

## A Progress Report on Early Childhood Education Cabinet Accountability April 30, 2009<sup>1</sup>

This status report presents a brief summary of ongoing work by the Office of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and by Standing Committees and individual members of the Cabinet to ensure high levels of public accountability.

### 1. What is the statutory basis for the Cabinet's Accountability Plan?

Section 10-16s (d) (1) of the CT General Statutes was amended by Public Act 07-03 as follows: "Not later than December 1, 2008, and annually thereafter, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet shall develop and implement an accountability plan for early child education services. The plan shall identify and define appropriate population indicators and program and system measures of the readiness of children to enter kindergarten. Not later than December 31, 2008, and annually thereafter, the cabinet shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, on the measures implemented in accordance with this subdivision to the Office of Policy and Management and to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, education, human services and higher education and employment advancement.

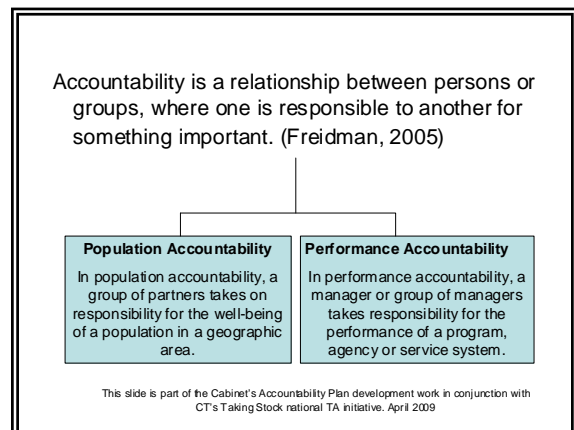
Section 10-16s (d) (2) requires that "As part of the plan implemented pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, in consultation with the Department of Education and the Office of Policy and Management, shall consider the development of data sharing agreements between state agencies and shall analyze whether the data can be combined to assess the progress of children toward school readiness.

Section 10-16 (d) (3) requires that "Providers of early childhood education that receive state funding shall employ the program measures developed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection to evaluate the effectiveness of their services. Not later than June 30, 2009, and annually thereafter, each such provider shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, the results of such evaluation to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet."

### 2. How does this statutory mandate relate to Connecticut's Results-Based Accountability work?

The statutory mandate to develop an Accountability Plan requires that it include components of the Cabinet's Results Based Accountability framework. As a fiscal policy tool, Results-Based Accountability was developed by Mark Friedman of the Fiscal Policy Institute.<sup>2</sup> The Connecticut General Assembly adopted Friedman's RBA framework in 2005-06 to guide legislative budgetary decision making.

The purpose of the RBA framework is to redirect primary policy decision making *from* counting activities related to a desired goal ("how much did we do") *to* providing an answer to the question "Is anyone better off" as the result of this work, expenditure or investment. A second, related purpose of the RBA framework is to assist policymakers and program



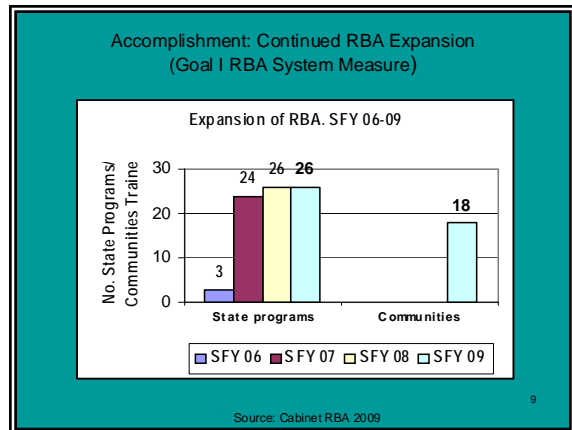
<sup>1</sup> This update was prepared by J.M.Gruendel, Ph.D., (Cabinet Co-Chair) with assistance from the Office of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and information provided by various Early Childhood Education Cabinet agencies and data sources. For more information, contact – janice.gruendel@aya.yale.edu

<sup>2</sup> Online at – [www.resultsaccountability.com](http://www.resultsaccountability.com)

administrators to identify what will needed to “turn the curve” over time if results on behalf of the people affected are not in the direction or at the pace that is required.

