



## STATE POLICY TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE TEACHING THAT IMPROVES CHILDREN'S LEARNING

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*Working Paper: June 1, 2015*

### I. The Purpose: What We are Doing and Why

The BUILD Initiative (BUILD) and The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) support state policymakers to implement early learning and development policies, programs, and practices that improve outcomes for all young children. Together we have embarked on an initiative to strengthen prominent policy levers that aim to promote effective early childhood teaching and learning for children from birth through third grade.

We have conceptualized this initiative as a collaborative effort and have engaged state leaders and national experts to provide ideas, best practices, and resources that can inform “what” policies and practices can most effectively advance teaching quality *and* “how” those policies and programs can be implemented to effectively support teaching and learning. Our goal is to facilitate joint problem solving for stakeholders who have the responsibility to guide early childhood policy and practice in their states.

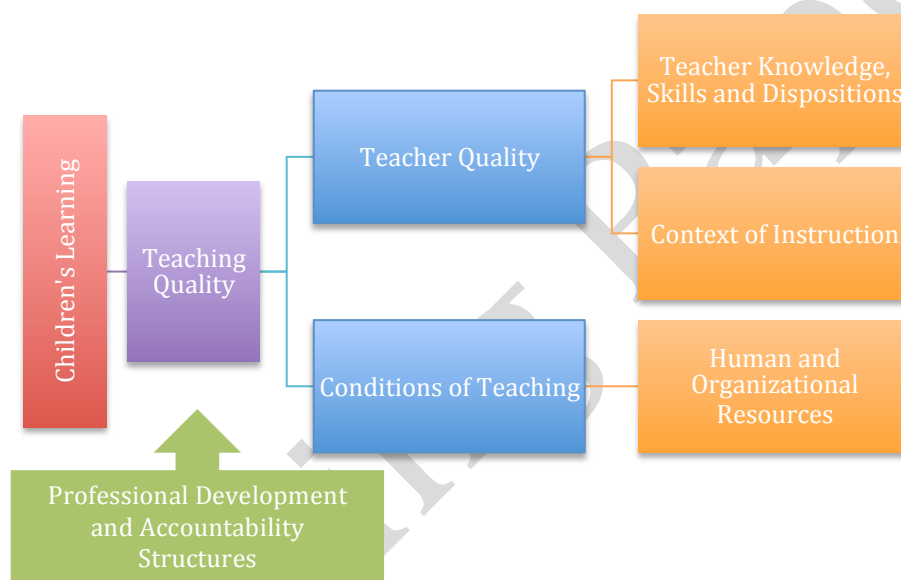
To begin this work, BUILD and CEELO, with the support of the Alliance for Early Success, convened a Think Tank on October 1, 2014 with selected leaders to share insights and expertise on the best strategies and opportunities for improve early childhood teaching and learning. We set the stage for the meeting with Linda Darling Hammond’s (2012) description of teaching quality:

*Teaching quality refers to strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn. Teaching quality is in part a function of teacher quality—teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions—but it is also strongly influenced by the context of instruction: the curriculum and assessment system; the “fit” between teachers’ qualifications and what they are asked to teach; and teaching conditions, such as time, class size, facilities, and materials. If teaching is to be effective, policymakers must address the teaching and learning environment as well as the capacity of individual teachers. (p. 3)*

We then asked the group to address the following two questions:

- What are the *consistent supports and sensible accountability systems* needed to drive teaching quality that will result in improved outcomes for children?
- What guidance can we give to states about these “powerful and few” core state policies that improve teaching quality and result in significant outcomes for children?

Based on deep discussion and an examination of the research and current practice, we agreed to focus on two primary policy levers that drive teaching quality: **professional development and accountability structures**. The following figure displays the theory of change that we developed using Darling Hammond’s definition of teaching quality and our focus on the two policy levers that has guided our collaboration.



In our work, *professional development structures* include the policies that guide early childhood teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional learning that transpires as teachers hone their skills through, for example, training and job-embedded professional development. *Accountability structures* include the systems that assess and support teacher and program/school quality and include teacher evaluation systems, teacher licensure and certification, program quality monitoring, and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). Both professional development and accountability structures are grounded in learning, professional, and programs standards.

