

# SOUTH CAROLINA EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL TEAM REPORT TEMPLATE

## Team 4 – State Early Learning Standards/Measurement

### **Section 1: Focus Area and over arching questions**

1. What can we learn from existing efforts in SC and nationally about this focus area?
2. What are SC's specific challenges?
3. What are your team's priority goal recommendations: short term and long term?

### **Section 2: Summary of your team's deliberations (# of meetings, documents consulted, public participation)**

Team 4 has met on three occasions to date (May 20, June 2, and June 7) for a total of roughly seven hours. Twenty-one individual participants attended one or more meeting, with each offered both in-person and virtually (via teleconference and webinar).

Documents consulted by the Team included:

#### STANDARDS

- The SC Infant/Toddler Guidelines
- The Good Start, Grow Smart Early Learning Standards
- The SC Academic Content Standards for Five-Year old Kindergarten

#### MEASUREMENT

- Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Measuring and Monitoring School Readiness in South Carolina (SC First Steps, June 2005)
- Measuring Trends in Child Well-Being: An Evidence Based Approach (Land, Lamb, Meadows and Taylor, 2007)
- Constructing Summary Indices of Quality of Life: A Model for the Effect of Heterogeneous Importance Weights (Haggerty and Land, 2007)
- Are All Indicators Created Equal (Zill, 2006)

### **Section 3: Description of current state landscape. What is working well?**

Team Four was charged with addressing two areas of interest: the state's early learning standards and its efforts to measure school readiness – with a specific focus upon the Executive Order's directive that the ECAC create an indicators-based measure of readiness.

South Carolina has committed a great deal of time and energy to the development of early learning standards. In addition to academic content standards for five-year-old kindergarten, the state authorized an inter-agency, public/private workgroups which developed and published the early learning standards for 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds under the leadership of the SC Department of Social Services as the state administrator of federal childcare block grant dollars to comply with the federal Good Start, Grow Smart initiative. More recently the South Carolina Department of Social Services authorized the development and publishing of the Infant-Toddler Guidelines through an inter-

agency public/private workgroup. Preparation for training and distribution of the Infant-Toddler Guidelines is underway for 2010 and beyond.

#### **Section 4: Identified areas where work is needed. What are challenges?**

While the state's early learning standards can be described as an area of great strength, the addition of the Infant-Toddler Guidelines will require a review of the three documents to ensure alignment across the documents to ensure the ongoing availability of high quality training and to assure the utility of these documents to front-line providers.

The state's efforts to measure school readiness present a greater challenge. After two, now defunct, efforts to measure readiness at the child level (using the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, CSAB, and the South Carolina Readiness Assessment, SCRA) the state has no statewide measure of readiness. In recent years, SC First Steps has worked to develop a multi-dimensional, policy-level School Readiness Index (SRI).

Under Executive Order 2010-06, Governor Sanford assigns the ECAC responsibility for developing and publishing an indicators-based measure of school readiness at the state level. While an indicators-based measure of available data may be most feasible, given available resources, Team 4 recommends exploring means through which to supplement this largely demographic measure with child outcomes (on a sampled basis) and program quality measures as resources can be identified (in an effort to fulfill First Steps original vision of a more comprehensive SRI, encompassing all three strands).

#### **Section 5: Short term recommendations (goal statements)**

Team 4 developed two overarching goals, one each relating to its standards and measurement charges. Each is listed below, along with accompanying short- and long-term recommendations.

##### **Standards**

Improve the accessibility, availability and alignment of the state's early learning standards (Infant Toddler Guidelines, Good Start Grow Smart SC Early Learning Standards, and SC Academic Content Standards for Five-Year-Old Kindergarten)

##### *Short Term Recommendations:*

- Revisit (via the DSS Early Learning Standards Workgroup convened in June 2010) the state's Good Start Grow Smart early learning standards to explore the feasibility of either incorporating existing 5K academic standards or making more explicit reference to these additional areas within the updated draft of the GSGS document.
- Charge the established inter-agency DSS Early Learning Standards Workgroup with ensuring the vertical alignment of the state's infant-toddler guidelines, early learning standards and 5K academic content standards. Charge this team with making alignment recommendations to the respective source agencies, to include voluntary horizontal alignment recommendations linking standards and appropriate methods of assessment for training.

##### *Long Term Recommendations:*

- Develop an aligned dissemination and training plan (across our standards) to include planning for regular cyclical review and the evaluation of training delivery.
- Develop methods to evaluate the extent to which standards are understood and utilized by front-line providers.

#### Measurement

Create a statistically-sound, indicators-based measure of school readiness for South Carolina.

#### *Short Term Recommendations:*

- Establish a technical team charged with exploring and recommending to the ECAC by Feb 1, 2011:
  - The most sound/appropriate means through which to identify demographic indicators linked to early school success.
  - The pros and cons of different approaches to weighting these factors within the state's proposed demographic School Readiness Index (SRI).
  - Exploring the potential costs and benefits associated with incorporating direct child assessments and program quality indicators, within supplemental strands of the SRI.
  - Developing a detailed SRI work-plan with a goal of launch during FY12.

#### *Long Term Recommendations:*

- Launch an indicators-based School Readiness Index at the state and community levels during FY12.
- Seek the resources required to supplement this indicators-based measure with both child outcome and program quality measures as soon as feasible in an effort to fulfill the multi-dimensional intent of the original SRI concept.

## **Section 7: Future ECAC role to sustain work on recommendations**

Given its direct assignment for the task under Executive Order 2010-06, the ECAC will retain a primary leadership responsibility for the state level SC School Readiness Index throughout its development and eventual dissemination.

Given the existence of the high-quality early learning standards, South Carolina has completed the federal charge to “develop high quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate” and the ECAC will remain involved in “developing recommendations for improvements in state early learning standards,” through regular reports to the Council recommended, per the short- and long-term recommendations above.