SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR RHODE ISLAND'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN: DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

IN 2011, RHODE ISLAND WAS ONE of only nine states to win a Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grant. The grant award from this highly competitive federal program not only validates the hard work that has been done in the state to build a strong system of early care and education, but also affirms the state's vision for how the system will continue to improve. Equally important, the $50 million grant provides the resources to sustain the state's work by funding system improvements that will allow Rhode Island to serve as a national model for high-quality early care and education.

The state's Race to the Top proposal outlined several ambitious reforms designed to increase the number of children in high-quality early care and education settings. At the foundation of these reform efforts is the development and implementation of high-quality early learning and development standards. Such standards articulate the state's expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages before entering school. At the state level, these standards help to unite different agencies around a set of common expectations for children; work to ensure that system improvements support children's progress toward school readiness; and, provide benchmarks that can be used by the state's assessment and data systems to track progress and identify school readiness gaps. At the program level, the standards guide decisions related to curriculum, assessment, and professional development, and provide developmental milestones that program staff can use to talk with families about typical patterns of child development and the progress of their children.

Given how important these standards are, Rhode Island committed to creating high-quality early learning and development standards for children birth to five years old. To meet this commitment, the state promised to develop birth to three early learning and development standards and to revise the current standards for children ages three- to five-years-old. In addition, the state promised to build on its successful history of implementation by creating new professional development and technical assistance supports to promote the consistent use of the standards across the state.

This paper describes the rigorous, inclusive approach that was used to develop Rhode Island's early learning and development standards, and outlines the supports that will be available to promote successful implementation. The approach was designed to ensure that the final standards are seen as credible and useful to early childhood experts, administrators, practitioners, and parents; that the expectations outlined in the standards are in line with those of state early childhood stakeholders; and, that the standards meet the commonly accepted criteria that define high-quality early learning and development standards. These criteria include that the standards:

1. Address all domains of learning and development;

2. Avoid redundancy and focus only on essential aspects of development and learning;

3. Can be measured;

4. Are developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate for all children including children with disabilities;

5. Are research-based or otherwise grounded in a strong rationale for inclusion; and,

6. Are vertically integrated with K-12 standards.

These criteria are the benchmarks by which high-quality standards are measured. This paper describes the steps that were taken and decisions that were made to meet these criteria and describes the ways in which the state ensured opportunities for public input and validation by national experts.

What are Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards?

Rhode Island's standards document is entitled *Charting a Course for Success in the Ocean State: Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards.* The title reinforces the notion that standards should act as beacons to guide administrators, practitioners, and parents as they make decisions that affect children's experiences both in early care and education settings and at home. Given the important role of the standards as a foundational piece in promoting high-quality early care and education, the document is carefully designed not only to provide expectations for what children should know and be able to do, but to support the developmentally appropriate use of the standards among Rhode Island's early care and education community. To that end, the document includes an introduction that offers additional contextual information that describes the role of the standards within the broader context of Rhode Island's early care and education system, and offers guidance on the appropriate (and inappropriate) use of the standards. In addition, the introduction offers an extended discussion of how the standards support children with disabilities and dual language learners and highlights the importance of relationships, play, and intentional teaching in early childhood settings.

The introduction also makes clear that development and learning are integrated across domains, and, as such, the document is organized into specific areas of development and learning only to highlight the areas that should be the focus of early care and education practices. There are four levels of organization to the standards—domains, components, learning goals, and indicators.

Domains represent the broad areas of early learning and development. The introduction to each domain provides an overview of the area, including why the domain is important, how the standards should be used with children with different needs, and a reminder that children will meet the expectations articulated in the standards at different rates. The standards are organized into the following domains:

Physical Health and Motor Development
Social and Emotional Development
Language Development
Literacy
Cognitive Development
Mathematics
Science
Social Studies
Creative Arts

Components are specific areas within a domain. For example, the domain of Physical Health and Motor Development is divided into three components: Health and Safety Practices, Gross Motor Development, and Fine Motor Development.

