

SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

The five elements described in the previous section of this toolkit make up a professional development system. The overall system also has an infrastructure to support it. This infrastructure includes governance—the body/bodies responsible for governing the system. The infrastructure also includes financing—the financial mechanisms and the funding streams used to support the system.

Professional development systems are often administered via contract and housed in higher education institutions or child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies. Most child care focused professional development systems are funded almost entirely by quality dollars from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. As States and Territories engage in furthering cross-sector professional development systems—serving child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, and other early childhood professionals—multiple funding streams are used. This section provides basic information, different perspectives, a State story about development of a cross-sector system, and examples of professional development system infrastructures. Appendix C also includes an infrastructure-related planning tool.

Overview

The professional development system structure is critical because it helps ensure system goals are met, the intended audiences are reached, and the appropriate entities are engaged. Professional development systems may be components of comprehensive service delivery systems or may be ancillary to the systems—operating independently, in coordination with, or in support of service delivery to young children. Structures have different types of leadership and administration as well as ways of providing input toward decision-making. Whether work is conducted primarily by one or more agency employees or by volunteer committee members, successful systems plan for the flow of information. Clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and reporting processes are critical to success. Informed decision-making and structures for implementation that recognize the required capacity and authority to carry out the plans are also essential.

Governance

Most State and Territory cross-sector professional development systems set out to ensure that all early care and education providers have consistent access to and effectively utilize a comprehensive system of training and professional development that will support high-quality services for children and families. To meet these goals, some kind of governance structure must be identified to link existing efforts, such as early childhood education certification programs, training and technical assistance activities, and mentoring incentives. In addition, a governance structure must be identified to coordinate development of new cross-sector professional development initiatives and financing strategies.

Some States are not limiting their focus to professional development, but are examining how all early care and education services can be better coordinated to deliver high-quality services to children and families. Currently, most States provide services through multiple agencies, such as

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departments of health, human services, education, and workforce development. Some States are revising their governance structures to create greater coordination across agencies so that services are more comprehensive and synchronize professional development strategies across sectors. To achieve these goals, some States are creating new departments for all services related to young children, collapsing or expanding existing agencies, and developing specific coordination strategies across existing agencies. Such revisions provide a solid infrastructure for the emergence of cross-sector professional development systems. In fact, some States have set up new, freestanding nonprofit organizations that focus specifically on professional development.

System financing

As States and Territories work to incorporate existing professional development efforts from each sector into more unified systems, a new financing goal often emerges: to maximize the utilization of current resources dedicated to training and professional development and leverage these resources to bring new funds into the system. To maximize public funds and leverage private dollars, States and Territories are increasingly dedicating funds to planning and governance infrastructures. These monies are typically used to fund salaries for those who have leadership roles in the development and implementation of the systems.

To support development and implementation of cross-sector systems financially, States are undertaking a variety of strategies. In addition to using private foundation funds for planning, States are establishing partnerships with the private market to finance particular system components, such as trainer and provider registries, scholarships, and benefits. They are also optimizing a variety of resources. Some States are making Head Start or prekindergarten training available to child care staff, while others are offering family child care professional development resources to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Perspectives on Systems Infrastructure

Professional development systems impact people in different roles in unique ways. The following provides some key points about the importance of professional development system infrastructure from both the provider and policy perspectives.

Provider perspective

- ★ Often information regarding professional development opportunities is not readily available in an integrated, easily accessible format and is not well presented in terms of career pathways. This is particularly true for home-based providers. Well-coordinated professional development systems address providers' continuum of needs.
- ★ A fragmented early care and education system has led to development of different and often competing professional development opportunities for providers, with different funding mechanisms not always accessible to all early care and education providers. Cross-sector professional development systems address these challenges.

- ★ Given the limited time and financial resources available to most early care and education providers, a single source of information increases the likelihood of their taking advantage of professional development activities on a regular basis.

Policy perspective

- ★ A sound governance structure guided by a centralized vision and set of standards provides CCDF administrators and other stakeholders with a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the quality and outcomes of State and Territory professional development activities.
- ★ Cross-sector professional development structures allow States and Territories to do the following:
 - Maximize the utilization of current resources dedicated to training and professional development, and to leverage those resources to bring new funds into the system.
 - Link all existing quality strategies—tiered reimbursement, licensing and monitoring, technical assistance, and others.
 - Identify gaps in their professional development system more easily and develop needed training resources accordingly, e.g., resources focused on working with children with special needs or English language learners.

State Story: Pennsylvania

The following describes Pennsylvania’s professional development system infrastructure. A brief overview of the State’s system provides some context for its governance and financing efforts. Also included is a description of how Pennsylvania’s specific infrastructure work began, connections to the larger early childhood system, keys to success, and lessons learned.

The National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) would like to thank Deb Mathias, director of the Bureau of Early Learning, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; and Gail Nourse, director of the Pennsylvania Key, for their contributions to the following State Story.

The Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality (PA Key) is the State’s comprehensive, cross-sector quality improvement program, which encourages and supports all early learning practitioners to improve child outcomes. The three main components of this program are the PA Keys to Professional Development System (coordinated through the PA Key), Community Engagement, and Keystone STARS—Pennsylvania’s quality rating system (QRS).¹

The Pennsylvania Keys to Professional Development System is a comprehensive statewide framework for professionals serving children and families in *all* early childhood and school-age

¹ A QRS is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRS award quality ratings to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

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settings, including child care, Early Head Start and Head Start, early intervention, public school, private academic school, and school age. It provides a continuum of professional development opportunities and ongoing support to practitioners to improve outcomes for children in early childhood and school-age programs. It is a clearly articulated framework that defines pathways that are tied to certification, leading to qualifications and credentials, and addresses the needs of individuals and adult learners. The system includes a core body of knowledge, a professional development record, a career lattice, early learning standards, credentials, the PA Quality Assurance System, a voucher program, and links to the Keystone Stars QRS.

How it began

The climate for an early childhood system in Pennsylvania was energized by the election of Governor Edward G. Rendell in January 2003 and his creation of the Office of Child Development in the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) in September 2004.

The impetus for the current PA Keys to Professional Development System began during development of the QRS in 2001. The QRS planning group was Pennsylvania's first attempt to address early childhood quality issues comprehensively. Representatives from Head Start, inclusion, and early intervention programs were at the table.

This cross-sector approach was adopted not only by Keystone Stars, but was also integrated into other service delivery strategies. For example, Harriet Dichter was appointed to the newly created position of deputy secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in 2004. The person in this role oversees all early childhood programs in both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and DPW.

Professional development system governance

Governance is jointly shared by DPW and the PA Key, with most decisions made collaboratively with advisory groups and six Regional Keys. Priorities are set both at the State and regional levels. The State partners ensure funding; set guidelines, such as requiring credential- and credit-based professional development activities and developing standards for instructors; and support specific initiatives such as the State's infant-toddler mental health program. The PA Key implements the professional development voucher program and the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood[®] Project; houses the Head Start Collaboration Office; administers Pre-K Counts, the State prekindergarten program; and plays a general coordinating role with the Regional Keys and Community Engagement Groups (CEGs).

The Regional Keys implement all of the other professional activities in the State, as well as the QRS activities at the regional level. They are responsible for all local planning and coordinating the regional professional development activities. The system's philosophy places importance on local professional development plans, formation of local cadres of experienced instructors, and collaborative decision-making with local partners.

Each Regional Key provides funds to local communities to form early childhood CEGs. The CEGs work in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties to leverage resources and support in the

community. Each CEG works to develop and implement a community outreach plan; facilitate linkages between school districts, early learning practitioners, and other community stakeholders to develop a community action plan to support successful kindergarten transitions; and coordinate with the Regional Key to implement the regional plan created by the State Key. The CEGs also create and distribute a “report card” to the communities describing the activities, goals, and outcomes of each group.

Professional development system funding

Of the current \$45 million annual allocation for Keystone Stars, \$20 million goes to infrastructure and professional development. Private funds are accessed intermittently at the State level, and through the CEGs at the local levels.

Keystone Stars came into existence in the earlier administration. Governor Rendell has continued to provide strong leadership and support to the PA Key as well as to other cross-sector early childhood programs—\$40 million in Head Start supplemental funds and \$75 million in prekindergarten funds have been allocated for Fiscal Year 2007.

Keys to success

A key factor in implementing the State’s cross-sector system was the early decision, in the previous administration, that in order for the Keystone Stars QRS to succeed, there had to be a substantial, coordinated professional development system to keep it going.

There has been a collaborative attitude across the State. The work done by the CEGs began with a focus on child care, but now has all sectors at the table in their leadership groups.

We realized that knitting sectors together makes for a stronger collaborative process and advocacy effort, and as a result increases the appetite for early learning across the State. The result—no empty seats in training, and our Early Learning Standards are across all early care and education categories. ~ Deb Mathias

The State has also seized every funding opportunity to foster collaboration and cross-sector work. Current examples of this are work in early intervention and prekindergarten. The State early intervention training and technical assistance coordinator works closely with the PA Key to make access to professional development activities available to child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten staff. There is currently a cross-sector technical assistance group examining how to set standards across sectors. In Pre-K Counts, funded with public and private funds, school districts cannot access funds unless Head Start and child care providers are invited to their professional development events.

