



Agenda Item No. 3
April 6, 2011 Meeting

DATE: March 29, 2011

TO: Children and Families Commission of Orange County

FROM: Michael M. Ruane, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Receive Update on the Early Learning Portfolio Implementation Strategies and Proposed Funding Allocations

SUMMARY:

An overview of the Bridgespan Early Learning Portfolio and implementation plan was presented at the March Commission meeting. The Bridgespan assessment provided a strategy for restructuring the Commission's portfolio of early learning investments to focus on evidence and outcomes, achieve a significant impact with limited resources, and demonstrate the power of a catalytic approach for other areas of the portfolio.

This report builds on the March presentation and presents the recommended funding strategy for the FY 11/12 Early Learning Portfolio. Specific contract actions and renewals will be brought to the Commission at the May meeting. Consistent with other Commission funding renewals, final funding allocations are subject to adjustment due to the State Budget redirection of Proposition 10 funding.

Early Learning Portfolio

Bridgespan recommended 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*". The current fiscal year has been a transition for the Early Learning Programs and marked the first year of the loss of First 5 California School Readiness funding although programs were continued with local funds, to the degree possible.

Over the past year, staff has reviewed the Bridgespan Group's recommendations, including input from early learning experts to develop a revised strategy for funding the Early Learning Portfolio. As presented in at the March Commission meeting (Attachment 1), funding for FY 11/12 is estimated at \$8.5 million and includes both countywide strategies and demonstration programs, and school district programs and services.

Countywide Services and Demonstration Programs

Maximum Funding Allocation: \$2,500,000 (25-30% of Early Learning Funding)

Countywide services and demonstration programs are primarily delivered through community based agencies with a focus on improving the educational outcomes of all children in Orange County. The services are designed to reach all children and to be replicable for countywide impact. Early learning program management provides countywide support and is also included in this area.

The following are proposed funding renewals and recommendations for programs under the Countywide Services and Demonstration Programs. Additional funding detail is included in Attachment 2.

- Early Literacy and Learning programs – Continued partnership with Think Together, HABLA, and the Early Literacy Program to continue development and implementation of early literacy programs. Combined funding of \$1.5 million.
- Math Literacy Programs –Continued partnership with the MIND Research Institute for the early math program. Consistent with prior Commission action, \$300,000 over 18 months.
- Demonstration Programs – Renew current demonstration programs (e.g. LEAPS) that if successful, can be models for replication and brought to scale. Approximately \$450,000
- Program management –Program management and dedicated positions such as the Countywide Child Care Coordinator. Total funding for this category will not exceed \$270,000.

Early Learning Specialists

Maximum Funding Allocation: \$2,500,000 (30% of Early Learning Funding)

The services at school districts address improving the educational outcomes of those children with the greatest deficit in educational attainment that could benefit from intensive intervention, consistent with Bridgespan recommendations. School district funding continues support for ongoing work of school readiness coordinators, renamed as Early Learning Specialists, with an updated scope of services. School districts are the priority platform for delivering school readiness services and are targeted to receive \$6 million, or 70% of the total portfolio. Funding for school districts include ongoing support for Early Learning Specialists and program funding.

Early Learning Specialists

All districts will be recipients of funding for Early Learning Specialists. A priority use of this funding will be to create Learning Links. Districts that do not operate preschools programs will be encouraged to create Learning Links as a priority strategy and/or partner with preschools in their community to improve quality. Early Learning Specialists funding will be allocated to school districts based on each district's proportionate share of the countywide kindergarten population. Total funding is budgeted at \$2.5 million.

Commission staff will work with each district to develop a tailored plan for the Early Learning Specialists addressing each school district's capacities and needs. School districts that operate preschool programs will prioritize improving the quality of teacher/student interaction and quality. This will include:

- Focus on improving classroom quality through data, coaching and curriculum.
- Ensuring use of collected data for continuous improvement and planning (Desired Results Developmental Profile/DRDP, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale/ECERS, Early Developmental Index/EDI)
- Expand use of data for comprehensive quality evaluation (Classroom Assessment Scoring System/CLASS)
- Implementing strategies for longitudinal student progress analysis, including evaluating preschool participation prior to kindergarten entry.

School District Programs

Maximum Funding Allocation: \$3,500,000 (40-45% of Early Learning Funding)

The current fiscal year was considered a transition year as districts responded to the loss of First 5 California School Readiness funding and the Commission reevaluated its future funding strategy to respond to the Bridgespan Group recommendations. The new funding will not replace First 5 California funding, but will provide funding for school district and community level programs to improve educational outcomes.

As presented to the Commission in March, school district programs will be based on a funding formula option based on a combination of enrollment, academic performance and/or economic factors and all school districts will be encouraged to participate at some level. School Districts will have discretion to develop programs that best meet their community needs through implementation of recognized strategies that support children prior to kindergarten entry with school success. The programs will comply with Proposition 10 limitations to direct funding to children 0 to 5 and consistent with supplanting restrictions.

