm	Public Comment (Susan Steele)
4:25-4:30pm	Co-Chairs' Next Steps, Final Thoughts and Adjourn (Pamela Harris)

ECLC Upcoming Meetings

- December 16, 2021
 - January 11, 2022
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Note: Any presentation requested by the ECLC does not constitute or imply an endorsement of the product, process, service or organization by the ECLC.

The next ECLC meeting will be held on Thursday, December 16, 2021 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

For information about future meeting dates, times and locations, visit www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org.



Early Childhood Leadership Commission November 10, 2021 ~ 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

MINUTES

Meeting Objectives:

- Approve the October 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Consider approval of the Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan
- Learn about the Governor's FY 2022-2023 Budget Proposal
- Hear updates on Office of Early Childhood Federal Stimulus Funding
- Provide input on Universal Preschool Recommendations
- Hear comments from the Early Childhood Community

Attendees: Tom Massey, Pamela Harris, Susan Steele, Jake Williams, Jeanne McQueeney, Heather Craiglow, Heather O'Hayre, Ida Rhodes, Leslie Nichols, Sue Renner, Angie Paccione, Adeeb Khan, Anne-Marie Braga, Lucinda Burns, Jasmin Ramirez, Melissa Colman, Rachel Hutson, Ryan Beiser, Happy Haynes, Mary Alice Cohen, Kristina Heyl

Welcome, Introductions & Approve Minutes

Pamela Harris called the meeting to order at 9:34 am and asked for a motion to approve the October 28, 2021 meeting minutes. Ida Rhodes motioned to approve the minutes as drafted, Angie Paccione seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Welcome from Anna Jo Haynes, Former ECLC Co-Chair

Anna Jo Haynes welcomed Commissioners and all meeting participants. [House Bill 21-1304](#) was named after Anna Jo for her decades of work advocating to advance early childhood initiatives in Colorado. She described several important early childhood milestones accomplished during her many years of work in the field. Anna Jo told the group she is honored to be a part of the work this far and is excited about the opportunities presented with the launch of the new Department of Early Childhood and universal preschool program. With the federal government considering funding for nationwide universal preschool, Anna Jo reminded the group that Colorado now has the opportunity to serve as an example for the country.

Approve the Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan

Pamela reminded commissioners that they received the final [Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan](#) on November 1, 2021. The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) has been charged by legislation to approve the plan for the new department and then share it with the Governor and Legislature. Pamela thanked all who have contributed to the development of the plan for their heart, passion, and commitment to the work. She noted a few clarifications that were made to the final plan, such as including oral health as an example of overall health and well-being, and asked the group for any final comments prior to taking a vote.

Jake Williams expressed appreciation for specific adjustments made to the recommendations around the early childhood workforce.

Heather O'Hayre shared concerns about the recommended governance structure being very different from other state departments as well as concern about coordination with services that are not proposed to move to the new department. She stated that none of the other state departments without governing boards require counties to contribute funds. She is concerned about a loss in county funding. The counties are required to contribute a match to the funding from the state budget and to use their own funding sources to cover any budget overages. There are counties today that cannot use state funding because they are not currently able to meet that required match. In order to consider the financial impact on counties, she believes there needs to be a dedicated rulemaking advisory seat for a county human service department representative or county commissioner. Heather also expressed concerns about all the child welfare prevention programs moving because they serve children ages 0-18 and the new department, while poised to

move the early childhood system forward in monumental and necessary ways, may not serve that wide of an age range. She expressed concerns about duplication of oversight and the mismatch of populations served with specific concerns about Promoting Safe and Stable Families and whether that funding stream can be moved to a department that is not be the state child welfare department. Heather stated that her concerns will not keep her from voting to move forward with the new department, but she wanted to reiterate those specific concerns. Pamela thanked Heather for her thoughtful input and for providing information about topics that need to be considered as the work implementing the new department moves forward.

Leslie Nichols expressed excitement about the vote and thanked Anna Jo for her introduction. She shared similar concerns as Heather about blending county funds and about the complicated age overlaps. She appreciates the emphasis on technology in the plan and that the plan continually calls out not only children and families but also workforce and compensation. She highlighted the need for concentrated efforts to blend and braid funds and regulations. Leslie thanked Mary Alice Cohen with the Office of Early Childhood and Melissa Colman with the Department of Education for working behind the scenes to figure out how their two existing departments will work successfully with the new Department of Early Childhood. Leslie's remaining concerns are about governance structure proposed in the Transition Plan, with the executive director having rule-making authority. While Governor Polis is an advocate for early childhood, future governors may have different priorities. Leslie does not want this department to become a backdoor for privatization of public education. She also highlighted the need for continued work on preschool special education. Not always can a convenient private provider offer the high-quality services that some kids with disabilities need. Colorado Preschool Program has been highly successful at serving at-risk children in the state. That population needs to continue to be well-served in the new universal preschool program. In rural communities, often school districts are the only provider or are one of few early childhood providers. Colorado Preschool Program funding and other funding for school districts needs to stay whole. She reminded the group that often the needs of rural communities are very different from the needs of urban communities. Pamela assured Leslie and the group that the Commission and transition planning leadership are committed to being responsive to the needs of rural, urban, and suburban communities across the state.

