

Early Learning Network Update **June 2009**

Welcome to the first edition of the *Early Learning Network Update*, which is designed to provide information to those practitioners affiliated with the Early Learning Network. The newsletter provides questions and answers about specific policies and procedures, addresses professional development opportunities, and provides additional resources for providers. If you have any information that you would like to see included in this newsletter, please send your ideas to earlylearningnetwork@pattan.net.

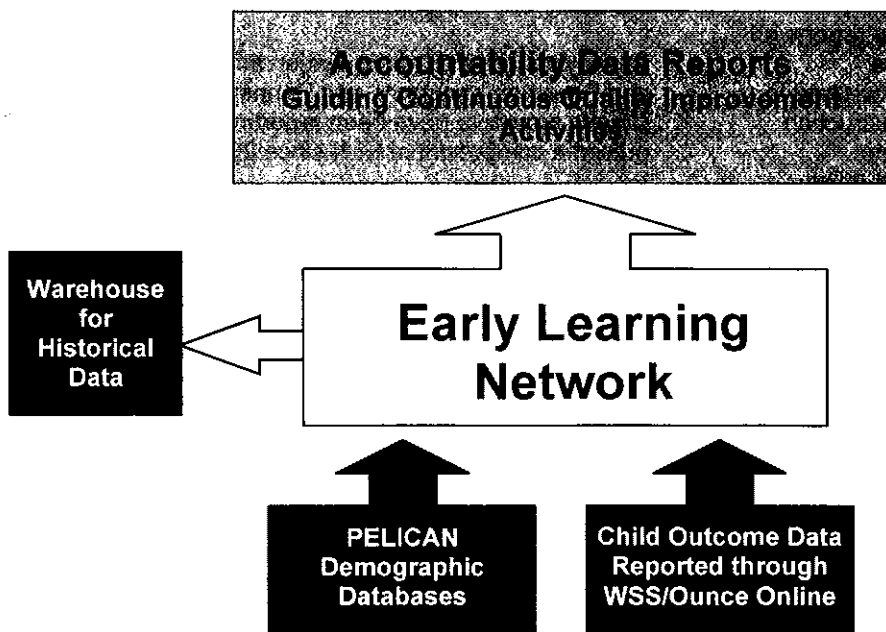
The Early Learning Network (ELN) is a comprehensive unified data system for assessing individual-level child outcomes across multiple programs. It links existing data systems by child identifier and will collect additional information on child and family services across program area. When fully implemented, the data will be used to inform state policy decisions, investments and improvement efforts for early educational programs from birth to third grade.

The first phase of the ELN was completed on May 30, 2009. This phase included the linking of existing child demographic database, PELICAN, with the child outcome reporting

system, Work Sampling and Ounce Scale Online (WSO/OSO). The use of unique child, teacher and program identifiers allowed ELN to match data collected in PELICAN with data collected in WSO/OSO for a more complete analysis of child outcomes.

The second phase of ELN, scheduled to begin in September 2009, expands the implementation of ELN to additional Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) early childhood programs including: Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, and Keystone STARS 3 and 4 child care centers.

The Early Learning Network will use existing program and demographic databases in combination with child outcome data to guide continuous quality improvement activities. ELN will also include a data warehouse feature that will allow longitudinal research on early childhood programs in Pennsylvania.



EARLY LEARNING NETWORK - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of the Early Learning Network?
 2. Which OCDEL programs will participate in the Early Learning Network?
 3. Which children will have data reported in the Early Learning Network?
 4. How is data entered into the Early Learning Network?
 5. How will the Early Learning Network protect the confidential data it is collecting?
 6. How will child outcome information be reported in the Early Learning Network?
 7. What is the cost to providers for use of Early Learning Network?
 8. What are the specific requirements for reporting child outcomes in the Early Learning Network?
 9. Who enters the child outcome data into Work Sampling or Ounce?
 10. How will I get access to the Early Learning Network?
 11. How should providers prepare for their participation in the Early Learning Network?
 12. What professional development support and resources are available to those programs who are participating in the Early Learning Network?
 13. What kind of ongoing support will be available to those programs participating in the Early Learning Network as they begin to report data?
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1. What are the benefits of the Early Learning Network?

There are many benefits for all stakeholders who are participating in ELN.

- Parents will have regular, consistent reports on their child's progress in any OCDEL early childhood program. These reports can be used to discuss child progress during parent/teacher conferences.
- Parents whose children are in multiple programs will experience a decrease in the number of times that they are asked for basic demographic information.
- Teachers will be able to generate reports on both individual children and entire classrooms. These reports can be used to individualize instruction, adapt instruction practices, and enhance curriculum.
- Teachers will be able to generate family-friendly child progress reports.
- The Work Sampling System and/or Ounce Summary Reports may be used in place of the Child Service Report required for certified child care programs as long as it is shared with parents.
- Program directors will be able to generate reports that can be analyzed to determine which practices have the most positive impact on children and make improvements to their program practices.