Lessons learned

As a result of its infrastructure development and implementation processes, Pennsylvania learned four main lessons:

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- ★ Learn from other States' efforts, but keep in mind that each State starts its planning in different places and builds the components of a professional development system in different timeframes.
- ★ Seize any opportunities to undertake cross-sector planning.
- ★ Allocate sufficient funds to spend on planning and infrastructure—without it, the ability to intentionally integrate quality efforts is lost.
- ★ Revisit existing system components that were not put together in a true cross-sector fashion. For example, the State's core knowledge document was created using only child care language. However, the career lattice was developed by all sectors. It was recently revised to make reference to special needs, early intervention, and prekindergarten.

Sources

NCCIC gathered information included in Pennsylvania's story via interviews with Deb Mathias and Gail Nourse on July 11, 2007. Information also comes from various materials from the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Web site at www.pakeys.org.

State Examples

The following are some examples of States' professional development system infrastructures. They represent a range of approaches States have taken to develop this system element.

Illinois

Gateways to Opportunity, the Illinois Early Care and Education Professional Development Network, is the State's professional development system. The Illinois Professional Development Advisory Committee (PDAC) is responsible for leading the system work in Illinois. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies is responsible for administering Gateways to Opportunity.

The purpose of the system is to meet the needs of more than 100,000 early care and education professionals in Illinois. These include people who work in the following settings: family child care homes and centers; family, friend, and neighbor care; early childhood special education; early intervention; kindergarten through third grade; Head Start/Early Head Start programs; higher education programs; home visiting programs; prekindergarten programs; CCR&R agencies; and family support programs.

The original PDAC subcommittees, formed during the planning phase, changed to accommodate the current stage of development. The new committees align with the professional development system elements described in the NCCIC document *Elements of a Professional Development System for Early Care and Education: A Simplified Framework and Definitions* (see Section 2).

The following is a list of the current PDAC subcommittees and their respective goals:

- ★ **Steering committee**—Create an organizational structure that will utilize the skills of its membership to develop and promote Gateways to Opportunity as the professional development network for early care and education professionals in Illinois.
- ★ **Funding committee**—Provide sustainability of Gateways to Opportunity (this work is conducted by members of the steering committee).
- ★ **Core knowledge committee**—Establish core knowledge, skills, and dispositions as the framework for professionals, preparation, training, and development for all early care and education providers.
- ★ **Qualifications and credentials committee**—Develop a system for recognizing professional achievements and work to embed identified pieces in the State government. Identify ways to embed the professional achievements into the State’s systems of licensure and certification.
- ★ **Quality assurance committee**—Create an early care and education career information system that includes a comprehensive registry of practitioners, approved trainers, and approved trainings.
- ★ **Access and outreach committee**—Support and promote the implementation of Gateways to Opportunity through marketing, public relations, policy implementation, and community awareness.

Additional information about the PDAC structure is available on the Web at www.ilgateways.com/about/pdac.aspx. Objectives for each of the six subcommittees are also described in the PDAC resource *Phase II Strategic Plan* (October 2005), available at www.ilgateways.com/forms/PDAC%20Strategic%20Plan%202005.pdf. A one-page document that outlines the original committee structure is available at www.ilgateways.com/forms/literature/pdac.pdf. More information about Gateways is available by visiting the Web at www.ilgateways.com or by calling 888-548-8080.

Minnesota

For more than 10 years, Minnesota has been working toward a coordinated system of professional development. Throughout 1993 and 1994, the Minnesota Early Childhood Strategic Planning Advisory Consortium examined the system of training for early childhood professionals in Minnesota in response to a government request. The work of that advisory group culminated in creation of the *Strategic Plan for Minnesota Early Childhood Professional Development*. The advisory group’s strategy included the vision of a comprehensive, coordinated, accessible, inclusive, statewide early childhood professional development system. In January 1995, the Minnesota Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, as a program of the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC), was created to implement the advisory group’s strategic plan and work toward its vision.

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MnAEYC's Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development began in 2002 with an extensive visioning process to determine how it could help meet the professional development needs of the State's early childhood workforce. With input from a broad spectrum of community members, the visioning process resulted in a plan for the Minnesota Professional Development Council (PD Council).

