

Dear Friends and Fellow Citizens of the Commonwealth,

We are pleased to present to you the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Five Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019). This new Strategic Plan is intended to document our aspirational goals and will be used to inform the development of an Implementation Plan which will outline the tasks, timelines, and outcomes to meet those goals.

With support and feedback from all staff in the agency, this new strategic plan builds on the strengths of the Board's original plan submitted in 2009 and adds new goals, aspirations and strategic directions for the agency on behalf of the children and families of the Commonwealth. Although the plan is written in narrative form, the conceptualization of the plan is in the form of a matrix, with each cell of the matrix referring to the intersection of one of the goals with one of the strategic directions. We are very grateful for the participation of EEC Staff. This is a better document because of it.

The mission of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and the mission framing the first Strategic Plan in 2009, has been to “...*provide the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.*” We have maintained that important mission in this new Strategic Plan 2014-2019, and have brought new emphasis to the fact that we no longer talk about education or care; education and care go hand in hand with young children. Both are equally important and integrated into the work of the Department..

We have also brought new emphasis to the role of educators in the broadest sense, and have made a special effort to be inclusive of all the elements of the mixed delivery system that the EEC supports, values, and works with. Finally, the plan emphasizes the renewed commitment of the EEC to work with sister agencies in education in the Commonwealth. This collaborative emphasis is very important when setting the priorities to continue to focus on the birth to grade three continuum, and on the preparation of the early education and care workforce.

Thanks to all who participated in the preparation of this plan, particularly Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Chair of the Board's Planning and Evaluation Committee , as well as Committee Members Joni Block and Cheryl Stanley, and Jennifer Louis from EEC. Each of them, and the many others who participated in this process, devoted countless hours to provide feedback and make this plan as inclusive, as respectful, and as committed as possible to the young children of the Commonwealth and their families.

On behalf of the Board of Early Education and Care, we are grateful for these efforts and respectfully submit the attached Strategic Plan.

Jay Gonzalez,
Chair, EEC Board

J.D. Chesloff
Immediate Past Chair, EEC Board

EEC 2014-2019 Strategic Plan Glossary of Terms

Educators- Any person certified by the Department of Early Education and Care for the regular education and care of children unrelated to the educator in a location outside the children's own home for all or part of the day, regardless of his/her level of certification. For example, family child care educators, teachers, assistant teachers, and directors.

EEC- The Department of Early Education and Care

ESE- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

EOE: The Executive Office of Education

Families- A family is a group of at least two people (adult and child) related by birth, marriage, guardianship, foster care, or adoption and residing together.

Family Child Care- EEC licensed education and care provided in a private residence during part or all of the day for no more than ten children younger than 14 years old or children younger than 16 if such children have special needs. Family child care shall not mean an informal cooperative arrangement among neighbors or relatives, or the occasional care of children with or without compensation therefore.

Group Child Care- Any EEC licensed facility operated on a regular basis whether known as a day nursery, nursery school, kindergarten, child play school, progressive school, child development center, day care center, pre-school, or known under any other name which receives children, not of common parentage, younger than seven years old, or younger than 16 years of if such children have special needs, for non-residential custody and care during part or all of the day separate from the parent(s). Child Care center shall not include: any part of a public school system; any part of a private organized educational system, unless the services of such a system are primarily limited to kindergarten, nursery or related pre-school services; a Sunday school conducted by a religious institution; a facility operated by a religious organization where children are cared for during short periods of time while persons responsible for such children are attending religious services; a family child care home; an informal cooperative arrangement among neighbors or relatives; or the occasional care of children with or without compensation therefore.

License Exempt- In some cases the education and care arrangement may be exempt from licensure and may not require a license from EEC. Exemptions may include preschool and after school programs operated by the public schools, drop-in programs, programs that do not operate on a regular basis, programs where care is not separate from parents, playgroups, religious services, informal cooperated arrangements and parochial and private school programs. In most cases programs must receive approval for exemption from EEC in writing

Mixed Delivery System- System of early education and care offered by early educators and programs in a variety of settings. Settings include Head Start, public schools, center-based programs, family care programs, nursery schools, etc.

Out of School Time- Non-school time periods for school-age children and adolescents, during which there is often a need for school-age child care and other types of programming. Programs offering out of school time may include EEC licensed programs and/or licensed exempt programs.

Programs- For the purposes of this EEC strategic plan, this term refers to all programs, activities and classrooms of early education and care supported by EEC which are included in the mixed delivery system (see above) to promote the healthy development and education of young children and their families; for example, family child care, center based, Head Start, public school early education and care programs, play groups, activities held in public libraries, home visiting programs, and family workshops. . In the case of a residential and placement setting, a program or facility that provides care and custody for one or more children by anyone other than a relative by blood, marriage or adoption on a regular 24-hour a day, residential basis. Group care program includes but is not limited to programs serving teen parents under the age of 16 years; transition to independent living programs; private residential schools that provide special services to children with special needs in which children with special needs constitute 30% or more of the school's population; and group residences or group homes. Group care program does not include family foster care; a recreational or summer camp; a hospital, ward or comprehensive center, including an intensive residential treatment program, licensed under M.G.L. c. 19, § 19 or c. 19B, § 15; a hospital, ward or comprehensive center operated by the Commonwealth; a hospital, institution for unwed mothers, convalescent or nursing home, rest home or infirmary or any program licensed under M.G.L. c. 111; any program licensed under M.G.L. c. 111E, § 5 and 7 unless the program admits children other than drug dependent children or dependency drug using children; or private residential schools except those providing special services to children with special needs as defined above.

