



**Agenda Item No. 5  
March 2, 2011 Meeting**

**DATE:** February 18, 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 Investments and Proposed Portfolio Redesign

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**SUMMARY:**

The Commission received an overview of the Bridgespan Early Learning Portfolio and implementation plan at the July 2010 meeting. 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 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
- Demonstrate the power of a catalytic approach for other areas of the portfolio.

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, and programs were continued with local funds to the degree possible. Over the past year, staff has worked to review the Bridgespan Group’s recommendations, including input from local School Readiness coordinators to develop a revised strategy for funding. The attached presentation summarizes the proposed redesign and strategies for funding for Fiscal Year 2011/12.

**Proposed Fiscal Year 2011/12 Funding Portfolio**

The attached presentation presents a proposed framework for your Commission’s consideration. Staff will be present at the March Commission meeting to review the presentation and receive Commission feedback and direction. The presentation addresses:

- Proposed overall funding strategy and components
- Proposed new role for school readiness coordinators, renamed as Early Learning Specialists
- Proposed funding for countywide and district-based early learning programs
- Timeline for future Commission action

**Early Learning Updates**

In addition to the attached presentation, the following are summary updates on related early learning programs:

*Early Math Literacy Project* – The Early Learning Portfolio includes investments in community-based countywide services. One of the investments has been to develop an interactive instructional software program to improve the math proficiency and problem solving skills of pre-kindergarten children. In follow-up to policy direction provided at the Commission’s February 2011 meeting, a proposal was received from the MIND Research Institute for implementing a Phase IV of the Math Literacy Project. Recommendations for funding are included for consideration today in a separate agenda item.

*School Nurse Program* – In addition to the Early Learning Portfolio strategies recommended for funding with Orange County school districts, the Commission also has made a significant investment in school nursing in partnership with the school districts. Recommendations for continued funding for the School Nurse Program are included for consideration as a separate agenda item. Combining the school nurse investments with the Early Learning Portfolio investments in one contract with the school districts is recommended.

*Status of the Early Development Index (EDI) Implementation* – In follow-up to the January 2011 Commission meeting, and the Commission’s endorsement of the EDI Business Plan, staff has been meeting with school districts to confirm participation for this school year. A priority is to implement the EDI fully in high-need school districts in order to provide the Commission and its partners with baseline data as new investments are made. Staff is exploring fund leveraging options with school districts to ensure that teacher stipends can be recognized this year.

*Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) Plus Program* – The Commission previously authorized the submission of an application to First 5 California to participate in the CARES Plus program. Funding would support both a planning phase and program implementation to expand preschool quality and classroom evaluation. The CARES Plus program would complement the Commission’s investment in the Anaheim Expansion Program and would support the proposed funding strategy for the Early Learning Portfolio. An application was submitted to First 5 California in January 2011 with notification of award anticipated by mid February. Contracted project planning was anticipated to start by February 16, 2011. Recently, Commissions who submitted applications were notified that the funding announcement would be delayed. If notification of award is received prior to the next Commission meeting, initial project planning can begin through redeployment of a minimal amount of existing Commission consultant resources.

## **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.

## **PRIOR COMMISSION ACTION**

- January 2011 – Received update on the Early Learning Portfolio Implementation Strategies and Investments.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Provide direction to staff.

**ATTACHMENT:**

1. Early Learning Portfolio: Preliminary Redesign Recommendations

**Contact:** Christina Altmayer

# **Early Learning Portfolio**

## **Preliminary Redesign Recommendations**

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# Background

At the June 2010 retreat, Bridgespan presented its findings from its Early Learning Portfolio Assessment. Bridgespan recommended that the goal of the Commission's Early Learning investments be *to reduce the achievement gap* through *investing in evidence-based strategies* and *by focusing on elevating* the achievement for those children at the greatest risk for educational outcomes and four primary focus areas:

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

This report provides a preview of proposed implementation recommendations.