To be sure, other factors significantly impact effective instruction and children’s well-being. Chief among them is a child’s family and community context. It has been well established that a family’s influence on a child’s development is paramount and that early childhood programs, coupled with comprehensive support services that enhance children’s mental and physical well-being, combine to help young children thrive. Adequate financing for the early childhood system is also critical. Current funding levels do not provide children from families with factors that place them at risk for school failure with sufficient access to quality early learning

opportunities. Resources are also needed to adequately compensate and support the early childhood workforce. Although comprehensive family and community engagement and system financing are fundamental to realizing the potential of high quality early childhood programs, they warrant focused attention in their own right and are beyond the scope of our work. The current project focuses strategically on specific opportunities within states' professional development systems and accountability frameworks that appear to most directly enhance teaching quality and support children's development and learning.

This working paper describes our collaborative thinking about the promising approaches for implementing policies at sufficient depth and scale to make a difference for young children. It begins with a brief review of research on effective early childhood teaching practices. We contend that professional development and accountability structures need to have a laser focus on supporting teachers to enact these practices. We then describe several "implementation factors" that determine whether policies actually support early childhood teachers consistently use research-based practices on a day-to-day basis. The paper then delves into four particular "problems of practice" that state leaders are currently wrestling with as they strive to implement particular policies and practices. The paper is meant to provide a springboard for our ongoing work to support states as we collectively move toward solutions to the challenge of providing all young children with opportunities to thrive in early childhood programs across the country.

## **II. Effective Early Childhood Teaching: Key to Children's Learning**

We start the paper by describing our ultimate goal: high-quality early childhood teaching that supports young children's optimal growth and development. The imperative to examine and strengthen the policy structures that target teaching quality comes from increasingly rigorous expectations for early childhood teachers to enhance children's developmental outcomes in order to reap the benefits of early childhood investments. Most stakeholders agree that high quality learning environments must be coupled with highly intentional and developmentally appropriate instruction to enhance children's developmental outcomes.

Fortunately, research is deepening our understanding about the instructional approaches that can help children gain critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Specifically, research indicates that successful teachers:<sup>1</sup>

- Develop trusting and responsive relationships with their students.
- Understand and scaffold learning based on individual children's knowledge, culture, language, ability, and experience.
- Individualize instruction by using coordinated instructional tools, such as comprehensive curricula and formative assessment data

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<sup>1</sup> This list of teaching strategies draws from seminal resources such as the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and the Division for Early Childhood's *Recommended Practices In Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education* (2014), as well as from Think Tank participants' review and comments on earlier versions of this paper.

- Integrate content across subject areas and ensure goals are achievable and meaningful to each and every child.
- Model, demonstrate, and provide feedback.
- Focus on language, literacy, and communication throughout the day.
- Establish responsive and reciprocal relationships with families
- Support the development of the home language and English language acquisition for dual language learners.
- Engage in ongoing reflection and personal growth by learning from the children in their care, reflecting on their own teaching practice, and collaborating with colleagues.

Although policymakers and practitioners are gaining clarity about the teaching strategies that most effectively support children’s development, many early childhood teachers are not equipped and supported to implement these practices and too many young children receive inadequate early education (Nores & Barnett, 2014). A major disconnect persists between what research shows, what policies promote, and what teachers do. To overcome that disconnect, we argue that states should streamline teaching-related policies to promote research-based practices.

### **III. Moving from Research to Policy To Practice: Addressing Implementation**

There are many reasons early childhood teaching does not consistently or equitably reflect best practices. During our Think Tank meeting, state colleagues raised particular challenges that influence the implementation of effective teaching for all children, in every setting, every day. More specifically, they surfaced four “problems of practice” that we describe in the next section of the paper. As we reviewed these problems of practice and literature on policy implementation, we noted that there are three “implementation factors” that determine whether policies are effective. They are briefly described below:

1. *Evidence-Based Approaches: To what extent are policies and practices based on evidence that suggests they will reach the intended outcomes?*

Early childhood education researchers are continuously learning more about effective professional development practices as they answer “what works for whom under what circumstances.” A commitment to enact research-based reforms that target learning and development is needed to enhance teaching quality and change the status quo when existing strategies are ineffective.

2. *State and Local Capacity: To what extent is there sufficient human and organizational capacity at the state and local levels to ensure that evidence-based policies and practices can be implemented with fidelity?*

The field’s capacity to consistently support best practice is uneven and often limited. This is due to variations in funding as well as human and organizational capacity at multiple points in the early childhood system. At both the state and local levels, sufficient human capital and a strong infrastructure are necessary to support significant and sustainable implementation of evidence-based policies and practices.