Parent- Father or mother, grandparent, guardian, or person or agency legally authorized to act on behalf of the child in place of, or in conjunction with, the father, mother, or guardian.

Unlicensed Child Care programs- Early education and care programs that have not been licensed by the EEC.

Workforce- Includes individuals working with young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children in centers, homes, and schools) and their families or on their behalf (in agencies, organizations, institutions of higher education, etc.), with a primary mission of supporting children's development and learning.

EEC STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

GUIDE TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission: Defines the purpose of the agency, who it serves and what it does

Vision: Defines what the agency aspires to do over a five-year period

Strategic direction: Names the strategic priorities over the next three years that will help move the agency towards its vision

Indicators of success: Measures used to mark the agency's progress within each of the strategic directions

EEC MISSION

Mission: Defines the purpose of the agency, who it serves and what it does

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) provides the foundation that supports all children and their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.

EEC VISION

Vision: Defines what the agency aspires to do over a five-year period

- EEC and the whole field of early education and care are highly regarded, publicly recognized and supported, and clearly understood to be a value to the Commonwealth
- The Department of Early Education and Care offers an array of high quality comprehensive and affordable early childhood, out of school time programs as well as resources, materials and activities designed to meet the diverse, individual needs of children and families.
- The early education and care workforce is respected, diverse, professional, qualified and fairly compensated
- EEC is an effective, responsive, efficient and resilient department which provides licensing and monitoring to early childhood, out of school time programs.
- EEC has clear standards for accountability and evidence that those standards are being met
- Families are engaged as partners integral to the health development and learning of their children, and they have access to the necessary resources to do so.
- All children have access to high quality early childhood, out of school and residential programs that meet family needs
- Children and families experience seamless transitions throughout their early learning and later developmental experiences.

- As one agency of the a larger system of education in the Commonwealth, EEC is aligned with and supports the goals and objectives of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS / FIVE-YEAR GOALS

1. All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the K-12 education system and be successful, and their families will be provided with opportunities to support their children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.
2. Programs offered in early childhood, out of school time settings licensed or license exempt by the EEC will promote and support the high quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.
3. The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce who works with children and families in the Commonwealth is professionally prepared, adequately compensated, and diverse.
4. The Department and Board of Early Education and Care will provide leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth

EACH OF THESE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS WILL HAVE SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES ORGANIZED IN FOUR GROUPS:

- a. Commitment to Quality
- b. Increasing Access
- c. Continuing Communication and advocacy
- d. Sustainable Infra-structure and finance

Goal # 1 [Children and families]: All young children in the Commonwealth will be ready to enter the Kindergarten-12 education system and be successful, and their families will be provided with opportunities to support their children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and physical development.

1.1 Commitment to Quality

- Children and families participate in high quality and safe programs that prepare children to enter the Kindergarten-12 education system and be successful
- Families understand and use information about quality to make informed decisions about early childhood and out of school time programs
- All children and families experience seamless transitions throughout early learning and developmental experiences

1.2 Increasing Access

- Children and families have access to high quality and safe programs that meet their needs within the mixed delivery system, without regard to their socio-economic status or residential location.
- Children and families will have access to the resources and materials that promote the healthy development and learning that is necessary to be ready to enter the K-12 education system and succeed.
- Information on early education and care services is available to all families, including families with limited English proficiency

1.3 Continuing Communication and advocacy

- EEC communicates successfully with families and communities about the strategies, resources and services that support young children's early education experiences, out of school time and residential and placement, to ensure readiness to succeed in K-12 education system and succeed
- EEC provides information to legislators, partners and other stakeholders about the necessary resources and policies to enable young children to be successful in school and life.
- Families are recognized as their child's first teacher, and are supported as full partners and advocates in the education of their children and are empowered by having access to information about child development, family support resources, and high quality education, and are encouraged to provide feedback to EEC.

1.4 Sustainable Infrastructure and finance

- EEC will continuously strengthen the infra-structure of staffing, programming, data and resources that will enable it to assess the quality and impact of the system on the outcomes for children and families.
- EEC is adequately financed to meet the mandates outlined by the Commonwealth, and its broader goals to serve the evolving needs of children and families

Goal # 2 [Programs]: Programs offered in early childhood, out of school time settings licensed or license exempt by the EEC will promote and support the high quality education and healthy development of children that enables all children to be successful as school members and citizens.