Learning goals are the general categories of competencies, behaviors, knowledge, and skills that children develop in increasing degrees and with increasing sophistication as they grow. For instance, a learning goal under Health and Safety Practices is that "Children engage in structured and unstructured physical activity."

Indicators are the specific developmental benchmarks for the competencies, behaviors, knowledge, and skills that most children possess or exhibit at a particular age for each learning goal. Taken together, the indicators depict the progression of early learning and development over time.

The Rhode Island early learning and development standards include developmental benchmarks at the following ages:

9 months
18 months
24 months
36 months
48 months
60 months

Every decision related to the standards document from the way it is organized, to the age benchmarks used, to the content of each developmental progression is grounded in a strong rationale based on research, best practices, expert opinion, and public input. The development process and the rationale behind key decisions related to the document are discussed in detail below.

DEVELOPING THE STANDARDS: LEADERSHIP AND PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

THE RHODE ISLAND Department of Education (RIDE) was the lead agency on the development of the standards. RIDE formed a Core Project Management Team that was advised by the Early Learning and Development Standards Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. The Core Team consisted primarily of state agency staff from RIDE, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Co-chair of the Early Learning and Development Standards Subcommittee. The Subcommittee consisted of staff from the RIDE and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services; representatives of Rhode Island's higher education, Head Start, child care, K-12, and disabilities communities; and, other early childhood stakeholders from around the state.[1] As such, the Core Project Management Team and Subcommittee brought together the key state and stakeholder perspectives to ensure that the standards were developmentally appropriate and reflected the needs of all children, regardless of culture, language, disability, or education and care setting.

The standards were developed over a 10-month period from June of 2012 to March of 2013. A two-phase approach was created for developing the standards, each with a robust public input process.

Phase I

The steps taken as part of Phase I defined the overall purpose and structure of the standards. To manage the work of Phase I, the state hired a nationally known early childhood consultant who led the development of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. This phase involved discussions with national experts regarding the criteria that define high-quality standards, as well as issues to be aware of during the development process. In addition to these discussions, Phase I included a review of standards from other states that provided insight into the different approaches utilized in organizing early learning and development standards and the variation that existed in the substantive content of other state standards.

The review led to the development of a "point of departure" document that used examples from other states to generate a discussion regarding the potential structure and content of Rhode Island's standards.

In late July of 2012, the state hosted two open forums and broadly disseminated a feedback survey to obtain public input on the point of departure document. The forums and the survey were designed to discuss key questions related to the organizational structure of the document, including the areas of development and learning that were addressed and the potential age categories to be used to define the expectations for each area of development and learning. In addition, the forums solicited initial feedback on the appropriateness of the developmental expectations defined by the sample of expectations taken from other states and also sought comments on some initial introductory text that would accompany the document.

Using public input on the point of departure document, the Core Project Management Team met by phone with the consultant every two weeks from August until mid-September of 2012 to develop an initial draft of the Rhode Island standards. In the last two weeks of September, the state hosted three public forums and six focus groups to solicit input on all aspects of the initial draft. The forums drew a diverse group of participants from Rhode Island's early childhood stakeholder community including good representation from center-based and family child care providers. One forum was hosted in Spanish to ensure that input was received from the state's Latino early childhood stakeholders. The input from the public forums was then used to complete a final first draft of the early learning and development standards.

Phase II

In Phase II, which began in December of 2012, an internationally known early childhood organization with experience working with other states was hired to subject the early learning and development standards to external validation. The goal of the validation was to ensure that the standards incorporated the latest research on early learning and development, and that

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[1]Appendix A lists the members of the Core Project Management Team and the Subcommittee on Early Learning and Development Standards.

they were appropriate, from a research perspective, for typically developing children, dual language learners, and children with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, a panel of national experts was assembled to review the document. The panel consisted of experts in the specific domains of development (e.g., mathematics, literacy, and executive function), as well as experts who work with specific populations of children (e.g., dual language learners and children with disabilities). In addition, the panel also included a nationally known early childhood expert who has advised multiple states on the development and implementation of their early learning standards.[2]

A protocol was developed for each expert reviewer that included general questions about the document as well as specific questions that were relevant to each reviewer's area of expertise. The general questions addressed how well the standards covered all of the key areas of child development and learning and whether the expectations defined by the standards, as well as the introductory content, reflected best practices and the latest research in the field. The experts were also asked to address whether there was adequate depth and breadth of the learning goals and whether the standards sufficiently communicated the core knowledge about young children's development. Finally, the experts were asked about the age categories and whether an additional 24-month benchmark, which was not included in the first draft, should be part of the progressions.

