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# **The Massachusetts Professional Development System Study: Interim Report**

**Submitted to the MA Department of Early Education and Care**

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## **I. Overview of the Study**

The MA Professional Development System Study (MA PDS study) examines the implementation of the new statewide model for professional development of the early education and care and out of school time workforce designed by the MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Many have noted critical gaps in the research on the EEC workforce and professional development (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006). The MA Professional Development System study is designed to answer questions of policy importance to Massachusetts (as well as other states) that are working to develop more integrated professional development systems that are responsive to the needs of the diverse EEC workforce and translate into higher quality classroom and family child care environments for young children.

The study seeks to answer two broad questions:

- How does EEC, along with its six newly-funded Regional Partnerships, implement a new professional development system to serve the diverse set of educators/providers in each region?
- How is the system-change implemented to develop a consistent and stable infrastructure with common goals and expectations shared by EEC and the six regional partnerships?

This first year of implementation is critical to the future of this new system. It is the building block on which the system will grow and develop over time. Data from this study is important for understanding how and why the system develops in the ways it does, and will shed light on successes, challenges, and lessons learned. This information can be used now to inform and improve ongoing implementation, as well as in the future to inform professional development policy and practice.

## **II. Purpose of this Report**

The purpose of this report is to describe our progress on the study and to share preliminary findings from the first phase of data collection.

The first phase of data collection occurred during October-December 2010 and captures the early stages of the implementation process for the new professional development system. This phase of data collection targeted a sample of the leaders and key partners within each region. An initial analysis of this data was conducted in December. Therefore, the preliminary results and recommendations included in this report should be considered a work in progress. Further data collection and in-depth analysis scheduled for January through June 2011 will lead to a more fully informed and robust set of findings and recommendations.

### **III. Report on the First Phase of the Study: October-December 2010**

This first phase of the study focused on the regional partnerships, and sought to address the following questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of each regional partnership in terms of structures and processes?
- 2) What are regional partners' perceptions of the changes in the statewide professional development system? What positive forces for change have emerged during this initial phase of system change implementation?

In September, during a meeting of our research team with Commissioner Killins and EEC staff, we heard the following specific questions from EEC:

- Does EEC need to give clearer expectations to grantees?
- Is the new regional structure worth the cost of collaboration?
- Is the regional collaboration presented in the proposals authentic?
- Are the regions truly working to build a functional state professional development system?

While our interviews and observations took in a broad scope of data based on the research questions listed above, these specific questions of immediate interest to EEC provided a lens through which we reviewed and pulled applicable data for this interim analysis. In the following sections we outline how we collected, analyzed, and synthesized the data.

#### **A. Data Collection Procedures**

During October-December 2010, we conducted a total of 33 interviews with regional leads/partners, observed 10 regional and statewide meetings, and reviewed regional and state system documents. The data collection protocol we used was approved by the University of MA Boston Internal Review Board for the protection of human subjects.

##### *Documents*

We reviewed several key documents during this period, including the proposals submitted to EEC from the regional partnerships, and the meeting documents from the June and August 2010 statewide professional development meetings (minutes, agendas, and Powerpoint presentations).

##### *Interviews*

Interviews provided the bulk of the data for the first wave of analysis as our focus was to analyze governance and effective functioning at the regional level, as well as perceptions of change. We conducted an initial three-question interview with each lead agent in October 2010 to ask the following questions: What are the challenges/questions you have about the new system (and/or about your regional partnership)? What would you be curious about learning from this study? What is your schedule for upcoming meetings that we might attend to learn more about your regional partnership? The answers to these questions subsequently helped shape the more

extensive interviews starting in November.

In November-December 2010, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with lead agents and members of the steering committee/lead partners in each region. We contacted a sample of five key partners in each region, selected to include representatives from key sectors (i.e. higher education, head start, public school, out-of-school-time, family child care, and diverse geographic areas within each region). We were able to successfully complete interviews with most of those we contacted (an average of 4.5 people/region). The interviews consisted of ten questions focused on the regional partnership and perceptions about governance, collaboration, communication, priorities and goals, and the system change process (see Interview 1 Protocol, Appendix A).

