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Better Together – Our Collective Work Advancing Early Learning

Roundtable 2018 Meeting Summary

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ROUNDTABLE 2018 | AUSTIN, TX



2018 Roundtable Summary

About the Roundtable

The annual Roundtable is collaboratively planned by the [Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes \(CEELO\)](#) and the [National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education \(NAECS-SDE\)](#), and national technical assistance partners to build capacity of state agency early childhood specialists to provide informed leadership about research-based practices that directly impact the development and learning of children, birth through grade three. The meeting provides participants with cutting edge research and innovative proven practices to enhance state policies and programs. All meeting materials from the 2018 Roundtable are available [here](#).

KEY RESOURCES

[2018 Roundtable Page](#)

[Twitter Roundtable Moment](#).

Attendees

The 2018 Roundtable, *Better Together - Our Collective Work Advancing Early Learning*, brought together [139 colleagues](#) in early learning to Austin, Texas for two days of interactive learning. Seventy-eight (78) attendees were early childhood specialists who represented 30 state agencies¹, local districts, and the Department of Defense. Ten (10) states² participated in pre-conference webinars as presenters or attendees, for a total of 40 states represented in pre-conference and/or conference activities. Twenty-two (22) states came with teams (two or more people).³ See Figure 1 for a visual of states attending.

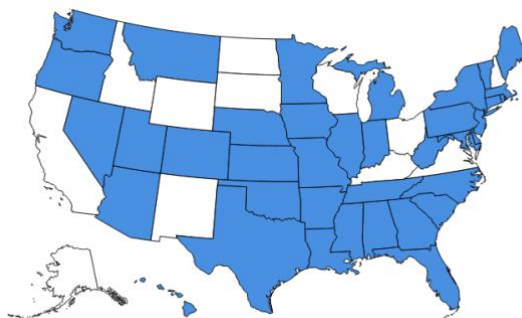


Figure 1 States Attending Pre-Roundtable or Roundtable Events

¹ AL, AR, AZ, CT, FL, GA, HI, IA, IL, IN, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NE, NJ, NV, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, WA, WV

² CO, DC, DE, KS, MA, MT, NY, RI, VT, VA

³ AL (4), AZ (2), CT (3), DOD (3), GA (2), IA (3), IL (2), IN (2), MD (3), ME (3), MI (8), MN (4), MS (4), NC (2), NE (3), NJ (2), OR (3), PA (3), TX (5), UT (4), WA (2), WV (2)

Four comprehensive centers (Mid-Atlantic, Great Lakes, Southeast, Building State and Productivity), one federally funded center (AEM-PDG), 18 national organizations or foundations, and five higher education institutes participated in the meeting.

Roundtable Purpose & Design

It is challenging for one-time sessions to make lasting impact on attendees. In response to this challenge, the 2018 Roundtable was designed with features to create learning before the meeting, delve deeper into hands-on content learning during the meeting, and create connections and conditions for continued learning after the meeting.

The meeting addressed four core topic areas central to policy progress in early learning:

- [Early Learning Opportunities in ESSA \(ESSA\)](#)
- [Equitable Early Learning for all Young Children \(Equity\)](#)
- [High Quality Instruction for Birth through Third Grade \(Instruction\)](#)
- [Advancing the Workforce Birth through Third Grade \(Workforce\)](#)

Across the topic areas, attendees developed skills in:

- Collective impact in high performing offices of early learning
- Implementing for continuous improvement
- Leading to results
- Systems thinking and alignment



Figure 2 Attendees Engaged in Whole Group Activities

The cohort structure was a huge improvement from past Roundtables. It allowed for the deeper dive that most of us are seeking at our level as SEA administrators. The exemplars brought in as part of the cohort breakouts were relevant, informative, and the helped to demonstrate the conceptual learning within the sessions. (Attendee)

Pre-conference Webinars & Preliminary Readings

Prior to the meeting, CEELO hosted webinars featuring state specialists and researchers who provided content expertise and application examples via four separate webinars tailored to each content area (ESSA, Equity, Instruction, Workforce). In addition to providing preliminary information, webinars facilitated connections between attendees before the in-person meeting. Recognizing the broad appeal of these areas, CEELO offered these webinars to the public regardless of meeting registration status.

Attendees had the opportunity to read two to three preliminary readings to help them prepare for their breakout sessions. These texts were recommended by the cohort planners. As with the webinars, the material was made publicly available on the [2018 Roundtable page](#).

Cohort Model in Conjunction with Full Group Learning

Attendees were assigned to a cohort in a specified content area to create a community of practice as cohorts attended the same breakout sessions together throughout the meeting. This approach supported the pursuit of deeper learning and discussion. It also supported the development of relationship building between state attendees due to the longer length of time within a consistent cohort. In turn, this provides more opportunity for continued learning among participants post-meeting.

While cohorts spent time in their designated content area, plenary sessions and whole group debrief times brought together all attendees. The cohort model and accompanying whole-group activities provided members a chance to share implementation strategies utilized to move state agendas on the topics presented, strategies for best practices, and help to outline policy statements and directions to inform the work of the NAECS-SDE Policy Committee.

WANT TO HEAR FROM MORE ATTENDEES?

Attendees shared their experiences on Twitter using the hashtag #Lead4ECE. Their photos, quotes, and reflections are curated in this [Twitter Roundtable Moment](#).



Figure 3 Learning through Play – Creating the Tallest Structure with a Set of Cards

Meeting Content

Over two days, attendees experienced a mix of full group during plenary sessions and breakouts tailored to each of the four respective cohort tracks.

Plenaries

Keynote speaker **Carey Wright** (Mississippi State Superintendent of Instruction) [shared Mississippi's early childhood story](#) and her leadership in transformational change, highlighting state strategies around building capacity of public and private early learning providers, using data to advocate for expanding access to pre-K, and partnering with philanthropic groups and practitioners to strengthen the pre-K system. She advised attendees to “Dare greatly!” in the work.



Figure 4 Carey Wright (MS)

Host state Texas offered reflections from state and local leaders on [implementation of pre-K in Texas](#). **Libby Doggett** facilitated a discussion between **Jacquie Porter** (Texas Education Agency; formerly Austin ISD), **Sarah Baray** (Pre-K 4 San Antonio), and **Cheryl Mixon** (Fort-Worth ISD) on the approaches they took in their work to support high-quality pre-K.



Figure 5 Panel of Texas Early Education Leaders



Figure 7 Andres Bustamante

Andres Bustamante highlighted the role of play in high quality early childhood instruction to support social and cognitive outcomes, giving a [“prescription for play”](#) and providing examples of research from Temple University. He provided definitions of play, advantages of play, and how it works in different settings

(home, school, community). **Lynn Burgett** shared how Illinois is addressing [play-based learning and direct instruction](#) and work done by her agency to provide expertise and guidance to the field.



Figure 6 Lynn Burgett (IL)



Figure 8 Steve Barnett

Steve Barnett charged attendees with lending their expertise to develop policies to support high-quality pre-K implementation as he reflected on [equity and the cohort topics](#). He guided attendees through a discussion of the “paradox” of early care and education policy – that although science finds benefits with high rates of returns, large scale public programs often do not reproduce these results. To address these, he gave advice on designing for success and focusing on supporting implementation.

Plenary materials, including slide decks, are available on [the 2018 Roundtable webpage](#).

Breakouts

As part of the cohort system, attendees stayed in their tracks for each of the four breakouts. This facilitated deeper learning and connections with cohort members.

[Equitable Early Learning for all Young Children \(Equity\)](#)

This cohort focused on four areas of equity - race, dual language learners/English language learners (DLL/ELL), disability, and age. This cohort discussed and refined a definition of equity, participated in peer learning around current research, determined implications of research on state level policy, and developed strategies related to equity to implement in their state for each of the equity areas. Preliminary readings, webinar video, slides, and handouts available on the [Roundtable Equity page](#).



Figure 9 Workforce Cohort Engaged in Activity

Facilitators: Ellen Frede (CEELO/NIEER), Jacqueline Jones (Foundation for Child Development), Christina Kasprzak (ECTA), and Lorena Mancilla (WIDA Early Years).

[Early Learning Opportunities in ESSA \(ESSA\)](#)



Figure 10 ESSA Cohort in Group Discussion

This session provided an overview of the early learning opportunities in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) focusing on the lessons from the CEELO-CCSSO policy brief reviewing plans approved by USED, [The State of Early Learning in ESSA: Plans and Opportunities for Implementation](#).

The session centered on three key priorities for early learning in ESSA: 1) setting clear goals and policy priorities for early learning; 2) integrating early learning into school improvement; and, 3) supporting early childhood educator development. Featured state

exemplars included Illinois, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Alabama. In discussions, states were encouraged to engage in peer learning on how other states were implementing early childhood through ESSA and to develop a goal/strategy related to one of the three topic areas for their state. Preliminary readings, webinar video, slides, and handouts available on the [Roundtable ESSA page](#).

