TO: PSESD Early Learning Program (PSESD Staff, Center Directors, Site Staff, and Families)
FROM: Nathalie Jones and Dr. Laura Lynn, Early Learning Design Evaluation Team
RE: Evaluation Progress Report for September 2017-February 2018 (Year 1, Quarters 1 & 2)
DATE: March 9, 2018

Evaluation Purpose and Background
The purpose of the evaluation of the PSESD Early Learning design is to examine and document implementation of the design. This information will be used to inform planning, strategy, and continued development of the design. The evaluation accounts for all layers of the Early Learning Program: children and families at the center, who are supported by sites, which are supported by PSESD Early Learning structures and staff.

The Early Learning Evaluation Group (ELEAG) was formed to guide the evaluation process. The ELEAG purpose of is to:
- Work across stakeholder groups (PSESD Early Learning staff, Center Directors/site staff, parents) to guide the evaluation (All members of the Early Learning Implementation Team are members of the ELEAG.)
- Provide input for the evaluation design and implementation, including around data collection methods and instruments (e.g. interview and survey questions)
- Review and interpret/analyze data for the evaluation to inform improvements and next steps
- Make recommendations re: improvements and next steps to Implementation Team, which determines next steps and actions and provides feedback to Advisory Group
- Support two-way communication with Implementation Team, and ensure accountability for feedback for recommendations/suggestions

The first phase of the evaluation, reflected in this progress report, has focused on:
1. **Clarity of purpose of the design and the evaluation, and clarity of structures, roles, and scopes of work, particularly for PSESD Early Learning staff and teams**
2. **Defining “racially equitable, high quality, and sustainable services”** — racially equitable, high quality, and sustainable services are central to the vision of the Early Learning design, and a collective definition of what this means will guide what we are looking for as we seek to better understand the experience of children, families and sites within the program
Guiding Questions and Data Collection

Given these areas of focus, the guiding evaluation questions from the first phase of work are:

1. Can PSESD Early Learning staff articulate the "why"/purpose/intent of this design?
2. How well do PSESD staff understand the scope of work for their role?
3. To what extent do PSESD staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement their scope of work?
4. What are stakeholder responses to design changes (e.g. ESD staff, site staff, parents, funders)? (Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)
5. Are responsibilities and FTE (i.e. full-time equivalency or workload) adequately distributed across roles? During transition to new design? After design has been fully implemented? Between developing the model of the Early Learning design and supporting the provision of services? (Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)
6. How are PSESD and site staff (including staff and leaders at all levels) supported to implement the new design? (Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)
7. How are PSESD and site staff managing and responding to phases and differentiation of new design (e.g. with health services)? (Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)

To address these questions, we have engaged in several data collection activities:

- PSESD Early Learning staff, Policy Council, and Center Directors completed online and paper surveys during and following their monthly meetings in September 2017, to understand clarity of the Early Learning design, the evaluation, and needed supports to move forward.
- PSESD Early Learning staff provided input during and following the January 2018 PSESD Early Learning Staff meeting about their understanding of how their roles relate to the Early Learning Program’s 5-year goals.

Results

Results and progress toward answering each of these questions are detailed below.

Question 1: Can PSESD Early Learning staff articulate the "why"/purpose/intent of this design?

Most Policy Council members, PSESD Early Learning staff, and Center Directors have understood the purpose of the Early Learning design (and the evaluation), based on September surveys.
In addressing what supports they needed to move forward with the design, Center Directors emphasized the need to experience the design in order to more fully understand it and know what supports they need.

**Question 2: How well do PSESD staff understand the scope of work for their role?**

In the September 2017 survey, PSESD Early Learning staff expressed the need for greater clarity for their own roles, as well as relationships among roles. In January 2018, staff expressed greater clarity about the expectations and responsibilities of their roles (i.e. the “what” of their job). Staff articulated a range of responsibilities:

- **Support via coaching/training/technical assistance**: Staff, particularly coaches and consultants, are clear that a key responsibility is to **provide support**, which includes training, coaching, and technical assistance for:
  - Staff at sites across all areas: education, dual language learner (DLL) supports, family support, and health/nutrition/safety
  - PSESD Early Learning staff to build knowledge, skills, and abilities of internal staff
- **Monitoring and compliance**: Understanding of how monitoring and compliance relate to staff roles includes:
  - Monitoring at the site level to ensure compliance with program requirements
  - Using monitoring data to identify training and support needs
- **Data**: Responsibility for complete and high-quality data is considered part of several roles, particularly Data Technicians
- **System development**: Development and support of systems – such as documentation systems, the ERSEA system, and developing processes and structures – as part of several roles’ responsibilities
- **Planning**: Planning processes, including collecting input and analyzing the impact of decisions, are seen as part of several roles
- **Direct service**: Staff working with children and families cite this direct service as a key part of their roles

**Coordination** came up as an area that is clear for some staff and unclear for others. Several named this coordination (and communication) across internal teams and with sites as part of their role, while others noted the need to better coordinate and communicate across and within teams.