Tom Massey reminded the group of the continuous evaluation that the new department will undergo during the first several years after its launch. As a rural advocate, he believes that the department should look for better ways to increase access, opportunity, and funding across the entire state.

Pamela asked for a motion to approve the final Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan. Adeeb Khan motioned to approve. Happy Haynes seconded the motion. Hearing no additional questions or discussion, Kristina Heyl called on each commissioner to provide their vote. **The Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan was approved unanimously with much enthusiasm by the 19 commissioners in attendance.**

Happy thanked the ECLC Co-Chairs and ECLC Director Kristina Heyl for their leadership and commitment during this process and for ensuring everyone had a seat at the table and an opportunity to be heard.

The Transition Plan will be sent out widely to the Governor, the Legislature, and stakeholders on Monday, November 15.

Governor's Office Updates + 2022-2023 Budget Proposal

Allie Kimmel, Deputy Legislative Director for Governor Polis, provided an overview of the Governor's FY 2022-2023 budget proposal. She introduced Tova Cohen, Transition Coordinator with the Governor's Office.

Allie explained that the Governor's proposed budget overall provides an increase of \$44 million for early childhood programs across several state agencies. Allie discussed specific program recommendations for the funds. New resources for the Department of Early Childhood will be provided over time once the executive team is in place. The budget provides over \$13 million in new resources for key administrative functions at the new department. There will be a budget amendment in January based on the forthcoming

recommendations for the universal preschool program. The new agency is expected to be more than 200 people, making it about the same size as the Department of Agriculture. Fully opening the new department will take a phased, multi-year transition, with the first year focusing on building a foundation of key staff and with more resources becoming available over time.

Mary Alice Cohen reviewed several early childhood programs with budget requests including Promoting Safe Child Care, Early Intervention, and the new Early Start Program. Allie described an additional \$30 million in one-time funds for the renovation of state facilities to provide child care for students and state workers.

An operational plan is being developed outlining the details for implementing the new Department of Early Childhood. The Transition Working Group will provide recommendations by January 1, 2022 on the new universal preschool program. The Governor's Office will continue to work on budget amendments to align with those recommendations. Allie briefly mentioned some of the exciting working being done at the federal level and hopes to bring additional information in the coming months.

There were several clarifying questions asked about campus-based and state child care facilities, Proposition EE and universal preschool funding, and the definition of illegal and unsafe child care vs. unlicensed child care. Questions on the budget can be directed to Camille Whisler, Office of State Planning and Budgeting Analyst for Early Childhood at camille.whisler@state.co.us, Allie Kimmel at allie.kimmel@state.co.us and Tova Cohen at tova.cohen@state.co.us.

Office of Early Childhood Federal Stimulus Funding Updates

Tom welcomed Mary Alice Cohen, Office of Early Childhood Director, to discuss federal stimulus funding early childhood strategies. A broad range of stakeholders participated in the development of these strategies. The intent is to tackle current challenges with a variety of sustainable changes in the early childhood landscape. The strategies involve funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Child Care Stabilization Grant and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act. Both funding streams must be spent by September 2023. More flexible Child Care Development Fund supplemental discretionary funding strategies are still being developed.

Mary Alice described the Office of Early Childhood's six overall strategies to ensure all children are valued, healthy, and thriving. These include a commitment to Access, Workforce, Family Strengthening, Education, Alignment, and Culture. She then highlighted the first three strategies of [Access](#), [Workforce](#), and [Family Strengthening](#) and shared overview documents with descriptions of specific activities for each. Access activities have been developed to stabilize the child care sector. Mary Alice reviewed these activities with the group. Next, she described activities for the Workforce strategy. The goal is to increase the workforce by 7%, which equates to approximately 1200 additional providers. Mary Alice then highlighted the importance of supporting parents and families and reviewed strategy activities related to Family Strengthening.

There were a few clarifying questions asked during the conversation including concerns about increasing compensation for the early childhood workforce and the need to layer funding to support providers. The group discussed analyzing the true cost of care, which should be addressed with the supplemental discretionary funds.