Program funding allocated to school districts can be used at the district's discretion for one or more of the following purposes:

- Health services – School districts have used Commission funding to increase school based health services including expanded nursing. Districts can continue to allocate funding to address gaps and increased access to school-based health services.
- Learning Links – As presented to the Commission in March, Learning Links are emerging as a successful strategy to promote early learning and support parent-child interaction in a stimulating, welcoming environment. Funding may be used to support one-time costs related to a Learning Link, expansion, or ongoing operations. Early Learning Specialists can also support staffing and operation of the Learning Link.
- Speech/language services – As previously reported to your Commission, speech and language services is one of the highest needs as reported by school nurses. Program funding could be used for early intervention to address speech and language delays prior to school entry.
- Classroom quality improvement - For school districts that directly operate preschools, funding can be used to provide teacher coaching, technical assistance, and/or educational materials to improve classroom quality. Additionally, funding can be used for implementation of instruments to measure classroom quality and assist districts in analysis and interpretation of results.
- Early math and literacy services – A priority for the Commission has been the implementation of language literacy and early math/STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education. Program funding could be used to support implementation of promising practices related to math and language literacy.

School District Program's Potential Funding Allocation Mechanisms

Staff examined multiple options for creating a transparent, understandable allocation mechanism for allocating the total program funding (\$3.5 million) among the Orange County elementary

school districts. One of the challenges for staff was developing an allocation mechanism cognizant of three constraints:

- Reduction in total funding available from \$4.5 to \$3.5 million
- Impact of the loss of First 5 California School Readiness funding on the 13 school districts that participated in the program
- Providing for capacity for all school districts to receive program funding at some level

First 5 California's School Readiness program allocated funding to schools with the lowest Academic Performance Index (API) scores in the county. This funding did not recognize that some districts have a high need population within their overall school population and only allocated funding based on school performance, rather than student achievement. Staff proposes relying on the number of students with below and far below basic proficiency as measured by second grade reading scores as the overall allocation mechanism for funding.

The four different allocation mechanisms developed by staff are summarized in Attachment 3. Based on Commission direction, staff will develop specific district by district allocation amounts and return to the Commission in May with specific funding requests for approval.

PRIOR COMMISSION ACTIONS

- March 2011 – Receive Update on the Early Learning Portfolio Implementation Strategies and Investments and Proposed Portfolio Redesign
- January 2011 – Receive update on the Early Learning Portfolio Implementation Strategies and Investments
- June 2010 – Receive presentation on Bridgespan Groups' Early Learning Portfolio Recommendations

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 ACTIONS:

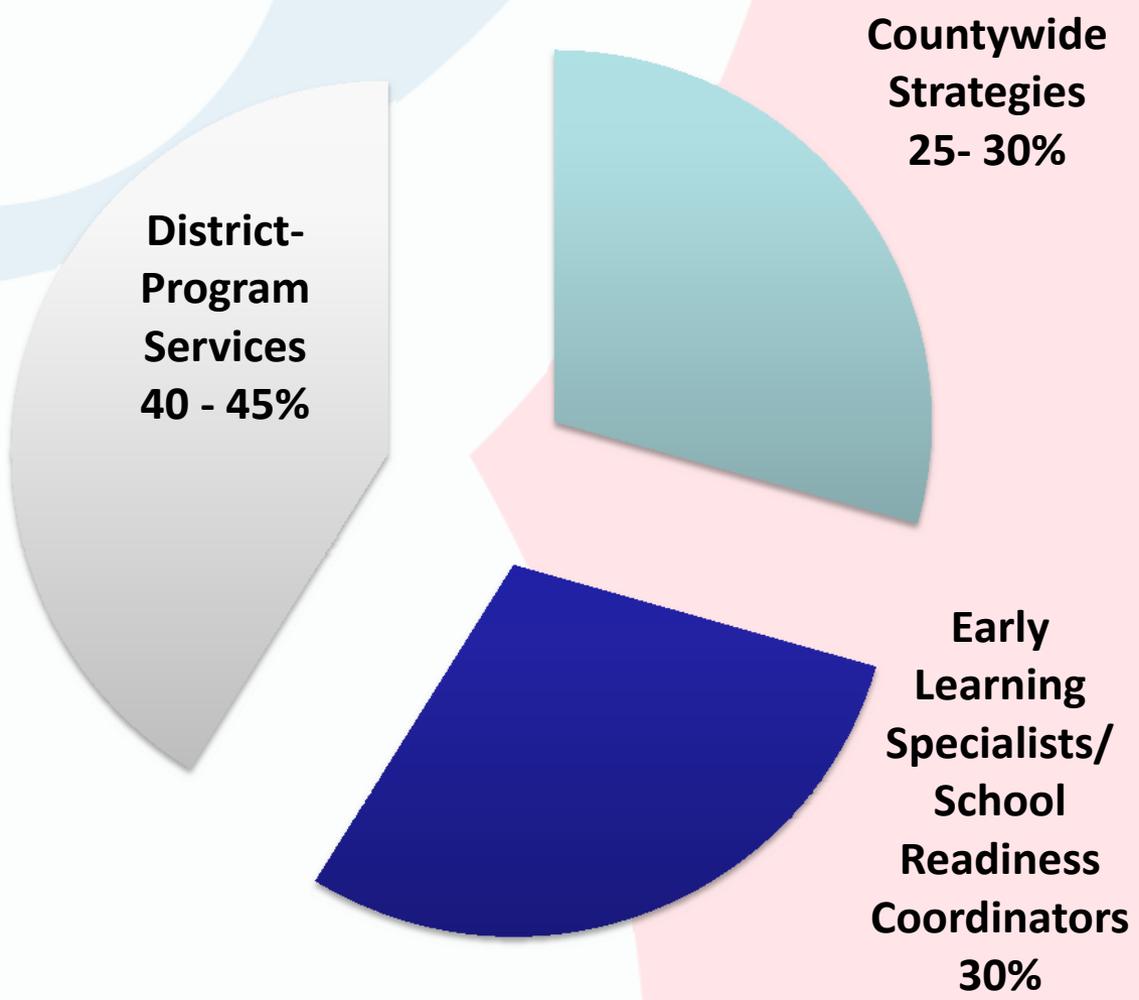
1. Receive report and funding plan for Early Learning Portfolio
2. Direct staff to return in May with specific funding actions