The experts provided extensive feedback on the document, which was used to make revisions to the standards document in late December of 2012 and early January of 2013. This revised draft was put out for an additional round of public input, with four public forums and six focus groups offered in late January. These forums and focus groups were well-attended by participants from all aspects of Rhode Island's early childhood stakeholder community. The input from these forums was used in the final revisions of the standards document. The final version of the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards was published in May 2013.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO THE EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

HOW DID THE STATE decide on the organization and content of the standards document, including the decision to present one birth-to-five continuum with six age benchmarks?

Developing the standards for multiple audiences

The initial expert discussions conducted as part of Phase I provided the state with a clearer understanding of how early learning and development standards are used by multiple audiences for multiple purposes. Table I illustrates this point. Assessment and curriculum publishers, for example, use standards to align their materials to show that they are addressing all of the areas of development and learning that are important to state stakeholders. In this case, a standards document must be highly detailed and technical to be able to determine how well these materials actually support the development and learning goals defined by the state. At the same time, early learning and development standards are also used by parents who have little or no understanding of the technical aspects of early childhood research and want simply to understand the typical progression of development and learning. In this case, the standards should be in their least technical form and contain narrative text that explains why the development and learning constructs defined by the standards are important, what they are, and how they can be supported at home. Accordingly, the final version of *Charting a Course for Success in the Ocean State* was developed as a "master document" that can be adapted for different purposes. The document contains sophisticated progressions of learning and development, while at the same time including guiding principles, guidance related to appropriate uses of the standards, and narrative text that provides additional context and that explains the importance of each developmental domain. As Rhode Island moves to the implementation phase with the standards, the document can be easily adapted into materials and supports for the different audiences.

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[2]See Appendix B for a full list of the expert panel and areas of expertise represented.

TABLE 1: AUDIENCES FOR THE EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DOCUMENT

AUDIENCE	PURPOSE OF THE STANDARDS FOR AUDIENCE	IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATION AND COMPLEXITY
Developers of Instructional Materials and Assessments	Standards serve as the baseline by which to align curriculum and assessment materials	The standards document should be comprehensive, detailed, and technical in nature. Assumes a high level of early childhood knowledge.
State Administrators	Standards serve as the foundation to guide systems development	The standards document should be comprehensive, detailed, and technical in nature. Assumes a high level of early childhood knowledge.
Program Administrators	Standards guide curriculum and assessment choices, professional development, and other aspects of the program	The standards document should be developed from a program implementation perspective, less complex and technical. Assumes a high level of early childhood knowledge.
Early Childhood Educators	Standards represent developmental goals for children to achieve while in the classroom	The standards document should be less complex with less jargon, but should still assume a higher level of early childhood knowledge; translation into multiple languages as necessary.
Parents	Standards facilitate parents' awareness of key milestones, support learning activities in the home, and provide parents with more context to better understand classroom practice	The standards document should be written at a 4th grade reading level, with no early childhood jargon. The document should be primarily narrative and supported with parent guides. Translation into multiple languages is required.
Other Stakeholders	Standards help the community understand the importance and complexity of early learning and unite them around common expectations for children	The standards document should be written at a 4th grade reading level, with no early childhood jargon.

Deciding on the domains, components, learning goals, and indicators

Early learning and development standards can be organized in a number of ways. For example, the National Education Goals panel organizes early learning and development into five overall domains whereas the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework contains eleven. For the Rhode Island standards, the fundamental goal was to accurately cover the breadth of early childhood learning and development. At the same time, it was important to balance the need to draw attention to key areas by giving them "domain status" while not making the domain specification less meaningful by creating too many domains. This balance was struck with the inclusion of nine domains contained in the final document.