Commissioner Updates and Public Comment

Anna Jo Haynes shared that Mile High Early Learning will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in January, and she is looking forward to celebrating this milestone.

Universal Preschool Recommendations Discussion

Susan Steele introduced the discussion on universal preschool. The ECLC has been charged with approving a set of recommendations for the implementation of a new voluntary, universal preschool program to launch in 2023. Last year, the Governor requested several groups convene to discuss the possibility of a universal

preschool program. The [Preschool Policy Leadership Committee \(PPLC\)](#) and the [Preschool Policy Advisory Group \(PPAG\)](#) met regularly for several months to brainstorm and consider what this type of program should look like. The universal preschool recommendations should continue to build on those conversations as well as the work of the [Transition Advisory Group](#) and [Subgroups](#).

Susan welcomed Nasha Patel with Watershed Advisors to walk the group through initial considerations and recommendations. Recommendations should be aligned with the Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan. They must address alignment with the Colorado Preschool Program to create one statewide preschool program; alignment with other early childhood programs to create a streamlined experience; a process for calculating funding rates, how the rates are designed to support quality preschool programs, and the process for distributing money; necessary interagency agreements; special education; and duplicative oversight.

Themes for consideration include application, funding flow, local partnerships, alignment with other programs, eligibility and prioritization for funding, mixed delivery, quality and evaluation, workforce, and special education service delivery.

Next, Nasha reviewed universal preschool stakeholder feedback collected so far. The legislation calls for a single application, and stakeholders have highlighted the need for an easy, accessible, streamlined, one-stop process that includes all available funding. There should be a human component to help families navigate the application and universal preschool system.

Additionally, stakeholders have said that the current funding flow puts the burden of blending, braiding, layering, and stacking money on parents and providers. This should be handled at the state and/or local level by an intermediary organization charged with facilitating the necessary collaboration and coordination of funding. A target amount of money, a per-child funding average higher than what exists now in Colorado, should be considered to ensure high quality.

Stakeholders also feel that local partnerships will be key to implementing universal preschool. Local examples of success should be elevated and scaled. Communities need tailored support and help to ensure accountability and success. There are local funds that must be factored in as well to ensure access to that money is not lost.

Nasha also shared feedback that the new preschool program must be mindful of its impact on infant and toddler care. There should be a greater degree of collaboration between local entities including schools and community-based providers. There should be a focus on whole-child, whole-family care with health and mental health considerations.

The program must also ensure that at-risk children continue to receive targeted support. The cost of quality and cost of care should be considered when deciding what funding rates will look like.

Universal preschool will be delivered through a mixed delivery system. Stakeholders have indicated the desire for this to be locally driven and based on the needs of individual communities. Stakeholders also believe preschool special education services should be provided in mixed delivery settings to allow for family choice but should also be aligned with federal and state regulations and laws.

The legislation calls for the Department of Early Childhood to ensure program quality standards and an evaluation of the universal preschool program. Program quality and funding are interlinked and should be considered at the same time.

Stakeholder conversations on workforce have fallen into three buckets which include pathways and credentials, professional development, and compensation. There is a need to assist people who want to enter the field and grow within the field over time; a need for high quality, affordable training for early

childhood professionals; and a need for better wage compensation packages with opportunities to incentivize the profession.

Finally, there have been multiple conversations around preschool special education. The legislation clearly calls for the Department of Early Childhood to be thoughtful about special education administration with the Colorado Department of Education making sure that universal preschool is implemented in alignment with federal regulations and that there are supports available for providers.

Nasha explained that the universal preschool recommendations should provide guidance to the Department of Early Childhood to assure a successful launch of the new program. The report must address how funding should flow to families and providers, how families will enroll in the preschool program, and how eligibility and prioritization for additional hours should work. The recommendations should also name the values and priorities for the new program, determine important questions and workstreams, and outline additional processes and deadlines for the department to arrive at critical answers.

Next, Nasha shared a draft of the first recommendation for a unified application for all funding sources. The application should only collect as much information as is necessary, verify eligibility for additional hours of care, ensure equitable access to the process, and include additional early childhood programs and services over time. The group discussed the importance of the design of the application. It should be functional, welcoming, inviting, and innovative. Beta testing should be conducted with the people who will use the application to ensure its success. Questions were asked about opportunities to use the application to ensure targeted supports for at-risk children and families. Heather Craiglow also reminded the group about the [Coordinated Application, Eligibility and Enrollment Work Group](#) convened as part of the Preschool Development Grant which will help answer more questions about the universal application.

