

Helios Education Foundation

Early Childhood Assessment Planning Grant

Background

In 2014 and 2015 Helios Education Foundation held two Early Childhood Assessment Convenings. The Council participated in both meetings. The discussions among experts in the field identified both the clear need and opportunity for effective public policies to strengthen Florida's early learning system with emphasis on assessment and accountability.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Assessment Convenings was to:

1. Bring together experts in the field who are interested in clarifying and aligning early childhood education assessments as indicated by participation in the convening activity.
2. Produce a summary document of expert recommendations.
3. Generate momentum in the field.
4. Develop opportunities to impact policy and practice on a statewide basis.

Because we successfully have met objectives one and two, Helios Education Foundation has awarded the remaining funds to support the Florida Children's Council and the Early Learning Consortium in generating momentum and developing opportunities to impact policy and practice in the state.

State policy makers are considering various options to improve classroom instructional practices and increase opportunities for children to enter kindergarten and be successful, especially in the areas of language acquisition and early literacy. There also is growing interest in early learning among key legislative leaders and powerful outside advocates such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce. Now is the time for coordinated leadership on early learning issues in order to maximize the policy and legislative opportunities that will be available in the next few years.

The Early Learning Consortium is well positioned to coordinate and advance efforts to solidify the use of fewer assessments and to identify methods to coordinate related teacher professional development. The Florida Children's Council, through the Early Learning Consortium, will capitalize on its strengths of providing policy and strategy expertise, as well as strong research and content expertise by serving as the coordinating lead for related projects, initiatives, and messaging.

The Early Learning Consortium will meet throughout 2016 to develop plans and recommendations to improve classroom and assessment quality. The Florida Children's Council will serve as project lead for the work and will contract with consultants for work supports. The Council will be responsible for managing work flow, products, and deliverables associated with the agreed upon work priorities and plan.

One initial deliverable will be writing a brief that focuses on how to translate the policy recommendations into improved instructional practice assessments and quality of programs. Building coherent and

comprehensive systems of early childhood assessments is a challenging endeavor. It requires the coordination and alignment of assessments, instructional practices, data systems and most importantly the way in which knowledge is transmitted or diffused to administrators, teachers, parents and students. This brief would aim to uncover best practices to align instructional assessments with practices aimed at improving instruction, which ultimately we believe will lead to better policies and increased child learning.

Other activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Conduct research and analysis** of both national and state policies, practices, and data sets to identify and develop strategies to increase funding and improve the quality of teacher instructional strategies
- **Author an education brief** on early childhood assessments related to classroom, program, and teacher quality
- **Draft policy recommendations** for reducing the number of early childhood assessments and identifying specific assessments for implementation
- **Provide subject matter expertise and guidance** as it relates to public policy priorities, opportunities, and community implementation of early childhood assessments
- **Deliver presentations and educating policymakers** on public policy priorities, opportunities and challenges related to improving the quality of early learning environments
- **Facilitate meetings** of the Early Learning Consortium to establish priorities and develop a 1-, 3-, and 5-year strategic plan for early childhood assessment alignment and coordination in conjunction with professional development

Budget:

Helios Early Childhood Assessment Grant	\$ 24,158.41
Helios PRE Center of Excellence	\$ 4,000
TOTAL	\$28,158.41