In 2006, the Connecticut General Assembly established two case examples upon which to begin application of the RBA framework: (1) the work of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and (2) a Long Island Sound water quality program within the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The Early Childhood Education Cabinet has now reported to the Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly for four years, 2006 through 2009.

Over this period, the Cabinet’s RBA framework has grown *from* reporting on preschool programs only *to* a “birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade” framework (Ready by Five, Fine by Nine) *and from* the inclusion of state agency programs only *to* the application of RBA in community-based B-9 strategic planning. The 2009 Cabinet RBA presentation to the Appropriations Committee along with the entire set of 2009 RBA “Report Cards” is online at the Early Childhood Investment Initiative website.<sup>3</sup>



### 3. What is the role of data in the RBA process?

Data-based decision making is the foundation upon which RBA is based. Data is reported for population accountability through “population indicators” and for performance accountability through “system and program measures.”

At each step of the RBA process, participants identify an agenda for data development and reporting as well as an agenda for research on questions that need to be answered, within and across strategies, agencies and programs, in order to finally achieve the population results.

Use of all component parts of the RBA framework is intended to allow systems, agencies and programs to:

- Assess whether they are contributing to the specified population result
- Determine what they can do individually and together to “turn the curve” in attaining the desired result in the specified time frame
- Identify where they need better data for outcomes reporting, program delivery and system operation, and
- Specify how – using these data -- they can modify their current behavior and investments over time to become more effective in achieving the population result.

### 4. What is the status of early childhood data development, interoperability and reporting in Connecticut?

A very recent report by the national Data Quality Campaign highlights the work of several states developing longitudinal data systems covering the preschool through post-secondary school period (P-20), including

<sup>3</sup> Documents include: (a) PPT Presentation to the CT General Assembly Appropriations Committee: 4th Year Early Childhood RBA; (b) CT-N Taping of the Appropriations and Education Committee Forum on the Work of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet (recorded 3/18/09); (c) Center for the Study of Social Policy’s web video: CT State Government Uses Results Based Accountability; (d) Final Report: Goal I and II Population and System Report Cards & Program Report Cards; (e) Cabinet Population Report Card: Goal I (Ready by Five); (f) Cabinet System Report Card: Goal I; (g) Cabinet Population Report Card: Goal II (Fine by Nine); (h) Cabinet System Report Card: Goal II. All are accessible online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/Content/RBA.asp](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/Content/RBA.asp)

Connecticut. The following summary taken from this report, entitled "The Next Step: Using Longitudinal Data Systems to Improve Student Success," highlights our work in Connecticut to date:

"Interoperability in Connecticut. There is a growing commitment across Connecticut to develop interoperability among agencies to improve data-driven and cross-agency decision making. The Connecticut General Assembly has required that the Early Childhood Education Cabinet propose data interoperability recommendations for 2009. Work is under way for an Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) based on unique child and program identifiers that will capture information on all prekindergarten programs that receive state funding and be able to follow individual students into elementary education. In addition, the departments of Labor, Higher Education and K-12 Education have worked together to ensure data on postsecondary education, training and employment can be exchanged, matched and linked to better serve individuals, provide state policymakers with key information on education and labor market outcomes, and improve programs and services throughout the education pipeline."<sup>4</sup>

Updates on Connecticut's evolving Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) have been made to the Cabinet and other bodies over the past 18 months, and are posted online. Most recently, in March 2009 the Office of the Cabinet launched a new section of the Early Childhood Investment Initiative website – Data Matters – that provides a central online location for reports on early childhood data system development.<sup>5</sup> Reports available at that location now include:

Title	Content
Charting CT Data Agreements	This report identifies more than 60 CT Memoranda of Agreements related to cross-agency data sharing and information exchange. Posted 3.09
CT Early Childhood Data Development Expansion Items & Proposed Reductions	This March 2009 report summarizes data development, interoperability and reporting information included in Cabinet fiscal reports over the fall of 2008. Posted 3.09
CT Early Childhood Data Systems: March 2009 Progress Report	This report summarizes current progress in developing CT's Early Childhood Information System. Posted 3.09
CT Early Childhood Data Systems: Summary of Challenges through June 2008	This report summarizes findings from a series of data development studies conducted for the Cabinet by the Public Consulting Group in SFY 08. Posted 3.09
Data Flow Analysis: Early Childhood State Agencies	This July 2008 report from the Public Consulting Group provides a graphic display of the structures and processes by which data flows across key CT state agencies serving young children. Posted 3.09

Work on the core components of the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) continues, as summarized below. For a more detailed summary, see "CT Early Childhood Data Systems: March 2009."<sup>6</sup>

Component	Status
Unique Child Identifiers	State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) are being assigned to: (a) young children enrolled in the B-3 program within the Department of Developmental Services, (b) three- and four-year olds enrolled in state funded preschool and (c) all public school students upon entry to kindergarten. Discussions continue with other state agencies to explore assignment of SASIDs to young children receiving other state services, B-5

<sup>4</sup> This report is online at -- <http://dataqualitycampaign.org/files/NextStep.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/Content/Data.asp](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/Content/Data.asp)

<sup>6</sup> Online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/images/customer-files//ecdatasystemsupdate3\\_09.pdf](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/images/customer-files//ecdatasystemsupdate3_09.pdf)

ECE Workforce Registry	This system is operative and administered by CT Charts-A-Course. A cross-agency steering group guides and resolves data issues. The system carries information about the education and training of individuals employed in state- or federally-funded preschool or child care programs. Data reports are now available.
Unique Program Identifiers	The cross-agency Registry working group has recommended development of a unique program identifier for early care and education programs funded or supported by state agencies. Participating agencies – SDE, DHE, DSS, and DPH – have ruled themselves out of consideration as the data host and development for ECE unique program identifiers. The group recommended that the United Way of CT be approached to develop and possibly host these functions. Exploration has begun.

5. What recommendations have been made by the national Data Quality Campaign related to early childhood and longitudinal data systems development and use?

The Data Quality Campaign has “identified three overarching imperatives for changing the culture around data use and maximizing states’ investment in longitudinal data systems” along with a series of specific, immediate actions that can be taken at the state level to ensure effective data use, as shown below.

10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use from “The Next Step: Using Longitudinal Data Systems to Improve Student Success”	
Data System Overarching Imperatives	State Actions Needed
<b>Expand</b> the ability of state longitudinal data systems to link across the P-20 educational pipeline and across state agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Link state K-12 data systems with early learning, post-secondary education, workforce, social services and other critical state agency data systems</li> <li>2. Create stable, sustained support for robust longitudinal data systems</li> <li>3. Develop governance structures to guide data collection, sharing and use</li> <li>4. Build state repositories (e.g., data warehouses) that integrate student, staff, financial and facility data</li> </ol>
<b>Ensure</b> that data can be accessed, analyzed and used, and communicate data to all stakeholders to promote continuous improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Implement systems to provide all stakeholders timely access to the information they need while protecting student privacy</li> <li>6. Create progress reports with individual student data that provide information that educators, parents and students can use to improve student performance</li> <li>7. Create reports that include longitudinal statistics on school systems and groups of students to guide school-, district-, and state-level improvement efforts</li> </ol>
<b>Build</b> the capacity of all stakeholders to use longitudinal data for effective decision-making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Develop a purposeful research agenda and collaborate with universities, researchers and intermediary groups to explore the data for useful information</li> <li>9. Implement policies and promote practices, including professional development and credentialing, to ensure that educators know how to access, analyze and use data appropriately</li> </ol>

