NYS Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup's

BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

Final Recommendations

September, 2018

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Statement from the Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup Co-Chairs

Early education benefits all children, all families, and society as a whole. The advantages of high-quality, well-designed early childhood education programs are well-documented. For children they include enhanced academic and socio-emotional competencies that contribute to increased earnings, better health, and positive social behavior as adults. Additionally, children that attend high-quality early care and education programs are better prepared for kindergarten; less likely to repeat a grade; or drop out of high school. Quality early education is also highly effective in launching early identification, prevention and intervention strategies. These findings, in turn, help reduce the disparities that are often associated with race, culture, ethnicity, language, citizenship status, and socio-economic level. Economic studies suggest that participation in high-quality early care and early childhood programs provides a high return on the investment.[1] Most importantly, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate early education programs offer young children their own space to learn and grow, as well as a place to be children.

The following Report, under the direction of the New York State Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup, reflects a deliberate and comprehensive process designed to give all children in our State the fairness of an even start.

Many individuals have provided invaluable information for this Report. We appreciate the thoughtful, insightful and informed recommendations provided by the Blue Ribbon Committee. These expert practitioners and researchers developed the overarching vision of transforming the birth to age eight early care and education system in the State of New York. We also acknowledge the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) for the leadership, support and encouragement provided by Kristen Amundson, President/CEO and Winona Hao, Director of Early Learning. We are truly indebted to our NYSED team who kept unlimited drafts of text and proposed budget recommendations, and who organized the logistics that produced the Report. Finally, we sincerely thank the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Teachers College in Central Harlem, Nazareth College in Rochester, Mercy College in Westchester County and United Way of New York City for providing support and space for our regional meetings.

Lester W. Young, Jr.
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1 Early Childhood Education. Strategy No. 5 in A Blueprint for Great Schools report from the Transition Advisory Team, California Department of Education August 9, 2011.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 5
Background 7
Blue Ribbon Committee Vision 7
Blue Ribbon Committee Meetings 9
Blue Ribbon Committee's Recommendation Framework 11
Final Recommendations 15
Summary 22
Appendix A: Recommended Guidance, Resources, and Support 23
Appendix B: Blue Ribbon Committee Members 25
Appendix C: NYSED Staff Support Team 27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Regents is engaged in an effort to better align the State's early care, preschool and early childhood educational policies and create a comprehensive plan to ensure that all children in New York State have an even start. To this end, in 2017 the Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup established a Blue Ribbon Committee of over 60 national and State experts who have developed recommendations to address early care and education in New York.

The reason for this effort is simple. Research shows that children who receive high-quality early care and education are better prepared for kindergarten and are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school later. Across the nation, students' academic success later in life is significantly impacted by their third-grade academic performance. In general, students who are behind in third grade may never catch up, which is especially true for children with special needs, those whose first language is not English, those impacted by poverty, and many minority groups. Finally, high-quality early education offers a positive return on investment and reduces the burden on other areas of government.

The Overarching Vision of the NYS Board of Regents Early Childhood Work Group's Blue Ribbon Committee

To transform the birth to age eight early care and education system in the State of New York. The Committee envisions a New York where ALL CHILDREN thrive from birth, flourish in preschool, enter the school age program on a trajectory of success, and are academically proficient in third grade by growing up healthy and having opportunities for high-quality early learning experiences that are culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate.

Blue Ribbon Committee Recommendation Framework and Priorities

The New York State Board of Regents is responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State, presiding over The University and the New York State Education Department. The Regents are organized into standing committees, subcommittees and workgroups whose members and chairs are appointed by the Chancellor. The Blue Ribbon Committee's role was to provide input to the Regents Early Childhood Workgroup that will help advance a policy agenda for New York State specifically in the areas of Educational Policy, Legislation and Budget. While many stakeholders were involved in the process of contributing to this critical work, the resulting recommendations may not necessarily reflect the endorsement of every participating individual or group.

The Committee's recommendations are a first step in achieving the Regents ambitious vision for early care and education in New York. All recommendations were informed by the research of Blue Ribbon Committee members and public feedback and are in consideration of culture, race, ethnicity, language, citizenship status and socioeconomic status of students and families. The implementation of recommendations is part of a five-year phased-in approach to support and advance policies that will prioritize the children with greatest need and require a coordinated effort with other State agencies and initiatives.

The recommendations were guided by eight priority areas:

1. Age Appropriate Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment
2. Comprehensive Family and Community Engagement
3. Comprehensive and Coordinated Services That Support the Full Range of Developmental Pathways Among Early Childhood Service Providers
4. Recruitment, Preparation, and Professional Development of High-Quality, Culturally Responsive, and Linguistically Prepared Teachers and Leaders Across All Programs
5. Sustained and Coordinated Funding Structure
6. Coherent and Comprehensive Early Childhood Policy
7. High-Quality Instructional Programs and Services
8. Quality, Evaluation, and Accountability

The vision of transforming the birth to age eight early care and education system in New York State emerged from the research and feedback on these eight priority areas. This vision is one in which all New York Children are given the tools and opportunities for lifelong academic success. The Blue Ribbon Committee believes that the following recommendations have three areas of focus and will enhance the State's existing programs and require the complete cooperation of State policy makers, agencies and programs to implement. A complete description of each recommendation is provided within the full report.

