Vision to Practice

Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance

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Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the federal, state, and local governments, along with early childhood experts and advocates, have been giving increasing attention to reducing the fragmentation, uneven quality, and inequity that characterize early childhood programs and services. A constant thread throughout this work is the proposition that governance is an essential ingredient for building a system that can bolster all the important elements necessary for children's healthy development and learning. In this exploratory study, we tried to gain insight into the status of efforts to build governance into comprehensive early childhood systems.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNANCE TO AN EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

For the purposes of this report, the term *early childhood system* refers to an inclusive set of programs and services that address all of the facets that contribute to healthy early childhood development and learning. At all levels of government these early childhood services and programs are of varying quality and are fragmented across multiple departments, agencies, and organizations. A fundamental assumption of a well-functioning early childhood system is that such unevenness and fragmentation must be remedied.

System building efforts assert that to serve children and families effectively, a system of early childhood programs and services should be:

- *comprehensive* (include early care and education; health, mental health, and nutrition; family support; and early intervention)[1];
- *coordinated* across these areas; and
- *aligned* developmentally (from birth to the start of kindergarten or to age 8).[2]

Experience has shown, however, that these connections do not occur independently at the policy,

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[1] As defined by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group, a U.S. collaboration of national organizations focused on early childhood system-building issues.

[2] Bruner, C. (2004). Toward a theory of change for the Build Initiative: A discussion paper. Des Moines, IA: The Build Initiative.

administrative, or practice levels—nor do incentives generally exist to create these connections. In light of this tendency to stay with the fragmented status quo, a predominant belief exists among those engaged in early childhood system building that achieving more comprehensive, coordinated, and aligned programs and services requires an entity that has sufficient power and authority to compel their development. *Governance* is the common answer provided to meet this challenge, especially by early childhood educators eager to advance the concept of all-inclusive services to support children's healthy development. While individual programs and services can advance in its absence, most view governance as necessary to ensuring that an early childhood system works in a way that is greater than the sum of its parts.

STATUS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

Kagan and Kauerz[3] state that since the 1960s early childhood system governance has evolved through three phases. The first phase—narrow and focused on the governance of individual programs—lacked a systems point of view and therefore contributed to program and service fragmentation. The second phase, in the mid-1980s and 1990s, focused on cooperation and collaboration across programs and funding. This emphasis resulted in various children's cabinets, state-level collaboratives, public-private partnerships, and state-local partnerships. Many of these efforts lacked the authority to propel system coordination and alignment, however. Also during this timeframe there was an increasing push for greater system equity, efficiency, and accountability—objectives most of these coordinating structures were not designed to accomplish.

The first decade of the new century birthed a third phase—one that featured increasing involvement by states and communities with early childhood comprehensive system building. This decade was characterized by widespread experimentation and innovation designed primarily to reduce the fragmentation within the early care and education sub-system, including new standalone or co-located departments to manage and govern early learning programs and services.

While still few in number, an increasing number of governors, legislatures, and other state leaders have endorsed creation of these departments or mergers. Other developments propelling

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[3]Kagan, S.L., & Kauerz, K. (2008). Governing American early care and education: Shifting from government to governance and from form to function. In Feeney, S. (Ed.), Continuing issues in early childhood education (3rd ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

consideration of early childhood governance include: public-private partnerships; P-20 Councils; the Early Childhood Advisory Councils mandated in the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007; the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (ECCS) funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and growing interest in expanding prekindergarten accompanied by a Pre-K through third grade education framework. These trends have catalyzed engagement by national organizations and pushed activity from both inside and outside of government at the local, state, and federal levels to assist and influence system building. Consequently, support for better system infrastructure, capacity, coordination, and accountability has grown, generating even greater attention to the issue of early childhood governance.

PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

Given wide attention and experimentation, the time is ripe to appraise what has been learned from responses to the call for better early childhood governance during the past decade. What new things have we discovered about what does and does not work? Is governance meeting the high expectations set for it (with coordination, alignment, equity, efficiency, accountability, and leadership all on its plate)? To what extent has thinking about governance coalesced among those who work on early childhood system building? Is governance still viewed as a crucial linchpin in early childhood system building and essential to ensuring effective and coordinated programs for children and families?