	10. Promote strategies to raise awareness of available data and ensure that all key stakeholders, including state policymakers, know how to access, analyze and use the information
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**6. What issues related to data development, analysis and reporting have arisen from the Cabinet's Community Co-Investment Partnership strategic planning process?**

As part of the Cabinet's co-investment partnership with the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, many of the 23 communities now funded to develop B-9 local strategic plans have participated in a Results-Based Accountability learning process. The community planning RBA process utilizes the same "quality of life result" as the Cabinet: "All Connecticut children are ready for school by age five and are successful learners by age nine." A set of common population indicators is emerging at the community level, also similar to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet's RBA framework.<sup>7</sup> These include:

- Percent of children attending preschool OR the scores of entering kindergartners on the annual Entry to K Inventory
- Percent of children with performance at the "state goal level" on the annual 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Connecticut Mastery Test in reading
- Percent of children in elementary school who are chronically absent (i.e., 20 or more days per year)
- The educational attainment level of parents
- Percent of children receiving recommended well-child care in their first year (or first three years) of life.

In addition, information on data challenges has been regularly provided to the Cabinet by its State and Community Partnerships Standing Committee. Over the period July 2008 through March 2009, "lack of access to state agency data disaggregated by town" was the most frequently cited barrier to local B-9 strategic planning.<sup>8</sup> A sample of specific data requested across communities follows:

Category	Data Elements
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prenatal health data from multiple hospitals by the town of residence</li> <li>▪ Data on dental care, obesity and behavioral health</li> <li>▪ Number of uninsured children B-9</li> <li>▪ Obesity data for children and adults</li> <li>▪ Rates of well child visits to pediatricians</li> <li>▪ Town level utilization analysis of Medicaid funded services</li> <li>▪ HUSKY well child and behavioral health data by town</li> <li>▪ INFOLINE ECE and child development data by town (referrals by age)</li> </ul>
<b>Early Care &amp; Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infant/toddler ECE data by town</li> <li>▪ Head Start data by town as collected and reported by the COPA system</li> <li>▪ Teacher qualification and school readiness program data by town with online access</li> <li>▪ Catalog of all state early childhood programs (online and print), including data about each initiative, (funding source, # children served, attendance)</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> This information comes from materials prepared for the William Caspar Graustein public listening forums hosted over the period March through April 2009.

<sup>8</sup> "Building Local Capacity Partnership Grants: Progress Report Summary (July 2008 – December 2008)." Materials prepared for the Standing Committee on State and Community Partnerships, March 2009. Online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2009&Month=3](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2009&Month=3)

The Standing Committee has also made recommendations to the Cabinet related to data development, analysis and reporting:

- Expand local community access to state data across agencies, disaggregated by community, in order to reduce the need for communities to develop their own data collection processes and ensure implementation of community RBA plans<sup>9</sup>
- Provide statewide support and technical assistance to communities, including data development, use of RBA, and an external evaluation for communities using infrastructure/"start up" funds to gauge effectiveness of modified state policies and practices. Fund at the state and regional level supports for communities to build their data collection and analysis capacity and RBA capacity. Each community should not build individual data expertise (which they may not even have available in their communities) but build off of strong statewide assets such as Community Colleges or the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs).<sup>10</sup>

## 7. What progress has been made on the Cabinet's Accountability Plan?

The Accountability Plan was to have been submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly on December 1, 2008. On February 23, 2009, the Co-Chairs of the Cabinet requested an extension of this due date through the end of May 2009. The delay in this work resulted from intensive Cabinet and agency attention to fiscal analyses over the fall as well as Connecticut's selection as one of four states to receive national technical assistance in the development of an early childhood assessment and accountability system. The team now developing a draft of the Accountability Plan for Cabinet action in May includes the Office of the Cabinet, State Department of Education and Department of Higher Education. The draft plan will integrate statutory requirements to related to the Cabinet's RBA framework while, at the same time, integrating recommendations from the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force report, "Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality."

