

**Department of Early Education and Care
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Key Joint Initiatives***

Standards

Preschool Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Learning Standards and Guidelines:

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has developed Preschool Science, Technology and Engineering, (STE) Learning Standards to inform the development of STEM curricula in early education programs for preschool children from 2 years and 9 months through 5 years old. The standards connect to and align with the Science and Technology/Engineering Standards for preschool through grade 12 being revised by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and align with EEC's existing regulations, early learning standards and guidelines. The Board of Early Education and Care approved the proposed Pre-K STE Standards on October 8, 2013. The proposed Pre-K STE standards are based upon *A Framework for K-12 Science Education* and the revision of the *MA Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework*.

Alignment of Preschool Curriculum Frameworks incorporating the Common Core Standards: EEC and ESE worked together to ensure that the 2011 revisions to the MA Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts and Literacy as well as Mathematics, included preschool standards. EEC and ESE developed a "train the trainers" workshop for EEC's Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Grantees and Readiness Centers and in turn, staff in these organizations trained preschool programs on the revised frameworks in 2012.

Revisions to the Birth-Kindergarten Curriculum Guides: EEC and ESE are jointly leading a workgroup in the revision of two important curriculum guides. The *Kindergarten Learning Experiences* (ESE, 2008), and the *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences* (adopted by then Department of Education, 2003) have guided districts, programs, and early childhood educators in the development and implementation of curriculum and instructional supports that are developmentally appropriate and aligned with our state's Curriculum Frameworks. The joint effort to align these guides is part of EEC and ESE's work to develop a continuum of educational practice from birth through kindergarten. EEC and ESE began holding working group meetings in November 2013 and will continue this work through August 2014 as needed, in order to make revisions to the guides to ensure their alignment with the current curriculum frameworks. In addition, the two agencies, along with the working group, will plan roll out of professional development on the updated guides.

English Language Learners - WIDA Guidelines: In November 2013, EEC adopted WIDA's Early English Language Development (E-ELD): Massachusetts Guidelines to Support DLLs, 2.5-5.5 years age. The E-ELD guidelines are aligned with ESE's English Language Development (WIDA-ELD) Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 12, adopted in June 2012, as part of the larger Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language (RETELL) Initiative. The E-ELD document corresponds to the State's Early Learning Standards and the Head Start's Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Use of the E-ELD Standards is designed to:

- help guide programs and families in planning to ensure that the different linguistic needs of dual language learners are met;
- support dual language learners to reach their next level of English Language Development;
- make programmatic decisions about class composition, staffing, curriculum, and assessment in programs that serve dual language learners; and
- advance within the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

Systems Alignment

Birth to Grade Three Strategy Development: EEC awarded Birth to Grade Three Strategy Development grants to five communities to support enhanced coordination and measured outcomes across the early (EEC) and elementary education systems including alignment of standards, curriculum, assessment and professional development that focuses on shared results for children from Pre-K to third grade. The grantees are Springfield Day Nursery/Square One, Somerville Public Schools, Boston Public Schools, Berkshire United Way/Pittsfield, and Thrive in 5 - United Way of Massachusetts Bay. EEC and ESE worked together on the development of the priorities for the grant.

Out-of-School Time (OST) Working Group: The Out-of-School Time (OST) Working Group was established in September 2013 to provide input, expertise and recommendations on the administration of OST in Massachusetts. Areas of the working group's review have included revisions to the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) standards for OST programs, professional development opportunities for OST programs, and methods of communication and collaboration between EEC, ESE, public schools and OST programs. The OST Working Group is comprised of members from the following sectors:

- EEC-licensed programs
- Public Schools
- Head Start
- Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies
- Readiness Centers
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees
- After-School and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) Quality grantees
- Special Interest groups

After-school and Out-of-school Time Coordinating Council: EEC and ESE work together on the After-school and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) Coordinating Council (now Chapter 254 of the Acts of 2012), overseen by the legislature. The Coordinating Council is chaired by one member of the Senate and one member of the House, and consists of 15 total members including a representative from the Department of Early Education and Care, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Department of Higher Education. In addition, the Coordinating Council includes members from the Department of Children and Families and Department of Public Health and eight members to be appointed by the Governor – two who represent community-based organizations that serve subsidized children, one member of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner, one school district superintendent, one representative from the private funding community who support after-school and out-of-school time programs, one representative from the Massachusetts After-school Partnership, one representative of the Governor's Youth Council and one parent or guardian of a child who participates in after-school. Council members' terms will be for 4 years. The Council is instructed to consult with various entities including the MSBA and the Governor's Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet. The Council will review existing programs and policies and make recommendations to DEEC, DESE and the non-profit sector on after-school and out-of-school time programs, opportunities for collaboration, methods for improving quality and retention in the after-school/out-of-school time workforce and ways to increase access to these opportunities.

