



Summary of Findings

Early Childhood Education Literature Review

Reports Reviewed

The Institute for Public Administration (IPA) compiled a review of the following 11 reports.

1. Sustaining Early Success: Delaware's Strategic Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood System (2013)
2. Mapping Fiscal Resources to Support Early Success in Delaware (2010)
3. STARS First Year Report (2014)
4. Workforce Study II (2016)
5. Delaware QRIS Survey (2018)
6. Interagency Resource Management Committee: Delaware Early Childhood Council Work Summary (2018)
7. Community Needs Assessment (2018)
8. Workforce Study I (2007)
9. Universal Pre-K Parent Survey Results (2018)
10. Kindergarten Registration Survey Results (2018)
11. Child Poverty Brief (2019)

Each of these reports made its own set recommendations or had its own set of data findings, which IPA categorized into one of the following seven categories. The number after each category represents how many of the total 152 recommendations/findings were sorted into that respective category.

1. Funding/Fiscal (31)
2. Enrollment & Capacity Building (27)
3. Professional Preparation and Development (23)
4. Family Engagement (22)
5. Cross-Sector Alignment (21)
6. Data Collection/Tracking and Technology (15)
7. Whole Child Learning (13)

Report Recommendations

All but two reports made at least one fiscal recommendation, making the “**Funding/Fiscal**” category the most popular. It is clear that childcare expense can be debilitating to a family's livelihood. Cost can drastically encumber a family's ability to enroll their children in quality, early care programs. Cost also inhibits the government's ability to support increasing pre-K enrollment, open more affordable, quality pre-K slots, and expand programming. However, each report differs in the most effective and efficient ways to fund early care in education. All reports agreed on the following funding priorities:

- **Purchase of Care Subsidies** – Raising rates for subsidized care to at least 75 percent of the market rate is present in each funding recommendation (*Mapping Fiscal Resources* and *Interagency Resource Management Committee*).
- **Stable Funding** – Funding instability and the need to create a consistent funding stream are prevalent (*Mapping Fiscal Revenues Report*, *Interagency Resource Report*, and *Community Needs Assessment*). To do this, reports suggest developing:
 - An endowment or capital fund for childhood services.
 - Delaware's Child Care Development Fund plan to apply funding and compliance policies throughout the state.
 - Philanthropic partnerships to encourage collaborations among local organizations to achieve larger-scale community initiatives.
 - Private investment relationship as part of the Office of Early Learning's established vision.



Although slightly less frequent overall, “**Enrollment & Capacity Building**” recommendations are also mentioned in all but two reports. However, there is significantly less continuity of recommendations in this area.

- **Number of Slots in Pre-K Programs** – The *Interagency Resource Management Committee 2017 Annual Report* specifies that Delaware should obtain more federal Early Head Start slots, with an emphasis on Kent and Sussex Counties. The *Mapping Fiscal Resources Report* recommends that Delaware should support additional full-day pre-K slots.
- **Improvements to Delaware Stars** – *QRIS Survey* warns that there is not enough incentive for providers to join Stars. Additionally, the report suggests the program must leverage tools for more objective accountability measures. *Mapping Fiscal Resources Report* recommends expanding Stars so all early care and education programs are able to participate in the quality improvement program.

“**Professional Preparation and Development**” recommendations are made in all but three reports. Within this domain, a few common threads emerged, focusing on:

- **Curriculum Writing** – Need for more robust curriculum development training (*Stars First Year Report, Workforce 2007*). In particular, the *Workforce 2007* study specifies the need to target curriculum coordinators, especially given the fact that while 41.4 percent have an advanced degree, only 16 percent had a degree in early childhood education. The *Workforce 2016* study estimates there are 417 early childhood curriculum coordinators in Delaware.
- **Educational Resources Format & Technical Assistance** – The reports provided ideas for the ideal format for teacher training and resources. *The Stars First Year Report* and *Sustaining Early Success Strategic Plan* both suggest using technical assistance (TA) to bolster teachers’ ability to provide the best quality education to children. On the other hand, the *2007 Workforce Survey* suggested encouraging training through courses at higher education institutions. Furthermore, the survey conducted through this workforce study found that higher education courses are teachers’ preferred method.

The *2007 Workforce Study* and the *Stars First Year Report* highlight the lack of institutional support for teachers to access training (i.e., requiring teachers to take vacation days, lack of substitute staff, high cost, etc.). The *2007 Workforce Study* suggests that the state’s annual, 18-hour training requirement for full-time employees be paid at the normal rate.

- **Employee Quality & Rating Systems** – Many of the reports cited the need for better qualified teachers (*Delaware QRIS Survey, Stars First Year Report, Interagency Resource Management Committee Annual Report, and 2007 Workforce Study*). To address this concern, many reports recommend instituting rating systems specifically for teacher education and quality.
- **Salary & Benefits** – As previously mentioned, a common theme is the need to improve the quality of employees in the early care and education field. While other reports provided solutions such as increased training, the *2007 Workforce Study* draws attention to the problem of turnover within the field. The study suggests working to retain employees by providing benefits such as vacation, holidays, and sick leave, while also increasing the time for which employees are paid (i.e., planning time).