The next discussion focused on funding flow. Answers to funding flow questions will inform other recommendations for the program. Funding for universal preschool will come from Proposition EE as well as additional funds from state and local sources. Nasha presented a high-level overview of four funding flow options for consideration. These include a tuition assistance/financial aid model, a model for funding allocations direct to providers, a model to leverage existing school system infrastructure, and a model for a local coordinating agency.

A follow-up survey will be sent to commissioners asking for feedback on these first two recommendations. Kristina reminded the group of next steps including upcoming [Transition Advisory Group](#) meetings and [Special Education](#) and [Universal Preschool](#) Subgroup meetings. A draft set of universal preschool recommendations will be ready to share in early December. The [ECLC](#) meeting on December 16 will be used to review the draft report. A final set of recommendations will be sent to the ECLC by January 1, 2022 at which point the Commission will have two weeks to vote on approval. There may be additional ECLC meetings or work sessions to ensure commissioners are properly updated and engaged throughout the process.

Next Steps, Final Thoughts and Adjourn

Susan and Tom thanked Nasha for continuing to provide transition information to the Commission. The Co-Chairs thanked everyone for their time, attention, participation, and contribution. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.

Note: Any presentation requested by the ECLC does not constitute or imply an endorsement of the product, process, service, or organization by the ECLC.

Thank you for joining! We will begin shortly.

ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

December 2, 2021

2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Google Hangouts



- Please remember to mute your computer or phone when not speaking ●
- We will be recording the meeting ●
- All materials can be found at: www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org/eclc-meeting-information ●

Meeting Objectives

- Approve the November 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Discuss Universal Preschool Recommendations
- Hear comments from the Early Childhood Community



Welcome, Introductions and Approve Minutes

Tom Massey



Universal Preschool Recommendations Discussion



**Universal Preschool
Recommendations: TAG Charge**

Legislative Requirements

The TWG is charged to provide recommendations for the universal preschool program and ensure they are aligned with the DEC Transition Report. These recommendations must address:

- Alignment with CPP to create one state-wide preschool program
- Alignment with other EC programs to create a streamlined experience
- Process for calculating funding rates and how the rates are designed to support quality preschool programs and the process for distributing money
- Necessary interagency agreements to define the roles and responsibilities of DEC
- Special education: alignment with federal requirements, identification, & accountability in a mixed delivery environment
- Reduction of duplicative oversight

TAG Charge on Universal Preschool

TAG will continue to convene to discuss ideas and recommendations for the new statewide, voluntary preschool program to offer the TWG. These ideas and recommendations will take into consideration the ideas and feedback from subgroups, listening sessions, town halls, and any other engagement.

Themes to be considered:

Application

Funding flow

Local
partnerships

Alignment with
other programs

Eligibility and
prioritization for
funding

Mixed delivery

Quality and
Evaluation

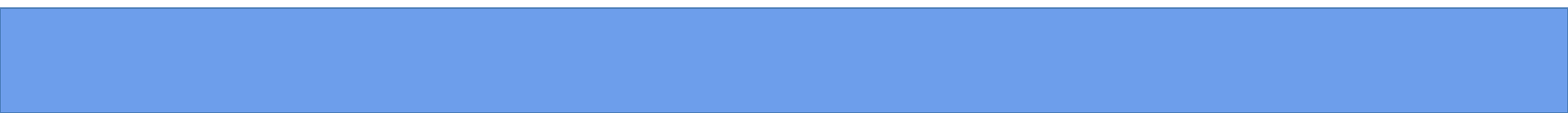
Workforce

Special Education
service delivery

Discussion

Recommendation: Framing the Work

- The recommendations aims to provide DEC with guidance and direction to ensure a successful launch of the universal preschool program.
- These recommendations are a starting point that DEC should use as they prepare for the launch of universal preschool in the 2023–2024 school year. This work will undoubtedly necessitate continual stakeholder engagement, review and evaluation.
- The implementation of universal preschool and these recommendations will come with many challenges that state agencies, local communities, and individual providers will need to address, including workforce shortages, limitations in local capacity, and lack of existing alignment in funding, regulations.
- These recommendations articulates a vision for universal preschool, with investments in infrastructure that will support children for decades to come. While this work may not be implemented seamlessly from the first year of the universal preschool program, these recommendations aim to set a vision for the work ahead.



Recommendation: Infrastructure

Based on the values raised in discussions, it became clear that for Colorado's infrastructure investment to best serve the diverse communities across the state it would need:

1. Local leads empowered to solve local challenges, foster partnerships, create alignment among all local entities, and allocate funding equitably in their communities.
2. A strong commitment from DEC to resource local leads and communities and to ensure that Colorado's aligned early childhood vision is executed successfully across the state.