As experimentation with early childhood governance has progressed at the federal, state, and local levels, a set of beliefs has emerged to drive these efforts. To examine the continuing viability of these beliefs and how they have played out in practice, we interviewed 20 state and national leaders across the country who work on early childhood system building. (See Appendix A.) Some interviewees had deep experience with governance at the state and local levels, while others worked across numerous states and communities on governance issues.

Specifically, we posed nine questions to interviewees, each of whom was promised that conversations would be held in confidence so they could be forthright in their responses. (Appendix B provides the interview protocols.) The questions varied somewhat depending on whether the work of our interviewees was directed at the state and community or national level. We explored their experiences, probed the extent to which their expectations matched their involvement with early childhood governance, and considered how their answers fit with three common beliefs, identified

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below, about early childhood governance. We also incorporated our own perspectives, based on our experiences with governance in states and at the federal level.

FINDINGS: TESTING THREE COMMON BELIEFS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

Our study examined three core beliefs[4] about early childhood governance that we think have become dominant, both in concept and practice, during this third phase of governance development:

1. Governance can exist across a comprehensive early childhood system.
2. A shared conceptualization exists about what cross-system governance should accomplish.
3. Decisions about governance structures should follow decisions about their function.

Below, we share what we learned about the continued relevance of each of these three beliefs.

BELIEF 1: Governance can exist across systems.

Early childhood systems are widely believed to include four sub-systems of early childhood programs and services—early learning; family support; health, mental health, and nutrition; and special needs/early intervention. Further, each of these four sub-systems is recognized as a "system within a system," meaning that each has its own set of interacting policies, programs, and services intended to meet children's developmental needs. For example, the area of early learning focuses on the early care and education experiences that children need to succeed in school and beyond, such as child care, prekindergarten, and Head Start. A core principle of early childhood systems is that optimal developmental outcomes for young children are best achieved when these four sub-systems connect and align to form a comprehensive whole.

When asked about the appropriate scope of governance for the early childhood system, most respondents offered a comprehensive list that was inclusive of these four areas. Most also felt that governance should cover and have oversight for a spectrum of early childhood programs and services across these areas.

At the same time, although the majority of respondents felt that an early childhood system should be comprehensive in focus, few thought creating a comprehensive early childhood governance structure was actually feasible. While the exact boundaries for a comprehensive early childhood system

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[4]While other beliefs obviously co-exist with these three, it is our shared opinion that they have yet to achieve a level of consensus within the early childhood field capable of driving early childhood governance development.

varied, most viewed creation of a single structure to govern the early childhood system as too complicated. Two intersecting reasons were offered for this conclusion.

First was the issue that there is *too much complexity in the change process*. The fragmented and siloed nature of early childhood programs and services emerged over many decades to produce complex and entrenched bureaucracies. Unraveling this complexity is neither simple nor straightforward. Shuffling the placement of programs and services does not automatically result in better coordination and alignment. Different programs cover different age ranges and have different rules, regulations, and funding streams, often from different sources at the federal and state levels. Programs also come with pre-existing governance structures of their own, often with differing levels of funding and oversight — federal, state and local—that must be addressed. The labyrinth of practical details to tackle can be staggering. All of this gets compounded when the aim is to create governance for a fully comprehensive system.

Second, most respondents asserted that the expectation for comprehensive system governance is too demanding because *creating a new paradigm comes with many challenges*. Achieving a shared vision and shared ownership across the four sub-systems does not happen overnight; change tends to be slow and incremental. Bursts of activity or progress can occur, but they typically are intermittent or associated with a changing political context. Also, different stakeholders in different parts of the system have varied experiences, interests, and priorities. For example, some focus on the developmental needs of infants and toddlers while others focus on preschool-aged children. Some focus on education while others focus on health. Gaining the trust of any one part of the system and vesting that trust in the system-as-a-whole is good in theory but incredibly complex to achieve in practice.

Even if cross-system governance can be achieved at the policy level, changing how organizations and individuals within the system think and act involves even more challenges. For example, it requires significant shifts in the way providers of early childhood programs and services are trained, supported, and rewarded. Perhaps in response to this reality, growing acceptance exists for governance needing sufficient authority to make and enforce decisions about priorities, funding, and practice.

In sharing this finding, it is not the intent to argue against the ambitious vision of cross-system governance. Rather, our take-away is the importance of moving forward with realistic expectations and potentially with a new way of thinking about early childhood governance.