We obtained informed consent from all interview participants. Our IRB-approved protocol protects the confidentiality of participants, and therefore we do not indicate specific individuals by name or connect individuals with specific identifying data. No incentives were offered for participation other than the knowledge that participation may contribute to increased knowledge about the new professional development system. Interviews were conducted either in person, or in some cases, by phone. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed with consent of the participant (s).

#### *Meeting Observations*

The research team observed a total of ten state and regional meetings of the professional development partners, collected meetings documents (i.e. agenda and handouts), and took detailed field notes.

The following table provides a summary of the interview and observational data collected during October-December 2010.

Region	# of interviews	# of meetings observed
1	6	1
2	6	0
3	5	0
4	6	1
5	4	0
6	6	1
Cross-Regional or State	0	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>

## **B. Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis methods were used with all data from interviews, written documents, and observations of meetings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this interim report, we conducted an initial analysis of the data with a coding strategy based on the following descriptive codes: governance, collaboration, communication, priorities and goals, perceptions of change. We then

conducted a second level of analysis to identify common and unique themes that emerged from the data. Data from each region were analyzed separately before cross-regional comparisons were made. Results of this analysis are presented below. Further analysis and triangulation of this data is needed, and will be conducted in January-June 2011 and included in the final report.

### C. Preliminary Findings and Analysis

The preliminary findings are presented below, organized into two main categories related to our two specific research questions: Regional Partnerships – Common and Unique Characteristics, and Perceptions of the Professional Development System Change. Within both of these categories, the following topics are addressed:

Research Question	Topics/Themes Included
1. What are the characteristics of each regional partnership in terms of structures and processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Governance</li> <li>▪ Collaboration</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> <li>▪ Priorities for the Partnership</li> </ul>
2. What are regional partners' perceptions of the changes in the statewide professional development system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation of Core Functions/Local Differentiation</li> <li>▪ Funding</li> <li>▪ Positive Forces for Change</li> <li>▪ Is EEC Moving in the Right Direction?</li> </ul>

#### 1. Regional Partnerships: Common and Unique Characteristics

The regional partnerships shared a number of common characteristics. In addition, several characteristics were unique to just one or two regional partnerships.

##### *Governance*

**The overwhelming majority of those interviewed were very satisfied with their regional partnership and its governance. They reported democratic, participatory, and inclusive decision-making practices that built on existing infrastructure and collaborative relationships.**

Each region has developed a governance structure that includes a lead agent (or co-lead agents), some type of steering committee, and partners or members. While most regional partnerships identify a steering committee, regions differ in their approach to membership on this governing body. Some regions included all members of their partnership on the steering committee, while other selected a smaller, representative group. We also identified several unique governance strategies. For example, at least one region is developing an advisory board broadly composed of educators and providers. Another region is actively seeking out unrepresented groups for inclusion on their steering committee.

**Most but not all of these governing structures appear to be functioning effectively.** In one region several of those interviewed reported a lack of clarity around steering committee membership, functions, and decision-making, resulting in frustration about the partnership's effectiveness.

**A common theme that emerged across regions was the need for a clear vision and strategic plan to guide the partnership's work:** designing a system that is "intentional and seamless", "clarifying our own priorities and strategies for meeting those priorities," "reimagining" the professional development system to better serve all educators.

**The most common reported barrier to effective governance structures was the lack of planning time and funding to support planning.** While most regions built upon existing partnerships, the regional scope is new and requires an expansion that involves coordinating and in some cases merging or blending structures and engagement with new partners from many local systems. Some regions have established hubs across their region as a strategy for bridging local and regional participation.

### *Collaboration*

**Most of those interviewed reported strong collaborative relationships among many core partners, rooted in a long history of working together effectively.** As a group, they possess a shared commitment to strengthening the early education and care workforce, with the ultimate goal of improving child and family outcomes and reinforcing existing strengths. Many also reported that their regional partnership utilizes or builds upon an existing infrastructure, developed through the former Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) or Building Careers grants. For example,

*Our leadership team has been collaborating for 15 years, since the CPC grants, when there was money and time to build relationships and programs. We hold best practices at the center of what we do.*

**One key strength of this existing infrastructure is the local relationships developed between professional development providers and educators/providers.** All regional partnerships spoke about frontline knowledge as key to their ability to design and implement a professional development system that is responsive to local needs. This local wisdom grows from their expertise in their own communities, and their relationships with educators/providers.