# FY 10/11 Early Learning Portfolio

- Early Learning Portfolio for current fiscal year was a transition year and included \$10.7 million (including \$2.2 million of one-time and carryover funding)
  - Language and math literacy (\$1.9 mil)
  - Community based programs (\$1.0 mil)
  - School District-based Services (\$6.9 mil)
    - School Readiness Coordinators (\$2.5 mil)
    - Transition support for 13 former State School Readiness Programs (health services, case management support)
    - Program grants that have been renewed
- FY 11/12 Portfolio has been reevaluated to:
  - Align with the Bridgespan Group recommendations
  - Continue the school district partnership
  - Balance the need to address children most at risk with the goal of improving outcomes for all children in Orange County (e.g. early math)

# Proposed Approach for Early Learning Renewals

- Assumptions/Principles
- Overall Framework
- Countywide Investments
- Role of School Readiness Coordinators
- District Specific Services



# Assumptions

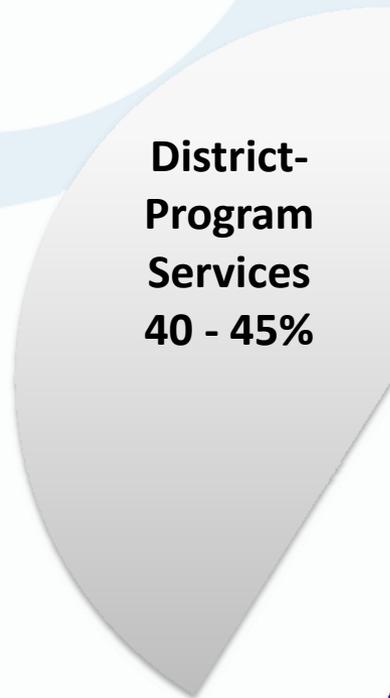
Early Learning Funding Portfolio will be restructured to support:

- **Countywide Services** will focus on improving the educational outcomes of all children in Orange County through:
  - Demonstration programs (e.g. early math)
  - Services designed to reach all children
  - Technical assistance for replicable programs
  - Funding for early math and language literacy as well as community agencies
- **School District Services** will focus on improving the educational outcomes of those children with the greatest deficit in educational attainment that could benefit from intensive intervention, consistent with Bridgespan recommendations

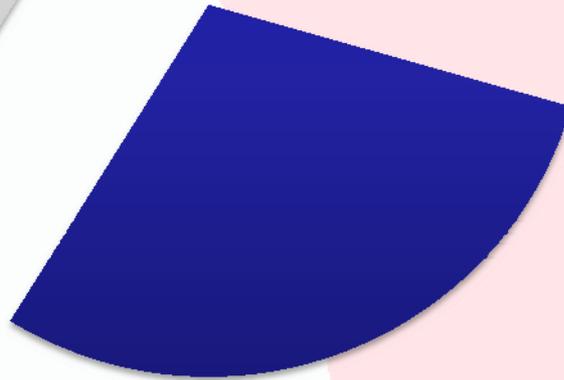
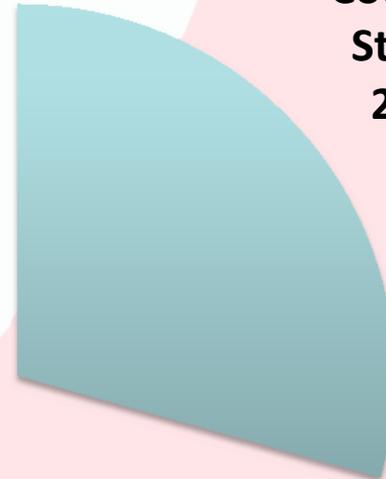
# Assumptions

- Develop an Early Learning Portfolio that:
  - Continues dedicated early learning staff at every districts
  - Supports implementation of early learning strategies, with emphasis on districts with children most at risk for poor educational objectives
    - Open, non-competitive approach for district participation
    - Discretion for districts to develop programs that best meet their community needs with recognized strategies to support children prior to K-entry with school success
    - Ensure compliance with Prop 10 restrictions (supplanting, target population)
  - Provides opportunity to test and bring innovative solutions to scale

# Proposed Portfolio FY 11/12 of \$8.5 million



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



# Countywide Investments

*25-30% of total Funding*

- Designed to meet common countywide needs:
  - Early Literacy
  - Math Literacy
- Test and pilot new emerging successful strategies and partnerships
- Provide models that could be eventually taken to scale throughout Orange County (e.g. early math)