Experience shows that cross-system governance is not taking shape across all the four sub-systems of a comprehensive early childhood system. Rather, it is taking the form of entities with varying

degrees of authority across one or two of the four, typically early learning and early intervention.[5] For example, new administrative agencies are co-locating early care and education programs and services and housing them within a single government structure. By contrast, examples of new administrative and government structures that also are inclusive of health and family support seem largely absent.

Our findings may help explain current eagerness for collaborative entities like Early Childhood Advisory Councils. In light of increased appreciation for the important role of early childhood governance—and in contrast to their relative ineffectiveness during the mid-1980s and 1990s—these groups' advisory role may position them to more easily assume a comprehensive perspective and to identify ways in which administrative and governance structures can better connect across the full system. They also point to the possibility, already identified by others,[6] that emphasis should be placed on governance functions rather than structures and on considering how these functions might be coordinated across the early childhood system through policy, regulations, administrative decisions, and *durable* cross-agency relationships.[7]

Perhaps in a future phase of early childhood governance development, a coherent governance structure that works across the full early childhood system might be achievable. However, based on our findings, the probability of this outcome seems questionable despite the enormous amount of time and energy currently being devoted to the task.

Still, retaining the vision of a comprehensive system is essential to ensuring that efforts to build comprehensive and coordinated systems continue. Yet objectifying that vision in the form of a singular structure and imbuing it with unrealistic expectations has lead to disappointing results. This expansive idealization of early childhood governance is not unique, though, and reflects what Merilee Gindle called "idea inflation," in which the expectations tied to an idea outpace its capacity to deliver on desired results.[8]

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[5] The tendency to join these two sub-systems may reflect the mandate for inclusion in mainstream early learning environments of children with special needs, plus the fact that early intervention/early childhood-special education programs (especially for 3s and 4s) and early learning programs frequently address the same population of children and have complementary purposes.

[6] Kagan & Kauerz, op. cit.

[7] Goffin, S. G. (November 21, 2010). Challenging ourselves to explore questions essential to leadership. Presentation to ECCS Leadership Summit: Innovations and Collaboration-Building the Next Generation of Leaders. Las Vegas, NV. Available at www.goffinstrategygroup.com.

[8] Grindle, M. (June 2010) Good governance: The inflation of an idea. Faculty Research Working Paper Series. Available at www.hks.harvard.edu.

BELIEF 2: A shared conceptualization exists about what cross-system governance should accomplish.

Although limited agreement seemed to be present among those we interviewed, there were a few ideas on early childhood governance that were held by all respondents. Foremost, in response to our question about the importance of governance, all but one saw governance as an essential element of the early childhood system, providing a stable entity that could support and sustain the system over time. There also was general convergence on the broad purposes or goals of governance. In varied ways, most respondents agreed that early childhood governance should strive for cross-system:

- *Coordination*—Connecting and collaborating so that what happens in one part of the system is known by and has meaning for another (at the policy and practice levels).
- *Coherence*—Ensuring that what the system does for infants and toddlers aligns with what it does for children who are preschool-aged and possibly older. System coherence across developmental ages and settings should exist at many levels and across system-wide tasks such as data collection, standards development, quality assurance, and outcome measurement.
- *Sustainability*—Ensuring the early childhood system endures over time and has the ability to withstand political and administrative vicissitudes.
- *Efficiency*—Making sure the early childhood system uses its resources wisely, reduces duplication, and returns the most value for the money.
- *Accountability*—Holding the early childhood system accountable for improved effectiveness and for achieving child and family outcomes.

There was much less convergence, though, about what governance should *do* to fulfill these broad intentions or at what level: state or local. Given the quantity of activity across the nation labeled as early childhood governance, the absence of a common definition and frame of reference for the actual work of governance may come as a surprise. In fact, this was our repeated experience as we tapped into views on this question. States and communities are attempting to move forward based on a presumption that a common framework for governance exists. However, we found little common ground on the operational meaning of the term *governance* or the responsibilities and outcomes associated with the work of *governing*—at least not among our interviewees and more than 200 individuals with whom we have interacted in public sessions

Responses varied widely to the questions of "What does the term governance mean to you as it applies to an early childhood system?"(See sidebar.) Ultimately, this variation came down to differences

in opinion, often confounded by whether respondents thought governance should precede, lead, or follow the early childhood system's development.