**Question 3: To what extent do PSESD staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement their scope of work?**

As noted above, staff shared increasing clarity about what was expected from them and their role as of January 2018. There remained an ongoing need for clarity and support about how to do accomplish those expectations. Areas where staff expressed the need for greater clarity included:

- **The “how” of coaching/training/TA**: Clarify how coaching, training and other support are provided across content areas
- **Measurement**: Identify how the program will measure progress toward goals as well and progress of the new design
- **Accountability**: Clarify how individuals are held accountable, and how sites are held accountable, particularly with many ongoing changes
- **Fiscal structures**: Increase transparency about budgets, fiscal structures, and decision-making processes
- **Decision-making and communication**: Identify structures for decision-making, including who is responsible for which decisions. Similarly, who is responsible for communicating about decisions and other important information.
- **Using data**: Clarify how data can be used to inform and improve our work, including how monitoring data supports training/coaching and how data can inform recruitment of families.

- **Structures of the design**: Several parts of the new design are not clear to staff, including planning structures, effectiveness of health system and processes, structures for racial equity work, and transitional supports when responsibilities are reassigned or people leave.

Again, **coordination** came up as an area that is clear for some staff and unclear for others. This input will inform further questioning of staff through discussion groups being planned for Spring 2018. These conversations will focus on what staff need to understand and be able to execute their roles.

**Question 4**: What are stakeholder responses to design changes? (e.g. ESD staff, site staff, parents, funders)? *(Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)*

During this six-month period, we have begun laying a foundation to be able to address this question over the course of the evaluation. Specifically, we have begun a process to collectively define key concepts from the vision of the design, which is the provision of “racially equitable, high quality and sustainable services”. Families, PESD staff, and Center Directors suggested early on that the evaluation focus on the impact for children, families, and sites sooner than later. To understand these impacts, we need to be grounded in what these services would look like and feel like for sites and for children and families. As such, we have begun a process to collectively define “racially equitable, high quality, and sustainable services” with the Early Learning Evaluation Advisory Group, consisting of parents, Center Directors and site staff. Starting with ELEAG input, we will engage Policy Council, Center Directors, and PESD in a similar process in March and April 2018. We are also identifying where and how to engage staff and families at sites in a similar process.

**Question 5**: Are responsibilities and FTE (i.e. full-time equivalency or workload) adequately distributed across roles? During transition to new design? After design has been fully implemented? Between developing the model of the Early Learning design and supporting the provision of services? *(Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)*

We had intended address this question from the start of the evaluation, but due to delays in data collection activities, have not had a chance to address it yet. As we plan for discussion groups with PESD Early Learning staff, we will address questions about structures, including staff capacity and “FTE-ness”/workload, as part of those discussions.

**Question 6**: How are PESD and site staff (including staff and leaders at all levels) supported to implement the new design? *(Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)*

In the September surveys, PESD staff and Center Directors identified supports that were needed to implement the new design. The stated needs included role clarity and clear and consistent structures in the following areas:

- **PESD Early Learning staff identified the need for**:
  - Role clarity including clarity of scopes of work, and clarity of how individual and team roles relate to one another
  - Greater clarity around content areas, roles, and how they relate to and support one another
  - Supervisory support, including understanding of and support for supervisees’ scopes of work
  - Capacity to implement the work, including sufficient time and training/support to effectively do one’s job
- **PSESD Early Learning staff and Center Directors** identified the need for clear and consistent structures for communication, including communication processes and tools (e.g. using OneNote as a communication mechanism for PSESD staff to document support to sites).
- **Center Directors** also identified the need to experience the redesign to know what is needed.

**Question 7:** How are PSESD and site staff managing and responding to phases and differentiation of new design (e.g. with health services)? *(Note: this will be an ongoing focus of the evaluation)*

We have not yet addressed this question, given delays in data collection opportunities. We will address this question through PSESD staff focus groups this spring, and by collecting input from site staff (via focus group and/or survey) about their experiences with the design so far.

**Next steps**

There are several next steps planned as we begin Quarter 3 of the evaluation:

- Conduct PSESD staff discussion groups to understand progress and needs re: clarity of roles, structures, scopes of work – March and April 2018
- Expand process to define “racially equitable, high quality, and sustainable services” with Policy Council, Center Directors, and PSESD staff – March and April 2018
- Next Early Learning Evaluation Advisory Group meeting – April 2, 2018

For additional information, background, and approach for this evaluation, please visit the Early Learning Evaluation webpage on earlylearningwa.org under “For Staff’ and “For Families”.