LOCAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION THROUGH ESSA — A MULTI-YEAR EVALUATION

NORTH CAROLINA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION
The Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in December 2015, bolsters federal support for early learning and provides opportunities to strengthen the birth-through-third grade continuum—a critical strategy to improve third grade reading proficiency.

In September 2017, North Carolina submitted its state plan to comply with the federal law, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) began preparing their district ESSA plans for the 2018-19 academic year.

Title I Preschool and the NC Head Start State Collaboration Office (Office of Early Learning, NC Department of Public Instruction), the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF), and EducationCounsel have partnered since December 2017 to support LEAs and early childhood community leaders in collaborating to develop the early learning components of the LEAs’ ESSA district plans.

Activities, documented on NCECF’s Every Student Succeeds Act webpage, included:

- Early Learning in ESSA workshops, presentations at conferences and webinars for local Smart Start partnerships, LEA representatives, Title I leaders, superintendents, and local school board members (May-December 2017)
- Regional meetings (Round I) to develop local birth-through-age-eight commitments, attended by 80 district teams (380 people) (January 2018)
- Coaching and technical assistance support for development of district ESSA plans, provided to five districts, selected from 20 applications (Spring 2018)
- Early Learning in the Comprehensive, Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) webinar for Title I leaders (June 2018)
- Early Learning in ESSA webinars for local early learning leaders (January 2019)
- Regional meetings (Round II) for local teams to identify a problem of practice and begin developing action plans, attended by 80 district teams—more than 360 local early learning and K-12 leaders. (January 2019)
- Resources provided to support local collaboration, such as an LEA/Head Start Coordination Guidance document and a series of four annotated agendas to move local collaborators to a plan of action around a specific problem of practice (April-May 2019)
- Series of Office Hours webinars addressing topics like developing and updating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between LEAs and early learning partners, early learning provisions in the CCIP, and local coordination and collaboration around ESSA. (April-July 2019)
- Virtual technical assistance (TA) sessions with local early learning teams to review MOUs, answer questions about coordination requirements, discuss strategies for continued collaboration, explore opportunities for including early learning strategies in district ESSA plans and receive technical support on creating aligned action plans. (May-July 2019)
- Developing or Improving MOUs: Head Start and Public Schools Statewide meeting (November 2019)

THIS EVALUATION OUTLINES:

- The impact of two years of ESSA work (December 2017 through December 2019)
- Lessons learned and recommendations for future work

Source documents include a series of evaluation surveys completed between 2017 and 2019 by early learning partners across the state who have been involved in the work.
Impact

In 2017, before this work began, local Smart Start partnerships and LEAs reported that while they were mostly aware of the early learning opportunities in ESSA, they were not all collaborating on their ESSA district plans. They reported interest in attending regional meetings to support LEAs and early childhood community leaders collaborate to develop early learning components of their ESSA district plans.

A survey of 49 Smart Start partnership respondents and 57 LEA respondents found that:

- Most respondents were aware at that time that North Carolina school districts have the opportunity to include birth-through-age early learning in their ESSA district plans, including:
  - 86% of Smart Start respondents
  - 81% of LEA respondents
- Most LEAs reported working with or planning to work with early learning leaders on their plans.
  - 77% of LEA respondents reported that they were working with or planning to work with early learning community leaders on the development of their ESSA district plan.
- However, Smart Start partnership respondents did not feel a part of that collaboration.
  - Only 13% of Smart Start respondents reported that they were working with their LEA on the development of their ESSA district plan.
- Nearly all Smart Start respondents and most LEA respondents reported that they partner in other ways to support school readiness for children before they begin kindergarten (e.g., joint professional development, transition, etc.).
  - 91% of Smart Start respondents reported that they partner with their LEAs.
  - 78% of LEA respondents reported that they partner with early learning community leaders and providers.
- According to respondents, most LEAs do not coordinate joint activities (e.g., professional development) with child care, Head Start, and kindergarten through third grade teachers.
  - 70% of Smart Start respondents said that LEAs do not.
  - 59% of LEA respondents said that they do not.
- Smart Start and LEA respondents agreed that they would be interested in attending regional meetings to support LEAs and early childhood community leaders in collaborating to develop early learning components of their ESSA district plans.
  - 98% of Smart Start respondents agreed
  - 89% of LEA respondents agreed
These survey results demonstrate that while earlier ESSA early learning activities had increased awareness of the opportunity, more work was needed to support collaboration between LEAs and other early learning partners on the district plans.

They also demonstrated that both LEAs and other early learning partners were eager to learn more and think about how they could collaborate.

In January 2018, four regional meetings were held to assist LEAs and early learning stakeholders in this work, with the goals of:

- Providing an overview of ESSA early learning requirements and opportunities.
- Preparing LEAs to engage cross-sector, early learning stakeholders in plan development.
- Supporting LEAs in identifying data needed to inform decision-making.
- Supporting LEAs in outlining early learning components to consider.

Those who attended the 2018 ESSA regional meetings saw a clear impact on their ongoing work.

Representatives from 74 school districts responded to a follow-up survey four months after the meetings (in April 2018) and responses clearly showed ongoing collaboration and work:

- 95% said that attending the regional meeting impacted their work.
- 86% said that their ESSA plan would include birth through eight strategies.
- 71% said that their team was working to implement the commitments identified at the regional meeting.

95% of the people who attended the 2018 ESSA regional meetings said that it impacted their work.
RESPONDENTS SHARED HOW ATTENDING THE REGIONAL MEETING HAD IMPACTED THEIR WORK. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Increased understanding of the state’s focus on birth-through-age-eight literacy and learning.

- Helped to get the conversation going and pulled all of the stakeholder groups together—some of whom I had never met or worked with.

- Programs were able to share information on what services were offered in each service area.

- The discussions at the meeting helped me with a Pre-K through 12 perspective, which is a shift from a K-12 perspective.

- Helped our ESSA Team have a better understanding of the purpose for this initiative, gave us direction, and provided us with time to meet and discuss how early learning is working in our county. We created goals and strategies for improvement. It was very helpful with getting all of the key players in one room to have those necessary conversations. Decision makers/school leaders were present, which helped.

- The meeting helped to set a framework for us and how to plan for the future. We were able to have ideas prior to meeting with stakeholders to discuss where we would go in the next year and beyond.

- We have formed as a planning team and met on multiple occasions. We created a shared document to identify the resources of each agency represented on the team.

- We (LEA/NC Pre-K) attended the regional meeting along with representation from Head Start, the Partnership for Children and Exceptional Children (EC) Preschool. Our team was able to discuss practices that were already in place, but loose, then develop a plan to tighten the practices. We were very strategic and intentional with our plan development and really did not need any new or expanded dollars to successfully implement.

- We have started a local ESSA planning team and have tried to meet at least once a month since the regional meeting. We have discussed many ways of collaboration including transitions to kindergarten, supporting social-emotional health starting in kindergarten, and building relationships across early learning and K-12 settings.

- At the Central Office level we created a committee comprised of our Head Start coordinator, NC Pre-K coordinator, Superintendent of Curriculum, Director of Federal Programs, and Director of Curriculum. We have met three times and the Head Start coordinator presented to our elementary principals in an effort to bridge the gap between preschools and our elementary schools.

- Began discussions of ways to expand preschool programs.

- Developed a new PreK-K transition Stakeholders group.

- The meeting allowed us to brainstorm some future transition events that we will hold for our rising K students. District staff have met with Smart Start staff to begin planning the event that we will host this year as a pilot.

- Two programs collaborated to reach a larger population of children in our county.