Some said governance should provide *leadership*; it should set and advocate a vision for the early childhood system. Others said governance should *manage* the early childhood system, making decisions about roles and responsibilities and operationally bringing diverse pieces of the system together to support children's learning and development. Still others said governance should primarily provide focused *oversight,* holding it accountable for advancing the system vision. Interestingly, in several states, the creation of Early Childhood Advisory Councils was identified as further blurring roles and responsibilities.

We recognize that governance will differ from state to state and, within states, from community to community. Yet the prevalence of different opinions about the fundamental role and work of early childhood governance seems problematic. At one level, the lack of shared and consistent understanding of the role governance plays makes it difficult to benefit from shared insights and effort. More importantly, though, it undermines efforts by states and communities to create a unified early childhood system with effective governance.

Seemingly, the concept of governance is too vague. While almost everyone agrees that it is important and necessary, few agree about what governance means in operational terms. Achieving definitional clarity, while still allowing for flexibility, will be important to the evolution of early childhood governance. Just like the early childhood field has tried to achieve more clarity and consistency (with varying success) on definitions of concepts like quality and equity, the field would benefit from a more concrete and consistent understanding of what governance should do for the early childhood system.

Governance is:
(According to Interviewees)

- Shared ownership and leadership.
- Shared vision, resources, & outcomes.
- To further "the cause" and assert all of the components of an early childhood system.
- State's ability to create policies or authority to effectively coordinate and collaborate entities/agencies and governing bodies that oversee & administer early childhood programs & services so consistent with a governor's vision.
- A way for groups of people to make collective decisions about priorities, deploy resources, and make policies.
- Is calling the shots; if the organization is calling the shots, that's governance.
- A function of what a state is trying to achieve … making sure [supportive] policies are in place.
- The mechanism needed for coordinating a cohesive system.
- Looking for shared agreements and connections across the system.
- The management of funding streams, policies, and procedures for the early childhood system.

BELIEF 3: Decisions about governance structures should follow decisions about their functions.

Early childhood experts have advised system builders that form should follow function.[9] This means that states or communities should not start their thinking about governance by focusing on a particular kind of structure, what it should look like, or where it should sit. Rather, the work should begin with clarity regarding the functions to be served by governance, followed by creating "the forms" to achieve them.

This belief implies that because states and communities are so different—their systems serve different populations and respond to different challenges—the way in which specific functions operate and therefore the forms that governance takes across states will and should differ. As one group of experts put it when speaking of the early learning sub-system: "There is no single answer to the question: What governance structure can create an early learning system and manage the system efficiently and effectively? What works in one state and for one system-building purpose may not work in another state, or in the same state for a different system-building purpose."[10]

The respondents we interviewed understood and agreed with the belief that form should follow function. Implicitly, they also agreed with the implications outlined above. Respondents consistently stated that they did not see any one governance structure as preferable to another. At the same time, what we heard during these interviews and what we have witnessed in states suggest that practice has yet to fully match up with this belief. Further, few have considered the options that might be available if greater attention were given to the presence and/or creation of governance functions across organizations.

Many states appear preoccupied with structure, focused on trying to identify the *one* governance structure or the *one* model from another locale that will work in their state. States do not seem to carefully think through the functions of governance before focusing on the structures to house these functions. In the process of this preoccupation, early childhood governance is not being considered holistically.

As expressed earlier, governance for a comprehensive early childhood system seems unlikely to reside in a single structure. The belief that form should follow function implies to us that a single structure of governance or a single level of operation is unlikely to fulfill all of the governance functions

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[9] For example, Kagan & Kauerz, op. cit.; Bruner, C., Stover Wright, M. Gebhard, B., & Hibbard, S. (2004). *Building an early childhood learning system: The ABCs of planning and governance.* Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network.
[10] Bruner, C., Stover Wright, M., Gebhard, B., & Hibbard, S. (2004). p.1.

required by an early childhood system. Rather, early childhood governance will need to be shared across a number of structures and units, and these, in turn, will need to be coordinated and aligned.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance has become a dominant topic in early childhood system building work. Driven by the critical importance played by comprehensive services in supporting children's healthy development and school readiness, it increasingly is viewed as a solution to the long-standing problems of systemic fragmentation, inefficiencies, and inequities in quality and access.

In light of extensive experimentation during the past ten years, this exploratory study investigated how three dominant beliefs of the past decade about early childhood governance have fared. We learned that governance continues to be viewed as a linchpin for early childhood system building. Yet after almost a decade of effort, limited agreement exists regarding the purposes/functions of early childhood governance or its intended outcomes. We learned that respondents are questioning the feasibility of creating a unified early childhood governance structure and no longer adhere to the belief that a single best structural form exists for governance.

New Insights

These findings led us to two insights that we hope will inform future thinking on early childhood governance:

- **The vision for cross-system governance of an early childhood system needs to be recognized as an aspiration rather than a blueprint.** System building is incredibly complex and difficult. It has been made even more difficult by the tendency to try and convert a vision into a concrete model/structure that increasingly is viewed as being unachievable. Acceptance of this reality—while retaining the vision—opens the door to new innovations and possibilities.

- **Reaching agreement on the functions and outcomes of early childhood governance no longer can be sidestepped.** The lack of clarity regarding the desired functions and outcomes for early childhood governance was ubiquitous, complicated by lack of precision and agreement on what should be governed. This challenge adds to the difficulty inherent to system building. Addressing this confusion is an essential next step in the evolution of early childhood governance.

Additionally, these deliberations should consider the ways in which complex, disjointed systems function and can be aligned.[11]

Next Steps

Reflecting on these insights, we believe the time has come to consider how to move productively from the present phase of early childhood governance, which has tended to be structural in orientation, to a fourth phase. This next phase should focus on early childhood governance not only as a crucial system element but also as a system in and of itself. We suggest that this shift in thinking can be made more achievable in least three ways.

1. Systems, by definition, are dynamic and function through relationships. The findings of this study should encourage us to focus on early childhood governance as a system in and of itself. As such, future efforts should prioritize the identification of key functions and then ensure that these functions are present *and* linked in ways that encourage the system's coordination, coherence, sustainability, efficiency, and accountability at all levels of service delivery. The governance system could include relationships among structures such as Early Childhood Advisory Councils and Cabinets as well the exercise of governance functions in diverse parts of the system.

2. Those working to build comprehensive early childhood systems may be on the cusp of endorsing a set of functions for early childhood governance that is consistent across states. The five functions that routinely emerged from our interviews—ensuring coordination, coherence, sustainability, efficiency, and accountability—provide the basis for this crucial next step in early childhood governance. Interestingly, these functions also represent potential system outcomes and could help refine our thinking by distinguishing system functions and outcomes from system-wide tasks such as data collection, standards development, quality assurance, and outcome measurement.

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[11] Mitchell, M. (2009). *Complexity: A guided tour.* New York: Oxford University Press; Senge, P., Smith, B., Kruschwitz, N., Laur, J., & Scheley, S. (2010). *The necessary revolution: Working together to create a sustainable world.* New York: Broadway Books; Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., & Smith, B. J., (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategic tools for building a learning organization.* NY: Doubleday.

3. A distinction can and should be made between the functions of governance and the *levers* that exist to influence governance's effectiveness. Consistent with the concept of "idea inflation" mentioned earlier, what we are labeling as levers was often offered as governance functions by interviewees. Arguably, these levers—variables such as leadership, federal policy and regulations, "politics," the management capacity of government agencies and entities, bureaucratic cultures, and philanthropic involvement—can influence or act upon all levels of governance to increase the probability of achieving system outcomes, thereby distinguishing them from governance and its functions.

The experimentation of the past ten years has done nothing to dim the faith placed in governance as central to early childhood system building. The three widely held beliefs that drove this experimentation have retained their relevance. Yet this study makes evident that each is in need of updating to take into account lessons learned from the most recent decade's efforts. Our findings offer a starting point for this task. Our reflections suggest a way forward. We are optimistic that this fourth phase of early childhood governance will demonstrate forms of early childhood governance commensurate with its complexity.

About the Authors

Stacie Goffin is the founder of the Goffin Strategy Group. Established in 2004, the Goffin Strategy Group dedicates itself to building the early care and education field's ability to provide effective programs and services to young children. Prior to forming the Goffin Strategy Group, Stacie led the five-year effort to reinvent the National Association for the Education of Young Children's [NAEYC] early childhood program accreditation system. A former senior program officer at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and professor in higher education, her present work revolves around the design, facilitation, and implementation of multi-stakeholder change initiatives. A recognized thought leader in early care and education, she recently has become engaged with the field's leadership issues.

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Jana Martella has been engaged in the education field for more that thirty-years, serving as a primary grade teacher, elementary school administrator and a policy liaison for state and national education organizations. Over the last decade she has focused on early childhood education, advancing the policies, programs, and practices that support high quality learning opportunities for the Nation's youngest children. She currently provides executive leadership to two national organizations: the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) and the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA Licensing)

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Julia Coffman is founder and director of the Center for Evaluation Innovation, a nonprofit effort this is building the field of evaluation in areas that are challenging to measure and where traditional program evaluation approaches are not a good fit. The Center specializes in emerging areas like systems change and advocacy evaluation where fresh thinking and new approaches are required. She is also a researcher and evaluator with the Build Initiative, a foundation-funded effort supporting states that are building comprehensive and coordinated early childhood systems.

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Appendix A – Interviewees, listed alphabetically

Deborah Adams, Education Consultant, Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Connecticut State Department of Education

Joan Blough, Vice President for Planning and Evaluation, Michigan Early Childhood Investment Corporation and Great Start

Rachel Demma, Senior Policy Analyst, National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices Education Division

Harriet Dichter, National Director, First Five Years Fund; Former Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, PA Departments of Education and Public Welfare, and Secretary, PA Department of Public Welfare

Stephanie Fanjul, President, North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.

Kathy Glazer, Director of State Services, Build Initiative; Former Director, Virginia Office of Early Childhood Development

Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood Development, Maryland State Department of Education

Louisa B. Higgins, Coordinator, Project Thrive, National Center for Children in Poverty

Sherri Killins, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

J. Lee Kreader, Director, Research Connections, National Center for Children in Poverty

Alicia Leatherman, Director, Ohio Early Childhood Cabinet

David Nee, Executive Director, William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

Ann Reale, Early Learning Systems Specialist, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC); Former Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Elliot Regenstein, Partner, Education Counsel LLC , member of the Illinois Early Childhood Advisory Council

Tonya Russell, Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services

Julie Shuell, Executive Director, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC)

Carla Thompson, Deputy Director, Office of Child Care, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Former Assistant Superintendent for Early Childhood Education, D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Margie Wallen, Assistant Director, National Policy Consultation, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Jane Wiechel, Former Associate Superintendent, Ohio Department of Education

1) What does the term *governance* mean to you, as it applies to an early childhood system? In other words, what does governance do for an early childhood system; what is its purpose?
   - How important is governance when trying to build an early childhood system? Could a state build an early childhood system without it? What are the implications if it's not in place?

2) When you think about the idea of governance for an early childhood system, what do you think is the ideal <u>scope</u> for that system?
   - What is the right age range?
   - What parts of the system should be covered (early learning, health, mental health, nutrition, family support, etc.)?

3) When most people talk about early childhood system governance, they focus on the role of states. What governance role do you think the federal government should play? What about local communities?

4) Now, I want to go a little farther and ask what you think it means to have <u>effective</u> governance for an early childhood system? What are the elements—in terms of either structure or function—that are necessary for governance to be effective? In responding, feel free to touch on what you think effective governance does <u>not</u> look like.

FOR STATE LEADERS

5) Now let's talk about you and your state. What is your personal role on early childhood system governance in your state?

6) Earlier you laid out what you think effective governance looks like. How well does governance for the early childhood system in your state meet that ideal in terms of:
   - Its function, scope, or structure?
   - The role of local communities?
   - Your personal role on governance?

7) What is currently happening in your state, if anything, to improve governance (e.g., the Early Learning Council)?

8) What lessons about governance do you think have emerged from your state? Please consider what you think your state both did and did not get right on governance.

9) You've mentioned what is currently happening in your state to improve early childhood system governance. Taking into account the political and economic realities your state is experiencing, is there anything else you think could be done to improve your state's approach on governance?

FOR NATIONAL LEADERS

5) Now let's talk about your experiences with states. You've just laid out what you think effective governance looks like. When you think about the states you've worked with or had experience with, to what extent do you think they are meeting that ideal with their approaches to governance?
   - In function?
   - In scope?
   - In the role of local governance?

6) Specifically, what do you think states are getting right in terms of governance? What states might you offer up as examples of places where you think they are getting it right?

7) For states that are not as far along in terms of governance, what issues are blocking their progress?

8) To what extent are states taking advantage of new opportunities to improve their early childhood governance (e.g., Early Learning Councils)?

9) A lot has been written and said about the *structure* of governance for early childhood systems, meaning in particular where it is positioned and who participates. States have taken different approaches on structure. How important is structure to good governance? Are some models better than others?