Seven reports make at least one “**Family Engagement**” and “**Cross-Sector Alignment**” recommendation. The recommendations in these two areas complement one another in many ways. Every report stresses the importance of coordinating among all sectors and the family. Several reports also indicate that mixed messages are common and duplicative efforts waste resources.

- **Wrap-Around Services** – A few reports recommend home visit programs as a way to streamline services and increase accessibility (*Sustaining Success Strategic Plan* and *Mapping Fiscal Resources Report*). This holistic, wrap-around model of service is meant to be family-centered and accessible, while comprehensively coordinating a child’s medical, home, and educational needs.



- **Transparency** – Parents want and need increased transparency regarding the quality of care and, specifically, how Stars standards are differentiated. Similarly, many medical providers do not understand the special education evaluation needs and/or the paperwork required when registering for pre-k and kindergarten programs.
- **Align Standards** – The inconsistencies of rating standards confuse families and community stakeholders across sectors. To change this, reports recommend:
 - Aligning elementary grade-level standards with the Delaware Early Learning Foundations (*Sustaining Success*)
 - Making ERS Personal Care Routines scoring requirements less rigid and more consistent with state licensing for health and safety (*Stars First Year Report*).
 - Funding further studies to better align Stars standards with other standards and best practices, while better educating providers on these updates (*QRIS Report*).
- **Formalize Coordinating Bodies** – Consolidate early child care and education governance into one formalized entity to ensure coordination, streamlined funding, and more frequent convening of stakeholders under a shared vision (*Mapping Fiscal Resources* and *Community Needs Assessment Report*).

Five reports make at least one “**Whole Child Learning**” recommendation. Throughout the literature review, two main patterns emerged, the importance of:

- **Streamlining Services** – *Sustaining Early Success Strategic Plan* outlines the need to incorporate child development, preventative health, and anticipatory guidance into primary care.
- **Access to Services** – Including expansion of developmental screenings (*Sustaining Success*); strengthening oral health, promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles, and increasing immunizations (*Sustaining Success*); broadening health coverage for all, young children (*Mapping Fiscal Resources*); and expanding social-emotional health services for young children (*Mapping Fiscal Resources*). *The Stars First Year Report* specifically proposes increased accommodations for dual-language learners and children with disabilities by developing STARS standards requiring such accessibility for obtaining Star 4 or 5 ratings.

Only four reports make a “**Data Collection/Tracking and Technology**” recommendation.

- **Shared Data System** – To provide better coordination of services, several reports suggest creating a shared cross-program data system (*Mapping Financial Resources Report*, *Stars First Year Report*, *Interagency Resource Report*, and *Community Needs Assessment*). Such a comprehensive database should link data across administrative systems [i.e., ECE program licensing, Stars ratings; ECE workforce registry, subsidized program enrollment (i.e., Head Start, ECAP, POC)].
- **Technical Assistance** – TA can be leveraged to improve program quality by expanding the supports initially provided by Stars in 2013. Specifically in Star 4 and 5, TA can emphasize accommodations standards (i.e., for children with disabilities or who are dual-language learners).

About the Institute for Public Administration

The University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA) addresses the policy, planning, and management needs of its partners through the integration of applied research, professional development, and the education of tomorrow’s leaders.

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Points for Consideration

Early Childhood Education Literature Review

The *Early Childhood Education Literature Review*, conducted by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), is an unbiased summary of 11 reports. However, there are a few important points for consideration that readers should keep in mind when reading the literature review.

- 1. The majority of the 11 reports are written to a legislative and/or state department audience.**
 - As a result, funding recommendations are prominent as these audiences are responsible for the allocation and distribution of funds for early childhood education. Therefore, many of the recommendations focus on funding.
- 2. Family voices are not captured in a reliable manner or with a significant sample size.**
 - The handful of reports that include family voices did not draw from a robust sample of families to participate in the surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Furthermore, these reports often did not cite the demographic information of those who responded. It is unlikely, therefore, that all family concerns or opinions have been captured in the recommendations and findings outlined in the *Literature Review*.
- 3. Many of the broad categorizations encompass specific recommendations for developing Delaware's Stars QRIS system. The following categories have specific recommendations for Stars:**
 - **Enrollment/Capacity Building:** Increase early childhood centers' capacity by better incentivizing participation in the Stars program, giving them more technical assistance support.
 - **Professional Preparation and Development:** Many reports cited the need for better-qualified teachers. One way to do this would be to integrate a teacher rating system into the Stars program.
 - **Whole Child Learning:** Expanding the standards associated with the 5-star rating to include an accommodation requirement for dual-language learners.
 - **Data Collection/Tracking and Technology:** Stars does not currently provided enough technical assistance for building and updating centers' data collection technology.
- 4. Inconsistencies among reports is not common; however, there are a few examples worth noting:**
 - Some provider believe Stars ratings are inconsistent across time and that Stars standards conflict with other standards.
 - Current available technical support or resources do not meet the needs of providers and families.
 - More information is needed to draw reliable correlations between the Stars rating system and child developmental outcomes.

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