Children & Families
Commission of Orange County

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Agenda Item No. 12
July 7, 2010 Meeting

DATE: June 17, 2010

TO: Children and Families Commission of Orange County

FROM: Michael M. Ruane, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Bridgespan Assessment of Early Learning Portfolio

SUMMARY:
At the June Annual Planning Meeting, the Commission received a presentation from Mike Perigo, Partner, The Bridgespan Group on their Early Learning Portfolio Recommendations. The recommendations were the result of Bridgespan's assessment beginning in January of this year to determine how the Commission could maximize the impact of its early learning investments. The objective of the assessment was to develop a portfolio of early learning investments that:

- Is focused on evidence and outcomes
- Has the potential to achieve a significant impact with limited resources
- Demonstrates the power of a catalytic approach for other areas of the portfolio.

Bridgespan recommends that the "Commission adopt a goal to measurably reduce the achievement gap that exists by age five between low-income children and their more advantaged peers in Orange County".

Staff has prepared the attached presentation that summarizes the Bridgespan recommendations and identifies issues for further analysis and discussion regarding the four proposed investment strategies: Pathways, Preschool, Parents and Place. The adopted budget assumes that FY 10/11 will be a transition year and that full implementation of any new or revised programs would be targeted for implementation beginning July 1, 2012. Staff will provide a presentation and receive further Commission direction at the July meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN & FISCAL SUMMARY:
The fiscal reports and recommended actions presented in this staff report have been reviewed in relation to the Commission's Strategic Plan and are consistent with applicable outcome goals.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:
Receive presentation and provide direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. Presentation on Early Learning Portfolio

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Bridgespan Review of Early Learning Portfolio – Follow-up Report

July 7, 2010

Commission Meeting

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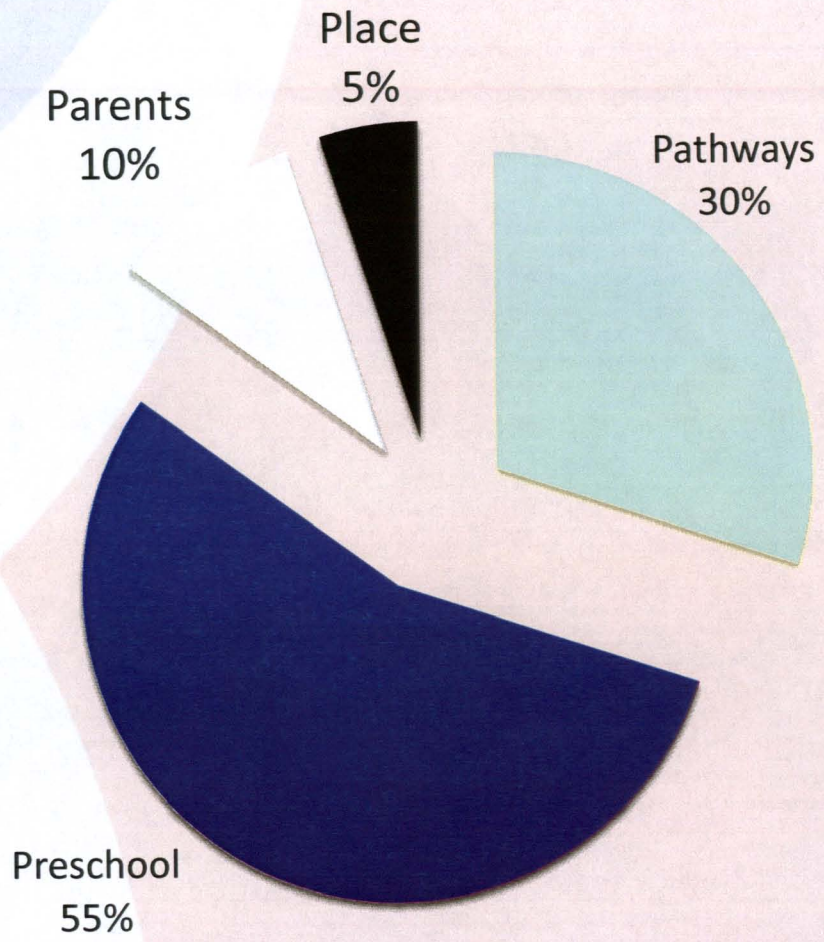
Background

As presented at the June retreat, Bridgespan recommends that the goal of the Commission's Early Learning investments ***be to reduce the achievement gap***. Specifically, Bridgespan recommends four areas of investment in the Commission's Early Learning Portfolio:

1. **Pathways**: Investing in instructional approaches with the potential to increase the quality of the interaction between teacher and child *and* fostering their use across settings
2. **Preschool**: Promoting the use of data and assessments in care settings to spur cycles of continuous improvement to improve the quality of interactions between teacher and child
3. **Parents**: Building the capacity of organizations that help disadvantaged parents to become excellent first teachers for their children
4. **Place**: Investing in select geographies in partnership with other funders and community organizations to demonstrate the power of holistic supports for disadvantaged children and families on the early learning outcomes of children

Early Learning Path Forward

- Bridgespan recommends that the Commission invests $10 million annually (FY 10/11 budget is $8.5 mil) or approximately in 35% to 40% of total portfolio beginning in FY 11/12



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Pathways: Scale Evidence-based Instructional Tools and Approaches

- What are the Bridgespan Recommended Investments?
  - Focus on increasing the use of evidence-based instructional tools and approaches
  - Prioritize preschools that serve the most disadvantaged children
  - Pilot programs, document results and disseminate
  - Provide support to trainers
- How well does the Commission's Current Portfolio Align with these Recommendations?
  - Commission has supported use of curriculum and instructional strategies in school readiness programs
  - Several pilots efforts have been underway in Anaheim school districts (Anaheim City and Magnolia) and through MIND Institute and THINK Together in Santa Ana
- What further analysis is planned or underway to assess this Recommendation?
  - Resources necessary to expand evidenced-tools
  - Potential school districts interested in piloting potential tools and curriculum
  - Role of school readiness coordinators in quality and curriculum development

Preschool: Change Focus from Quantity to Quality

- What are the Bridgespan Recommended Investments?
  - Focus resources on quality improvements in district-operated state funded preschools
  - Codify lessons learned and outcomes from the Anaheim Expansion project (AEP) to create demand among districts
  - Recast the role of the School Readiness Coordinator to focus on improving preschool quality
  - Establish preconditions for funding that require districts to collect and use data consistently; Provide support on use of data
  - Fund intensive support for teachers to improve practice; Support incentives for quality improvement
- How well does the Commission's Current Portfolio Align with these Recommendations?
  - Funding for Anaheim Expansion Program (AEP) was renewed (at reduced level)
  - Exploring Anaheim and Magnolia AEP as model for new quality focus for School Readiness Coordinators
- What further analysis is planned or underway to assess this Recommendation?
  - Capacity of districts to employ and analyze data
  - Resources required to support this effort based on other national and state models

Parents: Scale Approaches to Create High-Quality Home-based Early Learning

- What are the Bridgespan Recommended Investments?
  - Provide business planning assistance and funding to build organizational capacity
  - Provide technical assistance support for funding
  - Provide business planning and fund development assistance to support new providers
  - Support convening of providers and knowledge codification
- How well does the Commission's Current Portfolio Align with these Recommendations?
  - Technical support continues to be provided to key programs such as THINK Together, HABLA
  - Commission's recent support with Rancho Santiago Community College District's pursuit of Early Head Start funds was a cited example
  - Commission regularly provides grant support and technical assistance and will continue in future years
- What further analysis is planned or underway to assess this Recommendation?
  - No further analysis anticipated at this time

Place: Support Community Approaches to Increase Academic Outcomes

- What are the Bridgespan Recommended Investments?
  - Focus in Santa Ana for the next 3 -5 years
  - Provide technical assistance for strategic planning and coordination
  - Coordinate program delivery of evidenced-based programs
  - Advocate for what works
- How well does the Commission's Current Portfolio Align with these Recommendations?
  - Commission was an active participant in The California Endowment project, Santa Ana Building Healthy Communities (SABHC)
  - Committed matching funds and technical assistance for the federally-funded Promise Neighborhood grant application targeting Santa Ana Communities
  - Commission continues to support new Early Head Start program in SAUSD, transition funding with loss of First 5 CA funds for approximately 440 children and families
- What further analysis is planned or underway to assess this Recommendation?
  - Commission will continue to leverage "placed-based" opportunities

Implementation Planning

- Commission is pursuing opportunities that can be maximized and leveraged to invest in all four dimensions i.e. Santa Ana Promise Neighborhood Grant
- Implementation and transition may need to be staged based on capacity of agencies, school districts and other partners to transition
  - FY 10/11 will be planning and transition year with recommended changes in FY 11/12
  - Opportunities to accelerate implementation through leveraged funding will be aggressively pursued

Schedule for Commission Review

- Staff will report at least quarterly on implementation analysis and solicit further Commission direction. Proposed timeline for Commission review:
  - October
    - Discussion of Potential Implementation Strategies and Investments for Early Learning Portfolio
  - January
    - Funding Recommendations and Strategies
  - April
    - Recommended Contract Actions for FY 11/12