Each step of the development process worked to define the organization of the final document. The original point of departure document contained 6 overall domains, 27 "sub-domains,"

and a number of "domain elements." In response to strong public input that the naming conventions were too academic, the names of the organizational levels in the final document were changed to domain, component, learning goal, and indicator. In addition, based on public input and recommendations from the Early Learning and Development Subcommittee, some of the original sub-domains from the point of departure document like mathematics, social studies, and creative arts were given "domain status" to underscore their importance. In some cases, original domain specifications like Language and Literacy Development were separated out into two domains, while other domains like English Language Development of Dual Language Learners were incorporated into other domains (Language Development). The external validation conducted by the expert panel either validated the original structure or resulted in a revision of the document to reflect the latest research in the field.

The domain components, learning goals, and indicators contained in the final draft of the standards were derived using examples from other states, early childhood research, Subcommittee and public input, and expert opinion. The original point of departure document contained a number of early learning and development standards from other states which were used to "calibrate" the expectations of the Rhode Island early childhood stakeholders. In the initial public forums on the point of departure document, Rhode Island stakeholders were asked whether they agreed with the expectations defined by the standards in the document. With only a few exceptions, the stakeholders thought the expectations in the document were reasonable. Using this information, early childhood research, and standards from other states, the Core Project Management Team developed the domain components, learning goals, and indicators. Similar to the review of the overall domains, the external validation process conducted by the expert panel either confirmed that the components, learning goals, and indicators articulated a coherent picture of learning and development, or the document was revised based on the panel's input to better reflect the latest research in the field. Consistently throughout the development process, including the expert panel review, there was feedback regarding the weakness of the birth-to-three indicators. As

such, a revision of these indicators, including the addition of a 24-month benchmark age category (discussed below), was the primary focus of the final revisions.

The decision for one continuum with six age benchmarks

For each learning goal, the final standards document contains one birth-to-five progression with six age categories. The Core Project Management Team took great care in making the decision regarding whether to divide the standards into two documents (birth-to-three standards and three- and four-year-old standards) or to present the standards as one progression. At the initial public forums, stakeholders were presented with this question and no clear consensus emerged. Ultimately, the Core Project Management Team decided on one progression because of the emphasis the team placed on allowing parents and practitioners to see the entire progression of development in one document. One progression allows the user to see where a child is developmentally and what the next developmental stage is regardless of the child's age. This point is particularly important for teachers and practitioners working with children with disabilities where a four-year-old may be exhibiting behaviors consistent with those of a two-year-old on certain indicators. With the one-progression format, the same document can be used for all children regardless of developmental level, and there is no need to switch between two documents for a child whose development may be significantly delayed or advanced in one or more areas. Finally, this approach is in alignment with the most widely used assessment instrument in the state.

Great care was also taken in deciding the appropriate age benchmarks for the progressions. In developing the specific age benchmarks, the Core Project Management Team and Subcommittee attempted to balance the need for numerous "check-in" points in the developmental progression with concerns about the document's ease of use. Additionally, given that learning and development occur at different rates in children, it was important that the check-in points have a sufficient age spread so that the distinctions in development and learning would be clear from one age benchmark to another. The five original age benchmarks in the point of departure docu-

ment (8, 18, and 36, 48 and 60 months) were based on those used in the *California Infant/Toddler and Preschool Learning and Development Foundations*. After a thorough review of the literature, California decided on three age benchmarks for infants and toddlers (8, 18, 36 months) because they represented three distinct "ways of functioning" during the first three years of life, and because there are clear differences in development and learning in each period. Although a great deal of development and learning occurs within these time periods, these age thresholds were determined to best capture the three distinct eras of development in the infant and toddler years.