- We organized an Early Learning Committee in our district who have been tasked with reaching out to home daycares, centers, Head Start programs, etc., to identify students in an effort to determine how they are learning, what their ability levels and learning styles are, how to address their academic needs, etc.
SOME LOCAL TEAMS SHARED THE COMMITMENTS IDENTIFIED AT THE MEETING THAT THEY WERE WORKING ON. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Expanding and developing Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with other early childhood community partners to include other “at risk” populations.
- Investigating the flexibility of funding to increase services for children birth-through-age-three in the most needed zip codes.
- Developing an annual comprehensive professional development calendar.
- Providing countywide professional development for all Pre-K staff, including private sites.
- Inviting local child care staff to our district kindergarten meetings.
- Seeking multiple funding streams to help with professional development across multiple agencies.
- Creating a systematic professional development plan for administrators that addresses early childhood topics.
- Creating a tracking system that shows connection between birth to five and third grade performance.
- Identifying how many children in our community need Pre-K services, collaborating with the [local] Partnership for Children in our recruitment efforts, and establishing a collaborative preschool application process for our county.
- Improving communication between preschool and kindergarten, including transition meetings for students moving to kindergarten.
- Developing and implementing a systematic procedure for receiving records of preschool children.
- Coordinating county resources - blending funding to increase number of slots.
- Showcasing Pre-K success stories to increase awareness of the value of early education.
- Creating effective parent/family engagement support activities.
- Working together to reduce the percentage of absenteeism by educating families on the importance of consistent attendance, to include arriving to school on time.
- Meeting with the local higher education institutions at least bi-annually about how to meet the community need for qualified teaching staff.
- Convening community stakeholders to work on a universal school readiness plan for our community.
- Meeting with local business partners.
- Providing books to early learners to help build literacy.
- Creating forms for moving students through the three tiers of MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support).
- Improving communication with all stakeholders (parents, staff, community leaders, etc).
- Creating a successful MTSS process that includes early learning strategies.

A case study, **Aligning Early Childhood Strategies so Every Student Succeeds in North Carolina**, shares more detail about the work through the spring of 2018 and the impact seen by early learning partners who participated.
In January 2019, a second round of regional meetings invited local teams to identify a problem of practice and begin developing an action plan around at least one of three priorities that had been identified by stakeholders as critical: family engagement, aligned professional development, or transition into kindergarten.

The goal was to support teams in doing the difficult work of collaborating toward a shared outcome. The four meetings were attended by 80 district teams (more than 360 people).

During 2019, the ESSA early learning state team supported local early learning partners through webinars, virtual TA session, and resources, including an LEA/Head Start Coordination Guidance document and a series of four annotated agendas to move local collaborators to a plan of action around a specific problem of practice. The Head Start State Collaboration Office and Title I Preschool held a summit on developing and improving MOUs between LEAs and local Head Starts.

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION SURVEYS AFTER THE JANUARY REGIONAL MEETINGS AND AT THE END OF 2019 FOUND THAT:

- 77% said that attending the regional meeting impacted their work.
- 74% said their teams were working to address the problem of practice and use the strategies they identified at the regional meeting.
- Of those who could answer the question, 80% said their district ESSA plan included birth-through-age-eight strategies. However, out of all the respondents, 45% replied that they didn’t know whether their district plan included early learning strategies or not. This finding suggests some staff new to ESSA work attended the 2019 regional meetings.
- 86% of those who knew about the four annotated meeting agendas reported that they had either used them or had plans to use them.

ATTENDEES SHARED WHAT THEY FOUND VALUABLE ABOUT THE REGIONAL MEETINGS, INCLUDING:

- This was a very helpful opportunity to collaborate and plan with our community partners by establishing a common vision and a specified goal focusing on the needs of our youngest learners.
- This event helped clarify opportunities and brought people together to collaborate around the support of early childhood education. It is often difficult to meet with people who are not directly in one organization and this provided that opportunity.
- Presenters gave us the tools to begin to develop plans and made us think strategically about how to develop them.
- Today provided us with a meaningful tool for collaborative work at the local level.
- Receiving important district data to identify problem of practice is beneficial in our work as we develop our strategic plan for the next cycle.
- The ESSA Early Learning meeting provided a great opportunity for teams from various districts to work together and to also note what other districts are doing on behalf of children and families.
- It was valuable to review other counties’ problems of practice and strategies.
- As a new Preschool Specialist, I found the training timely as I start this important endeavor to better the lives of our birth to eight children.
- Having the opportunity to hear from my colleagues that they share the same challenges as me was encouraging. We are not alone on this great work.
Attendees also shared something they were proud of that resulted from the 2018 (Round I) Regional meetings, one year later. Examples included:

- Three goals set by community agencies were consistently focused on this school year.
- We accomplished all but one of the goals we set.
- We have continued to meet and work towards our goals and plans.
- We revived our local interagency team to reduce silo-work.
- **We achieved the short term goal we set for our team last year.**
- Formed a more defined partnership with the school system.
- We were able to expand Title I preschool.
- We had a data meeting with stakeholders in our community.
- A real plan to help our preschool teachers grow professionally.
- LEA opened up some trainings for TA and coaching staff from the Partnership.
- Our county developed a kindergarten transition team that has met regularly since last year’s meeting and has made great strides towards implementing an effective kindergarten transition plan for our community.
- Sharing Pre-K TS Gold data with principals and Kindergarten teachers.
- The partnerships that were developed with Smart Start and outside community preschool programs.
- Increased partnership with Title I supervisors.
- **Connecting the school system leadership with the Head Start leadership was tremendously valuable.**
- Collaboration has increased, with data sharing between Head Start and LEA.
- MOU with Head Start.
- Enhanced Head Start school readiness team.
- Working with other LEAs as a community of practice.

Attendees commented on how the annotated agendas were helpful. Examples include:

- We have held five meetings, including the community round table. We have been able to stay on task with the outline and allow participants to provide valuable feedback.
- Our leadership team has been together for a year and a half now and has utilized bits and pieces of the agendas. The agendas have been very helpful at the individual school level. We plan to have four meetings at each elementary school this school year and follow the agendas. So far, we have used the agenda for the first meeting, and it went really well.
- We have held two meetings since the school year has started. The agendas have impacted our work because they gave us a starting place to move forward.
- **The agendas provided a framework which was instrumental in executing our plan.**
- They have aided our collaborative spirit.
- They have kept us focused.
- We hope that these plans will allow clear and consistent communication among all stakeholders while making certain everyone is speaking the same language. Our goal is to become more goal oriented as a result of these agendas.
- We will be using the agendas to ensure that early learning plans are aligned.

Survey data suggest that the support provided to local early learning teams to coordinate and collaborate around ESSA was useful to them and moved their work forward.
Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Work

Evaluations throughout the period also contributed to our knowledge around opportunities for improving the work going forward and what supports stakeholders would like to see in the future.

For example, in 2018, those who said that the regional meetings did not impact their work shared some reasons why not, including:

- We have not had any follow-up meetings or interactions with the school system since the meeting in January.
- We need more guidance from the state on how to engage the local LEA. The Early Childhood community and the Partnership could use TA on how to engage the local LEA and help them to understand their role with ESSA planning and the importance of it.
- We felt that we were already collaborating and implementing most of the strategies that were suggested.
- We have had turnover in our district.

Those who shared that their 2018-19 district ESSA plans would not include birth-through-age-eight strategies shared some reasons why, including:

- [Our county] has several collaborative partnerships with community organizations that focus on literacy and learning from birth-through-age-eight. However, not all of this work is reflected in the ESSA plan.
- We need some TA to help engage the LEA on the importance of the early years.
- The Partnership is filling the role of implementing strategies that are mostly targeted at birth-through-age-five (not yet in kindergarten) population. Our Smart Start funding restricts us from providing school age services, so our ability to serve school age children is limited to the funding we receive elsewhere.
- Turnover in the LEA. Currently we are waiting on the new person to take position in the new school year.
- Not sure whether it does or not. We have not been provided any information regarding the plan.
- We have primarily focused on birth-through-age-five since most of our preschool children are in NC Pre-K classrooms and Head Start classrooms. Once we work through this first year, we can certainly expand the work to include ages 6-8 with existing district structures.
SOME RESPONDENTS SHARED WHAT HAD PREVENTED THEIR TEAM FROM MOVING FORWARD AND WHAT WOULD SUPPORT THEIR TEAM IN MAKING PROGRESS ON THE COMMITMENTS MADE:

- Engaging the LEA has been almost impossible.
- No initiative from the school system regarding the plan or goals.
- Lack of communication and collaboration.
- The members of the team only represented at the meeting were preschool staff not the school-age level representatives.
- Not every team member was present at the meeting.
- Time.

RESPONDENTS SHARED WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT THEIR TEAM WOULD LIKE MOVING FORWARD. THEY WERE INVITED TO CHECK ALL THAT APPLIED (OUT OF 88 WHO RESPONDED):

- Annual regional meetings to support development of district ESSA plans, which must be submitted annually (55%).
- Focused support on birth-through-age-eight aligned professional development (51%).
- Webinars to share information and learn best practice (43%).
- Focused support on family engagement (41%).
- Case studies showcasing how NC districts are incorporating early learning into their district ESSA plans (35%).
- Focused support on transitions (34%).
- Coaching and technical assistance to support district birth-through-age-eight planning (33%).
- Analysis of all NC district plans to determine and share early learning components (33%).
- Focused support on data collection and analysis (30%).
- Capacity building in facilitation and collaborative action (19%).
- Focused support on school improvement (14%).
- Other (please specify) (14%):
  » More emphasis needs to be made on including all stakeholders in the early learning community. Head Start has accomplished so many of these things already, such as family engagement, and can offer valuable information to the committee. I think that sometimes public school officials do not think to include the local child care providers in their planning/transition.
  » Not sure what we need but doesn't seem to be the direction that the school system would like to take with the birth-through-age-five population.
  » Focused support on creating a seamless social-emotional health pipeline from early learning settings to K-12.
  » Offer professional development for principals/administrators to attend.
  » Examples of plan structure and feedback on existing plans.
IN 2019, STAKEHOLDERS WERE SURVEYED ABOUT WHAT WAS USEFUL TO SUPPORT THEIR ESSA WORK IN 2019.

- As mentioned in the Impact section, 86% of those who knew about the four annotated meeting agendas reported that they had either used them or had plans to use them.
- However, a third of the respondents answered “I don’t know what they are.”

SOME RESPONDENTS SHARED WHAT HAS PREVENTED THEIR TEAMS FROM USING THE AGENDAS AND WHAT WOULD SUPPORT THEM IN MAKING PROGRESS ON THEIR PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE. RESPONSES INCLUDED:

- Leadership.

Teams were led by schools, since this is Title I funding. So they would need to answer this.

- The entire team has not met since the February 2019 meeting so some members have no idea what our LEA is doing.

- Competing priorities and need for additional time to meet as a team. Need to integrate this work into other existing planning and projects.

- We were already meeting with clear agendas before the February 2019 meeting.

- Didn't need them to foster meeting.

- We are a small district who serves all PreK-age children and we only have two childcare centers to work with. Due to the makeup of the childcare arena in [our] county, it is very easy to meet, discuss, create and carry out a plan of action to make progress on our problem of practice.

- There has been a lot of turnover in our partnering agencies as in NC Pre-K and Head Start. We are trying to regroup and get back on the right track.

- Team meetings, as coordinated by the LEA, serve the purpose of agency updates. In my opinion, we are really not taking the time to focus on the identified topic of Transition to Kindergarten at this time. Additionally, there is still a lot of education needed for LEA staff on the world of early childhood education and vice versa. We did discuss the possibility of spending a portion of each meeting for this purpose, but as of this date no formal coordination has occurred.

- We have not met as a team since the regional meeting.