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Portfolio FY 11/12 of \$8.5 Million
2. Early Learning Countywide Services and Demonstration Programs Budget
3. School District Program's Potential Funding Allocation Mechanisms

Contact: Christina Altmayer

Proposed Portfolio FY 11/12 of \$8.5 million



District Services could prioritize, but not exclusively focus on high-need districts

Early Learning/Countywide Demonstration Program Budget
Potential Funding Demands
FY 2011/12

	FY 10/11	Proposed FY 11/12	Notes
MIND-Early Math Project	\$ 220,000	\$ 200,000	Based upon 12 months of 18 month funding renewal in March 2011
THINK Together	\$ 550,000	\$ 1,524,000	FY 11/12 total is for all three programs, and will be adjusted to reflect specific allocations.
HABLA	\$ 525,000		
Countywide Early Literacy Program	\$ 690,000		
Kid Builders	\$ 20,000	\$ -	Will only be available on-line
Countywide Child Care Services Children's Home Society	\$ 75,000	\$ 100,000	Combined allocation pending review
Countywide Child Care Services Child Care Coordinator	\$ 50,000		
Fullerton Joint High School District Teen Parent Program	\$ 123,500	\$ 115,000	Evaluation underway
Readiness on the Road - Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove	\$ 80,400	\$ 80,400	
LEAPS-Special Needs Demonstration Program (Newport-Mesa School District)	\$ 250,000	\$ 200,000	
Providence Speech & Hearing	\$ -	\$ 50,000	Was not included in FY10/11 Early Learning budget
Program Management	\$ 220,000	\$ 220,000	Subject to final review

TOTAL \$ 2,803,900 \$ 2,489,400

Note: Does not include one-time projects from prior years (e.g. Boys & Girls Clubs of Huntington Valley)



School District Program's Potential Funding Allocation Mechanisms

	Option 1: Allocate Based on Percentage of Children in Each District with Low Proficiency	Option 2: Bridgespan Hybrid	Option 3: Tiered Model	Option 4 and 4A: Mitigated Impact Funding
How would it work?	Each district would receive a proportionate share of the total funding based on its share of the total number of children in the county below/far below basic as measured by second grade English-Language Arts scores (2009-10 data). For example if 5% of a district's students score below/far below proficiency on second grade English-Language Arts scores, it would receive 5% of the \$3.5 million.	Bridgespan's "place" recommendations focused on prioritizing investments in the highest need communities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana and Anaheim. Staff modified this approach to provide some allocation for districts with "pockets of poverty". Funding for Option 2 was allocated 50% based on districts in the target communities' share of below/far below basic children and 50% based on all districts' share of the same population.	Similar to Option 1, this option allocates funding to all districts based on their share of below/far below basic students. Under this alternative, funding is not allocated based on a percentage share, but using a step or tiered model based on the percentage of low/below basic in each community. For example, districts with less than 1% of the county population would receive \$20,000. District with the highest percentage (>than 10%), would receive \$400,000. A step range of funding from \$50,000 for \$200,000 would be used for interim percentages.	Similar to Option 1, these options would allocate funding to all districts based on the share of proficiency. However, the ten districts that would be first-time recipients of program funding, and in general, have 2% or less of the low proficient children. Option 4A makes minor adjustment to this funding by mitigating the impact by allowing no more than a 15% increase or 50% decrease in year-to-year funding.
Advantages	Provides some funding for all districts.	Prioritizes funding for the three communities (5 elementary school districts) which collectively represent 50% of the total countywide population of students with high need.	Provides some funding for all districts at a higher level that provides lower funded districts greater capacity for program development.	Provides some baseline funding for all districts at a higher level providing greater capacity for program implementation.
Disadvantages	Amount of funding allocated to highest performing districts may be insufficient for program implementation. Results in some dramatic shifts in funding.	May result in significant reductions for high-need districts outside of three priority communities.	Results in some dramatic shifts in funding, including reductions as districts previously funded at a high level.	Provides some preference for prior recipients of School Readiness Funding (that may only have 2% of County population).