The PD Council convenes, facilitates, and/or partners with representatives from early childhood and youth professional development initiatives. Five workgroups have been created to address its work: (1) articulation; (2) communication; (3) core competencies; (4) practitioners professional development and delivery; and (5) structure. The workgroup chairs along with the fiscal manager of the PD Council make up the executive committee.

A history of Minnesota's professional development efforts is available on the Web at www.mnpdcouncil.org/About%20Us/history/index.html. Additional information about the PD Council is available by visiting the Web at www.mnpdcouncil.org or by calling 651-646-8689.

North Carolina

The North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development serves as an advisory group to the Division of Child Development in the NC Department of Health & Human Services in matters related to developing an educated work force to care for children who are in group care. Membership of the Advisory Committee is diverse and representative of numerous fields that constitute the early childhood profession. The members are invited because of their professional role or their experience and expertise in the area of early childhood professional development, and their willingness to work toward improving the quality of care of all children in North Carolina.

The Institute is dedicated to defining and advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive early childhood professional development system that provides supportive, accessible, and individually appropriate education which is linked to compensation in order to ensure high quality care and education services for children and families.

The Institute is guided by an Executive Committee who chair one or more task groups and recruits and involve the participation of early childhood stakeholders in its work. Currently there are five task groups:

- Educational Certification
- Compensation & Education
- Professional Development Infrastructure Coordination
- Public Policy
- Outreach & Support

Most of the products that have been developed by the Institute have resulted from the work of the Task Groups and are available at www.ncchildcare.org/pubs.html.

Vermont

The Vermont Alliance for Children, a public-private partnership, was created by State statute to provide a unified, sustainable system of early care, health, and education for young children and their families. Members of the State board include private sector providers, families, business leaders, community members, and State government decision-makers. The 19-member board functions as an umbrella entity with local affiliates and has standing subcommittees, including the professional preparation and development (PPD) subcommittee.

PPD formed after the first session of the State-level Early Childhood Workgroup in 1992. The subcommittee worked on a statewide level to coordinate professional development and training activities spanning entry-level workshops to higher education teacher preparation programs. It also developed products that support career and professional development planning for the early childhood and school-age care workforce.

In recent years, the PPD subcommittee focused its efforts on establishing a statewide professional and career development system—Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals.

Vermont Northern Lights is administered by the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) and the Community College of Vermont (CCV) through a contract with the Vermont Agency of Human Services' Department for Children and Families. Work is coordinated with the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) via weekly meetings with a representative of the Child Development Division of the Department of Children and Families. The purpose is to integrate the professional development calendar, Instructor Registry, and individual resume function into the BFIS. Center staff maintain communications with CCR&R agencies, the Child Development Division, and other State and community partners through regional liaisons.

The Northern Lights Career Development Center for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals Final Start-up Report to the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Vermont Agency of Human Services (August 2005) describes the State's plans and implementation progress for establishing a new early childhood professional development system. This report is available on the Web at http://northernlights.vsc.edu/cdd_final_report05.pdf.

Additional information about Vermont Northern Lights is available by visiting the Web at <http://northernlights.vsc.edu> or by calling 802-241-4661.

West Virginia

The West Virginia Partners Implementing an Early Care and Education System Advisory Council (PIECES Advisory Council) Professional Development Subcommittee leads the State's early childhood professional development system work. PIECES was established by the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) and State superintendent

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of schools in response to a legislative mandate to work together to create universal prekindergarten. One of the subcommittees is devoted to professional development.

The PIECES Advisory Council took a broad approach to its collaborative work and formulated a mission to help plan programs for all young children by coordinating services provided by child care, Head Start, education, and other early childhood programs. Staffed by employees of DHHR and the Department of Education, PIECES is charged with creating a unified system of early care and education for children birth to age 5. The 20-member council is made up of representatives from education, Head Start, child care, early intervention and special education, legislative staff, and local communities.

The professional development subcommittee charge includes creation of a career pathway for all early care and education professionals; articulation of training and degrees from one level to another; development of a core body of knowledge; integration of current trainings and career paths; use of distance learning; approval of training and trainers; compensation; and issues regarding child and family outcomes. Workgroups also address specific issues such as core competencies and articulation.

Detailed information about the subcommittee charge, including meeting minutes, is available on the Web at www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/ece/pieces/pd.asp. Additional information about PIECES and other State systems is included in *Cross-Sector Early Childhood Professional Development: A Technical Assistance Paper* (revised February 2005), by Anne Mitchell and Sarah LeMoine, NCCIC. This resource is available on the Web at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/goodstart/cross-sector.html>.