## 8. What is the nature of the national Taking Stock technical assistance?

Following more than two years of analysis and deliberation, the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force recently issued a landmark report on early childhood accountability, "Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality."<sup>11</sup> The Task Force defined a "State Early Childhood Accountability and Improvement System as:

A system of standards-based assessments of (a) children's development and learning and (b) program quality, designed to inform state policy decisions, investments, and improvement efforts for early education programs for three- and four-year-old children, linked to a continuum of kindergarten through third grade standards, curriculum, assessments, and program improvement efforts."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Recommendations: Standing Committee on State and Community Partnerships Policy Recommendations, SFY 10 and 11." Early Childhood Education Cabinet report. December 2008. Online at "Cabinet/Standing Committees/Meeting Documents/December 2008" -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2008&Month=12](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2008&Month=12)

<sup>10</sup> "Fiscal and Policy Briefing Summary: State and Community Local Capacity Building," Materials prepared for the October 2008 Standing Committee meeting. Online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2008&Month=10](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/fileManagerRecursive/default.asp?LevelID=5&Year=2008&Month=10)

<sup>11</sup> Online at -- [www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k\\_education/task\\_force\\_report1.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/task_force_report1.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality. The Report of the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2008. p. 4. Online at -- [www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k\\_education/task\\_force\\_report1.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/task_force_report1.pdf)

The Task Force made five “framing recommendations” provided to guide the development of early childhood accountability and assessment systems.<sup>13</sup> These follow.

National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force Accountability System Framing Recommendations	
Unified System	Develop a unified system of early childhood education that includes a single, coherent system of standards, assessments, data, and professional development efforts across all categorical programs and funding streams.
PreK-3 Alignment	Align high-quality and comprehensive standards, curriculum, and assessments as a continuum from prekindergarten through grade 3.
Child Assessment Development and Data Reporting	Assure that all child and program assessments are valid and reliable, meet high psychometric standards, and are well suited for their intended purpose. Data analysis and reporting methods should incorporate state-of-the-art method to accurately and fairly document the performance of programs, including, where feasible, information from assessments of children and program quality together.  Data from assessments of children should not be reported without data on the programs that serve them; Reporting on program quality should highlight attributes of classroom quality, instructional practices, and teacher-child interactions that are most highly correlated with enhancing children’s progress in learning and development; Reporting on child assessments should highlight children’s progress over time (or the “value-added” contributions of programs) as well as their end-of-program status.
Inclusion	Support the full inclusion of all children in accountability and improvement efforts, with appropriate accommodation of assessments to fully document their progress and status. Adapt for young English Language Learners and young children with disabilities
Adequate Resources	Provide adequate resources to enable programs to meet performance standards, and to support accurate, credible and useful assessments and effective program improvement efforts. <sup>14</sup>

Technical assistance is provided by two national early childhood assessment and accountability experts, Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan of Columbia Teachers College and Dr. Thomas Schultz of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

**9. For what other state statutory mandates does the Cabinet also provide accountability updates?**

In their 2009 RBA presentation to the Appropriations Committee, the Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet also updated the General Assembly on compliance with its other statutory mandates. A summary chart updated (as of April 15, 2009) follows.

<sup>13</sup> Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality. The Report of the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force. Fall 2008

<sup>14</sup> Op cit. pp. 5-6

Cabinet's Legislative Mandates	Narrative Status	Compliance status as of 4.15.09
Advise SDE Commissioner on CGS Sec 10-16o	Ongoing; Commissioner sits as Co-Chair	In compliance, ongoing work needed
School Readiness Longitudinal outcomes study	PreK-K component of design complete. Draft RFP complete. Funds cut from SFY 09 Cabinet budget	Not in compliance. Study cannot be started or completed under current fiscal constraints; budget action required in SFY 09 if SFY 10 implementation is expected
Budget analyses & requests	Cross-agency 10% reduction proposals analyzed, summarized and presented to Cabinet. Three fiscal scenarios created and debated, Fall 2009. Budget letter submitted to Governor with 10% reduction proposal. All materials distributed and online.	In compliance, ongoing work needed
ECE Workforce Plan & Reporting	Required ECE Workforce Plan completed by Research & Policy Council. Adopted by Cabinet	In compliance; budget action required for implementation
Reports on Quality and Comprehensiveness of Early Childhood "System"	Framework reports adopted: B-3 (First Words, First Steps); K-3 (Fine by Nine); Two reports on School Readiness Program; Early Childhood Health System Framework adopted. See below for report on ECE quality, to be presented to the Cabinet in June 2009	In compliance, ongoing work needed
Minimum/Higher Standards Early Care & Education	Interim Preschool Quality Project assessed classrooms with new SRP slots; Yale professor analyzing data. Cabinet invested ~ one million dollars direct to local programs for targeted quality improvement activity  Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) proposal developed by Council working group and adopted by Cabinet	In compliance; budget action required for further development and implementation
Accountability Plan	Under development. To be submitted by May 30, 2009	Compliance will be achieved by 5.30.09
Data Development, Interoperability & Reporting	Early Childhood Information System in design and initial implementation: Unique child ID being implemented for preschool through SDE SASID; ECE Workforce Registry operational; ECE program id work begun. See Data Matters reports on Early Childhood Investment Initiative website ( <a href="http://www.ctearlychildhood.org">www.ctearlychildhood.org</a> )	Requirement for recommendations will be met through Accountability Plan submittal, 5.30.09; budget action required for continued development and implementation
DSS-SDE integrated system (HS, DSS centers, SRP)	Some systems design work accomplished through 2008 NGA grant. DSS-SDE have not issued a comprehensive plan for integration	Not in compliance. Cabinet B-9 Standing Committee assigned to this work under federal HS Act of 2007 requirements

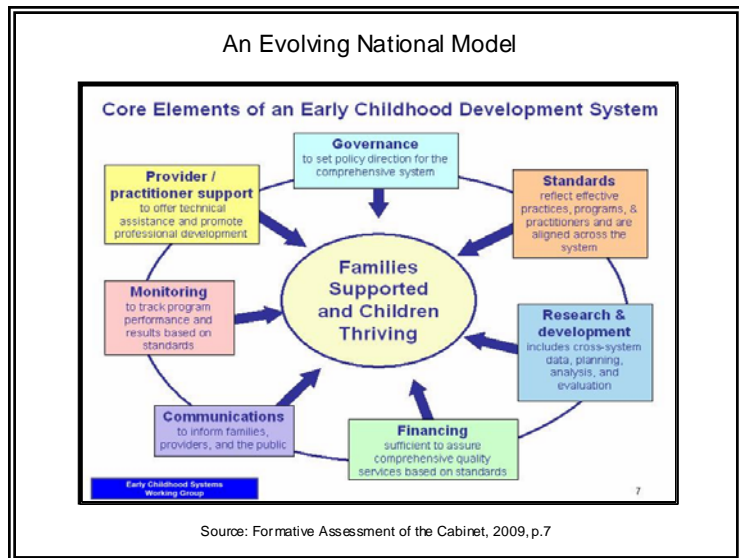
## 10. What were the results of the Cabinet's "formative assessment" conducted over the fall of 2008?

Under authority granted it by Executive Order 13<sup>15</sup> and at the request of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet's co-chairs, the Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council undertook a "formative assessment" of the Cabinet since its inception in the fall of 2005. Charles Bruner, a national expert on early childhood systems development and Executive Director of the Child and Family Policy Center<sup>16</sup>, was contracted to conduct the study over the late summer and early fall of 2008. The report was presented to the Council in late February and was adopted and transmitted to the Co-Chairs of the Cabinet.