- I am a new Director and did not attend the session in February. I do not have knowledge of the activities that took place.

STAKEHOLDERS SHARED WHAT PREVENTED THE DISTRICT FROM INCLUDING BIRTH-THROUGH-AGE-EIGHT STRATEGIES IN THE ESSA PLAN AND WHAT WOULD SUPPORT THEIR DISTRICTS IN INCLUDING SUCH STRATEGIES IN FUTURE YEARS.

- Leadership.

- The identified (prioritized) needs were more specific to three and four year-olds.

- We are developing a family engagement county plan in alignment with the Early Childhood Action Plan. This plan will be birth through eight. We are expanding our focus.

- We plan to make this a priority this year to include strategies birth-through-age-eight. Due to a recent large amount of turnover we are in the process of setting up a new support system/team.

- We need more input from those on the front line teaching/supporting upper grades.

- We start with age four.
Again in the 2019 survey, stakeholders were asked what kind of support their teams would like moving forward and were invited to check all that applied (out of 52 responses):

- Annual regional meetings to support development of local early learning action plans (60%).
- Case studies showcasing how NC districts are implementing early learning strategies and incorporating early learning in strategic plans (ESSA, Head Start, Smart Start, etc.) (52%).
- Webinars to share information and learn best practice (48%).
- Focused support on family engagement (42%).
- Coaching and technical assistance to support community planning around birth-through-age-eight strategies (37%).
- Collaborative meetings for partnering on specific topics (subsidy, serving vulnerable populations, continuity and transition, aligned PD, family engagement across systems, etc.) (35%)
- Focused support on birth-through-age-eight aligned professional development (35%).
- Focused support on transitions (33%).
- Capacity building in facilitation and collaborative action (27%).
- Focused support for development of local agreements/MOUs (27%).
- Other (please specify):
  » Fewer regional meetings. More resources to use at a local level. We would appreciate directives/goals and the freedom to implement them independently.
  » Continued work on behavior management for young learners and how that impacts transition activities.

60% of stakeholders said they wanted annual regional meetings to support development of local early learning action plans.
STAKEHOLDERS WERE INVITED TO SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THEY THOUGHT WOULD HELP US IN MOVING FORWARD:

- We are in a growth process currently. We are fortunate to have community partners through the Partnership for Children, who will continue to work with us on our projects to address early education.
- Thank you for aiding us to focus our strategies and collaborative work. Several statewide initiatives are aligning and we are excited to be a part of this.
- The support and tools have been wonderful, and we hope the opportunity to meet as a group continues.
- Sharing sample plans and the agendas, provide resources in one area (google doc or livebinder).
- Having time to collaborate with our community partners is beneficial during the annual meeting.
- I think it is important to allow differentiation, which you certainly promote because districts and needs are so different. In terms of support, I would like to see all of the options you offered. The collaborative meeting was wonderful but a little difficult to get all parties involved since some agencies serve so many districts yet having that time was productive. Having a meeting like this once a year would be valuable, but not something we could do each month. I love learning from the support team but hybrid plans of face-to-face, webinars, coaching, screencasts, etc. would fit my needs better.
- This work will take quite a bit of time, because we all are so busy and overtasked. The interest and commitment are there, but finding the time to work together is difficult.
- One of the meetings (perhaps the one on CCIP) was over the summer, and there was a very short notice of this meeting. Although convenient, webinars are not my preferred method of receiving information. They are very easy to tune out or skip altogether when our daily schedules inevitably run at a frantic pace. We have not met as a group, and I think that is because we don't have a leader to organize a meeting.
- It would be great if there were maybe quarterly check ins.

IN NOVEMBER 2019, THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING HOSTED A SUMMIT FOR LEAS AND HEAD STARTS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DEVELOPING OR IMPROVING THEIR MOUS.

- 68% of meeting attendees shared that the meeting was well worth their time, with an average rated score of 4.64 out of 5.