Although the Rhode Island stakeholders were in agreement with the preschool age benchmarks, there was concern that the original infant and toddler age benchmarks created an 18 month gap (from 18 to 36 months) where there were no development and learning indicators. Both the stakeholders and the expert panel weighed in heavily on these age categories. There was no consensus among stakeholders with regard to the specific age breaks, but the stakeholders were clear that there was an overall weakness in the indicators for children younger than three and the desire for additional age benchmarks. The expert panel also pointed out the weakness of the indicators for children younger than three but did not agree on the need for additional benchmarks. Whereas some experts thought the broad age breaks avoided "overly prescriptive timetables for development" others thought the lack of a 24-month age break failed to communicate "how much critical development happens between 18–24 months and 24–36 months." The Core Project Management Team was persuaded by the latter argument and saw the addition of this age benchmark as an important aspect of improving the overall quality of the infant and toddler standards. In addition, the Core Project Management Team also made the decision to switch the 8-month benchmark to 9 months to be in alignment with other initiatives in the state, such as EPSDT well baby checks. The state then hired an infant and toddler expert to develop the indicators for a 24-month benchmark and to also improve the 9-, 18-, and 36-month indicators. Public input on the final draft of the document was very positive about the addition of a 24-month age benchmark and the overall improvement in the infant and toddler indicators.
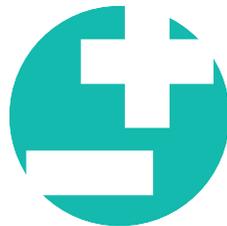
What was the rationale for removing play as a standard, and how is it emphasized in the new standards?

Rhode Island's early childhood stakeholders passionately value play as the primary vehicle through which young children learn. In fact, to emphasize the importance of play, the 2003 Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards included play as a "standard" in each domain of development and learning. Although the revised standards place a similar emphasis on play, the new document adheres to a nationally recognized definition that defines a standard as "an expectation for what children should know and be able to do" at different ages of early childhood. Given this definition, play is not included in the document as a standard, but is instead emphasized more accurately as a vehicle to promote learning.

The Core Project Management Team also felt that it was important that the standards document highlight the importance of play within the context of intentional teaching. Not all play is the same, and as such, the discussion of play in the document is addressed in a more sophisticated and nuanced way. Accordingly, the document discusses the need for teachers to purposefully support a child's play and highlights the different types of play that foster learning.

Throughout the development of the standards, the stakeholders expressed concern over the removal of play as a standard and emphasized the need to see it strongly represented in the document. In general, the stakeholders overall were pleased with the representation of play in the final standards document, particularly when compared to earlier drafts. In addition to a more sophisticated treatment of play in the Introduction, a large percentage of the indicators in the document define the expectations within a play context. For example, the indicators for engaging in structured and unstructured play include, "Carry a large toy while walking or playing" and "Participate in active physical play with an adult." Finally, to address any lingering concerns around the importance of play in the new standards, the state has committed that the professional development training and supporting materials that accompany the revised standards will further emphasize play as the primary route to learning and development.

How did the state ensure that the standards are appropriate for children who are dual language learners (DLLs)?

Rhode Island has a culturally and linguistically diverse population of children. According to the 2013 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook, 23 percent of Rhode Island's children speak a language other than English in their home. A majority of these children who are dual language learners (DLLs) speak Spanish, with smaller percentages of children speaking Indo-European or Asian languages in the home. Given the size of the DLL population in the state, the Core Project Management Team and the Standards Subcommittee were mindful that young children enter early care and education settings with varying levels of exposure to the English language, and took great care to ensure that the standards were culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Cultural and linguistic appropriateness was a principle that guided the development of the standards. With one exception (discussed below), the document contains domain components that apply to all children. A major factor in making the standards linguistically appropriate is the explicit guidance that children who are DLLs should have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and knowledge in any language. For those components not associated with English language acquisition, the goal is to support a child's ability to learn the underlying constructs articulated in the standards regardless of the language in which the knowledge is expressed. If, for example, a 36-month Mathematics indicator is the ability to "verbally count to ten," a child that counts to ten in Spanish or Mandarin will have met that standard.