Comprehensive Services for Children and Families

- Fund Prekindergarten Expansion
- Promote Blended Learning
- Cultivate Local Community and Family Engagement
- Implement a Multi-Agency Comprehensive Developmental Screening Process
- Support Emergent Multilingual Learners
- Develop Statewide Behavior Management Practices
- Require Full-day Kindergarten

Strengthening the Early Childhood Workforce

- Elevate Teacher Preparation and Professional Development
- Develop Career Pathways for Childhood Educators
- Recruit a High-quality Workforce
- Strengthen Teacher and Leader Preparation
- Develop Concentrations in Early Childhood Teacher Certification
- Revise School Leader Certification Requirements

Statewide Supports and Infrastructure

- Conduct a Cost Validation Study
- Establish Early Learning Technical Assistance Centers
- Fund Expansion of QUALITYstarsNY
- Create Multi-Agency Data System
- Address Prekindergarten Transportation
- Reevaluate Preschool Special Education Funding
- Consider a State Office of Early Care and Learning
- Review Allocations for Community Based Organizations

BACKGROUND

Every child should be the beneficiary of a comprehensive and coherent early care and education system that is designed to ensure that they receive a healthy start in life and attain the skills and concepts necessary to have a successful academic experience. Research substantiates that children who attend high-quality early care and education programs are better prepared for kindergarten, have stronger language skills in the first years of elementary school, and are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school.[2] High-quality early care and education offers one of the highest returns of any public investment—more than $7 for every dollar spent—by reducing future expenditures on special education, public assistance, and the criminal justice system.[3]

In New York, like many states, a student's academic path is significantly impacted by his or her tr
demic performance. Without the strong start that high-quality early childhood education provides, students who are not proficient in reading by the third grade may never catch up, creating an achievement disparity that increases as they move through the K-12 school system. This finding is most evident for children who are socio-economically in need; children with special needs; children whose first language is other than English; and children who are black, Hispanic or recent immigrants. That is why every child must have the opportunity to attend comprehensive, high-quality early education experiences regardless of setting or community.

Based on the research, the science of brain development and learning and the status of early learning in our State, the New York State Board of Regents[4] is engaged in an ambitious effort to find a pathway to better align the State's fragmented early care, preschool, and early childhood education policies and in the development of a clear, coherent, and comprehensive strategy to ensure that all of New York State's children have the fairness of an even start. The Board of Regents understands that a cohesive early childhood delivery system must maximize collaboration and coordination between diverse experts, State agency systems and providers of early education programs. With these tenets in mind, the New York State Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup established a Blue Ribbon Committee (Committee) in the fall of 2017.

The Committee included over 60 national and state experts and was charged with developing recommendations to amend and address New York State education policy as it relates to early childhood education. The Committee accomplished this by leveraging the expertise of its members and by traveling around the state to receive feedback from stakeholders representing: researchers, practitioners, policy makers, elected officials, teachers, school administrators, and parents.

Blue Ribbon Committee's Vision

"Emerging from Blue Ribbon Committee deliberations was the overarching vision of transforming the birth to age eight early care and education system in the State of New York; one that envisions a New York where ALL CHILDREN thrive from birth, flourish in preschool, enter the school age program on a trajectory of success, and are academically proficient in third grade by growing up healthy and having opportunities for high-quality early learning experiences that are culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate."

2 National Association for the Education of Young Children, Developmental Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Servicing Children from Birth through Age 8, 2009.

3 Early Childhood Education. Strategy No. 5 in A Blueprint for Great Schools report from the Transition Advisory Team, California Department of Education August 9, 2011.

4 The New York State Board of Regents is responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State and presiding over The University and the New York State. Members and Co-Chairs of the Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup have been appointed by the Chancellor.

This vision is supported by what is known from the theory and literature related to developmentally appropriate practice about how children develop and learn. For example, all the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, psychological, cognitive and linguistic —are important and inextricably interrelated. A child's development and learning in one domain is influenced by what takes place in other domains. In addition to domain interrelationships, development and learning require viewing each child within the cultural context of that child's family, home language, and community, as well as within the broader society. These various contexts, interacting with the domains of development, have a major influence on the developing child. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) identified the following essential principles of child development and learning that inform practice.

Essential Principles of Child Development and Learning

1. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers;
2. Development and learning result from a dynamic and continuous interaction of biological maturation and experience;
3. Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child's individual functioning;
4. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation, as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competency;
5. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and when they have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills;
6. Children's experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning, such as persistence, initiative, and flexibility; in turn, these dispositions and behaviors affect their learning and development; and
7. Development and learning occur in, and are influenced by, multiple social, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

Blue Ribbon Committee Meetings

To make the vision of the Blue Ribbon Committee actionable, several meetings were convened in various parts of the State to engage the Committee in pertinent discussions on national research in early childhood education and how to improve the early care and education system in New York State, keeping in mind the complexity of issues and the fragmentation of the current system. In addition to participation of Committee members, three meetings included local early childhood experts to provide additional insight and feedback to help shape the recommendations developed by the Committee.

