



September 2012

Inside this Brief

- **Legislative History**
- **Head Start and Early Head Start**
- **Oregon Pre-kindergarten**
- **Kindergarten Readiness**
- **Staff and Agency Contacts**

Legislative Committee Services
State Capitol Building
Salem, Oregon 97301
(503) 986-1813

Background Brief on ...

Oregon Early Childhood System

About 40% of the 45,000 children born in Oregon each year are exposed to a well-recognized set of socio-economic, physical or relational risk factors that adversely impact their ability to develop the foundations of school success. These include poverty, unstable family backgrounds, substance abuse, criminal records and negative peer associations. Moreover, Oregon's history of delivering results for children of color is particularly disappointing, as exhibited by the well-known "achievement gap."

Legislative History

At the behest of Governor John Kitzhaber, the 2011 Legislative Assembly enacted Senate Bill 909, which established the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) to create a seamless, unified system for investing in and delivering public education from early childhood through high school and college. The measure also created the Early Learning Council (ELC) as a component of the OEIB, and charged it with formulating recommendations to merge, redesign or improve the coordination of early childhood services and align them with child centered outcomes.

House Bill 4165 (2012) implemented ELC recommendations by merging several agencies and/or programs that provide services to children including the following:

- Eliminated the Oregon Commission on Children and Families and the Oregon Commission on Childcare, transferring the programs and responsibilities to the Early Learning Council.

- Designated the ELC as the state Advisory Council as defined in the Head Start Act.
- Replaced Early Childhood Matters Council (and three subcommittees) created by Executive Order.
- Replaced the Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee and Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee with one single body – Youth Development Council – for non-school programs targeting youth.
- Eliminated requirements on counties to form or operate local commissions and removed state obligations to fund County Commissions on Children and Families.

Rather than a state-mandated administrative structure imposed on every county, the ELC will establish a request-for-proposals process for “Community Based Coordinators” (Coordinators) to convene and coordinate early learning services in a defined area. Administrative costs will be limited to 15 percent, with an effort to reduce overlapping structures at all levels. The new system will:

- Require broad-based local oversight, including elected officials and community members.
- Require documented participation from government and non-government partners and providers, including counties and health care providers.
- Determine the “region” or area of service based on feedback from and collaboration with respondents. In some areas, this may be based on participation by one or more county governments, in others by, for example, a nonprofit organization, university, tribe, or faith-based organization.
- Feature a provider-neutral RFP process focused on a coordinated system committed to outcomes for at-risk and underserved children and families.
- Set standards that communities are then empowered to meet in ways they deem best.

Head Start and Early Head Start – The federal government created Head Start in 1965 to provide comprehensive child development services, including preschool education, for children ages three and four, and their families. In 1995, Early Head Start was created to provide comprehensive child development services for pregnant women, children ages zero to three, and their families.

Both programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start and Early Head Start are available for free to children of families whose income is at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to reserve at least 10 percent of their total enrollment for children with disabilities. Community and Family Partnerships are required components of both programs. Additional service requirements include the following:

- Preschool Education;
- Family Support and Parent Education;
- Health;
- Nutrition; and
- Mental Health.

Grants are administered by the federal government directly to local public agencies, private non-profit and for-profit organizations, American Indian tribes, and school systems, which in turn use the funds to operate programs in local communities.

As the designated Advisory Council for Head Start programs, the ELC will ensure that the 14,000 children of the estimated 108,000 at-risk children in Oregon will continue to receive services. Recent legislation will also keep the state aligned with federal rules for Head Start, include Head Start programs in the list of programs shown as participating in a locally coordinated system, and directs the state to adopt Head Start standards and align with Common Core State Standards for kindergarten through grade twelve.

Oregon Pre-Kindergarten – In 1987, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 524 that created the Oregon Prekindergarten Program (OPK), modeled after and designed to work side-by-side with, the federal Head Start program, serving children from age three to five, and their families. Together the programs are known as Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OHS PreK). OHS PreK programs are funded through an open competitive grant application process similar to federal Head Start.

OHS PreK received a total of \$122.2 million in General Funds during the 2011-2013 biennium and an additional \$115 million in federal funds. Currently, there are 34 OHS PreK grantees in 36 counties, serving 13,366 children.

In February 2010, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) received \$1 million in General Fund monies to provide services to existing federally funded Early Head Start programs. This funding was continued in 2011-2013 with \$1.5 million to provide services to 68 additional children.

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) - State law (ORS 343.475) requires ODE to administer a statewide program of early intervention and early childhood special education services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities or significant developmental delays. Early intervention services are for children birth through two years of age who have cognitive, adaptive, physical, communication, social, or emotional delays, and have a need for services or are diagnosed with a medical condition that is likely to result in developmental delay.

Early childhood special education services are for children between age three and school age who experience a developmental delay or a physical or mental disability or impairment. Funding for EI services is provided by state General Funds (81 percent), federal funds (18 percent), and Medicaid fee-for-service reimbursements (one percent). The ODE contracts with education service districts to provide direct services to qualifying children and their families. As of March 2012, there were

2,995 infants and toddlers receiving early intervention services and 8,135 children receiving early childhood special education for a total of 11,130.

Kindergarten Readiness

House Bill 4165 directs the ELC and the Department of Education to jointly develop a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to be piloted in the fall of 2012 and implemented statewide in the fall of 2013. In order to achieve this goal, the ELC appointed a workgroup to develop recommendations for an Oregon statewide KRA to be administered in kindergarten classrooms in the fall of the kindergarten year.

The KRA Workgroup began meeting in January 2012 and includes kindergarten teachers, district administrators, early educators, Department of Education specialists, researchers, OEIB staff and members of the ELC.

The KRA is a critical component of Oregon's efforts towards an integrated Preschool to Workforce (P-20W) system. Kindergarten entry, the first occasion for observing almost all of Oregon's children, provides a unique opportunity to take a snapshot that answers the following questions:

- Are Oregon's children (as a population) arriving at kindergarten ready for school?
- Is their level of school readiness improving or declining over time?
- Are there disparities (geographical, cultural, racial, and socio-economic) between groups of children's kindergarten readiness that must be addressed?
- Are there particular domains of school readiness that Oregon should target?

The results of the KRA will help local educators support their students' strengths and meet their educational and instructional needs. The results will also assist educators to identify needed

resources and community partnerships to strengthen children's readiness to learn. Kindergarten readiness is not just about schools. It is also a community issue that requires involvement of health, social services, child care, families and others. Successfully chosen and implemented, the kindergarten assessment can serve as a community rallying point for understanding children's needs and ensuring school success. It can spur collaboration between schools and community partners, and it can guide future state investment in our youngest children by highlighting communities and identifying the areas of greatest need.

The work that remains to be done over the next year is substantial. The selection of an instrument is only the first step in developing a KRA system that supports the success of all children in Oregon. In addition to addressing training, test administration and other implementation issues, Oregon will also need to build supports that help parents, teachers, schools, communities and policy-makers in interpreting and effectively using this information.

Staff and Agency Contacts

[Jada Rupley](#), Oregon Early Learning
Systems Director
503-373-0071

[Duke Shepard](#), Policy Advisor to
Governor John Kitzhaber
503-373-1558

[Legislative Committee Services](#)
503-986-1813