3. *Policy Coherence: In what ways do evidence-based policies and practices fit together within the birth to third grade sector?*

The complexity of the early childhood system of services for children from birth through third grade contributes to the challenge of implementing evidence-based approaches. The programs young children attend are located in community-based organizations, Head Start programs, homes, and, increasingly, in public schools. The program requirements, funding, and accountability structures that are designed to improve the quality of early childhood education need to reflect distinct policy contexts yet provide a coherent focus on teaching quality. As such, they need to build on existing structures and allow for sufficient flexibility with local adaptation so policies can be integrated. This is particularly critical for ensuring coherence between efforts that address children birth to five and efforts focused on instruction in the early elementary grades in the public school sector.

These implementation factors influence how each of the four “problems of practice” that are described in the next section of this paper are experienced at the local level. We recommend that attention be paid to each implementation factor in order to strengthen the links between research, policy, and practice.

#### **IV. Four “Problems of Practice”**

Together with our Think Tank colleagues, we identified four specific “problems of practice” that state leaders and national organizations are working together to tackle as they strive to implement policies that will improve teaching quality. For each problem, we pose a guiding question, describe the rationale for the problem, identify relevant implementation factors, and share tools and resources that can move policymakers and practitioners toward solutions to these challenges. The final version of this paper will also include vignettes from our learning table states to provide examples as other states leaders grapple with similar work.

##### **Problem: Ensuring Racially, Culturally, and Linguistically Competent Teaching For Each and Every Child**

###### ***Guiding Question***

How do we encourage early childhood teaching that is effective and differentiated to be responsive to the rich diversity of children?

###### ***Rationale***

Teaching and caring for young children necessitates a strong understanding of the culture and community context surrounding them in their classrooms and families. Teachers’ ability to honor children’s differences with individualized teaching and learning is foundational for children’s development and building positive dispositions toward learning. However, a great deal of early education policy does not explicitly address how children’s identities – in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, ability, and socio-economic-status – shape effective teaching and

learning. As a result, accountability structures and professional development strategies may not adequately support culturally and linguistically responsive and relevant teaching.

The ongoing reflective practice that is needed to support the development of this deep understanding of children is seeded in teachers' preparatory work and grows through ongoing reflection and improvement in a teachers' practice with an intentional emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity. Indeed, job-embedded support for teachers as they engage in sustained learning about themselves and the children they care for is essential for effectively educating our diverse young children.

### ***Moving Toward Solutions***

#### *Questions about Evidence-Based Strategies*

As policymakers strive to ensure the early childhood workforce has the capacity to enact culturally, linguistically, and racially competent teaching practices, some important questions for state partners to consider include:

- In what ways do existing professional development and accountability policies reflect best practice in meeting the individual needs of diverse children?
- Do existing policies on English language learners support the latest research on dual language programs?
- What sources of evidence including data are used to track progress and improve racially, culturally, and linguistically competent teaching?

#### *Questions about Capacity*

In order to move from policy to practice, there needs to be attention to the state and local capacity of programs and stakeholders to enact reforms. Some important questions for state partners to consider in this area include:

- Do teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development strategies pay sufficient attention to how the early childhood workforce supports the diversity (e.g. race, culture and language) of children?
- In what ways do state and local policies ensure culturally competent instructional leadership?
- How are the supportive partners, such as higher education and professional development and technical assistance providers, positioned to support teachers' and instructional leaders' practice?

#### *Questions about Coherence*

New policy initiatives need to fit together with existing policies and practices in the birth to third grade sector. As policymakers consider how to install and sustain new evidence-based approaches, some questions to consider include:

- In what ways can existing policies reinforce or limit states' goals and strategies to improve teaching for each and every child?

- What may be the unintended consequences of current and proposed policy initiatives for the diversity of the workforce and effective teaching for all children?

### *Some Useful Tools and Resources<sup>2</sup>*

- The BUILD Initiative and the QRIS National Learning Network supported a sequence of professional development and planning sessions related to building quality services and supports for young children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse. Resources from this Learning Table are available at <http://build.fpg.unc.edu/>
- FirstSchool is a promising educational model for providing students with individualized instruction that leverages students' diverse cultures, language, and abilities. FirstSchool developers have recently released a new book that describes the policy issues, effective use of data, and instructional and curriculum practices through the lens of our most vulnerable children. FirstSchool resources can be found at <http://firstschool.fpg.unc.edu/>
- *The Center for Law and Social Policy's* report *Supporting a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale* describes the importance of providing infants and toddlers with culturally competent early care and education. The paper also makes several recommendations for improving the cultural competence of the workforce. The report can be found at [www.clasp.org/publications/cp\\_rationale5.htm](http://www.clasp.org/publications/cp_rationale5.htm)

### **Problem: Focusing Professional Development Policies on Effective Teaching Practices**

#### ***Guiding Question***

How can early childhood professional development systems promote teaching practices that are most critical for advancing children's outcomes?

