



# **Accountability in Early Childhood Education**


**NCSL 2007 Annual Meeting**

**Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan,**  
Columbia University & Yale University

**Dr. Thomas Schultz**  
The Pew Charitable Trusts



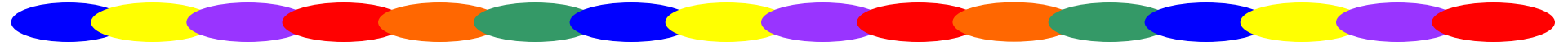
# *Overview*

- 
- *Part I: Background*
  - *Part II: Key Challenges*
  - *Part III: Proposed System Design*
  - *Part IV: Action Steps*




*Part I:*


*Background*



# *Origins*

- 
- Conceived by The Pew Charitable Trusts as part of their Advancing Quality Pre-K For All initiative.
  - Additional funding from the Foundation for Child Development and the Joyce Foundation.
  - Task Force convened in fall, 2005, report release fall, 2007.
  - Presentation reflects progress-to-date.

# *Impetus*

- 
- Increased attention to early learning
  - New state leadership efforts:
    - Systems of early childhood services
    - Funding specific programs
    - Oversight and improvement of local agencies
    - Building P-21 and PK-3 continuum
  - Accountability movement
  - New interest in child and program data

# *Task Force Members*

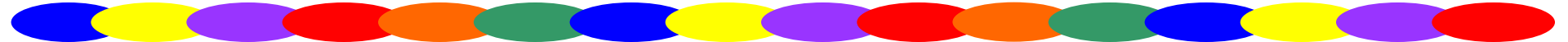


- Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, Chair
- Dr. Eugene Garcia, Vice-Chair
  - Dr. W. Steven Barnett
  - Ms. Barbara Bowman
  - Dr. Mary Beth Bruder
  - Dr. Lindy Buch
  - Dr. Maryann Santos de Barona
  - Ms. Harriet Dichter
  - Mr. Mark Friedman
  - Dr. Jacqueline Jones
  - Dr. Joan Lombardi
  - Dr. Samuel Meisels
  - Ms. Marsha Moore
  - Dr. Robert Pianta
  - Dr. Donald Rock




*Part II:*

*Key Challenges*



# *Four Challenges*

- 
1. Structural Challenges
  2. Conceptual Challenges
  3. Technical Challenges
  4. Resource Challenges

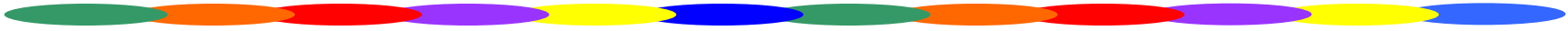



# *Challenges: Structural*



- Fragmented non-system of programs for preschool-aged children
- Disjointed early childhood and public education policies

# *Multiple Standards and Assessments*




	<b>Child Care</b>	<b>Head Start</b>	<b>State PreK</b>	<b>Special Education</b>
<b>Program Quality Standards</b>	State Licensing Standards (50 states) Quality Rating Systems (QRS) (13 states + 29 pilots)	Program Performance Standards	State Program Standards (39 states)	IDEA regulations State program standards
<b>Assessing Program Quality</b>	Licensing Visits QRS Assessments (13 + 29)	PRISM Reviews	Program Monitoring (30 states)	State Program Monitoring
<b>Standards for Children's Learning</b>	Early Learning Guidelines (49 states)	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework	Early Learning Guidelines (49 states)	3 functional goals
<b>Child Assessments</b>	No current requirements	National Reporting System	PreK Assessments (13 states) Kg. Assessments (17 states)	States report % of children in 5 categories on 3 goals
<b>Research/Evaluations</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
				
<b>Kindergarten to Grade 3 Standards, Assessments, Data</b>				

# *Challenges: Structural*



- Costs, burdens, confusion of multiple standards, assessments, and reports
- Multiple new initiatives all at once
- Pre-K – K-3 disconnects:
  - Pre-K assessments are *not* transferred to schools.
  - Standards, assessments, curricula are *not* aligned.

# *Challenges: Conceptual*



- Reconciling early childhood's focus on developing curriculum based on the child, not on standards
- Reconciling formal and informal approaches to assessment
- Discerning the wise and appropriate uses of data, so as not to track, label, punish or retain children

# *Challenges: Technical*



- Need appropriate assessment tools and methods to report on:
  - Progress/status of young children in all domains of learning and development
  - Young ELLs and children with disabilities
  - Program quality in diverse local agencies

# *Challenges: Resources*



- Limitations and inequities in funding for:
  - Programs
  - Infrastructure
- Risk that accountability efforts ignore and exacerbate inequities in resources
- Doing accountability and assessment right is costly; doing it wrong is deadly.




