

2011 STAM – CCPRC Meeting  
Workshop E1  
November 17, 2:00-3:30 pm

## **Studying the Collaboration Process: Early Learning Challenge Grants**

### **Description**

This workshop explored the opportunities for studying collaboration that exist in States applying for and receiving Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants (RTT-ELC). Panelists discussed methods that exist for studying collaborative processes and explored what should be measured.

### **Facilitator**

Diane Schilder, Education Development Center, Inc.

### **Presenters**

J. Lee Kreader, National Center for Children in Poverty  
Kathleen Dwyer, OPRE  
Jana Martella, National Association for Regulatory Administration  
Erin Oldham LaChance, Oldham Innovative Research  
Mary Beth Jackson, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

### **Scribe**

Laura Rothenberg, Child Trends

### **1. Documents in Session Folder**

- “Studying the Collaboration Process: Early Learning Challenge Grants: A Brainstorming Session,” J. Lee Kreader
- “What are the Functions of a Comprehensive Early Childhood System?” Jana Martella
- “Early Care and Education Collaboration: A Key Topic Resource List,” Child Care and Education *Research Connections*

### **2. Summary of Presentations**

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Lee Kreader
  - The RTT-ELC application named five foundational areas, including successful State systems, high-quality accountable programs, promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, a great early childhood education workforce, and measuring outcomes and progress.
  - There is a spectrum of collaborations across early childhood systems (including health) and early childhood education and care systems (CCDF, Head Start, prek, etc.).
  - One approach to evaluating systems collaborations is the framework from Julia Coffman for the Build Initiative, 2007. There are also multiple CCPRC supports for evaluating collaboration, including annual meetings and working meetings, the INQUIRE working group, and the *Research Connections*’ Key Topic Resource List.

- **Summary of Presentation #2: Kathleen Dwyer**
  - Kathleen Dwyer discussed a logic model intended to facilitate research on and evaluation of state-level collaborations. The logic model has various inputs and components that lead to the outcomes.
  - Inputs to Collaboration include: the initial design features of the collaboration (e.g., number and representation of stakeholders) and the inputs of the stakeholder agencies (level of commitment to the collaboration, etc.).
  - Process Components include: how the initial design components are put to work in doing the collaborative business. Examples include norms, inclusion, equality, authenticity, problem focus, support, identification, and generative processes.
  - Collaborative Outcomes include:
    - *Example at the State level:* shared understanding of the policy problem;
    - *Example at the service level:* shared problem definition and shared goals and desired outcomes for the set of services; and
    - *Example at family and child level:* outcomes for children, outcomes for families, ability to track outcomes for children and families.
  - Researchers are encouraged to tailor the model for specific State collaborations and to develop research and evaluation questions.
  
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Jana Martella**
  - Jana started by showing a “wordle” illustration of the RTT-ELC Grant. She then showed a systems model of the functions of a comprehensive early childhood system. Within this model, outcomes for children are at the center of the work.
  - Jana then showed examples of the models that States presented in their RTT-ELC applications. These State models showed the many complex elements of the States’ systems and how these worked together.
  - She suggested that people consider implementation science as a way to measure early learning models. Governance requires authority, financing, and accountability, but it is often influenced by many other elements within the system. It can be very difficult to get a grip on what the variables are.
  
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Erin Oldham LaChance**
  - The priority areas for the RTT-ELC were promoting school readiness for children with high needs, including all early learning and development program in tiered QRIS, understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry, sustaining program effects in early elementary grades, and encouraging private sector support. There was also a push the coordinate kindergarten assessments with preschool assessments and sustaining these in K–12.
  - Erin noted that States are struggling with whether they should include family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care in the quality continuum.
    - Head Start programs tend to be included in QRIS, but not in a very formal way (because Head Start already has performance standards, there has to be an incentive for them to join).
    - Another challenge is home-visiting and how it should be incorporated in QRIS, because it involves a person going into a home and differs from how we think of QRIS now.

- An additional consideration is whether or not to include child outcomes.
- **Summary of Presentation #5: Mary Beth Jackson**
  - Kentucky had to consider what makes a State system successful and how one can measure that success. Kathleen’s tool is very interesting; from the State administrator perspective, it is overwhelming to be a part of all of these systems. Is there a way to figure out what the real system actually is?
  - From the administrator perspective, she needs to put on various hats at any system meeting she attends. She recommends a troubleshooting section in the model for things such as leadership changes and financial challenges. Also, models often don’t play out as they are conceptualized in theory.
  - If you say something and no one listens, is it really collaborative? Being a part of developing the RTT-ELC application was an eye-opening experience for her; it was both empowering and challenging. It was stressful, and people have varying feelings about it. However, it pushed the needle and forced some things that needed to occur.

### 3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants

- Lee highlighted aspects of the RTT-ELC Grant that helped States understand how their State systems can collaborate to promote high quality programs. He mentioned resources available for evaluating systems collaborations, including the INQUIRE working group and *Research Connections’* Key Topic Resource List.
- Kathleen presented a logic model that illustrates some elements in State level collaborations. This framework can be useful not only for research but also for policy. She encouraged researchers to tailor this model for their specific state collaborations.
- Jana presented on both the federal application and how States responded to it.
- Erin presented on the priority areas for the RTT-ELC and considerations that States had in their attempts to coordinate their sectors of early care and education with their QRIS (including home-visiting, Head Start, and FFN care).
- Mary Beth closed with her experiences on RTT-ELC and her thoughts about the collaborative process and the need for administrators to wear multiple hats.
- Participants in the group discussion talked about collaborative challenges from their experiences with the RTT-ELC.
  - Time is a critical issue in collaboration; for many States, the RTT-ELC application process benefitted from ongoing collaborative efforts, but the timeline for completing the application was a challenge.
  - Political will and financial considerations were issues (the variable of funding in collaboration, and how this variable might strengthen, weaken and/or complicate collaborations).
  - States might use the logic model to measure their own collaboration, so that over time they can track their progress against the model, and across States.
  - A question was asked about how States grappled with the need to prioritize high needs. Kentucky indicated that the FAQ document that said States could define high needs as they wished; this allowed them to ask State partners what they considered “high needs” children. A major struggle was home-visiting, because services don’t occur in a classroom setting.