Throughout the fall of 2017, Blue Ribbon Committee meetings were held around the State. In September, Dr. Aisha Ray presented to the Committee at Teachers College in New York City. Her keynote presentation, "Serving Children from Diverse Cultural, Linguistic and Economic Backgrounds: The Role of Higher Education" addressed the need for New York State to develop goals to establish a culturally responsive and linguistically prepared early childhood workforce that can support the cognitive, language and physical development of children from diverse backgrounds. Dr. Ray expressed the critical importance of meaningful relationships for children ages birth to age five, the most significant time of brain development. She also provided research to support a focus on birth to age eight, including that professionals who work with children must use children's knowledge, culture and language as a platform for learning.

In October, a second convening of the Committee was held at Nazareth College in Rochester. Jeff Kaczorowski, MD was the keynote speaker and presented on "The First 1000 Days on Medicaid", an initiative coordinated by the New York State Health Department and chaired by SUNY Chancellor Emeritus Nancy Zimpher and NYS Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia. The project brought together experts from across healthcare and education systems to collaborate on improving outcomes and opportunities for young children and their families through access to childhood health services and expansion of other health and early childhood system coordination and family supports. During his presentation, Dr. Kaczorowski stated that Medicaid and Early Childhood Education systems must work together to ensure the health of all New York's children. By supporting common goals, both systems can begin to reach optimal outcomes for our youngest children. Dr. Kaczorowski's presentation included significant research on the correlation between socio-economic status and reading assessment gains through 8th grade. The research also indicated that disparities begin very early for children who are raised in poverty. These findings make it essential for the two initiatives – The First 1000 Days on Medicaid and the Board of Regents Early Childhood Blue Ribbon Committee - to work together to determine the best pathway for supporting all of New York's children.

In November, a third meeting of the Committee was held at Mercy College in the Lower Hudson Valley. Ms. Lorelei Vargas, the New York State Administration for Children's Services Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and Family Wellbeing, provided a keynote presentation entitled, "Trauma, Stress and the Brain: Integrating Research Into Practice". Ms. Vargas emphasized the importance of relationships as "active ingredients" in supporting healthy brain architecture. When children do not form protective relationships, they experience elevated levels of stress which can disrupt the architecture or connections in the brain. Ms. Vargas shared the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study which focused on ten adverse experiences (i.e. incarcerated family members, community violence exposure, Child Protective Services involvement, etc.) that, when faced during childhood, could lead to later at-risk behaviors including illicit drug use, suicide, and depression. Ms. Vargas described the need for "trauma informed care in early education" and suggested that every teacher in New York State be required to complete coursework in trauma-informed care.

In June 2018, the Committee reconvened in New York City to finalize recommendations and develop effective strategies to implement and sustain the transformation of early care and education in New York State. The Committee concluded that all its recommendations must reflect research and seek to enhance and/or modify the existing system of programs and services. To ensure supports for the healthy development of young children, efforts must include agencies, organizations, policies, and programs that are outside of the traditional education system. The recommendations of the Committee are rooted in this approach and will require State policy makers, agencies, and

programs to work collaboratively across sectors. This concept of collective impact across sectors is supported by the recent recommendations of New York State's First 1,000 Days on Medicaid initiative, in which we are reminded that, ***"These are the same kids and families in different systems across time."***[5]

5 New York State's First 1000 Days on Medicaid Presentation, New York State Department of Health, November 2017.

BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION FRAMEWORK

The expertise of the Blue Ribbon Committee, keynote speakers, and public feedback all helped to inform a reasoned set of recommendations – some require legislative changes; some require changes in education policy or regulations; some require a budget request to implement; and some could be implemented administratively without the need for legislative or budget approval (see Appendix A).

The Committee's recommendations represent a first step in achieving the Regents' ambitious vision for transforming early care and education. The implementation of all recommendations is part of a five-year phased-in approach to support and advance policies that will prioritize children with greatest need and require a coordinated effort with other state agencies and initiatives. Recommendations were guided by the following eight priority areas and related goals, each of which were inclusive of culture, race, ethnicity, language, citizenship status, and socio-economic status. Each topic area was deliberated by a workgroup comprised of Blue Ribbon Committee members who were charged with developing policy solutions that could help reach the goal of the priority area.

PRIORITY 1

Age Appropriate Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

Goal: To provide an organized and developmentally appropriate structure that outlines the content that children should learn, a process to determine the achievement of curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, including a framework for selecting learning experiences and materials.

PRIORITY 2

Comprehensive Family and Community Engagement

Goal: To specify a framework that guides districts, schools, programs and providers to develop and increase the availability of high-quality family and community engagement opportunities for all families with young children in New York State.

PRIORITY 3

Comprehensive and Coordinated Services That Support the Full Range of Developmental Pathways Among All Early Childhood Service Providers

Goal: To target services for children birth to age five and school-age children and their families, with supports for expectant families in the areas of child care, child development, special needs, and academic readiness, etc., that promote the provision of comprehensive services and school readiness with strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate and aligned to education, health, housing, and social service systems that serve students and families.

PRIORITY 4

Recruitment, Preparation, and Professional Development of High-Quality, Culturally Responsive, and Linguistically Prepared Teachers and Leaders Across All Programs

Goal: To attract, educate and retain high-quality early childhood workforce which includes teachers and administrators who know their curricular content, have linguistic competence, can demonstrate developmentally appropriate instructional practices, and know the children they teach and how they learn.

PRIORITY 5

Sustained and Coordinated Funding Structure

Goal: To establish a unified and sustainable early childhood funding strategy that aligns state investments to achieve desired outcomes.

PRIORITY 6

Coherent and Comprehensive Early Childhood Policy

Goal: To recommend to the New York State Board of Regents targeted strategies and policies that promote coherent and comprehensive early childhood education.

PRIORITY 7

High-Quality Instructional Programs and Services

Goal: To recommend to the New York State Board of Regents targeted strategies and policies that support students with diverse learning needs.

PRIORITY 8

Quality, Evaluation, and Accountability

Goal: To design and implement strategies and policies to regularly evaluate early childhood programs consistent with program goals, using a variety of evidenced based approaches to determine the extent to which programs and providers meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended outcomes.

Blue Ribbon Committee Recommendations for Education Policy, Legislation, and Budget Proposals

The Blue Ribbon Committee's role was to provide input to the Regents Early Childhood Workgroup that will help advance a policy agenda for New York State specifically in the areas of Education Policy, Legislation and Budget.

Education Policy, the principles and collection of rules and regu lations that govern the operation of the education system, directly affects the education that people engage in at all ages. When draft ing Education Policy, the following points should be considered: what is the purpose of the policy, the objectives (societal and personal) that it is designed to attain, the methods for attaining them; and the tools for measuring their suc cess or failure.

Legislation involves creating or changing a law which would ultimately be enacted by a leg islative or other governing body. Legislation can have many pur poses: to regulate; to authorize; to proscribe; to provide (funds); to sanction; to grant; and to de clare or to restrict. The goal of the workgroup is to propose legisla tion for consideration by the NYS Legislature and Executive.

Budget Proposals recommend funding needed to achieve the objectives of the proposed legisla tion and education policy. Lack of funding may have a direct impact on the State s ability to improve the educational destiny of our young est learners. Budget proposals are thoughtfully prepared and attempt to strike a balance between the state s fiscal climate with the urgen cy to align and integrate policies to ensure that all New York State s children experience improved out comes through access to services that are developmentally appro priate and responsive to culture, race, ethnicity, language, citizenship status, and socioeconomic status.

OVERARCHING THEMES OF BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout Blue Ribbon Committee's deliberations and resulting recommendations, there were three distinct areas of focus: a) Comprehensive Services for Children and Families b) Strengthening the Early Childhood Education Workforce and c) Statewide Supports and Infrastructure. These overarching themes are equally important and unequivocally linked; comprehensive services for children and families required to improve and align early care and education is dependent upon a well prepared, multifaceted workforce and collaborative, sustainable statewide supports and resources. (See Figure 1)

The Committee believes that the recommendations detailed below will enhance the State's existing programs and will require the complete cooperation of State policy makers, education, health and human services agencies and programs to implement with fidelity.

Figure 1:
The Pathway to High-quality Early Care and Education

Final Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect consensus by the Blue Ribbon Committee members and are supported by the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

Comprehensive Services for Children and Families

1. Fund Prekindergarten Expansion (Budget): Provide $20M to expand the Prekindergarten Program to approximately 2,000 four-year-old children in 40 school districts, targeting areas of highest need first, and phasing in additional funds over subsequent years until Prekindergarten is fully universal for four-year-old children in New York State. Child seats would be funded at $10,000 per child or double the district's half-day Universal Prekindergarten allocation, whichever is greater, until an alternate funding method is developed pursuant to a study of the actual costs of quality Prekindergarten programs in New York State.

Budget Rationale: *During the 2016-17 school year, approximately 120,000 four-year-old children were served in State-administered prekindergarten programs, representing 65% of the State's eligible four-year-old population. The total number of eligible four-year-old children in New York State is currently 181,500. A $20 million increase in the 2019-20 budget would enable 2,000 more four-year-old children to be served; the overall percentage of students served in New York State would increase to just under 70%. It is important to note that 30% of the State's eligible four-year-old children would still not be served. NYSED projects that it would cost a total of $280 million to fully fund those districts that are not currently receiving State-funded prekindergarten dollars. An annual increase of funds for prekindergarten by at least $30 million for each of the next 10 years would bring the overall percentage from its current 65% percent to an estimated 82% of the total four-year-old population in New York State.*

(The New York State 2018-2019 enacted budget included $15 million to expand prekindergarten.)

2. Promote Blended Learning (Budget): Provide $6M for pilot programs which will target funding to half-day and full-day 10-month and summer inclusion prekindergarten programs for three and four-year-old children. Funds would be blended and layered with existing prekindergarten and preschool special education funding to support classrooms comprised of both preschool students with and without disabilities, which will be subject to a newly developed methodology pursuant to Chapter 59 of the law of 2017.

Budget Rationale: *In the 2017-18 enacted State budget, NYSED was directed to develop an alternative funding methodology for preschool Special Education Integrated Setting (SCIS) programs. SCIS programs provide specially designed instruction and related services to preschool students with disabilities alongside their peers who do not have disabilities. Due in large part to the separate and inadequate funding structure, there are not enough early childhood programs operating a SCIS model, and many existing SCIS programs do not have sufficient numbers of typically developing peers in their classrooms. The $6M would create a pilot program to target and combine resources needed to serve both student populations in the same classroom. These new funds would be blended and layered with current early childhood and preschool special education dollars to add approximately 600 new preschool seats.*

3. Cultivate Local Community and Family Engagement (Budget): Provide $2M that is formula-driven (non-competitive) at the statewide, regional, local, and programmatic levels that gives targeted communities the opportunity to self-identify and meet their specific family and community engagement needs. The objective of

the funding would be to create program models that weave family and community influence into all levels of the educational system, while reflecting the following values including, but not limited to, cultural responsiveness; family support and engagement; common / wrap-around messaging; attention to trauma and stress; and leaders as weavers. One specific evidence-based model that could be replicated using these funds involves assigning a family advocate to assist with care beginning at the prenatal stage and continuing with the child and family as necessary, through age eight.

Budget Rationale: *Allocations will be used to hire family and community engagement coordinators in identified school communities using indicators to direct the funds toward high-need districts. These funds will augment and support mandated Title I allocations for family engagement and other federal and state funds with similar goals. A phased-in approach would be used so that, in subsequent years, additional funds would be available to enhance this strategy by increasing the number of school districts and contributing to the healthy development of children.*

4. Implement a Multi-Agency Comprehensive Developmental Screening Process (Budget): Provide $700,000 as a first step toward the implementation of a comprehensive developmental screening process for all children ages zero to eight that includes vision, hearing, physical and dental health, speech and language skills, fine and gross motor skills, and social, emotional and cognitive development, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics Bright Futures Chart. This developmental screening would help inform whether a child is on track to be ready to succeed in Kindergarten. It also would inform teachers' practices, better support each child's learning, and support child readiness across the State. Every effort will be made to ensure children are screened in the language spoken in the home.

Budget Rationale: *In the first year, NYSED would convene the necessary State agency partners to identify the comprehensive developmental tool and to design a protocol to be followed by early care and education settings, pediatricians, home visiting programs and parents. Two communities would be selected to participate in a pilot to test the feasibility of implementing the comprehensive developmental screening process.*

5. Support Emergent Multilingual Learners (Education Policy): Revise the Commissioner's Regulations, Subpart 151-1, to include the identification of children enrolled in State administered Prekindergarten who speak languages other than English in their homes as "Emergent Multilingual Learners".

Rationale: *Children should be entitled to a combination of supports and instruction in their home language(s), with consideration of dialects, while learning English. Revisions of Subpart 151-1 Regulations would include school district PreK counts of Emergent Multilingual Learners in the final program report to the Office of Early Learning and a requirement that districts include a plan for meeting the needs of prekindergarten multilingual learners and supporting multilingual families. Information collected will also be used to determine gaps and needs for recruiting a more diverse workforce.*

6. Develop Statewide Behavior Management Practices (Education Policy): Hold a convening of NYSED and New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) staff to discuss best behavior management practices for staff to mitigate and ultimately eliminate Prekindergarten suspensions and expulsions, and leveraging lessons learned in existing successful initiatives.

Rationale: *In year one, NYSED, OCFS, New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and other interested stakeholders, including parents, will meet regularly to discuss ways to decrease Prekindergarten suspension and expulsion rates which are disproportionately high for poor students and male students. Emphasize the importance of increasing opportunities for professional development on cultural competence and on strategies to effectively work with children with behavioral needs.*

7. Require Full Day Kindergarten (Legislation): Require full day kindergarten in all school districts across the State, which will include lowering the compulsory age for education from six years old to five years old.

Rationale: *This change would match national norms and best practices. Kindergarten plays a pivotal role in preparing children for reading and other academics, and academic research suggests that early childhood education can provide critical preparation for school success and reduce the need for remediation in later years.*

Strengthening the Early Childhood Education Workforce

8. Elevate Teacher Preparation and Professional Development (Budget): Provide $2.5M to adopt and implement a competency-based approach in pre-service teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development for new and existing educators and leaders, ensuring that all teachers are prepared to teach all students, especially as the student population continues to increase in diversity. This funding would be directed at professional development that requires all teachers to be culturally competent, culturally responsive, and linguistically capable.

Budget Rationale: *In the first year, these funds would be directed to five Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), replicating a model called Quality Universally Inclusive Early Responsive Education. Applicants would receive scholarships to participate in the program aimed at addressing the teacher shortage in Bilingual Special Education and preparing participants to be dually certified in Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education. Participants in this program would be expected to teach in New York State for three years upon completion of the program. NYSED recommends a phase-in approach in which additional IHEs would be funded in subsequent years.*

9. Develop Career Pathways for Early Childhood Educators (Education Policy): Improve retention of the workforce by creating a comprehensive, statewide strategy to assist and incentivize current and aspiring early childhood educators, including special education teachers, and ancillary staff[6] to advance along the State's career pathway ladder. Pathways must encompass high school, Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, Associate of Arts (A.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.) and Master of Science (M.S.) levels of education.

