

Delaware PDG B-5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan Background

The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) will inform the development of Delaware's next iteration of the early childhood strategic plan to advance Delaware's vision for its B-5 mixed delivery system: all children and families will have access to an integrated early childhood system, from birth through third grade, which provides high-quality services and an environment that supports their growth, development, and learning to prepare them for success in school and life.

This plan must address the State's current priorities for its early childhood system:

- 1) data integration to coalesce data collection and data sharing among agencies and programs supporting young children;
- 2) highly qualified, adequately compensated, and trained B-5 workforce; and
- 3) families' access to high quality programs and services for their children, including sufficient funding; and
- 4) the alignment of services for families between the B-5 and the K-12 systems and support seamless transitions.

While the needs assessment and strategic plan must focus on the B-5 system because of federal grant requirements, the work done must build and strengthen high-quality birth to age 8 services for families between the B-5 and the K-12 systems. This work must build on five core principles that guide Delaware's vision for quality, coordination, alignment, and efficiency of programs and services within Delaware's mixed delivery system from birth to third grade:

- *Whole-Child Development.* Children must have opportunities to become physically, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally healthy, and have access to high-quality early learning experiences. Many factors influence a child's development and learning, and Delaware must address all of these factors in an integrated manner to improve long-term outcomes for children.
- *Birth-Through-Third Grade Learning.* Currently, early childhood education in Delaware extends across two largely unconnected systems—a mostly private B-5 system and a mostly public kindergarten through-third grade system. To set children up for a lifetime of success, we must strengthen both systems and overcome the gap between them.
- *Family Knowledge and Choice.* Family is the most important factor in a child's development; thus, engaged and knowledgeable families are essential to our children's well-being and success. Every facet of Delaware's system must educate families and provide transparent, user-friendly data to enable families to be active collaborators in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services for their children.
- *Inclusion and Access for All.* Delaware's commitment is to a B-5 mixed delivery system that serves all children - vulnerable and underserved children, children with developmental challenges, children who experience trauma, dual language learners, and children either in formal care or at home. The State is committed to making inclusion and access for all a core component of each of its initiatives, embedded into all aspects of program operation and professional development for early childhood providers, schools, agencies, and communities.

- *Collaboration Across Sectors, Agencies, and Organizations.* Cross-sector, interagency, and multi-stakeholder collaboration is critical to a comprehensive and sustainable early childhood mixed delivery system, and this is a distinctive asset of Delaware. Key programs and resources serving young children and their families are delivered and supported by public, private, nonprofit, faith-based, and community-based institutions. The State's commitment is to align and further mobilize these early childhood partnerships.