2.1 Commitment to Quality

- Early Education and care programs offered to children and families in the Commonwealth meet high quality standards as measured by the QRIS system.
- QRIS standards are research-based, broadly understood, culturally appropriate and aligned with local, state and national standards.
- Community organizations and programs that are supported by EEC provide high quality resources for children and families.
- Licensing regulations that reflect best practices have been promulgated, translated, clearly communicated to the field, and enforced consistently throughout all regions.
- Comprehensive supports are embedded in the delivery of services for families and children as part of a high quality experience.
- Early education and care services are delivered through a seamless system that is responsive to the needs of all families.
- EEC provides support and resources for children transitioning into and out of early education and care and out of school time programs and services.

2.2 Increasing Access

- Programs have access to a range of initiatives, resources and supports that will improve their quality throughout the calendar year, including summer.
- Children in residential and placement programs receive high quality services in appropriate settings so they are ready to join school communities and be successful.
- Programs offering high quality experiences will be able to expand access and deliver services that meet the needs of children and families.
- Programs that offer transportation do so in a safe and affordable manner.

2.3 Continuing Communication and advocacy

- Families are knowledgeable of the mixed early education and care system in the Commonwealth.
- Strong partnerships are established between families and educators to maximize high quality early education and care for all children.
- Families seeking to adopt are knowledgeable of available adoption resources and state adoption policies.
- All stakeholders in the field and consumers are knowledgeable of EEC initiatives, policies and procedures and have access to information to in order to advocate on behalf of the field of early education and care.

- Parents and guardians of children in residential and placement programs are knowledgeable of appropriate placement and treatment options that are compatible with the needs of their children.

2.4 Sustainable Infrastructure and finance

- Programs and services are adequately funded to provide the quality of services that enable children to be successful in the K-12 education system and beyond
- Programs and services for children and families are delivered in a coordinated manner across state agencies
- Programs are funded commensurate with the quality of early education and care they provide, as measured by QRIS.

Goal # 3 [Workforce]: The workforce of early childhood educators and care professionals who work with children and families in the Commonwealth is professionally prepared, fairly compensated and diverse.

3.1 Commitment to Quality

- To support and strengthen the workforce, high quality ongoing professional development and technical assistance is available.
- The early education and care workforce has clearly defined education and professional development standards that are based on best practices, current research and data.
- The workforce has licensing regulations that reflect best practices.

3.2 Increasing Access

- The workforce has access to high quality and affordable education and professional development resources and technical assistance

3.3 Continuing Communication and advocacy

- Stakeholders will recognize the early education and care workforce as professionals, and advocate on their behalf to support and advance the field.
- The workforce and families, with support from EEC will work together to advocate for compensation for the workforce that aligns more with the evolving qualifications and expectations.
- The early education and care workforce has education and professional development standards and qualifications that have been communicated to and are understood by the field.

3.4 Sustainable Infrastructure and finance

- The early education and care workforce has a well-defined career-ladder that outlines specific credentials, demonstrates upward mobility and fairly compensates educators as professionals in order to attract and retain talented educators.
- Educators are fairly compensated, and there is emphasis on increasing compensation as educators move up the career ladder.

Goal # 4: [DEEC] The Department and Board of Early Education and Care provide the leadership, direction and resources to meet the mission of the agency with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of the Commonwealth

4.1 Commitment to Quality

- EEC is the state lead resource on early education and care in the Commonwealth as well as for leading developments in the field.
- EEC is known as a national education leader in the development and implementation of licensing regulations, quality standards and practices for all early education and care programs.

4.2 Increasing Access

- EEC provides services and resources in multiple languages.
- EEC provides access to information about initiatives, policies and procedures.

4.3 Continuing Communication and advocacy

- EEC communicates its mission and vision so that the public is knowledgeable of them.
- EEC communicates to state and local leaders and other stakeholders about EEC initiatives and how these initiatives benefit their communities and the Commonwealth.
- All EEC staff and community partners have comprehensive information about educators and early education and care programs.
- EEC provides information about early education and care issues in the State and leading developments in the field.
- Communication between EEC, educators, and families is open, diverse and effective

4.4 Sustainable Infrastructure and finance

- All EEC staff members and Board members are knowledgeable of agency initiatives, operations, key staff functions, and the agency's community partners.
- The operational roles of EEC's community partners and consultants have been clearly defined, and are aligned to support the agency's mission.
- EEC has a technology and communication system that responds to the type, style and nature of the information needed by internal and external stakeholders, and consumers.
- EEC has the staff, resources and stakeholder partnerships required to achieve the agency's mission.
- EEC continues to implement policy initiatives that are supported by research, developed through stakeholder collaboration and coordinated with agency operations.
- EEC staff is diverse, knowledgeable and adequately trained to perform assigned functions.
- EEC has developed effective and collaborative relationships with ESE, DHE, other state agencies, community partners, public and other stakeholder organizations to meet its mission and support alignment between agencies.
- EEC's internal controls and management systems are updated and periodically reviewed to ensure they are current and meeting the highest standards with integrity and accountability.
- EEC has a system that collects, analyzes and disseminates program *and child outcome data* to inform policy, program development, quality and implementation

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS WILL BE DESIGNED BY THE DEEC STAFF AS PART OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN