

December 15, 2020

State Superintendent's Advisory Council on 4K and 4K Community Approaches
Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Advisory Council Members:

Thank you for submitting the State Superintendent's Advisory Council on 4K and 4K Community Approaches' (Council) 2020 recommendations. I recognize these recommendations are the result of a multi-year process involving input from many voices of the early care and education field, families, and community members. The Council's collective voice speaks to your dedication to Wisconsin's youngest learners, their families, and their communities.

I have provided a response to each of the proposed recommendations. As you will note, some responses extend beyond the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) specific purview. My responses will reflect additional statewide partners who need to be aware of the Council's recommendations.

Council Recommendations:

1. Create a 4K and 4K Community Approaches (4KCA) Statewide and Regional Infrastructure/System.

Request the Wisconsin State Legislature repurpose (the maximum of available funding) the annual 4K Start-up Grant funds (\$1,350,000) to develop a statewide infrastructure/system to provide ongoing coordination, networking, support, technical assistance, and grant opportunities to 4K sites and cross-sector partners.

Response:

I recognize the importance of early care and education providers accessing support from the numerous voices and systems that are part of the early care and education landscape. Successful 4K and 4KCA implementation relies on collaborative partnerships, understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, and engaged stakeholders at the community, local, and state levels.

To address this recommendation, DPI will continue as a primary partner in the Preschool Development Grant (PDG). One of the goals of the PDG is to assess and develop sustainable structures and support for 4K and 4KCA that will carry on beyond the scope of the PDG. This support includes, but is not limited to, my membership on the PDG Leadership Council on the Early Years (LCEY), serving as co-chair on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), providing dedicated DPI staff time to administer and provide guidance on the PDG activities and implementation, and providing over 70 percent of the federal required match funds for the grant.

Through these, I will receive continuous updates regarding the progress of the PDG goals and ensure the focus of this recommendation remains a priority.

2. Regularly Communicate with District Superintendents.

At least quarterly, the Wisconsin state superintendent should intentionally communicate to district superintendents, through existing or new channels, the importance of 4K and 4KCA to districts, child care professionals, families, and community members.

Communication should highlight the significance of high-quality 4K and early education as a foundation for future success in education (social and emotional, and academic) and the need for ongoing strategic communication among 4K, community partners, and the early elementary grades.

Response:

Within my role as state superintendent, I have always highlighted the importance of early childhood education for the future of our state. This communication has happened through different venues and across different audiences, including my annual State of Education Address, hearings with state legislators, as well as educational leadership conferences, such as the Wisconsin State Education Conference and Promoting Early Childhood.

As I continue to share the importance of early childhood, I will identify additional opportunities to communicate with district superintendents, such as DPI ConnectEd stories, DPI social media channels, and targeted district administrator emails. These communications will highlight why connections among public schools and community resources (childcare and Head Start), and high-quality early education contribute to the overall wellbeing of communities in Wisconsin. Strong community partnerships and the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices have a vital role in promoting future success for children and families as they continue their educational journeys.

3. Promote Effective Cross-Sector Family and Community Engagement.

Request the Department of Children and Families, Department of Health Services, and Head Start programs partner with DPI to do the following:

- 1) Jointly fund a comprehensive state scan of how current state and federal funds are being used to support young children and families, and develop and propose policy changes to support capacity needs for effective family and community engagement.
- 2) Develop and disseminate consistent evidence-based technical assistance to early care and education providers to support implementation of effective practices for community and family engagement.

Response:

Family and community engagement is one of my five focus areas to support DPI's mission of educational equity. As a department, we are engaged in a multi-year process to identify how we have been engaging families and what needs to be done to provide meaningful support to districts to move beyond family involvement toward true family engagement. This work has involved representation from all divisions within the DPI, families, and community members.

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Your recommendation highlights the need for this work to expand beyond the DPI and actively engage additional partners who are central to the lives of Wisconsin's youngest children and their families. As state superintendent, I encourage department staff to collaborate with stakeholders, outside agencies, and organizations.

This recommendation speaks to additional commitments from the Department of Children and Families, Department of Health Services, and Head Start leadership in Wisconsin. As the ECAC co-chair, I will share this recommendation with the ECAC members for consideration, on behalf of the Council. I believe the ECAC is the venue to move this forward and actively engage our statewide partners.

Thank you for your commitment and contributions to Wisconsin's earliest learners and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn S. Taylor". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Carolyn Stanford Taylor
State Superintendent

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