Central to Bruner's analysis is an emerging national agreement<sup>17</sup> on the seven core elements of an "early childhood development system":

- Governance
- Standards
- Research & Development
- Provider & Practitioner Support
- Monitoring
- Communications
- Financing.

With this in mind, Bruner organized his findings and his report<sup>18</sup> into three sections: Staffing and infrastructure; Planning and decision-making; Vision and action. A summary of each section follows:



*"Staffing and Infrastructure.* There are particular strengths that the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and Research and Policy Council bring to achieving the goal that all Connecticut children are "ready by five and fine by nine." In particular, the level of investment in the Cabinet and Council to foster change is, by government standards, very significant. Connecticut's investment in Cabinet staffing and in Council activity provide the ability to be much more intentional and comprehensive in systems building than most other states and to draw from the best available evidence in both innovation and the diffusion of best practices."

*"Planning and Decision-Making.* The structure of both the Cabinet and the Council generally incorporate the key stakeholders needed to develop the early childhood system of services and supports to achieve

<sup>15</sup> Online at -- [www.ctearlychildhood.org/FileManagerRecursive/customer-Files/EXECUTIVE\\_ORDER\\_NO\\_13.pdf](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/FileManagerRecursive/customer-Files/EXECUTIVE_ORDER_NO_13.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Online at -- [www.cfpciowa.org/page.php?id=4](http://www.cfpciowa.org/page.php?id=4)

<sup>17</sup> This conceptualization was developed by the Early Childhood Systems Workgroup, a national group of organizations that came together and agreed to develop and use a common framework for describing an early childhood system for achieving the goal that all children start school healthy and prepared for success. Members of the Workgroup are: Alliance for Early Childhood Finance; Birth to Five Policy Alliance; BUILD Initiative; The Children's Project, the Center for Law and Social Policy; Council of Chief State School Officers; National Center for Children in Poverty; National Child Care Information Center; National Conference of State Legislatures; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center, State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network, and Zero to Three.

<sup>18</sup> "Getting All Connecticut Children 'Ready by Five and Fine by Nine': Formative Assessment for the Connecticut Early Childhood Policy and Research Council." December 8, 2008. This report is available from the CT Economic Resource Center by contacting Gretchen Deans at -- [gdeans@cerc.com](mailto:gdeans@cerc.com)

the goals. The actual planning and decision-making role for the Cabinet and the relationship between Cabinet and Council, however, are viewed differently by different members. There are potential opportunities for the Cabinet and Council to be more effective in fostering, supporting, and even managing this systems building than they are today. I emphasize the words “potential opportunities ... to be more effective” because: (1) To change will require personal change, and this change requires a certain ‘readiness’ that cannot necessarily be forced on individuals nor achieved through any discrete activity or process; and (2) To not change will not mean that the Cabinet and Council won’t be able to continue to do worthwhile and essential things for building that system.”

*“Visioning and Action.* Whatever the decisions regarding any formal changes to the structure or work of the Cabinet as a planning or decision-making entity, there are several specific issues that the Cabinet and Council should consider as part of their ongoing work, based upon the experiences of other states. These include: (1) establishing a systemic framework around meeting the goal for children; (2) broadening leadership and ownership in the work; (3) developing an ongoing strategy and process for incorporating community initiative within a state systems framework; and (4) determining whether and how to be explicit in addressing issues of race, class, language, and culture.”

Reviewing Bruner’s report, the Governor’s Early Childhood Research and Policy Council extracted and commented upon the following more specific findings as shown below. These quotes are taken directly from the Council’s near final “Report on the Work of the Governor’s Early Childhood Research and Policy Council: Grounding Connecticut’s Early Childhood Investment Initiative in Research and Data” (February 2009).