#### ***Rationale***

Given the diverse experience, qualifications, and job responsibilities of the early childhood workforce, a multifaceted yet targeted approach to professional learning is needed to support early childhood teachers. Early childhood education researchers are continuously learning more about the best ways to support teaching quality (Neuman & Kamil, 2010). For instance, numerous studies have found that coaching focused on particular curricular objectives yields promising results for teaching and children's learning (Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle, 2010). Research indicates that both rigorous preparation and professional learning that is grounded in teachers' classroom experiences can boost children's learning.

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper we provide a short list of publicly available resources to inform readers' thinking about each problem. A more comprehensive and detailed list of resources is available on the BUILD/CEELO page devoted to this project: <http://ceelo.org/teaching-and-learning/>

## ***Moving Toward Solutions***

### *Questions about Evidence-Based Approaches*

As policymakers implement professional development approaches that successfully promote effective teaching practices, some important questions for state partners to consider include:

- Do teacher preparation programs that lead to certification meet the early childhood education profession's national standards and provide students with a combination of rigorous early childhood content knowledge and rich and diverse field-based opportunities to hone their teaching skills?
- Do faculty at universities and colleges receive professional development that focuses on research-based teaching practices?
- Do the state's professional development standards hone in on the core features of effective teaching of young children?
- Is job-embedded professional learning, such as coaching, focused on teaching strategies that have been shown to be effective in helping teachers support positive child outcomes?
- Do quality improvement and accountability structures include expectations that teachers will use research-based instructional tools to individualize instruction, such as comprehensive curricula and formative assessments)?

### *Questions about Capacity*

In order to move from policy to practice, there needs to be attention to the state and local capacity of programs and stakeholders to enact reforms. Some important questions for state partners to consider in this area include:

- Do instructional leaders have knowledge about highly effective early childhood teaching strategies and the capacity to support teachers to implement these practices?
- Are sufficient resources directed to evidence-based, job-embedded professional development approaches?
- Are professional learning strategies implemented with sufficient intensity and frequency to positively impact teaching practices?
- What is the right balance of investment toward staffing, instructional leadership, and job-embedded professional development compared to direct service?
- How are the state-level and local-level infrastructures equipped to ensure that effective professional development strategies are available and accessible to the local early childhood workforce?
- What sources of evidence, including data, are used to evaluate and continue to improve professional learning opportunities focused on effective teaching?



### Questions about Coherence

New policy initiatives need to fit together with existing policies and practices in the birth to third grade sector. As policymakers consider how to install and sustain new evidence-based approaches, some questions to consider include:

- What professional development policies currently impact teaching quality?
- How would a new effort reinforce existing approaches?
- Does the policy or practice have sufficient flexibility and support to accommodate variations in the capacity and culture of different communities throughout the state?
- Does the policy or practice have flexibility to meet the needs of the diverse early childhood workforce?

### Some Useful Tools and Resources

- *The National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning* has developed the *Framework for Effective Everyday Practice* that is used to guide the professional development supports provided to Head Start teachers. The framework and other companion resources are available at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/house-framework.pdf>
- *The National Center for the Education of Young Children* has numerous resources that can inform policies that focus on effective teaching practice, including professional development and preparation standards, key definitions, the professional development policy blueprint, and professional development system components. These resources can be found on NAEYC's website and are brought together in *Advancing the Early Childhood Profession: NAEYC Standards and Guidelines for Professional Development* (Lutton, 2012). The book can be found at <https://www.naeyc.org/store/advancing-the-early-childhood-profession>
- *The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California at Berkeley* has developed the *Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory*, which assists policymakers and other stakeholders to describe the landscape of a state's early childhood degree program offerings. This information allows policymakers, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders to identify the gaps and opportunities in the available offerings, make informed policy decisions, and assess the capacity of the higher education system over time. Information about the inventory is available at <http://www.irlc.berkeley.edu/csce/2013/early-childhood-higher-education-inventory/>
- *Practices for Promoting Young Children's Learning in QRIS Standards* (Smith, Robbins, Stagman & Kreader, 2012) provides a state-by-state review of QRIS components that address teaching practices. The article can be found at [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1070.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1070.html)

## **Problem: Streamlining Accountability Structures that Impact Teaching Quality**

### ***Guiding Question***

In what ways can the requirements of current early childhood accountability systems be better aligned so that teachers in school, community, and home-based settings have coherent and equitable expectations for effective practice?

### ***Rationale***

Numerous accountability structures impact early childhood teachers. Programs located in community-based organizations, homes, and public schools often have different program standards and are subjected to divergent monitoring procedures. The accountability structures for teachers who work with children before they begin kindergarten include child care licensing regulations; teacher certification and licensure requirements; Head Start program performance standards; state-funded prekindergarten program standards; states' Quality Rating and Improvement System frameworks; and the Office of Special Education Program's rules and regulations. Within the public school sector, accountability structures include teacher licensure evaluations that assess teaching practices based, in part, on students' progress.

As a result of the current accountability context, many early childhood teachers encounter multiple accountability demands that focus on different aspects of their practice. This challenge is particularly acute for the teachers in state-funded prekindergarten programs and in early childhood special education classrooms because the public school teacher evaluation frameworks may apply to them but the frameworks may not incorporate an adequate focus on teaching young children. When these varied accountability reforms are perceived as disjointed, teachers and other stakeholders may question their value, resulting in confusion and fatigue.

To enhance young children's development and learning, our systems should become focused on the key indicators that reflect a shared definition of teaching quality. Streamlined accountability for early childhood programs is essential so that scarce resources – most importantly, teachers' and leaders' time – may focus on providing young learners with effective and individualized instruction.

### ***Moving Toward Solutions***

#### ***Questions about Evidence-Based Strategies***

As policymakers streamline accountability approaches that successfully promote effective teaching practices, some important questions for state partners to consider include:

- Do state and local stakeholders have a shared vision for what young children should learn and the best strategies to support children's progress toward those learning goals?
- Are there mechanisms for ECE and K-12 to learn from each other's best practices, mistakes, and lessons to develop coherent support and accountability systems for early educators from 0-8?
- In what ways do accountability structures support teachers' learning goals and ongoing growth and development?

- Is there a mechanism to continue to plan, develop, and improve the accountability systems in each sector and track and align progress coming from each sector?

### *Questions about Capacity*

In order to move from policy to practice, attention must be paid to the state and local capacity of programs and stakeholders to enact reforms. Some important questions for state partners to consider in this area include:

- Are there structures in place to promote collaboration among the stakeholders who are responsible for designing and enacting accountability policies at the state and local levels?
- Are resources devoted to the implementation of coordinated accountability approaches across sectors or systems?

### *Questions about Coherence*

New policy initiatives need fit together with existing policies and practices in the birth to third grade sector. As policymakers consider how to install and sustain new evidence-based approaches, some questions to consider include:

- What federal, state, and local accountability policies are used to assess and support teaching quality – for what teachers in what settings?
- Are teachers’ voices included in decisions about accountability policies?
- Are accountability systems implemented with sufficient flexibility to support the state’s diverse communities and instructional approaches?

### *Some Useful Tools and Resources*

- *The Center for the Study of Education Policy* at Illinois State University has conducted a crosswalk between the Danielson Framework for Teaching that Illinois is using for its public school teacher evaluation system and the CLASS early childhood observational assessment tool. This crosswalk, as well as resources from other states, are available at <http://teecc.illinoisstate.edu/companionresources/>
- *The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research* has developed a brief that provides guidance on connecting learning standards, multi-tiered systems of support, and teacher evaluation systems (Hayes & Lillenstein, 2015). *A Framework for Coherence: College and Career Readiness Standards, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, and Educator Effectiveness* and can be found at [http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Multi-Tiered\\_Systems\\_of\\_Support.pdf](http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Multi-Tiered_Systems_of_Support.pdf)
- *The Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes* developed a paper that describes state teacher evaluation systems and whether they address features of early childhood teaching. The paper provides recommendations for improving evaluation approaches to

support early childhood best practices (Connors-Tadros & Horowitz, 2014). *How are Early Childhood Teachers Faring in State Teacher Evaluation Systems?* can be found at [http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CEELO\\_policy\\_report\\_ece\\_techereval\\_march\\_2014.pdf](http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CEELO_policy_report_ece_techereval_march_2014.pdf)