Colorado should create early childhood infrastructure that establishes local leads in each community and calls on DEC to invest in local leadership and capacity including strong investments in infrastructure.

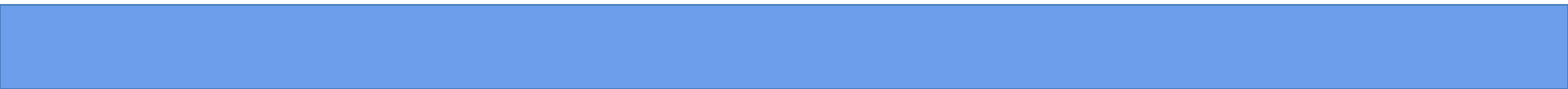
DEC should launch and support local leads as implementation partners in order to deliver a coherent, community-based, **mixed delivery** universal preschool program. As local leads are established DEC should fully support and resource local leads to achieve their charge and, if a community is unable, fulfill these responsibilities themselves or through another partner. DEC should work to recruit and build the capacity of a local partner within the first three years of UPK implementation.

Recommendation: Local Lead

A single local lead in each community should be DEC's partners to help organize the local early childhood landscape and serve as the singular local level point of contact on early childhood in their community.

- DEC should competitively select, support, oversee and hold this entity accountable for a rigorous set of expectations.
- The best fit entity could be any public or nonprofit organization, including but not limited to: county, school system, ECC, special taxing district, Head Start grantee, local nonprofit, etc.
- Some local leads may elect to take on larger areas, or multiple areas, while other local contexts may require different choices.

Local leads should bring community partners together -- including schools, child care, Head Start, counties, business, and philanthropy -- to build a unified, long term early childhood plan and to request state-administered early childhood dollars (e.g., Prop EE, Build Back Better) in alignment with that plan.



Recommendation: DEC Role

In addition to establishing a state level vision and enabling a thoughtful partner and guide for helping communities build out the infrastructure they need. To do this, DEC should:

- **Unify applications:** Build a simple, common application that can be used and adapted across Colorado.
- **Empower local leadership:** Competitively select and train local leads to build community early childhood plans and implement universal preschool.
- **Launch and oversee local leads:** Launch and oversee local leads, collaborate with them as implementation partners, and fully support them to achieve their charge.
- **Build capacity:** Invest in local leadership and capacity including, strong investments in infrastructure for start up and implementation, through funding, training, and technical assistance, partnership, and accountability.
- **Align programs:** Align all funding and programmatic regulations, wherever possible, to better blend/braid/stack federal, state and local early childhood dollars.
- **Incentivize local share:** Award universal preschool funding to local leads based on strong local spending plans
- **Fund equitably:** Ensure the funding allocation process provides universal service, but also ensures equity of offerings to all children in CO.

Implication on Key Areas of the Legislation

The funding flow model should empower local leaders, provide state flexibility to accommodate local context, and recognize that the DEC should play a strong supporting role for communities. To achieve Colorado’s vision for access to universal preschool **and cohesion in the birth to five system,**

Funding flow

Early childhood funding should flow from DEC to a local lead (e.g., county, LEA, ECC, etc.) in each community where possible. DEC should ensure, through its capacity, contracts, and partnerships, that all areas in the state have implementation coverage.

Local partnerships

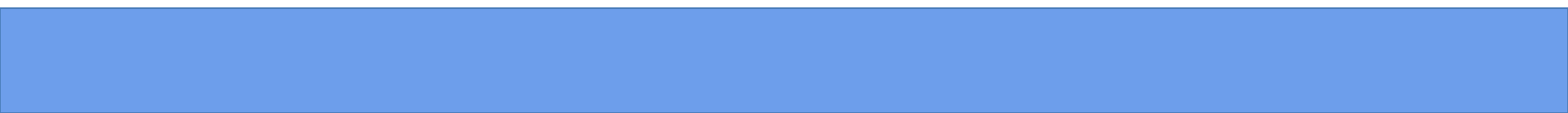
Local leads should be responsible for creating a **birth to five** community plan in collaboration with all local partners. These plans should, at a minimum, ensure all available funding for UPK is accounted for, define a streamlined application & enrollment process across partners, and address capacity needs to achieve UPK for all.

Alignment with other programs

DEC should establish a unified vision for early childhood experiences for children and families **birth to five**, supported by regulatory changes to reduce fragmentation and burdens, that enables local leads to increase alignment and coherence for families and providers.

Mixed delivery

Local plans should account for distributing funding in each community to all providers in an equitable way that matches family demand, adheres to DEC guardrails, and promotes availability of care across ages.