Attendees shared the aspects of the meeting they found helpful. The most common responses included:

» Time to meet and collaborate with other agencies.
» Requirements, expectations, and how to write the MOU.

Other examples include:

- The resources and examples you shared as well as the opportunity to gain best practice ideas from talking with others in our group activity.
- The PowerPoint, brainstorming, actual work time.
- The whole agenda was helpful as this process is new.
- Direct activity for drafting our MOU.
- The details of expectations, handouts, and small group sessions.
- Brainstorming and sharing. Examples.
- Gallery walk of ideas from other participants.
- Handouts and discussion with my peers about their MOU process.
- The materials.
- Discussion time with partners to review our current MOA and make decisions regarding next steps.
- The variety of information provided and allowing each agency to speak.
- New ideas on transition.
- Getting to meet representative from local charter school in person.
THOUGH THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS FOUND ALL ASPECTS HELPFUL, A FEW SHARED WHAT ASPECTS OF THE MEETING THEY FOUND LEAST HELPFUL:

- Not having a copy of the PowerPoint in advance.
- The group session was too long.
- Individualized area for disability.
- Having time to identify areas of need specifically.
- Team building activity.
- Being able to do some of this work before we come.
- Needed a little more time to dive into the new requirements.

THEY OFFERED SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROCESS USED AT THE MEETING. THE MAIN REQUEST WAS “MORE TIME.” OTHER SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE:

- Space the tables further apart so we have some breathing room.
- More space to move around, presentation regarding homeless children.
- Have the training earlier prior to deadlines.
- Scheduling a follow-up meeting this spring to have an opportunity to meet to review and improve plans with guidance from DPI would be great.
- Have meeting closer to home.
- Keep this up with feedback.
- A smaller follow-up meeting with more regionalized groups... help with accountability and closer proximity would allow other partners to attend.
- More work time with less interruption.
- Facilitators at each table to assist with beginning to write the MOU.
- A template with examples to draw from to expedite process.
- More movement.
- Tell us what the puzzle was supposed to look like. That was a great, although frustrating activity. It really drilled home how we have to work together and communicate.
- Slow down going over the new requirements, not all that are in attendance have been informed of what is now needed.
Next Steps

Survey results indicate that:

▶ Local teams find the supports for local coordination and collaboration useful in their work
▶ They value face-to-face time
▶ Teams are in all different places in terms of the depth and breadth of their collaborative work, and needs vary by district/county
▶ A barrier to continued success is not having local-level facilitators to continue moving the teams’ collaborative work forward between annual meetings

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK BASED ON THE SURVEY RESULTS INCLUDE:

• Continue to make technical assistance available and flexible enough to meet the varying needs of local teams and meet them where they are at different stages of collaboration.

• Hold annual in-person meetings, which was the top item noted in both 2018 and 2019 surveys when participants were asked what kinds of supports their teams would like moving forward (55% of respondents noted this in 2018 and 60% in 2019). COVID-19 made an in-person meeting impossible in 2020.

• Present useful information for regional teams via webinar (43% of respondents noted this in 2018 and 48% in 2019).

• Produce case studies showcasing how NC districts are implementing early learning strategies and incorporating early learning in strategic plans (ESSA, Head Start, Smart Start, etc.) (35% of respondents noted this in 2018 and 52% in 2019).

• Continue to share out the resources already created by the state ESSA team through state partners’ newsletters, to ensure widespread distribution to all local early learning partners.

• Invest in building the capacity (expertise, financial resources, bandwidth) of local early learning partners to facilitate local collaborative planning and implementation processes with their partners.
NCECF would like to acknowledge and thank our partners in this 2017-2019 work to build local coordination and collaboration around the Every Student Succeeds Act:

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING: TITLE I PRESCHOOL
NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING: HEAD START STATE COLLABORATION OFFICE

The NC Early Childhood Foundation promotes understanding, spearheads collaboration, and advances policies to ensure each North Carolina child is on track for lifelong success by the end of third grade.