**There is some sense of loss and concern that the new system is less local/less relational/less responsive to local needs.** Adaptive change typically involves loss, and we found that a sense of loss was indeed a common experience among many of those we interviewed. For example, several partners with whom we spoke described a loss of local control and strong local relationships that developed and flourished in the former CPC networks. The move to a regional system has led some to fear the loss of these strong local relationships that are seen as a key ingredient of successful professional development. How frontline knowledge and leadership might be brought to bear on the way forward remains a question at this point in this study, and one that may be further explored as the study progresses.

**Most but not all regions reported strong collaborative relationships.** One region reported struggling to overcome a history of mistrust among some partners. In another region, efforts are still underway to develop a broad regional collaborative, building on the more local collaboratives that have been working across this region.

**In all regions, collaboration appears to have increased through the inclusion of new partners at the table.** Many partners reported that higher education, family child care, and out-of-school time care are new and very welcomed partners at the table. Several people commented that higher education operated separately in the past, but now is meeting with the other professional development providers to plan and coordinate. One partner we interviewed described how new collaborations across sectors have enriched and expanded their work:

*Providers were at the [regional partnership] table that we haven't traditionally reached out to. These relationships...[were]created as a result of the [EPS] grant ...and led to work beyond the grant. [A new early learning project has] taken off like wildfire, as a direct result of these [regional] meetings...now it's not just a professional development activity...but a community and family activity as well. ...The networking and relationship-building has allowed for an unbelievable amount of opportunity and I would ...classify it as best-practice.*

She went on to describe how these new relationships resulted in the ability to leverage resources, with organizations volunteering to contribute resources, materials, and/or sponsorship of these activities. We repeatedly heard that these more inclusive and diverse regional partnerships contribute in positive ways to collaboration by: bringing new perspectives, “disrupting” old negative group dynamics, breaking down silos, and fostering thinking outside the box.

**We found a strong consensus across regions that the biggest challenge they have faced in starting up the regional partnerships has been the lack of a planning process (time and resources) prior to rolling out the new system.** Another challenge reported by many is that of designing and implementing a system that meets the diverse needs (geographic, educational, language) of their region with, in most cases, far less funding than in the past. Developing systems for effective outreach was also identified as a common challenge facing many regions.

### *Communication*

We explored communication at multiple levels. While we focused on communication within each regional partnership, we also gathered some preliminary data on communication between the regional partnerships and educators within each region, as well as communication between the regional partnerships and EEC.

*Communication within regions among regional partnerships leads/members:* **We found evidence of strong and effective communication in most regions, fostered by regularly scheduled meetings, consistent email communication, and responsiveness of lead agents to partners.** In these regions, most of those interviewed reported high satisfaction with their regional partnership. In a very small number of regions, there was a reported lack of regular communication including a lack of regularly scheduled meetings. **The absence of consistent**

**and effective communication is a significant barrier to a well-functioning regional partnership.**

*Communication from regional partnerships to educators/providers:* **Outreach is an area of communication that was identified as a priority in many regions.** One respondent described educators/providers in her region as “blindsided” by the changes in the professional development system. Others described the need to develop a new regional system for communicating with educators/providers to provide information about the new system and how to access professional development opportunities. Widespread confusion among educators/providers was reported about new requirements for accessing professional development, such as the need to obtain a Professional Qualifications Registry number and complete an intake form and/or an Individual Professional Development Plan. Because many educators are reportedly not using email, outreach efforts must include word-of-mouth and mail methods, along with electronic methods. Those interviewed reported that more outreach is needed, and they are currently developing and implementing strategies to increase and improve effective communication with educators/providers about how to access professional development opportunities.

