



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 27, 2019

Ms. Shanida Mathieu, Chair
Ms. Melanie Washington, Executive Director
State Interagency Coordinating Council for EarlySteps
1051 N. Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Ms. Mathieu and Ms. Washington:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Preschool Development Grant. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has enjoyed a long-standing working relationship with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and the EarlySteps program. Louisiana was awarded nearly \$8 million through the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG P-5). The goals of the grant are to establish and support infrastructure that serve all children birth to five, including children with special needs. In keeping with our long-standing working relationship, when developing the state's application, the LDOE consulted with LDH and Department of Children and Family Services staff, including EarlySteps staff and other early childhood stakeholders. You noted in your letter concerns related to accessing good quality care, the cost of care, and ability to integrate special needs services with quality care. These challenges are real for Louisiana families, and we hope to continue to collaborate with stakeholders like yourselves to solve them. As a start, this grant prioritizes these concerns through the activities and goals of the grant, including building local shared early childhood governance, supporting teachers to interact effectively with all children, and increasing access to quality care and services for the state's youngest population.

By focusing on implementation of standards-aligned curriculum, increasing positive adult-child interactions, and supporting ongoing formative assessment of child development for child care centers, Head Starts and Early Head Starts, and public and nonpublic schools, the LDOE strives to support early care and education classrooms to improve the learning and development of all children. In addition, the existing community network structure increases partnership and collaboration among programs in each community, through which the regional EarlySteps coordinators are active partners. The LDOE will continue to seek collaboration with the EarlySteps program and other LDH programs that serve young children and families. We can also provide updates to the State Interagency Coordinating Council for EarlySteps on this work if helpful. My staff is available at any time to answer any questions or discuss the priorities of the PDG B-5 grant and associated activities.

Thank you again for the important work that you do to support our state's youngest and most vulnerable population. We look forward to a continued partnership with your organization.

Sincerely,

John White
State Superintendent of Education

Louisiana Believes