One component—Language Development of Dual Language Learners—is specifically designed for children who are dual language learners, and is English-language dependent. This component was adapted from California's well-researched English-language development foundations with permission from the California Department of Education. The component, taken together with the others, highlights the importance of supporting English language acquisition while at the same time recognizing that a child's home language provides a foundation for learning English. Fostering English language acquisition while supporting the development of a child's native language is consistent with the latest research on children who are DLLs. It
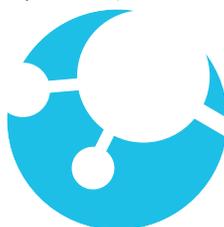
should be noted that the indicators of English Language Development for DLL children are not tied to specific age benchmarks, but instead are discussed in terms of stages of English language development. Although different from the other indicators, this approach recognizes that a child's exposure to English does not correspond to the child's age and that teachers must meet children who are DLLs where they are regardless of age.

Preliminary feedback indicated that both the state stakeholders and the expert panel thought the standards adequately addressed the issue of cultural and linguistic appropriateness for dual language learners, with two exceptions. First, the English Language Development component was initially separate from the Language Development domain and placed at the end of the standards document. Feedback from the public forums and the expert panel indicated that the component should be integrated into the Language Domain. The final version of the standards incorporates this change.

In addition, some expert reviewers asked that additional explanatory narrative be incorporated into the standards regarding how English Language Development occurs in children who are dual language learners. This narrative would explain important concepts such as "code-switching" and "telegraphic English phrases" to teachers who work with children who are DLLs. Although additional narrative text was not added, the Core Team decided that this will be an important aspect to be integrated into the professional development activities that will accompany the standrds.

How did the state ensure that the standards document was appropriate for children with disabilities?

The standards were designed to apply to all children, including children with disabilities. From the onset of the work, a universal design philosophy was applied to the development process. In this case, taking a universal design approach meant designing standards that were inherently applicable to all types of children, including children with disabilities. For example, the decision to have one birth-to-five continuum rather than two adheres to a universal design philosophy. With this approach, teachers do not have to use a different standards document for older preschool children who may have a significant developmental delay.

To ensure an adherence to a universal design philosophy more broadly, the expert review panel included one of the nation's foremost experts on standards development for young children. The expert panel provided a number of comments related to indicators that were not appropriate for children with certain types of disabilities. In addition, the panel suggested introductory text that discussed how the standards are to be used with children with disabilities and that encouraged caregivers and teachers to adapt the standards when necessary. As a result, the introduction to the standards document and domain introductions were revised to clarify that specific timelines and indicators may need to be adapted for children with disabilities and that some children may need more individualized or more intensive instruction than others in order to make progress. The introductions also address the potential need for accommodations for children with disabilities, such as adaptive or assistive technology in order to participate in learning experiences that promote progress. Equally important, the standards document emphasizes that children should be provided with a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The public input process, particularly in Phase II of development, sought input from the state's special education and early intervention communities. In fact, focus groups were held specifically with these two groups to get their input on the universal design aspects of the document. Overall, the input on the final draft was positive. Participants in the focus groups felt that the final draft did a much better job communicating the role and use of the standards for children with disabilities and noted that they appreciated that the state was focused on the universal design of the document. They also appreciated the extra context in the introduction on how the document should be used for children with disabilities as well as the additional notes in the domain introductions with specific reminders that educators are encouraged to adapt the standards appropriately. In addition, some participants also said that the indicators had been changed in a way that made the document easier to use with children with disabilities.

Participants in the preschool special and early intervention focus groups, however, felt that there could be even stronger messaging of the need for adaptations for children with disabilities throughout the standards document. They noted that the document addresses adaptation for physical disabilities but does not effectively address adaptations for children who have cognitive, social-emotional, or sensory challenges. In addition, participants in all the preschool special education and early intervention focus groups felt that there needed to be more guidance for general educators on how to make adaptations and they recommended that the state offer professional development on this topic. Although the final document did not include additional language around these issues, the Core Team sees these as key points to address, as suggested, in the professional development and supporting materials that accompany the standards.