*Communication in the system as a whole:* **Communication between EEC and the regional partnerships was identified as both a strength and a weakness.** Many of those interviewed reported frustration with communications from EEC: many policies, procedures, and requirements are still unclear, leading to confusion and sometimes to speculation or rumors about EEC’s intentions or goals. For example, we heard conflicting understanding (in both interviews and meetings observed) about whether or not EEC intends to support CEUs, accreditation, and/or higher education. Another interview respondent explained,

*At this point in time I am feeling good about the partnership. I think it’s evolving, I think it still has a ways to go as we all do. What could work better is probably getting some clarity from the department I think would help us move forward more efficiently rather than floundering.*

At the same time, many of those we interviewed reported that EEC staff were accessible and responsive to their questions and requests for information.

**Some evidence collected thus far suggests that regional lead agents, and in some cases steering committee members, are in a “boundary spanner” role where they translate and mediate information from EEC to their region.** Defined in the organizational studies literature, boundary spanners “collect, filter, translate, interpret, and disseminate knowledge from the external environment to members of their organization so that the organization is better able to monitor and adapt to changes emanating from the external environment”; in other words boundary spanners manage the flow of information between EEC and their regions (Gittell, 2003, p.286). In this boundary spanner role, lead agents and lead partners can influence the regional partnerships’ (and ultimately educators’ and providers’) perceptions of the new system, EEC itself, and the changes taking place. As mentioned previously, some of those we interviewed reported educators and providers were confused or “blindsided” by the changes to the system. Regional partners have been in a boundary spanning role bridging and mediating the change, selling the new system to the educators/providers, while struggling to clarify and implement the system EEC has developed. This emerging finding, calls for further investigation into the ways lead agents/core partners have used this role, and the extent to which that has

influenced the larger partnerships' perceptions, progress, and ultimately outcomes of the system change implementation.

### *Priorities for Regional Partnerships over the Next Six to Twelve Months*

**Those we interviewed in all regions identified a key overarching priority to develop an effective regional system to meet goals such as: clearly defined professional development pathways, data and reporting systems, improved access to higher education and professional development opportunities, improved access to dual language professional development opportunities, and improved outreach to educators and providers.** As one partner we interviewed explained,

*[Our regional partnership] has helped us see what our needs are, in a more focused way to lay the groundwork about what our needs are and what it will take to move people. It's been a good group for having that discussion. [We are] using this year as a year to get to that place.*

The focus on the development of an effective regional system speaks to the current planning and initial implementation stage of the regional partnerships. Regional leaders are putting the various professional development “pieces” together into a coordinated system, identifying questions and seeking/developing answers, and engaging in dialogue about various approaches and specific priorities. All these activities represent the elements of the design phase of the regional systems' development. This is a critical stage in the overall system's development, as regional leaders are open to new possibilities and thinking creatively, laying the groundwork for moving forward in an effective, inclusive, and strategic way.

We also heard a range of additional priorities, including strengthening the regional partnership infrastructure, governance structures, vision, and leadership position in the region; improving responsiveness to educators/providers; improving communication and collaboration with EEC; and improving and/or expanding coaching and mentoring.

## 2. Perceptions of Change

In this section we present our findings about perceptions of change in relation to the professional development system. We explored perceptions of change in the following four areas:

- Implementation of Core Functions/Local Differentiation
- Funding
- Positive Forces for Change
- Is EEC Moving in the Right Direction?

### *Implementation of a system with Core Functions and Local Differentiation*

At the June 16, 2010 Professional Development Meeting, the Department of Early Education and Care defined the new professional development system as “a system of **core functions** that are

predictable across the state and allow for **local differentiation** but create statewide access to core competencies.”