- The Ounce of Prevention Fund’s paper *A Framework for Rethinking State Education Accountability and Support from Birth through High School* (Regenstein & Romero-Jurado, 2014), recommends that early care and education and public school sector accountability structures set goals focused on effective teaching and provide necessary supports for achieving those goals. It describes existing accountability structures and offers guidance for moving toward common approaches. This paper can be found at <http://www.theounce.org/what-we-do/policy/policy-conversations>

## **Problem: Integrating Conditions into States’ Professional Development and Accountability Structures**

### ***Guiding Question***

How can existing public policies and practices promote teaching conditions that enhance teachers’ ability to improve their practice and provide excellent instruction?

### ***Rationale***

Supportive teaching conditions are essential for teachers to implement the evidence-based best practices that will help children reach significant developmental milestones (Almy & Tooley, 2012). Indeed, Fullan (2007) argues “student learning depends on every teacher learning all the time” (p. 35) and teachers must have supportive teaching conditions that allow them “to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they actually work.” Research shows that early childhood teachers “seek work environments that have a high level of staff cohesion and collaboration, effective administration, and opportunities for teacher leadership” (Whitebook, 2014, p. 13).

Several tools exist to help leaders organize school and program environments to ensure that all teachers have several key supports, such as time to plan, collaborate, and provide instruction. Support for adult well-being, fair compensation, collaborative professional development, mutually respectful leadership, and coherent instructional guidance are also critical to provide a productive work environment. As policymakers look to advance teaching quality, it will be critical to embed these key constructs into states’ professional development and accountability structures.

### ***Moving Toward Solutions***

#### ***Questions about Evidence-Based Strategies***

As policymakers integrate teaching conditions into state professional development and accountability approaches, some important questions for state partners to consider include:

- In what ways do existing state early childhood policies promote or inhibit productive and positive teaching conditions?
- Is there an equitable distribution of resources to support all teachers in all settings, including compensation, benefits, flexible staffing and work days?
- Are staffing levels sufficient to ensure teachers have the time and support to enact research-based instructional strategies?
- What sources of evidence including data are used to track progress and continue to improve and understand teaching conditions in all the sectors?

### *Questions about Capacity*

In order to move from policy to practice, attention must be paid to the state and local capacity of programs and stakeholders to enact reforms. Some important questions for state partners to consider in this area include:

- Do instructional leaders across the sectors have the human and organizational capacity to provide teachers with supportive work environments?
- How much funding is needed to ensure attention and support for teachers' mental and physical well-being?

### *Questions about Coherence*

New policy initiatives need to fit together with existing policies and practices in the birth to third grade sector. As policymakers consider how to install and sustain new evidence-based approaches, some questions to consider include:

- How can tools that assess and support work environments be integrated into professional development and accountability frameworks?
- In what ways can policies that address teaching conditions reinforce states' goals and strategies to improve teaching and learning?

### *Some Useful Tools and Resources*

- BUILD and CEELo have developed a discussion guide and crosswalk of five frameworks and assessment systems that examine teaching conditions. This resource is available at <http://ceelo.org/teaching-and-learning/>
- *The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders* has developed several resources to guide professional development for public school leaders about teaching conditions that are available at [http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/TeachingConditions\\_Handouts.pdf](http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/TeachingConditions_Handouts.pdf)
- *The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment* at the University of California at Berkeley has developed the *Supporting Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning (SEQUAL)* measure to assess the adult learning environment in center-based ECE

settings from the perspective of teaching staff. It examines how settings in which teachers work influence their ability to apply what they have learned through professional education and development opportunities and to continue to develop on the job. Information on this tool is available at <http://www.irl.berkeley.edu/cscce/priorities/rewarding-environment/>.

## V. Next Steps

BUILD and CELO have taken just a small step towards underscoring key policy and practice challenges our field currently faces in its goal to dramatically improve the quality of teaching and young children's learning. But we know change happens incrementally, and, therefore, will continue to tackle these challenges together with our state and national colleagues. A first step is the launch of a state policy Learning Table in the spring of 2015. With selected state teams, we will work hard to achieve specific goals that each team has identified. We aim to learn more about the challenges and find solutions to improve the quality of teaching for young children.

In this working paper, we strive to document our collective thinking and problem solving. We plan to disseminate what we learn through our websites. Check back for further information.

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