Facilitators: Rolf Grafwallner (CEELO/CCSSO) and Tracy Jost (CEELO/NIEER)

[High Quality Instruction for Birth through Third Grade \(Instruction\)](#)

Participants engaged in learning about the role of coaching/professional development, principal supports, and assessments in supporting high quality instruction at the district, program, school and classroom levels. Facilitators were a mix of content experts and state specialists. Panelists shared best practices and state examples on coaching and professional development. The role of principals in B-3 instruction was explored, as was the role of assessment in supporting high quality instruction. Preliminary readings, webinar video, slides, and handouts available on the [Roundtable Instruction page](#).

Facilitators and panelists: Lori Connors-Tadros (CEELO/NIEER), Abby Copeman-Petig (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment), Vincent Costanza (Teaching Strategies), Gisele Crawford (FPG Child Development Institute), Melissa Dahlin (UC, Irvine, CEELO/EDC), Harriet Feldlaufer (CT), Wesley Hoover (AIR), Tara Huls (FL), Erin Kissling (IN), Abbie Lieberman (New America) Mischele McManus (MI), Sharon Morgan (OK), Nasha Patel (LA), Jacquie Porter (TX), Diane Schilder (CEELO/EDC), Anna Severens (NV), and Kathleen Theodore (Southeast Regional Comprehensive Center/AIR).



Figure 11 Instruction Cohort Member Shares her Enthusiasm

[Advancing the Workforce Birth through Third Grade \(Workforce\)](#)

This interactive session assisted specialists in understanding various lenses to view the early childhood workforce in their state; developing strategies for attracting, preparing, recruiting, supporting, retaining, and promoting professionals; adapting and utilizing data systems to monitor progress; and identifying policies to promote a world-class workforce. Attendees learned about results-based accountability, collective impact, and systems thinking as tools to support their work. Preliminary readings, webinar video, slides, and handouts available on the [Roundtable Workforce page](#).



Figure 12 Workforce Cohort in Discussion

Facilitators: Deborah Adams (Connecticut), Bruce Atchison (ECS), Linda Bray (Nebraska), Louisa Diffey (ECS), Jana Martella (CEELO/EDC), Susan Sarver (Buffett Early Childhood Institute), and Jim Squires (CEELO/NIEER).

Attendee Reflections

A post-meeting survey demonstrated that the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the 2018 Roundtable was high. Nearly all respondents (n=55) gave *high* or *very high* ratings as to the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the meeting to their work. Attendees cited

the meeting design, cohort structure, opportunity to connect with other state early childhood leaders and learn about implementation in other states, and time to delve deeply into material as key features of the meeting that worked for them. **Appendix A** provides a snapshot of attendee reflections on their experience

Appendix A – Respondent Feedback

In a post-meeting survey, 55 attendees provided feedback on their experience with the meeting. To provide voices of attendees, a selection of quotes is listed below.

Meeting Design

Respondents commented on how well elements of the meeting fit together and flowed, as well as positive remarks regarding the breakouts, experts, and pre-conference webinars.

- *“Cohesive presentation across the breakout presenters. Their content seemed to build off each other and the initial presenter set norms that were then followed by our cohort throughout the conference.”*
- *“Keynote speakers were good. Great networking opportunities, and great opportunity to catch up on ‘hot’ topics.”*

Cohort Structure

While related to the meeting design, the frequency of comments pertaining specifically to the cohorts merited a theme related to this.

- *“I liked the relatively small size of the cohort group. It was helpful in getting to know others and to hear more directly from states about their work.”*
- *“Hearing where other states are in the process of professional development and what others are doing to work with Higher Ed...understanding through the collective impact lens.”*

Networking and/or Learning from States

Respondents tended to mention networking without going into too much detail. In addition to connecting with other early childhood leaders, many cited the opportunity to learn from other states about their approaches.

- *“Networking with people from across the country all dedicated to Early Childhood.”*

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- *“Interacting with the other states. Learning more about opportunities with ESSA through the speakers at the break out session.”*

Depth of Discussions

Respondents indicated appreciation for the opportunities to go in-depth with colleagues on important issues.

- *“I really enjoyed the cohort design. It allowed for longer, more in-depth conversations with some of the same table partners, which I appreciated.”*
- *“I enjoyed meeting other early learning educators and directors. I enjoyed the depth of conversation around these important topics.”*