*Part III:*

*Proposed System Design*

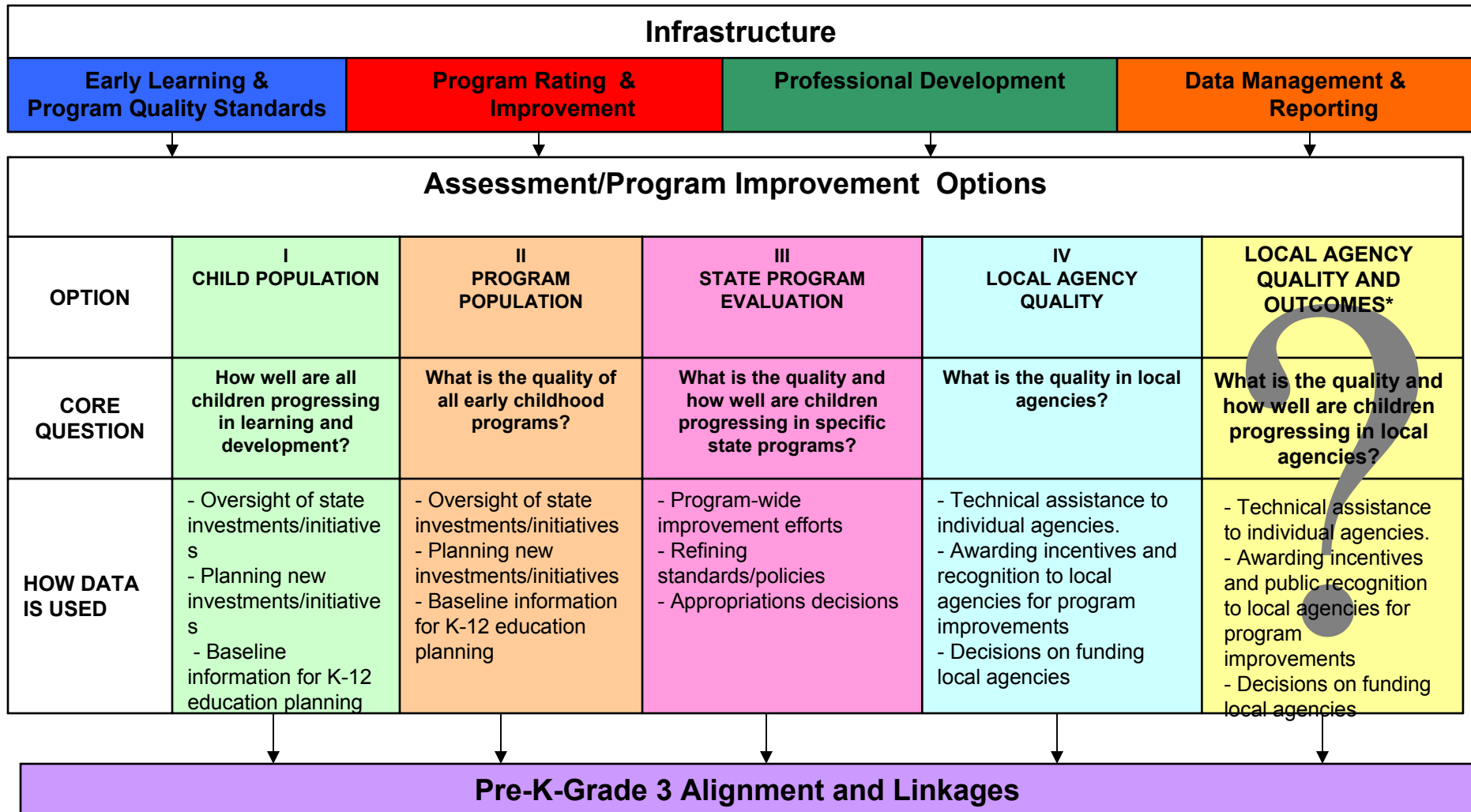


# *Framing Beliefs*

- 
- Accountability is here to stay.
  - Programs should be held to performance standards that are documented and verified.
  - Assessments should inform policy decisions and be tied to program enhancement efforts.
  - Current approaches to accountability and assessment must be reformed.



# State Accountability & Improvement System Design



\*Task Force members have differing views on the desirability and feasibility of this option.

# *System Design: Infrastructure*



## **System Infrastructure**


**Early  
Learning &  
Program  
Quality  
Standards**

**Program  
Rating &  
Improvement**


**Professional  
Development**

**Data  
Management  
& Reporting**

# *Infrastructure*

- 
- **Early Learning & Program Quality Standards**
    - Alignment between:
      - Standards, assessment systems, *and* curricula
      - Standards *between* ages and grades
      - State *and* federal program structures and funding streams
      - Child *and* program standards

# *Infrastructure*

- 
- **Program Rating & Improvement**
    - Assesses and reports on the quality of all forms of early education programs
    - Provides technical assistance and professional development to improve quality
    - May provide public recognition/incentives to reward higher levels of quality

# *Infrastructure*



- **Professional Development System**

- Links informal training with formal education, provides career pathways, links education and compensation.
- Supports training on assessment administration, analysis and use.