Summary of TAG Feedback

- Add that this system should be designed so that the infrastructure can be used for the entire birth to 5 system, not just 4 year olds.
- Emphasize that there should be a single local lead in each catchment area, so that there is only one source of funding flow.
- Offer more clarity about DEC's role in the oversight of local leads.
- State that there should be rigorous expectations for selecting a local lead. Similarly, note that the accountability for meeting the responsibilities of a local lead should be rigorous.
- Add more about the role of local lead in ensuring mixed delivery in their community.

Recommendation: Application

HB21-1304 calls for the development of a common program application process that is easily accessible to families and streamlines enrollment and eligibility.

In feedback across engagements, there was consensus on the following points:

- Colorado should build an application that is easy to complete and submit, and is designed around streamlining and enhancing user experience.
 - DEC must set requirements to ensure equitable access to the application process. The base application should collect only as much information from families as necessary.
 - Where possible, this application should reduce the duplication of information collection or the complexity of process for providers.
- This application should include all publicly-funded early childhood services from birth to preschool. This would include all funding sources that can be blended, braided, or stacked with universal preschool dollars (e.g., PropEE and CPP/ECARE, CCAP, Head Start, local funds).
- DEC should fund and empower local navigation support to assist families in completing the application and to coordinate community outreach.

TWG recommends DEC work with a team of experts to ensure that these recommendations are thoughtfully integrated into the design and launch of this application.

Recommendation: Eligibility & Prioritization of Funding

In order to define eligibility and prioritization for universal preschool funding, DEC should convene both stakeholders **with diverse and representative perspectives** and experts to help DEC determine:

- Base per-child rate for UPK
- Weighting for harder to serve populations, including at-risk students, English learners, children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, and children enrolled in special education
- Regional considerations such as economies of scale in rural areas
- Other additional incentives such as teacher qualifications, implementation of mixed delivery, care for infants and toddlers, and quality

DEC should also ensure:

- **Total CPP funding should not drop overall, but UPK rate should not be connected to the school finance formula without correcting for inequities.**
- The rate is kept stable or increases over time to support a stable system
- There is a plan for funding allocation in times of scarcity and excess, including how to ensure the available targeted funds are allocated to meet family needs.
 - DEC should review the current CPP risk factors, as a starting point along with national standards and the needs of the state, to ensure that students who are eligible to access additional services do not lose access.
- **Three year old access remains consistent.**

DEC should consider the implications of each decision on the entire birth to five system

Summary of TAG Feedback

- More clarity should be added about the CPP rate not dropping below its current rate.
 - CPP is currently tied to the school funding formula which is inequitable for many children. CPP funding should not drop overall, but should be disconnected from the formula.
- Acknowledge the entire birth to five system when thinking about eligibility and prioritization.
 - Reference 3 year olds, particularly those served by CPP.
- When stakeholders or experts are convened, a diverse array of perspectives should be at the table, particularly different types of providers.
- DEC should collect more data and be able to disaggregate it to monitor how it is serving all populations.

Quality and Evaluation: Challenges and Feedback

Challenges

- There isn't alignment across program standards and regulations for all funding sources
- Understanding of quality varies across the state and programs
- The system of quality measures that currently exist do not cover all types of providers (ex. FFN)
- QRIS level isn't always an indicator of quality. For example there are high quality sites that choose not to invest beyond a Level 1 (e.g., montessori)

“Providers are only rated every three years, and with high teacher turnover, quality can change day to day”

“the quality of teacher-child interactions should be a key component of program evaluation”

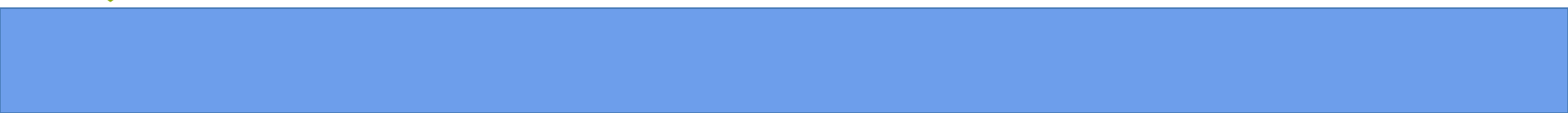
“It is hard to find qualified teachers in rural communities, AA degrees are a great start, BA degrees are even better.”

“Quality rating system should monitor/include child outcomes.”

“high quality [rating] does not always equal high outcomes for families”

“Some funding streams (ex. Head Start) have higher requirements that can be difficult for some providers to meet.”