Many of those we interviewed are aware that this is EEC’s vision. However, perceptions differed on whether:

- the opportunity for local differentiation currently exists
- EEC’s core functions are clearly defined and distinct from areas in which local differentiation is allowable
- EEC intends for this to be a co-created system, or a state-managed and controlled system

**While some partners reported a perceived sense of autonomy in specific aspects of their professional development system, a common theme in the interviews was that the new system offers less autonomy than in the past**, due to the regional rather than local focus, as well as the many new mandates related to professional development services and reporting requirements. As one interview respondent explained,

*As a department I think they need to provide some more guidance and leadership and I think they, under the auspices of being ultra-democratic, they’re trying to put it all out there like it’s all of us that are shaping this together, and I don’t think it’s true.*

**Many of those interviewed reported frustration with a lack of clarity and/or consistency from EEC** about various policies, procedures, and requirements, leading to confusion and sometimes to speculation or rumors about EEC’s intentions or goals that then lead to further confusion. For example, one participant described,

*The system, and what EEC wants, is constantly changing – people return from meetings with news of some change – it’s all over the place – it doesn’t seem secure.*

Many perceive that EEC intends to provide an answer to these questions in the form of a policy or “clarification statement”, and view the new system as rigid and controlled by EEC. When a question arises some expect an answer from EEC.

**Still others believe that EEC is disappointed that regional partnerships are not exerting more autonomy and developing their own answers to these questions.** Those who have expressed this view may be the “adaptive leaders” who want to provide advice to EEC about how their region will perform a particular function. Several people we interviewed suggested some type of an advisory group (representatives from the regional partnerships) with whom EEC would consult for certain types of decisions, before these decisions are made.

As described above, perceptions vary as to how much autonomy EEC allows for the regional partnerships. Responses to this uncertainty vary as well: some want answers from EEC so they can be in compliance with the parameters of the grant, and be positioned well for the next funding cycle; others want to develop the opportunity for regional control to design a system most responsive to their region’s needs and priorities, positioning themselves as leaders with a vision.

**Fears about the future of the system may limit the perceived autonomy of the regions.** One fear that surfaced in the interviews is that EEC will suddenly change course, throw out this new system, and replace it with something else. We heard a strong hope that EEC will continue its investment in this new system, and recognize the grassroots investment going into the system right now that takes time but has promise to transform professional development.

**While differing perceptions among stakeholders are to be expected during a change process, ambiguity can create confusion and frustration. Greater clarity and shared understanding about core functions and the parameters of local differentiation are needed.**

Further research is needed to provide a broader range of stakeholder perceptions about the relationship between EEC and the regional partnerships, and specifically the factors that contribute to improving effective communication and system-building. Regional adaptive leaders ‘live’ in this relationship with EEC leaders. This relationship makes frontline knowledge readily available to decision makers. Thus, more attention to this relationship in the study is warranted (Heifetz, 1994). The strength of this relationship is central to the effectiveness of the implementation and outcomes of the new system.

### *Funding*

**Loss of funding - the need to do more with less - was a common theme in the interviews, as well as in the meetings we observed.** Most regions report operating with significantly less funding than in previous years, while attempting to develop new systems, expand or develop infrastructure, and serve an even more diverse population of educators/providers. This loss is coupled with some anger about the lack of resources for the coordination and administration needed to develop the new regional systems. Some regions reported difficulty identifying potential lead agents last spring, due to EEC’s reported 8% cap on administrative costs. For example, one respondent explained that “five institutions [in our region] came back and said this [the lead agent role] is not financially feasible.” While collaborative partnerships have the potential to engage local communities in lasting and transformative change, they are not known for their efficiency. We observed much work taking place through collaborative meetings, and partners investing time and resources to design and implement new regional systems.

### *Positive forces for change*

In our interviews, we asked what people saw as positive forces for change. Several themes emerged.

**First, many regional partners identified a broadly shared strong commitment to success: success of their regional partnership and the new professional development system.**

**Second, we heard from all regions that conversation and dialogue are powerful positive forces for change that have moved them forward.** Simply stated, “Having new people at the table increased our ability to think outside the box.” As described above under “Collaboration”, dialogue within regions (that now includes new people at a more-inclusive table) and across regions (monthly, quarterly meetings, and regional conference calls) has opened doors, sparked

creative and innovative thinking, expanded perspective, increased alignment across diverse EEC sectors, fostered best practices, and created a forum for leveraging resources beyond the scope of the EPS grant.

