

2020 AESD Legislative Request: Leverage and Expand Early Learning Systems

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

The nine regional Educational Service Districts (ESDs) through the Association of ESDs (AESD) Network are uniquely positioned to build and connect PK-3rd grade delivery systems across the state and for improving school readiness and ensure success through 3rd grade. Over many years the nine ESDs have collaborated with state and regional early learning leaders on foundational work with WaKIDS, ECEAP, early mathematics, early learning fellows, and full-day kindergarten professional development; and have extensive professional development expertise and familiarity with both preschool delivery systems (developmental, Title 1, ECEAP, Head Start, childcare) and the state’s K-12 ESSA priorities.

By working collaboratively and partnering with state and regional early learning organizations and stakeholders, the AESD is poised to elevate the importance of the development of young children, PK-3rd grade, and is committed to improved educational outcomes through coordinated services, family engagement, community partnerships, and high quality educator professional development.

The current regional infrastructure and funding for Pk – grade 3 coordination varies among the ESDs:

- Within each region, early learning staffing is cobbled together from various funding sources.
- All but two ESDs receive ECEAP funding to deliver programs and services specific to that program.
- Consistent and equitable funding *across the AESD* for regional early learning coordination has been variable, insufficient, and unsustainable.
- Equitably resourced early learning coordination for each region would allow for:
 - Greater and more consistent early learning expertise within each region
 - New infrastructure support and coordination
 - Enhanced early learning coordination services
 - Certainty of support continuity among early learning providers, schools, districts

In order to solidify a strong, equitable, and high quality statewide early learning support network, the AESD requests an investment that supports whole-child practices and closes opportunity gaps for our youngest learners.

The AESD offers a statewide structure for early learning coordination that can coordinate shared early learning services and professional development for early learning practitioners, teacher leaders, and school administrators. This request is consistent with the state’s investment in regional literacy, math, and science professional development coordination across the nine ESDs.

Establishing a consistent structure will allow for greater equity across the state and allow for every ESD to leverage system efficiencies and focus additional early learning efforts on supporting early learning practitioners, teacher leaders and school administrators to increase their capacity for sustainable, whole child practices to close opportunity gaps in centers, schools and communities across the state.

Early learning coordination in the space of Pre-K through grade three in each region would:

- Build on past AESD work with WaKIDS implementation, early mathematics, early learning fellows, and common resources for transitional and full-day kindergarten.
- Build each region’s capacity to intentionally target and support, more school districts, community partners, and early learning programs for the purpose of expanding program opportunities and resources so that our region’s teachers are prepared to meet the needs of ALL of our earliest learners.
- Provide more in-depth and targeted technical assistance to school districts and community preschool providers throughout the region, to develop and build upon instructional quality, implementing assessments, specifically Teaching Strategies, assist staff in data analysis, and strategies for improvement in an effort to build potential opportunities for ECEAP expansion.



- Includes providing on-site intensive support and training for Kindergarten teachers, due to the large number of inexperienced and new K teachers statewide.
- Develop and facilitate intentional professional learning opportunities for school district and preschool staff, specifically to increase the number of discussions regarding how they collaboratively can help children be ready for kindergarten, improve alignment, and create smoother transition into the K-12 programs.
- Establish a designated point person in each region to connect statewide and regional initiatives and allow each ESD to be poised and ready to respond to opportunities that can enhance resources, supports, discussions and cross-sector continuity. For example:
 - provide state-wide, regional and local leadership and advocacy to strengthen PK–3rd grade delivery systems alignment so that children and families experience greater continuity as they transition out of one system and set of services into the next;
 - increase cross-sector coordination of resources and supports to children impacted by trauma (i.e., coordination with mental health providers, and professional development support); and
 - ensure access to high quality inclusive preschool programming by connecting early learning providers and school district partners to leverage existing resources and expertise.
- Connect regional early learning efforts with other statewide K-12 initiatives (i.e. mathematics, special education, migrant, student and school improvement).
- Support expansion of programs and deepen supports in key areas such as ECEAP expansions and inclusionary practices.

INVESTMENT

\$1.9 million per year for statewide Pk-3 early learning system:

- This request aligns with current ESD professional development funding allocations for math, science, and English language arts.
- In addition to salary and benefits for the coordinator positions, the request includes funding necessary for partial administrative support and office space, as well as for supplies and travel associated with the position.