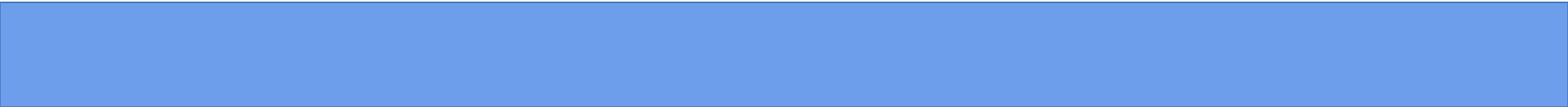
“selecting a classroom environment tool for evaluation that has a focus on social emotional learning is essential”



Recommendation: Quality and Evaluation

As Colorado scales to universality, DEC will need to review existing regulations and standards to ensure alignment across funding sources:

- DEC should review standards from CPP, NIEER, HeadStart, and guidance on BBB to find opportunities to simplify and align as it designs UPK standards
- Where possible, DEC should identify where standards may limit universal access, such as ratios and licensing regulations, and look for solutions
- DEC should establish one single definition of the quality experience children should be having in classrooms regardless of funding source, and align resources and supports to help local communities achieve it
 - Due to the current constraints of the system, DEC should consider a phased approach to quality to support all communities as they seek to scale quality
- DEC should work with local communities and eligible providers to build capacity to meet quality standards
- DEC should contract with an external evaluator to measure the success of UPK, including measuring child outcomes, and provide recommendations to improve the program in future years.
- **As DEC runs processes to determine the implementation of quality and evaluation, it should engage a representative group of stakeholders, including all types of providers.**



Workforce: Challenges and Feedback

Challenges

- Colorado faced a loss of about 6.8% of the workforce from 2020 to 2021 alone.
- Although there is a minimum qualification, workforce preparation, and competency varies; agency staff are creating crosswalks for workforce credential qualifications across programs
- The implementation of universal preschool will require a larger workforce than Colorado has ever had to ensure every child gets services

“Lack of workforce/teachers and wages/benefits are not high enough or robust enough to recruit, retain, and support the workforce.”

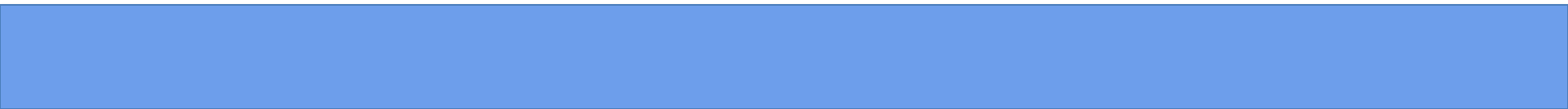
“Long-term: Compensation in all settings is aligned with the local school district pay scale. Short-term: Require a regionally-based recommended compensation target for all providers.”

“The program should include an escalator to quality, so that teachers/providers can gain the necessary trainings and supports to meet the high standards.”

“start with basic, entry-level requirements and ensure that teacher progress in developing strong skills with support and increase their qualifications along degree pathways”

“There are varying professional development requirements some of which are duplicative for teachers who have already earned their BA/MA, and professional development requirements do not guarantee increased compensation or time to complete them.”

“ECE teachers are underpaid and undertrained”



Recommendation: Workforce

Currently, Colorado is in the midst of a workforce crisis. The Early Childhood profession must be elevated to be respected, valued and seen as integral members of the fabric of communities across the state. To do this, by the launch of UPK, DEC should:

- Find innovative ways to ensure there are enough teachers for the launch of UPK, including:
 - Giving the workforce the support they need (e.g., incentivizing providers to increase pay, providing grants that help compensate the workforce, paying signing bonus, supporting shared services and other innovations to increase availability of benefits)
 - Simplify the process for entering and remaining in the workforce through a credentialing review
 - Ensure the process for joining the early childhood workforce is welcoming and that there are not barriers to entry. In particular, consider under-tapped pools and the barriers that prevent them from joining the workforce.
 - Considering an induction model that could decrease the time it takes to get a teacher in a classroom
- Clearly define the competencies needed by the workforce, and review regulatory barriers to promote attainment of these competencies through identified partners (including Higher Ed pathways), freely available training, and reduced bureaucracy.
- Develop strategies in conjunction with leads from CDHE, CDLE and CDE to sustainably recruit, develop, and incentivize new members of the workforce, including stackable, credit-bearing options.