**We heard multiple examples attesting to partners' capacity to see positive benefits (“early wins” as one partner expressed) at the same time they experience anger/frustration with EEC and the change process.** For example, a partner spoke about the frustration she experienced with the Readiness Center grant process, yet emphasized that now “we are sitting at the Readiness Center table; before this, we weren't sitting at that table.” In each region, we spoke with partners who already identified ways the new system is having an impact, from the new partners at the table, emergence of new cross-sector dialogue and collaboration, and leveraging of resources.

**Several of those interviewed expressed surprise at the end of the interview that their responses to our questions were so positive.** The interviews provided an opportunity for partners to reflect on the implementation process, and share their insights about progress and challenges. The interviews created an intellectual and emotional space for leaders to safely give voice to their cares and concerns about the actual process of the change. Information about the ways in which people are dealing with the change emerged. For example, in some regions people were focused on concrete structure and reconfiguration while in other regions people were focused on the dynamic of power and the shift from local control (CPC) to regional governance. The conversations allowed leaders to be reflective and thoughtful about their journey. The conversations invited leaders to stand in the center of their deep commitment to children and families; listening to them served to value their frontline knowledge and experience.

*Is EEC Moving in the Right Direction?*

**We asked partners for their perceptions about whether EEC is moving in the right direction with the EPS grant and the changes in the professional development system. Partners overwhelmingly said “yes.”** One partner identified Commissioner Killins as “the first commissioner in the state who is truly invested in advancing our field.” Another stated her appreciation that EEC came to the regions to create this system.

**While we heard strong support for the direction EEC has taken, this support was strongly qualified with concerns about the process for change.** As one regional partner explained,

*... we're riding that bike as we are building it. We are actually heading in about 27 different directions all at once. I think the overall goal of having a more coherent, more consistent, more cohesive system ... is the right goal.*

Another perspective was that while the change is taking us in the right direction, this was not the right time for change due to inadequate funding and resources. Another partner voiced her perspective about whether we are moving in the right direction, saying

*I want to say ‘yes.’ I hope so. I think we took a system that wasn't working well, threw it out, and now all we have are puzzle pieces. How it fits into a new system is not yet clear.*

**Compensation reform was widely viewed as a missing yet critical piece of the system**, both as an incentive for professional development, as well as to address issues of pay equity. Addressing the incentive issue, one partner we interviewed explained,

*We have been and continue to be committed to observable career pathways and have a big concern about folks who are not interested in an academic pathway - family child care providers for 20 years, who have no interest in a pathway beyond the way the current regulations are written. They say, 'my program is full, my parents are happy, what benefit is there to my career with college courses?'*

Despite concerns voiced about the process of change, and the need for compensation reform, we heard a strong consensus that the overarching goals and direction of the new professional development system are widely embraced by the regional leaders.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

As noted at the beginning of this report, the findings presented here represent a preliminary analysis of data collected from regional leaders. As such, the report represents a piece of the picture of this developing system, and should not be considered representative of all perspectives. Despite these limitations of such early findings in this study, we believe that several recommendations to EEC are warranted based on the key findings described above.

##### **1. Increase clarity, and reduce ambiguity, about the extent of regional power and control in the new system.**

EEC has presented the system as a co-created system, built together by regions and EEC, yet many of those interviewed are unclear about the scope of power at the regional level. Clearly define the scope of power allowed for “local differentiation” and for EEC’s “core functions.” Identify the specific functions/ policies over which regions can differentiate, as well as any core functions/policies in which regions could/should be involved.

##### **2. Consider a formal structure for regional input into decision-making.**

For example, develop a regional EPS advisory to EEC, made up of lead agents (or other regional designee), with input on an identified scope of decisions before these decisions are made. Such an advisory requires a defined structure, as well as a defined scope of decision-making authority.

##### **3. Recognize that much of the leadership within regions has moved beyond “pushback” and is deeply committed to developing an effective new system that is responsive to all educators.**

Capitalize on our finding that most regional leaders agree that Massachusetts is moving in the right decision with the new system. Reframe the “push-back” perception as a drive for integrity and an opportunity to design the new system drawing upon collective

expertise. Use the reality of scarce resources plus regional leaders' integrity and commitment to enjoin their leadership and build clarity, trust, and a new system together.