Rationale: *Strategies will include creating avenues to better prepare the workforce for classroom challenges, to become culturally responsive and linguistically prepared, and to recruit and retain educators who reflect the race, background, and/or culture of the students they are teaching. It is also important to work with two-year and four-year colleges to incorporate a comprehensive statewide strategy that encourages the Career Pathway Ladder described in this recommendation, and that inspires people of color to become early childhood educators across New York State that reflect the race, background and/or culture of the students they are teaching.*

10. Recruit a High-Quality Workforce (Education Policy): Recruit a diverse workforce of educators and providers who possess core knowledge and demonstrated competencies including cultural competency, from diverse backgrounds by creating partnerships, beginning at the high school level, who reflect the race, background, and/or culture of the students they may teach.

Rationale: *Charge the State Education Department with developing and implementing a policy requiring higher education programs to partner with high school and local agencies in recruiting and incentivizing a diverse workforce, including paraprofessionals, in the field of early childhood education.*

6 Ancillary Staff may include Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Counselors, etc.

11. Strengthen Teacher and Leader Preparation (Education Policy): Develop collaborations between NYSED's Office of Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education teacher and leadership preparation programs to include culturally responsive family and community engagement principles and best practices. As part of teacher preparation and professional development, Institutions of Higher Education, would be required to use existing competencies set forth by the NYS Core Body of Knowledge: Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, as well as incorporating the essential shifts accompanying the Next Generation Standards, including play for learning, language development, and multiple entry points for Multilingual Learners. Promoting self-directed play as an avenue for children to examine, experiment, practice, and advance their skills is an ideal opportunity to observe competencies associated with the Standards. By teaching the whole child, emphasis is placed on all developmental domains including social-emotional functioning and physical well-being. Incorporate typical early childhood development, nutrition, health, mental health and cultural competencies into the existing set of core competencies for pre-service and in-service (mandated, ongoing professional development) for early childhood educators and leaders.

Rationale: *Cross systems will convene to discuss best practices and field experience necessary for preparing educators and leaders to be culturally competent to understand the race, background, and/or culture of the students they are teaching, and to prepare educators and leaders to understand family and community engagement principles and best practices to communicate effectively with families. In year one, NYSED will require Institutions of Higher Education to review NYS Core Body of Knowledge: Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, and the Next Generation Standards to better prepare educators to understand child development, to effectively address classroom challenges, and to prepare educators to be culturally competent.*

12. Develop Concentrations in Early Childhood Teacher Certification (Education Policy): Change teacher certification requirements in the existing birth-2nd Grade certificate to allow teacher candidates to choose a concentration in Infant/Toddler, Pre-K, 1-2, Bilingual Education, Special Education or a combination thereof. Teachers with a concentration in any of these certifications would be able to teach across multiple grade levels. Work with the NYS Department of Health Early Intervention Program that is responsible for 0-3-year-old children, while the State Education Department oversees the teacher certification for this age range.

Rationale: *In the first year, NYSED and cross systems will convene to review current requirements, certifications and extensions, and rules and regulations for the different regulatory authorities and begin the process of developing concentration pathways.*

13. Revise School Leader Certification Requirements (Education Policy): Change the certification for school leaders by requiring that school leaders (preservice) submit a certificate of completion of 8 hours each in special education (including topics such as: differentiation; universal design; and inclusion); multilingual strategies (including topics such as culturally and linguistically relevant approaches, bilingual education; English as a New Language [ENL] strategies); developmentally appropriate practice (including topics such as play-based learning, cultural relevance, language acquisition) and trauma-informed support. All topics should incorporate family and community engagement throughout. By 2020, currently certified school leaders must provide a certificate of completion of 8 hours in the above areas along with a with demonstration of competency. Require that every four (4) years a 2-hour refresher in each area must be taken.

Rationale: *NYSED will reevaluate current school leaders' certification process: school leaders must understand all tracks and have ongoing professional development; must have strong knowledge in core components of general education, special education, bilingual education, and developmentally appropriate practice, and must demonstrate competency in the afore mentioned areas. NYSED recommends that a group be formed to specify the appropriate numbers of hours that should be required in each of these specialized areas to ensure balance with other certification requirements. This newly-formed group should also review the recommendation re: the number of hours to be required for a refresher course for School Leader Certification.*

Statewide Supports and Infrastructure

14. Conduct a Cost Validation Study (Budget): Provide $300,000 to conduct a cost study to validate the actual cost of a high-quality prekindergarten program for all four-year-old children, with appropriate weightings for areas of economic disadvantage, high concentrations of Emergent Multilingual Learners, and high concentrations of students with disabilities, followed by a similar study for three-year-old children.

Budget Rationale: *New York State has made significant investments in prekindergarten. Currently there are several funding structures for prekindergarten programs. A common concern among early childhood stakeholders is, in addition to ensuring that Prekindergarten is fully universal for four-year-old children, that all programs be high-quality programs and be responsive to community and student needs. A request for proposals would be issued to an entity to conduct a study examining what the actual costs of operating a high-quality program are.*

15. Establish Early Learning Technical Assistance Centers (Budget): Provide $2M to establish five Early Learning Regional Technical Assistance Centers (TAC) to provide support to early care and educational settings (i.e. in areas that include mental health consultation, training in the use of the Pyramid Model, professional development on implementing high-quality early childhood education, among others). The TACs will develop four content area trainings and a train-the-trainer course for each content area. In addition, the TACs will support school leaders by providing professional development on topics such as differentiation, universal design, and inclusion; multilingual strategies including topics such as linguistically-relevant approaches, bilingual education, and English as a New Language (ENL); developmentally appropriate practice including topics such as play-based learning, cultural relevance, language acquisition, cultural and linguistic competence, gender identity, anti-bias training and trauma-informed care.

Budget Rationale: *Currently, 11 professional staff in the Office of Early Learning, located at NYSED in Albany, are responsible for providing technical assistance and monitoring oversight to prekindergarten programs in 471 school districts and thousands of prekindergarten classrooms around the State. The regional TACs are necessary to adequately meet the needs of programs, better respond to local demographics and climates, and coordinate with existing regional support centers for Special Education and Multilingual Learners. In the next budget cycle, NYSED would request an additional $1.5 million to fund three additional TACs, bringing the total number to eight Early Learning Regional TACs around the State.*

16. Fund Expansion of QUALITYstarsNY (Budget): Provide $3M to expand the availability of QUALITYstarsNY[7] throughout the State by improving assessment tools and staff support; strengthening the existing system; improving coordination by leveraging all resources available for quality improvement; and expanding the number of programs and classrooms receiving support from QUALITYstarsNY. Currently, funding can only reach a small percentage of early care and education programs, yet data shows those programs that participate in QUALITYstarsNY have better outcomes for children.

Budget Rationale: *Currently, QUALITYstarsNY receives $5M as New York State's Quality Rating and Improvement System. As of November 2017, QUALITYstarsNY served approximately 736 center-based programs, family-home providers, and public schools in targeted communities. At a cost of $300 per child, an additional $3M will enhance services for approximately 10,000 children and strengthen the existing system, which will improve coordination by leveraging all resources available for quality improvement to programs.*

7 Quality Stars Website

17. Create a Multi-Agency Data System (Budget): Provide $500,000 to fund the first step toward the creation of a unified HIPAA and FERPA- compliant data system to meet the needs of children and families by tracking all screening and assessment services to capture and share relevant and useful results with parents, educators, health care organizations and other agencies. The system should include a parent portal where parents can access information about their child's learning needs and progress. Initial steps include aligning existing data systems where feasible.

Budget Rationale: *In the first year, NYSED would convene the necessary State agency partners to plan and design a request for proposals to fund three communities to purchase the appropriate data system that captures screening and assessments and enables referrals across systems. Funds would also be used for training appropriate staff in early care and education settings in the selected communities to use the data system as well information technology staff to assist with the technical components of the proposal.*

(The New York State 2018-19 enacted budget included an annualized amount of $300,000 to develop a data system for cross-sector referrals, as part of the First 1000 Days on Medicaid initiative.)

18. Address Prekindergarten Transportation (Education Policy): Establish a cross-system Transportation Workgroup to inform policy that will address issues related to transporting prekindergarten children.

Rationale: *NYSED would convene the necessary State agency partners to provide solutions to address the continued lack of regulated transportation providers (especially in rural areas), the cost and availability of transportation, explore what communities are currently doing to leverage resources and provide transportation, the types of collaborations that already exist, and how the State should include transportation aid for Prekindergarten to ensure access and equity for young learners. Also, for consideration, is the safety of 2.9-year-old children who are enrolled in Prekindergarten (issue: in September, some children are 2.9 years old since they are required to be 3-years old by December 1).*

Recommendations Requiring Further Discussion

The following three recommendations will require further discussion and exploration.

1. Reevaluate Preschool Special Education Funding (Education Policy): Reevaluate the funding for preschool special education to ensure there is sufficient funding to support the cost of services and there is equitable salary and benefits for staff between community-based providers and school district staff. Make school districts responsible for preschool special education rather than the counties in a manner that ensures current State and local funding follows the child, or if school districts are to levy the local share of funding, that the levy to maintain special education funding is exempt from the tax cap.

Rationale: *Create a consistent source of funding for early childhood education system, support a stronger child care work force, and begin to streamline programmatic inconsistencies across multiple communities: duration of day, services, offered, class ratios, teacher qualifications because standards depend on the funding stream. Concern exists regarding the recommended change to make school districts fiscally responsible for preschool special education rather than the counties.*

2. Consider a State Office of Early Care and Learning (Legislation): Create and fully fund an Office of Early Care and Learning which has responsibility and accountability for all programs serving children ages 0-8 with a fully funded infrastructure including: curriculum and instruction; early learning; preschool special education; child nutrition; all agencies serving children 0-3 including, but not limited to, family day care and day care centers, early intervention, public schools, community-based organizations and private educational settings.

Rationale: *To allow for one oversight office for early childhood. Create one administration system that is a single point of entry for all children and families, has coordinated planning for children's needs and a fluid continuation of services. The Office would ensure accountability for a coordinated system of supports that are responsive to children's culture, race, ethnicity, language, citizenship status, and socio-economic status. The new Office will include NYSED's departments/units responsible for early childhood education (Office of Early Learning, Office of Special Education Preschool Policy Unit including regional Special Education Quality Assurance offices with support from the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages), NYS Department of Health's Early Intervention and NYS Office of Children and Family Service's Division of Child Care Services. Concern exists regarding the ability to create a cohesive, systemic, inter-agency State office.*

3. Review Allocations for Community Based Organizations (Legislation): Revise Education Law 3602-e to increase the required percentage school districts must allocate to community-based organizations (CBOs). (Currently, 10% of allocated award must be allocated to CBOs).