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**Overall Assessment.** Bruner’s “overall assessment of Connecticut’s efforts in this area is positive. He states: ‘From all this, it is clear to me that Connecticut has more than sufficient leadership, expertise, and passion to be the national leader among states in building an early learning system that can meet children’s goals of ‘ready by five and fine by nine. He found that Connecticut’s investment in cabinet staffing and in Council activity provides the ability to be much more intentional and comprehensive in systems building than most other states and to draw from the best available evidence in both innovation and the diffusion of best practices.’”

**2. Compelling Interagency Cooperation.** “The decision to create a Cabinet in itself suggests that the more traditional departmental structure is not meeting the needs of its (their) constituencies. While the Cabinet was established by statute to develop and advance a cross-agency early childhood agenda through developing “budget requests for the early childhood program” and promoting the “consistency of quality and comprehensiveness of early childhood services,” the placement of the Cabinet staff within the Department of Education for Administrative purposes frustrates the intent of creating the Cabinet in the first place. According to the assessment, the chosen management structures are not sufficient to compel the type of cooperation that is required across agency lines, a need identified by the Council in its Early Childhood and Investment Plan.”

**3. Cabinet/Council Structure.** “While interviewees cited some confusion over the respective roles and processes of the Cabinet and the Council in guiding Connecticut early childhood services and policies, Bruner notes: ‘particularly regarding many of the infrastructural elements that cut across different agencies, several interviewees noted the particular value of having a locus for research and planning like the Council.’ The Council has fulfilled this role in certain areas, including recent deliberations about the need to address several serious issues in the area of early childhood workforce. Mr. Bruner stated that ‘there are potential opportunities

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<sup>19</sup> This information is taken from a near final draft report of the Governor’s Early Childhood Research and Policy Council to have been delivered to the Governor and the Early Childhood Education Cabinet in March 2009. The report could not be formally adopted as Executive Order 24 abolished the Council effective March 1, 2009. The report was reviewed in April by former members of the Council acting in an ad hoc capacity. Ad hoc members directed the Council Co-Chairs to distribute the report as a near final draft to the Governor and the Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet.



for the Cabinet and Council to be more effective in fostering, supporting, and even managing the systems building than they are today.’ He emphasized that the Cabinet and Council can continue to do worthwhile and essential things for building that system even without this level of change.”

Acknowledging that there are no silver bullets and no one best structure that will, in and of itself, guarantee the development of a successfully functioning early childhood system, Bruner’s formative assessment concludes as follows:

“Virtually everyone interviewed identified Connecticut state government’s fiscal predicament as a potential barrier to moving forward. While there will be necessary attention to fiscal issues around the 2009-10 budget development, it should not preoccupy the discussion of building an early childhood system nor be used as a rationale to stop long-term work underway.

There always will be competition for scarce resources, and developing an early childhood system that can ensure all children are “ready by five and fine by nine” likely requires new Connecticut investments in the hundreds of millions of dollars, even assuming that greater efficiency, reduced duplication or services, and economies of scale can be found. Such investments will not be made within a single budgeting cycle, nor could they be effectively used if they were. The alternative to making these investments today, however, is to incurring much greater costs in the future. The gains to making such investments, however, are potentially much greater, both in terms of future economic vitality and reduced needs for treatment, remediation, and public protection services.

This formative assessment does not speak to possible tactics related to addressing early childhood budget needs within the current fiscal situation, which in many ways will be determined by what already exists in political capital in Connecticut to press for inclusion.

Instead, this formative assessment looks toward continuing to build the capacity and political capital within Connecticut (infrastructure and elements) needed to build the system over the long term.

Public investments will be made in early childhood when there is confidence that those investments are needed and can be used effectively. The Cabinet and Council collectively, and its members individually, are the ones best positioned to make that compelling case and to deliver on it as resources are deployed.

There is enough work for everyone to do, and, while the orchestration and coordination of this work can be improved, mostly it just needs to be done. To the degree that, individually and collectively, leaders in Connecticut can do so while often holding two opposing ideas in mind, the possibilities are great.”