

5.17.19

Early Learning and Educator Advancement Council Alignment

SB 182 references the need for collaboration between EAC and the Early Learning Council related to policies and practices to achieve vigorous and comprehensive early childhood professional development systems in this state incorporating improved recruitment, preparation, induction, career advancement opportunities and support for early learning providers and professionals, including professionals who provide home visiting services.

Oregon has made meaningful strides in supporting kindergarten transitions over the last several years; however, significant work remains to scale culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate transition practices across the state, and to achieve greater alignment across early education and K-12 settings. Furthermore, many communities have implemented full day kindergarten without being fully supported to adopt age/developmentally appropriate classroom practices. As a result, many children experience difficult transitions into kindergarten, contributing to challenging classroom behaviors, chronic absenteeism, and persistent opportunity and achievement gaps between groups of students throughout the early grades, impacting overall learning trajectories.

EAC alignment with Early Learning Division staff and providers in Oregon could establish shared professional culture and practice between early education and kindergarten to grade 3 (K-3) supporting all domains with attention to:

- Professional Learning Teams, consisting of both early learning and kindergarten to grade 3 (K-3) educators, with participation in shared statewide and regional professional learning activities on the part of both early learning and K-3 educators, including elementary school principals and Early Childhood Education directors;
- A focus on high-quality culturally-responsive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate professional learning can help support school districts' efforts to align curriculum, instructional and assessment practices across the prenatal-to-third-grade (P-3) continuum;
- Aligning the work of RENs and Early Learning Hubs can support social emotional learning across the P-3 continuum.
- Improving professional learning opportunities includes increasing the relevance and effectiveness of professional learning through job-embedded supports and the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Early childhood educators also need pathways to early childhood degrees, ongoing professional learning supports, and positive, supportive work environments in order to implement best practice. These conditions can ensure that Oregon retains the workforce it needs, rather than continue to see a quarter of the workforce leaving the field each year.

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Elevating Teacher Voice and Career Advancement

One of the EAC's core values is focused on elevating teacher voice and opportunities for teacher leadership on decisions impacting the education profession. The role of teachers in systems redesign is a focus on user-centered design in which top-down decisions are replaced by teacher-led design teams. A 2014 report by the Center for Teaching Quality, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the National Education Association states:

When it comes to teacher retention, for example, both new and experienced teachers who leave the profession have indicated that they do so in part because of a lack of shared decision-making roles and opportunities to lead. Teaching has been referred to by researcher Charlotte Danielson as a “flat” profession; the dearth of roles in which teachers can grow and extend their knowledge and practices beyond the classroom—while still having the option to engage closely with student learning—can lead to dissatisfaction and flight from the profession, especially among those who crave additional intellectual and career rigor.

Lessons learned from [national research](#) find that schools are still less likely to emphasize the elements of instructional leadership entailing recognition of, and support for, teachers and enhancing teacher voice. Yet, the research points to instructional leadership is independently, significantly, and positively related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools (such as poverty level), and this is so for both mathematics and English language arts. Furthermore, some areas of teacher decision making are more strongly tied to student achievement.⁷

“...faculty voice and control related to student behavioral and discipline decisions are more consequential for student academic achievement than teacher authority related to issues seemingly more directly tied to class- room instruction, such as selecting textbooks, choosing grading practices, and devising one’s classroom teaching techniques. School improvement planning is the decision-making area that has the next strongest association with student achievement.”

In Oregon, school districts engaged in Network-funded School District Collaboration grants found improvements in professional learning in districts where teachers’ voices authentically informed change. Teachers indicated how much they learned and accomplished in two years of implementation and they noted it would have been impossible without funding to compensate teachers’ time to engage. Paying attention to teacher voice was a useful reminder noted by districts of other voices they could also learn from as their user-centered lens expanded to include to students, parents, and community members.

⁷ Ingersoll, R M.; Sirinides, P; Dougherty, P. (2018). Leadership Matters: Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making and School Performance. *American Educator*, v42 n1 p13-17, 39 Spr 2018.