Rationale: *NYSED will review current allocations and consider raising the percentage to increase opportunities for partnerships between school districts and local community programs. Concern exists on whether the increase is necessary. NYSED will develop guidance to the field to ensure that school districts are maximizing partnerships with community-based Prekindergarten providers.*

SUMMARY

The Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup's Blue Ribbon Committee rec ommendations are a first step in achieving the Regents' ambitious vision for early care and education in New York. As evidenced throughout this report, the Committee's work reflects informed judgment, innovative best practices and collaborative efforts. The Regents' five-year phased-in approach to support and advance policies will prioritize children with greatest need and will require a coordinated effort with other State agencies and initiatives. These efforts will result in New York State having the opportunity to implement high-quality ear ly childhood and education programs that recruit and retain highly effective, culturally responsive and linguistically-prepared educators, and ensure young children get a healthy start from birth, become ready for Kindergarten, stay on track to graduate from high school, and are successful in life.

APPENDIX A

Blue Ribbon Committee Recommended Guidance, Resources, and Support

The following are Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations that do not need legislative or budget approval. Rather, these are recommendations that can be implemented administratively and will help complement the education policy, legislation and budget proposal recommendations set forth in this report. These can be done within and/or in conjunction with other State agencies.

1. **Create K-3 Approaches to Learning guidance document that includes a "learning through play" addendum to the Next Generation Standards.**

   Rationale: In order to elevate play as an instructional strategy that leads to high achievement:

   - Create K-3 Approaches to Learning document that includes a "learning through play" addendum to the Next Generation Standards.
   - Provide guidelines for program schedules, birth-age 8, that include learning through play and adequate recess.

2. **Create a guidance document that provides resources for workforce administrators and teachers that highlight the essential shifts accompanying the Next Generation Standard - Play for Learning and multiple entry points for ELLs/MLLs based on English language proficiency levels, literacy levels in English and the home language, and academic background.**

   Rationale: Provide resources for the early childhood workforce, administrators and teachers that highlight the essential shifts accompanying the Next Generation Standard - Play for Learning and multiple entry points for ELLs/MLLs based on English language proficiency levels, literacy levels in English and the home language, and academic background.

3. **Provide the early childhood workforce, administrators, teachers, and families with a guidance document(s) about early care and education, birth to age 8, so they can understand and support the implementation of developmentally and culturally responsive practices.**

   Rationale: Provide the early childhood workforce, administrators, teachers, and families with resources about ECE birth-age 8 so they can understand and support the implementation of developmentally and culturally responsive practices and create resources such as:

   - Visual continuum of development across five domains birth-age 8
   - Revision of NYS Early Learning Guidelines, including extension from birth- age 8.
   - Framework (competencies) for culturally sustaining practices, including approaches to teaching and learning for multilingual learners, 0-8
   - Videos of developmentally and culturally responsive practice linked to Next Generation ELS birth-age 8
   - Create or update Statewide family and community engagement philosophy.

Blue Ribbon Committee Suggested Cross-Agency Efforts

1. **Establish a Workgroup with staff from the New York State Department of Health's Early Intervention office and the New York State Education Department's Office of Preschool Special Education to identify and address the barriers of transitioning from Early Intervention to the Committee on Preschool Special Education and to ensure a smooth transition for children and families to the Committee on Special Education.**

   Rationale: Create a streamlined, integrated, open communication-based approach to ensure a smooth educational transition for children with disabilities and their families as they move from the Early Intervention system to the Preschool Special Education system to the School age system.

2. **Create and fully fund a system of assessment and evaluation for programs serving children ages 0-8 that is culturally appropriate.**

   Rationale: The New York State Education Department, in conjunction with the other appropriate State agencies, should create and fully fund a system of assessment and evaluation for programs serving children ages 0-8 that is culturally appropriate and includes the following characteristics:

   - Uses the most current edition of assessment tools
   - Uses valid and reliable assessment tools
   - Is administered by staff that is adequately trained in the specific tools;
   - Program leaders and educators are adequately trained, can interpret and use the information collected.
   - Training in assessment of diverse populations and in cultural responsiveness.
   - Program and student data are only to be used to inform instruction and program improvement, not as a high stakes evaluative measure of staff or educational facility.

3. **Ongoing comprehensive developmental screenings from birth to age eight that are culturally sensitive and administered by trained professionals across all developmental domains. Children should be screened in the language used in the home.**

   Rationale: Create a process, which follows the child from the screening to the implementation of any needed service. Program leaders and educators must be adequately trained, able to interpret, and use the information collected.

4. **Develop a data collection system such that the data can be shared in a format that is understandable, relevant and useful to parents, providers and policy makers. Coordinate data collection efforts with existing data systems and encourage that data be used to guide instruction.**

   Rationale: Establish a performance data system that identifies all children—not just those served in state funded programs — and will list students' demographic information for the purpose of aiding in analysis and effectiveness of provided services, and the ability to share data with districts/counties sooner so that the data can influence quality programming.

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

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NYS Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup's

BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

Final Recommendations

September, 2018

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