# School District Partnerships

## *70 – 75% of total funding*

- Partnership with school districts to meet and address local educational needs continues as priority. All districts will have funding available to support:
  - School Readiness Coordinators (new scope/title)
  - Local School District-Based Funding
- Support all school districts, while focusing on districts with highest needs to promote improved educational outcomes:
  - Allocate a portion of funding to all district based on kindergarten class size for determining school readiness coordinators
  - Allocate a portion of funding to all districts based on proportion of children with lowest reading scores
  - Staff is exploring options that vary allocations between all districts and high-need districts



# Proposed Funding Strategy for School District

## School Readiness Coordinators (Early Learning Specialist)

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## Funding for Early Learning Programs

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*Allocated to all districts based on district's share of the total County kindergarten pop. Each district will receive between .5 or 2 FTE.*

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*Allocated to all districts using a formula that allocates based on the number of children below/far below reading proficiency (2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading scores). District prioritizes among eligible uses:*

↙ ↘

### *Districts that operate preschool programs*

- Focus on improving classroom quality through data, coaching and curriculum

### *Districts that do not operate preschool programs*

\* Create Learning Links (must have sustainability strategy) OR focus on improving quality of community preschools within their district

One-time catalytic

Additional /health nurses

STEM/Early Literacy

Learning Link

Speech & Language

Classroom Quality



# School Readiness Coordinators

## *Districts with Preschools*

- **New Role:**
  - Change Title – Early Learning Specialist – Funding a minimum of .5 FTE Specialist at each school district
- **Data Evaluation and Planning**
  - Ensuring use of collected data for continuous improvement, planning (DRDP, ECERS, EDI)
  - Expand use of data for comprehensive quality evaluation (CLASS)
  - Work with districts for longitudinal data analysis
  - Make progress on evaluating preschool participation prior to kindergarten entry
- **Coaching and Support**
  - Provide coaching and support for teachers to improve classroom quality
  - Coaching and support on addressing children with developmental issues, esp. speech and language
- **Curriculum**
  - Ensure use of standard curriculums for math and english literacy
- **Develop Multi-year Milestones**
  - Develop three-year sustainability targets
  - Commitments from district in terms of data and support



# School Readiness Coordinators

## *Districts without Preschools Programs*

- **New Role:**
  - Change Title – Early Learning Specialist – Funding a minimum of .5 FTE Specialist at each school district
- **Implement Innovative Community Strategies**
  - Encourage adaption of successful Learning Link model to provide math and language literacy in a flexible environment (preferred option)
  - Replicate successful models
- **Provide support to community preschools**
  - Some districts have successfully worked with community-based preschools to improve classroom quality and strengthen curriculum

# Potential Uses of School District Funds for Early Learning

- School District will be provided discretion to allocate funding to local needs and priorities considering:
  - Prior programs
  - Lessons Learned
  - Emerging successful practices, such as Learning Links
  - Increased focus on classroom quality and STEM
- Proposed program must reflect emerging promising practices, not supplant and be specifically geared to preschool population



# Implementation Challenges

- Transition from First 5 CA school readiness funding model
  - State-driven criteria that did not necessarily account for size/magnitude of need in communities
  - Funding was successful in significantly expanding local capacity
- Balancing “high need” communities with the needs of all communities: Focus on high-need communities, but recognize “pockets of poverty”
  - Bridgespan recommendation emphasized continued focus on Santa Ana, Garden Grove and Anaheim
  - These districts collectively represent 50% of the total County population of the children below/far below 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading proficiency (need)
  - Staff is considering range of funding allocation methodologies
    - Allocate funding only to high-need communities?
    - Allocate funding to prioritize high-need communities?
    - Allocate to all communities based on proportion of need?

# Next Steps

- Ongoing Staff Work
  - Consolidation of contracts for administrative ease (School Readiness Nurse and Early Learning Funding)
  - Transition planning for current funded services that may not meet new paradigm (health services, services for high-risk populations)
  - Implementation and transition may need to be staged based on capacity of agencies, school districts and other partners to transition
- Proposed timeline for Commission review
  - No later than April 2011 – Contract renewal actions