

LEARNS Early

Learning Work Group

July 20, 2023

Reminders

Work Group Members

Facilitator(s): Tonya Williams, Lori Bridges, Dawn Jeffery

- Richard T. Atkinson, Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Head Start
- Jenny Barber, Russellville School District/Pre-K Administrator
- Alexandria Galleur, Penny Lane Child Care Center
- Bill Sims, Grow Learning Center/Early Intervention
- Anna Strong, AR Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- Tara Armstrong, Camden Fairview School District
- Diana Nathan, Parent
- Fredricka Tabor, White River Health
- Leigh Keener, Teacher
- Gwen Couthren, Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative
- Shelley Ray, Teacher/Junction City SD
- Brandy Wolfenbarger, Pre-K Administrator/ Springdale SD
- Jamie Ward, AR Infant Mental Health Association
- Joe Fisher, Guy-Perkins School District Administrator
- Tracy Dunn, Teacher, Russellville School District
- Angela Betancourt, Greenbrier School District/Pre-K Administrator



Meeting Norms

Prior to Meeting

- Tonya Williams will send out agenda and materials at least 3 business days in advance of each meeting.
- Members review all materials and come prepared to share feedback.

During Meeting

- Mute yourself when not speaking.
- Keep feedback centered on topic at hand.
- Stay engaged (e.g., actively participate and use the chat function).
- Be mindful of how much “air time” each member receives.
- All ideas are valued.

Materials (notes, slides) will be posted after the meeting for members who can not attend.



FOIA

Legislative Intent:

To ensure that public business is performed in an open and public manner so that the electors shall be advised of the performance of public officials and of the decisions that are reached in public activity and in making public policy

FOIA

Who is subject to FOIA?

- All government entities
- Private entities that receive public funds and are intertwined with government activities

FOIA - Public Records

Definitions:

- Writings, sounds, electronic info, or videos that (a) are kept and (b) constitute a record of performance or lack of performance of official functions

Early Learning Work Group Charge

For Early Learning, the key areas that LEARNS requires new rule/policy are:

- Transition of programs to ADE *(by October 2023)*
 - Review of all early learning rules previously overseen by ADHS
 - CCDF State Plan
- Definition of K readiness
- Licensing review *(by January 2024)*
- Local leads *(by August 2024)*
- Uniform accountability system based on child outcomes *(by August 2024)*

Engagement from this group and other stakeholders is essential to ensure that all early learning policy is representative of the perspectives of all part of the state's early childhood system.



Scope and Sequence

To accomplish the timeline outlined in LEARNS, this group will meet biweekly for the next several months to discuss the following topics. Adjustments may be made or additional topics added at a later date based on the pace and timing of work group meetings.

Date	Anticipated Topics
July 6	Kick-Off
July 20	Transition plan
August 3	Local early childhood leads
August 17	Definition of K readiness

Reflection

You were asked to review the CCDF State Plan, the ABC Governing Rule, and the LEARNS Act.

What stood out to you from these documents?

What questions do you have after reviewing these documents?



New Office of Early Childhood

New Office of Early Childhood

As of August 1, the Office of Early Childhood at ADE will house:

- Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)
- AR Better Chance (ABC) Program (state preschool)
- IDEA Part B and C
- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Child Care Licensing & Background Check Unit
- Family Support Unit
- Better Beginning QRIS
- USDA Child Nutrition



Vision for the Office of Early Childhood

As all of these programs unify under ADE, Arkansas envisions creating a unified system that supports children and families from birth to grade 12 and beyond.

ADE hopes to capitalize on this moment to build a ***unified early childhood system*** that:

- Offers more coherent experiences for families and providers
- Aligns with research on high-quality care, education, and services
- Is correlated with child outcomes
- Connects early childhood programs to the K-12 system



Office of Early Childhood: Opportunity

This transition provides the opportunity for Arkansas to build an Office of Early Childhood that better serves children, families, and providers.

This is an opportunity to consider what changes can be made that will better the overall system:

- Increase alignment between B-5 and K-12
- Identify opportunities organize and administer by function of the system
- Increase coherence of funding administration
- Align existing and promote new supports for the field
- Consider opportunities to align and improve communications



Discussion

What would you hope to stay the same for early childhood in Arkansas after the transition?

What would you hope to be different as a result of the transition?

How can the field be supported throughout this transition?



Next Steps

- Tonya Williams will send draft materials in advance of next meeting
- Work group members review the LEARNS [Executive Order Report](#): An Analysis of Arkansas's Early Childhood System
- Next meeting's topic: Local early childhood leads