NEXT STEPS: IMPLEMENTING RHODE ISLAND'S NEW EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

THE OVERALL IMPACT of the revised standards will depend on how well they are implemented by the state's early childhood practitioners. Throughout the public input process, stakeholders underscored the importance of professional development and praised both the rollout and implementation support that was provided when the initial 2003 standards were released. Accordingly, the state is taking a similar approach with the revised standards with the goal of creating trainings that are user-friendly and accessible to professionals and families in the most effective and efficient format possible.

The state is currently working on two strategies to support early childhood professionals and families in successfully implementing the revised standards. First, the state is contracting with a design firm to redesign the presentation of the standards and to create supplemental materials. The goal of the new design is to present the standards in a way that guides professionals and families in their use and understanding of the standards. Additionally, the new design will effectively communicate the role of play, intentional teaching, and the integrated nature of young children's development.

Second, the state is organizing design teams to revise the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards (RIELS) Project trainings (Intro to RIELS, Levels I–III) as well as the Fun Family Activities

cards. The RIELS trainings revisions will be completed in August 2013 and the revised trainings will be piloted in fall 2013. Full roll out of the revised RIELS Project trainings will begin in January 2014. The revised trainings will align with the nine new Early Learning and Development Standards developmental domains, and content of all training sessions will be expanded to include developmental knowledge of and recommended caregiving and teaching practices for infants and toddlers in addition to preschoolers.

The Fun Family Activities card revisions will be completed by July 2013. Once completed, a design team will then begin revisions of the Fun Family Activities trainings to align and update the trainings with developmental knowledge of and recommended strategies for parents and caregivers to support the healthy development and learning of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and to promote success in school.

For those early childhood professionals who have already completed RIELS Project trainings, their certificates of participation will remain valid. At the same time, opportunities to update one's understanding of the standards will be made available online and in face-to-face trainings over the coming months.

CONCLUSION

CHARTING A COURSE FOR SUCCESS in the *Ocean State: Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards* represents the culmination of a rigorous and comprehensive development process that brought together key stakeholders from all aspects of the state's early childhood community. A multi-phase, iterative process was used to fully incorporate feedback from national experts and state stakeholders. The final standards document meets the criteria that define high-quality standards and has the capacity to serve many purposes and be utilized by diverse audiences including practitioners, publishers, families, administrators, and early childhood experts.

In addition, the standards were developed to support the diverse population of young children growing up in Rhode Island and were carefully designed to reflect the needs of all children, regardless of culture, language, disability, or education and care setting. In addition to providing guidance on what children should know and be able to do, the document, along with accompanying professional development and technical assistance resources the state will provide, offers practitioners and parents key information on how to support children's progress on the standards. This is done by establishing responsive and caring relationships, promoting learning through play, and the use of intentional teaching in early childhood settings. The Early Learning and Development Standards document is an integral piece of the high-quality care and education system that supports the learning and development of Rhode Island's youngest children and will play a key role in the successful implementation of the state's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.

Appendix A: Rhode Island Core Project Development Team and Early Learning Standards Subcommittee

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Rhode Island Department of Education

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Jackie Bourassa
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Appendix B: Expert Committee Used for External Validation of Standards

NATIONAL EXPERT	SPECIFIC FOCUS
Clancy Blair Professor of Applied Psychology New York University	Executive Functioning Self-Regulation
Douglas H. Clements Kennedy Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Learning and Professor University of Denver	Mathematics Alignment to Common Core State Standards
Linda Espinosa Professor of Early Childhood Education (Ret.) University of Missouri, Columbia	Dual Language Learners Cultural Responsiveness
Kathleen Hebbeler Manager of the Community Services and Strategies Program SRI International	The Needs of Children with Disabilities
Linda Kimura Director Babies Can't Wait	Developed 24-Month Benchmarks Across Domains Alignment Across Age Ranges
Catherine Scott-Little Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies University of North Carolina	Overall Review Developmental Appropriateness for Infants & Toddlers
Dorothy Strickland Samuel DeWitt Proctor Professor of Education, Emerita Rutgers, The State University of NJ	English Language Arts Alignment to Common Core State Standards