Data Sharing

State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) Assignment: The assignment of a unique identifier to each child is the first step to facilitate the tracking of children's participation in social services, education, and experiences as they progress to adulthood. This identifier allows agencies and government to evaluate the effectiveness of social service and educational programs. ESE already has a unique identifier for school-aged children, the SASID (state assigned student ID). Through a partnership with ESE, SASIDs are now routinely assigned to teen parents and children of teen parents enrolled in EEC-licensed early education and care programs. Beginning in October 2013, reports became available to elementary school teachers and administrators in the Edwin Analytic System that provide demographic information on these children, data on what type of early education program they attended, and how frequently they attended the program. EEC is able to access a report through Edwin Analytic System that provides data by school district and individual schools with aggregate information about how the children who received early educational services by EEC are progressing, including the 3rd grade MCAS scores. This information may be used as EEC considers future policy decisions.

Early Childhood Data System: The goal of the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) is to provide the data necessary to plan for, supply, and evaluate necessary supports and services for young children and their families across the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts ECIS will include subsidy-related child, program, quality and workforce data and will serve as a data feed for the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The ECIS was deployed in June of 2013 and EEC continues to expand its data and functional capabilities from an enterprise data warehouse to multiple data marts, each facilitating specialized reporting (demographics, program quality and fiscal). This project is funded, in part, by the Commonwealth's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge plan. To address the governance and challenges of building the system, a governance body was established by EOE called the Education Data System Advisory Group (EDSAG) which is chaired by the Secretariat Chief Information Officer (CIO) of EOE. EDSAG is comprised of the Commissioner's designees from EEC, ESE, and Department of Higher Education (DHE), respectively, and the Secretary of Education's designee(s) from EOE.

Longitudinal Data Systems (LDS): The LDS grant initiative provides the ability to link information as students move from early education and care, to elementary and secondary education and on to higher education. EEC and ESE are working in partnership on the LDS and now have aggregate school reports available for use.

Special Education

Special Education Interagency Service Agreement (ISA): EEC administers the Early Childhood Special Education Grant (ECSE) Fund Code 262. Through this entitlement grant, \$7,057,442 has been made available in fiscal year 2014 (FY14) to 311 local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter school districts that serve 3, 4, and 5 year old children. These federal entitlement funds are made available pursuant to Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

As part of the FY14 ISA, EEC also provides professional development and technical assistance on topics related to the inclusion of children with disabilities in early education and care programs and public school preschool programs. EEC also collaborates with ESE's Special Education Policy and Planning unit in supporting LEAs effective implementation and reporting of activities related to Early Childhood Special Education (IDEA Part B-Section 619) in the State Performance Plan (SPP), which is submitted to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These activities include:

- **Indicator 6 Preschool Least Restrictive Environments (LRE)**, which gathers information about the number of children with disabilities in preschools who received their special education services in general education settings, alongside their peers without disabilities. Specifically, this indicator measures the percent of preschool children with IEPs who received special education and related services in settings with typically developing peers (e.g., early childhood settings, home, and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings). [20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A)]
- **Indicator 7 Preschool Outcomes**, which collects data in three outcome areas to determine whether children ages 3-5 with IEPs have made developmental progress in comparison to their same-age peers in three primary areas: Positive Social-Emotional Skills (including social relationships); Acquiring and using knowledge and skills; and Taking appropriate action to meet needs.
- **Indicator 12 Transitions**, which requires that all children referred from Part C/Early Intervention programs must have their eligibility determined, and if found eligible, have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday.

Other

Early Childhood Experiences and Students' Growth in Early Learning: EEC has commissioned the Regional Education Laboratory – Northeast and Islands (REL-NEI) to work with the state of Massachusetts on a study of how children's early childhood education (ECE) experiences relate to student learning over time. REL-NEI will create a working group that includes state and local educators and policymakers to undertake a study that explores children's growth in multiple early learning domains. The goals of the project are to 1) understand how children develop over time in reading, mathematics, and social-emotional development from prekindergarten to the end of kindergarten, and 2) link children's early educational experiences with growth. The study will take place in Springfield, MA. Strong early childhood programs in Springfield, such as Square One and Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start, are currently collecting data on children and using child assessments to help understand the progress of the children in their programs. Springfield Public Schools is also participating in the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) initiative, and is collecting assessment data on the progress of their kindergarteners at the beginning and end of the school year.

Supporting Family Literacy Grants: This Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge funded project supports five grantees in providing services to families to educate them about early language and literacy development and to assist them in implementing strategies to support early language and literacy development in their children. EEC and ESE are collaborating on the review of applications and awarding of funds, as well as the collection and review of data and reports from grantees.

**This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.*