#### **4. Make a public commitment to continued investment in this model.**

Recognize that EEC's investment in a regional model shows signs of building local buy-in and growing a cadre of local/regional leaders who can move forward the agenda of an integrated professional development system. While this approach takes time, and continued investment, it has potential to transform the field at the grassroots level. Communicate an unmistakable understanding that regions are committed and want the new system to be successful. Unless an imminent system change is expected, avoid communicating a message of instability and threat, for example the message some seem to be hearing that EEC may "throw out" this new system in the near future.

### **V. Next Steps for the Research Study**

This report describes the progress made on the study as of December 2010. The next steps in the study include the following:

- a) Continue data collection as described in our October 2010 Detailed Research Plan. This includes continuing to observe regional and statewide meetings, and interviewing a broad range of stakeholders. In addition, we will continue data analysis, applying Bolman and Deal's (2003) conceptual framework, as well as other relevant frameworks for understanding and analyzing the data, and develop recommendations.
- b) Engage EEC and regions:
  - a) Meet with Commissioner Killins and EEC staff to discuss next steps and feedback about December 2010 Interim Report
  - b) Share the December 2010 results with each region individually. Solicit feedback and insights about our findings and analysis. This begins a continual feedback loop process designed to provide feedback for improvement to the regions as well as to the researchers.
- c) Consider emerging research questions: Several research questions emerged or were suggested by those we interviewed this fall, and warrant further consideration during this first year of the research study, or possibly in future years. These questions include:
  - a) Where is the avenue for the workforce to shape this system?
  - b) How do lead agents serve as boundary spanners between EEC and their regional communities? How can this role be supported and strengthened?
  - c) How are regions engaging and supporting directors as "gatekeepers" of professional development access?
  - d) How does this system of broad engagement with regional leaders advance the field through a strong local/regional foundation and "embedded leadership"?

- d) Explore funding options for Year 2, to fund ongoing longitudinal study of the implementation process, as well as to begin to explore the outcomes questions, as one interview participant asked: “How do we know if what we are doing is improving quality and child outcomes?”
- e) Develop and share with EEC: Year 1 report, as well as scholarly papers that report on the findings and analysis.

## VI. Deliverables (updated)

Deliverable	Due Date	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Meet with EEC staff to review this project and identify needed documentation;</li> <li>➤ A detailed description of the entire proposed study to EEC will be submitted to EEC;</li> </ul>	Sept 30, 2010	X  X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A detailed research and data collection plan will be completed and submitted to EEC.</li> </ul>	Oct 31, 2010	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ First wave of data collection from regional partnerships will be completed.</li> <li>➤ Interim Report: We will submit a detailed status report to EEC that will include: the progress made towards implementation of the study; a description of key partnerships, core functions and local differentiation; and recommendations.</li> </ul>	Dec 31, 2010	X  X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 2nd Interim Report: We will submit a brief report describing the progress on the project.</li> <li>➤ Data collection and analysis will be completed.</li> </ul>	June 30, 2011	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Research Report: We will submit a detailed final report to EEC that includes: analysis of the research findings, indicators of a healthy PD system, recommended next steps for research, efforts to secure funding to further the study, and resources needed to continue the study.</li> </ul>	August 31, 2011	

## VII. References

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## Appendix A: Interview 1 Protocol

1. What are the unique strengths and challenges in your region in terms of early childhood professional development?
2. How does your regional partnership communicate with its members? What works, what could be better?
3. How does the governance or executive committee work in your regional partnership? What works, what could be better?
4. What do you see as the top 3 priorities for your regional partnership in the next 6-12 months?
5. Have you met any new partners as a result of being a part of your regional partnership? If so, please describe any changes/differences you see as a result of having new people at the table.
6. How satisfied are you with the regional partnership during this birth/early development phase? What is working? What could be better?
7. What have been the positive forces for change in your partnership?
8. How does the new system work in terms of allowing your region some control or autonomy over professional development in your region? How has your region used that control?
9. Is MA heading in the right direction with this change? Please explain.
10. Is there anything else you would like to share?