# *Infrastructure*



- **Data Management & Reporting**

- All-in-one place data on:
  - Children
  - Programs
  - Workforce
- Unified system of child identification numbers
- Provides for quality assurance of data and assessments

# *Assessment Options*



- States vary in:
  - What they want to know
  - How they plan to use data
  - Available resources
- States may implement one or any combination of options
- Report includes cautions/safeguards for each option

# *System Design: Assessment/Program Improvement Options*



<b>Assessment/Program Improvement Options</b>					
<b>CORE QUESTION</b>	<b>I</b> How well are all young children progressing in learning and development?	<b>II</b> What is the quality of all early education programs?	<b>III</b> What is the quality and how are children progressing in specific state programs?	<b>IV</b> What is the quality in local agencies?	<b>*</b> What is the quality & how are children progressing in local agencies? 

\*Task Force members have differing views on the desirability and feasibility of this option.



# *Options I and II: Statewide Data on All Children & Programs*



- How data is used:
  - Planning interagency investments/initiatives
  - Legislative oversight
  - Baseline information for public education

# *Option I*



- *How well are all young children progressing in learning and development?*
  - Data on learning status/progress for representative sample of all young children in a state
  - Demographic data

# *MD Kindergarten Readiness Assessment*



- Kindergarten teachers administer modified Work Sampling System assessment to all kindergarten children in November.
- Report statewide and school district trends in overall “readiness” in specific domains for subgroups of children.
- Data used to target new state investments and in school district planning.

# *Option II*



- *What is the quality of services in all early childhood programs?*
  - Quality in all forms of early education services
  - Early childhood workforce
  - Levels of investment/program resources

# *PA Quality Rating System*




- PA Keystone STARS documents and improves program quality through standards, professional development, incentives, and public recognition.
- 4,300 local agencies serving 153,000 children participate.
- ECERS-R assessment tool administered in 1/3 sample of classrooms as part of 4-tiered system of quality recognition.
- State invests \$46 million to support STARS including \$22 million in incentives to providers.

# *Option III: Data on Specific State Programs*



- *What is the quality and how well are children progressing in specific programs?*
  - How data is used:
    - Program-wide improvement efforts
    - Refining standards/policies
    - Appropriations decisions

# *Michigan School Readiness Program*

- 
- Longitudinal evaluation of program quality and children's learning through grade 4 using comparison group of similar children.
  - 5-state program evaluation using a regression discontinuity design and different child assessment tools.
  - Positive results helped sustain program funding in era of budget reductions statewide.

# *Options IV and V:*

## *Data From Local Agency Assessments*



- How data is used:
  - Technical assistance to individual providers
  - Awarding incentives and public recognition
  - Funding decisions by state agencies



# *Options IV and V*



- *Option IV: What is the quality of services in local provider agencies?*
- *Option V: How is the quality and how well are children progressing in local provider agencies?*
  - Task Force members had varied views on merits and feasibility Option V.

# *Option IV: NJ Quality Assessments*



- NJ administers ECERS-R and 2 state-developed tools assessing quality of teaching in literacy and mathematics in samples of 300 classrooms/year.
- Local agencies conduct self-assessments of tools based on state program quality standards. State validates self-assessments in 1/3 of agencies each year.
- Results are used for provider-specific program improvement and evaluating contracts with Head Start and child care providers.

# *Option V: NM Pre-K Program*



- NM visits all local agencies twice per year to monitor and offer assistance on program quality standards.
- Teachers use state-developed observational assessment tool for instructional purposes; agencies report data to state 3 times per year.
- State aggregates results to report to legislature.
- Local agency results are used for program improvement but are not reported to the public.

# *System Design: Pre-K – Grade 3*

## *Alignment and Linkages*



**Pre-K-Grade 3 Alignment and Linkages**

# *Pre-K – Grade 3 Integration*

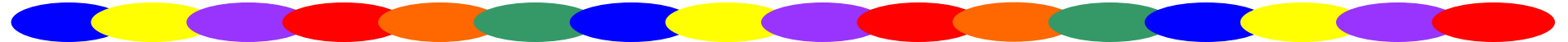


- Align standards, assessments, and reporting on:
  - Children’s progress
  - Quality of teaching/learning opportunities
- “Vertical” teams of teachers/managers to:
  - Review assessment information
  - Enrich learning experiences and teaching strategies
- Joint professional development




*Part IV:*

*Action Steps*



# *Action Steps: Legislatures*



- **Provide adequate funding for programs and infrastructure to support ongoing assessments and program improvements**

# *Action Steps: State Agencies*



- **Develop a strategic plan for early childhood accountability and program improvement system**
- **Create a robust, positive, and rigorous culture for early childhood accountability efforts**
- **Enable local Pre-K – 3 partnerships**



# *Action Steps: Federal Government*




- **“Harmonize” information systems**
- **Fund research and development for better assessment tools**
- **Conduct ongoing longitudinal research on children and programs**

# *Action Steps: Local Agencies*



- **Create opportunities for teachers and managers to review assessments and enhance children's learning opportunities**
- **Initiate dialogue with local school districts**

# *The Benefits*

- 
- **For Children:** Enhanced learning opportunities and improved outcomes
  - **For Legislators:** Better data to guide state policies and investments
  - **For Teachers/Directors:** Targeted and well-resourced professional development and program improvement efforts
  - **For the Early Childhood Profession:** Enhanced public awareness and credibility