



Early Learning Division | 775 Summer St NE, Suite 300, Salem, OR 97301

Phone: 503-373-0066 | Fax: 503-947-1955

SB 213: Early Learning Hubs

Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

March 19, 2015

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Megan Irwin and I am the Acting Early Learning System Director. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 213, which establishes Early Learning Hubs as permanent, by amending a previous statute to remove the label demonstration project.

Early Learning Hubs were created to make resources and supports more available, more accessible and more effective for children and families that have historically been over-represented in the achievement gap and under-represented in services. The Hubs are tasked with working with the state to build a more coherent and cohesive early learning system out of what has traditionally been a patchwork of programs and services on the ground.

House Bill 2013 gave the Early Learning Council and Early Learning Division the authority to establish early learning Hub demonstration projects. We were permitted to establish no more than 16 Hubs and could establish up to seven in the first year of the biennium and up to nine more in the second year. We were appropriated \$4 million dollars to do this work.

As you hear members of the community talk about their Hubs, please keep in mind that the work they are describing has happened in a short amount of time with a relatively small amount of funding. Each Hub received \$50,000 in start up coordination funding and \$15 per child to operate. For our Hub with the largest population that came to just about \$900,000 and for our most remote Hub it was less than \$200,000. This is less than the former commissions on children and families had to operate and the Hubs have done really exciting and different things with these limited funds, living up to their charge to be innovative and outcomes focused.

This statute also laid out basic requirements for Hubs including governance and participation requirements, a 15% cap on administrative overhead, and directions for the Early Learning Council to establish metrics.

The Hubs have four core responsibilities:

- Identify the populations of children in their communities most at risk of arriving at kindergarten unprepared for school.
- Identifying the specific needs of these children and their families.
- Working across sectors to connect children and families to services and supports that will meet their needs.
- Accounting for outcomes across the system.

Broadly speaking, the hubs are responsible for working with the state to make sure that the early childhood system is aligned, coordinated and family centered, that children are supported to enter school ready to succeed and that children are raised in healthy, stable and attached families.

The Hubs are creating regional strategies for how to support a focused population of children across the birth through school continuum for the first time in our state.

One of the main reasons we need a locally based coordinators is that our “system” to date has really been a loose collection of programs and services. Some are public, some – like child care – are private businesses, most have really specific eligibility requirements, almost all have long wait lists.

- The problem with this kind of approach is that it relies on people who need services finding their way to them – and relies on a program having a slot open when they do.
- It also ties funding up into programs with specific rules and guidelines limiting the ability to really innovate – AND programs are busy conducting their core business which means they also don’t have a lot of time to think about organizing around innovative solutions to serving un-served children and families.
- That’s a problem because there are a large number of children – about 25% of our under 5 population – who are exposed to risk factors that impact their development and their readiness for school.
- Further, we estimate that we’re only serving about 12.4% of our under 5 population in formal early learning services right now.

- The Hubs don't solve all of these problems of course, but they are set up to take us a long way toward solutions because they have the power to hone in on the problem locally, convene partners around local problem solving, and push for and help resource innovation and change.

Over the last year, 16 Hubs have been locally developed across the state. The oldest Hub signed its contract with the state 11 months ago and the youngest signed its contract with us in February. In terms of service areas, the entire state is covered. Our staff is currently working with three regions to finalize their strategic plans and governance models so that the Council can approve a contract with them.

One thing that is interesting to note about the way this system has developed is that the organizations and people who have stepped forward to build and lead Hubs are really different and diverse. Lead organizations for the Hubs include:

- A coordinated care organization
- A community college
- Four non-profits
- A community action agency
- Six ESDS
- Two county governments

The legislation that created Hubs called for Hubs to be accountable to metrics and as this committee contemplates this legislation that will remove the demonstration project language, we wanted to share with you what those metrics will look like over the next five years.

In January the Council adopted a set of metrics that were developed by a group of Hub leaders, Hub partners and measurement experts over the course of six months.

These metrics lay out our long term desired outcomes and then stage out short term – 1 to 2 year indicators of success, and medium to long term indicators of success – things we'd expect to start seeing in years 3,4 and 5 as we move from initial organizing work to impacting population level outcomes.

These metrics are all aligned to a few core principles. These principles helped guide the creation of these metrics and made sure key priorities were elevated within the metrics.

In the short term we focused on measures that would create and require partnerships on behalf of the children we are looking to move long term indicators for.

As we move from the start-up phase with the Hubs and into true implementation of a system of the next couple of years we think the short term indicators give the Hubs concrete enough guidance to develop local strategies with their partners and the long term indicators and well defined goals give them a north star to aim for.

SB 213 and removing the “demonstration project” language from the statute demonstrates a state commitment to this transformation and the tremendous work of local partners. I urge your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Megan Irwin

Acting Early Learning System Director