Preschool Special Education Services in Colorado

- About 7% of the total 3-5 year old population have an IEP
- Child Find must identify children suspected to be in need of special education
- About 9,000 preschool aged children with an IEP are reported in fall pupil and December 1 Special Education counts
- Another 3,600 children are identified and placed later in the school year, including those exiting Part C at age 3 who are Part B eligible
- FAPE in Colorado for a preschool student is equivalent to 10-12 hours/wk of access to general education preschool curricula

EXISTING DEC Transition Plan Recommendations

CDE, in partnership with DEC and stakeholders, should utilize the input from the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup to develop a preschool special education implementation plan to support districts, administrative units, and other providers working in partnership to fulfill the requirements of IDEA and Colorado's ECEA. This plan will include:

- Best practices of mixed delivery currently occurring across Colorado and nationally to provide lighthouse examples;
- Optional training for 619 district coordinators on the legal obligations and opportunities related to mixed delivery for students; and
- Ongoing support for the universal preschool program rulemaking process to ensure it can be easily delivered in compliance with IDEA and in support of all students in all settings.

During the rulemaking process, DEC should collaborate with CDE to ensure that any rules are aligned with ECEA and IDEA, Part B regulations and can be easily delivered in compliance with federal law and in support of all students in all settings.

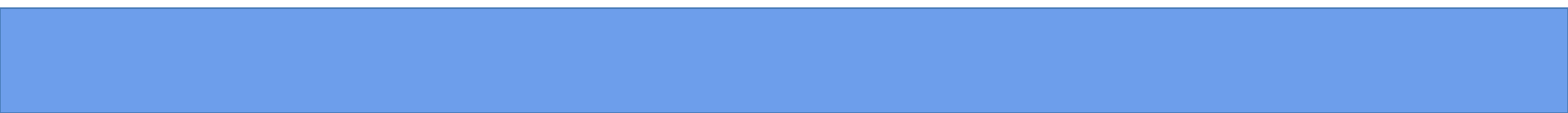
Recommendation: Special Education

This report will likely not suggest any programmatic or structural changes related to the accountability and oversight of special education, but recommends two critical steps that DEC can take to build and strengthen inclusivity and supports for children with disabilities, including:

1. Considering additional funds for children with disabilities in the UPK rate; and
2. Ensuring accountability for strong collaboration between DEC and CDE on special education services delivery and support.

In addition to the recommendations from the Transition Plan, to best support children with identified needs, DEC should:

- Establish clear expectations for supporting children from specific subgroups including children with identified needs and dual language learners, consulting with stakeholders with requisite representation and expertise
- Create an interagency agreement with CDE to ensure all federal regulations are complied with, address all legislative requirements for universal preschool, and eliminate or reduce duplicative regulations
- **Support programs and communities to provide individualized, meaningful, culturally relevant active and participatory learning for all children.**



Summary of TAG Feedback

- Define vision for quality through a stakeholder engagement process that includes participation from all forms of care.
- In evaluation of UPK, include opportunity for families to weigh in.
- Consider an ‘escalator approach’ to quality. Set clear standards for growth, but allow time for quality to grow.
- Ensure that the process for joining the early childhood workforce is welcoming and that there are not barriers to entry. In particular, consider under-tapped pools and the barriers that prevent them from joining the workforce.
- Onboarding process often prevents teachers from getting into classrooms in a timely manner, worsening the workforce crisis. Consider recommending an induction model similar to K-12.
- Further emphasize the crisis faced in recruiting and retaining workforce, especially special education service delivery staff.
- Emphasis on individualized, meaningful, culturally relevant active and participatory learning for all children.

A draft of the universal preschool recommendations will be released to the public next week!

Additional opportunities to provide feedback:

- Tues Dec 7, 5:30–5:30pm: Monthly Town Hall
- Weds Dec 8, 2pm–4pm: Special Education Subgroup
- Thurs Dec 9, 10am–12pm: Universal Preschool Subgroup
- Sat Dec 11, 10am–11:30am: Listening Session
- Mon Dec 13, 10 am–11:30am: Listening Session
- Mon Dec 13, 5:30pm–7pm: Listening Session
- Tues Dec 14, 11:30am–1pm: Listening Session

**Register for all of these sessions on the [ECLC website](#).*

There will also be a feedback form available on the ECLC website. ***We ask that all feedback be provided by end of day on December 15th.***



Public Comment

Susan Steele

Public Comment

- Each speaker may take up to three (3) minutes to make his or her comments. This time constraint may be modified by the ECLC Co-Chairs.
- Any opinions, advice, statements, services, offers, or other information or content expressed or made available by stakeholders or members of the public during public comment does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the ECLC.



Co-Chairs' Next Steps, Final Thoughts and Adjourn

Pamela Harris

Upcoming Meeting Dates

December 16, 2021

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

January 11, 2022

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Next Meeting:

December 16, 2021

9:30 am - 12:30 pm



Thank you!