- Program directors will be able to use the ELN reporting features as a management tool to ensure high quality data reporting.
- Program directors will have the information they need to allocate their professional development and technical assistance resources.
- All Commonwealth citizens can be assured that OCDEL is an effective steward of the public investment of tax dollars in early childhood programs.

2. Which OCDEL programs will participate in the Early Learning Network?

Pennsylvania's Early Intervention Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs and Pennsylvania PreK Counts providers have been reporting the child outcome component of ELN since 2007.

In the fall of 2009, Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, and Keystone STAR 3 and 4 childcare centers will begin to report child/program demographics and child outcome data through ELN.

It is anticipated that in 2010-2011, Keystone STAR 3 and 4 family and group child care providers, Nurse Family Partnership programs, and Parent Child Home programs will begin to participate in ELN.

3. Which children will have data reported in the Early Learning Network?

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are enrolled in programs that participate in ELN will have demographic and child outcome data reported in ELN. Data on kindergarten and school-age children will not be gathered in ELN at this time, even if those children are enrolled in Keystone STARS 3 & 4 programs.

4. How is data entered into the Early Learning Network?

ELN data is gathered through two web-based components: Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children across Networks (PELICAN) for program/child demographic data and Work Sampling Online/ Ounce Scale Online (WSO/OSO) for child outcome data.

The PELICAN system includes basic child demographic data, information about a child's parents/guardians, and general information about the program and their teachers. Data collected in PELICAN represents the unique constellation of variables that make up each child, family, and program experience. A program administrator will typically enter this data, updating as needed.

The WSO/OSO system is used to report child outcome data. Teachers and therapists may use a variety of sources of evidence to understand a child's progress that will then be reported in WSO/OSO according to reporting timelines for that program.

ELN has been designed so that information can be shared between PELICAN and WSO/OSO, allowing for decreased data entry. ELN uses child identifiers to confidentially link the data in these two databases, allowing for a comprehensive data system.

5. How will the Early Learning Network protect the confidential data it is collecting?

OCDEL has worked diligently to design confidentiality processes that comply with state and federal regulations and has sought feedback from its stakeholder ELN Advisory Committee.

- ELN will comply with all federal and state confidentiality, privacy and security requirements;
- Practitioners will have access only to the data relevant to their students, programs and/or concerns. Child specific data will not be disclosed beyond the level of the direct service provider except as permitted by applicable law; and
- Only aggregate information, which does not allow for the identification of specific children, will be reported to the Commonwealth and when required, to the federal government.

6. How will child outcome information be reported in the Early Learning Network?

In order to have the highest quality child outcome data, OCDEL is using a uniform process to report outcomes across all early childhood programs.

Programs are encouraged to use multiple sources of information about the individual child to guide outcomes reporting. Programs may use such sources as parent report, child observation, reports from other teachers/therapists involved with the child, portfolio materials gathered from the child's experience, outcomes derived from various assessment forms, and other sources to understand the child's progress. Work Sampling Online (for preschoolers) and Ounce Scale Online (for infants and toddlers) are the required reporting systems.

7. What is the cost to providers for use of Early Learning Network?

For those providers who are participating in ELN, there is no cost for the use of ELN or for the use of the WSO/OSO license to report child outcomes. This represents a substantial cost savings for those providers currently purchasing a license to use WSO/OSO.

In addition, professional development activities, which include copies of Work Sampling and Ounce Scale materials, are available at no cost to providers through the Regional Keys.

Those programs who are not required to participate in ELN, may chose to report child

outcome data in WSO/OSO at a significantly reduced rate. For additional information on how non-required programs may participate in reporting child outcomes, please send an email to earlylearningnetwork@pattan.net.

8. What are the specific requirements for reporting child outcomes in the Early Learning Network?

All early childhood programs, including Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, Keystone STAR 3 and 4 childcare centers, and Pennsylvania PreK Counts Programs report outcome data three times each year. Child outcome data is reported in WSO/OSO on October 1, February 1, and May 15 of each year.

At a minimum, each preschool-age child has the checklist component completed in WSO if the child is enrolled at the time when data is reported. At a minimum, each infant and toddler has the Developmental Profile component completed in OSO. The other tools in WSO/OSO, such as recording observations, portfolios, and/or Family Albums may be used at the discretion of the program. The use of these additional tools can enhance quality practices in early childhood programs and are strongly encouraged.

Early Intervention infant/Toddler and Preschool programs record child outcome data based on the child's enrollment in the Early Intervention Program. Data is reported upon a child's entry to the program, at the annual anniversary of participation and upon exit from the program. Each child enrolled in Early Intervention will have a Checklist (preschoolers) or Developmental Profile (infant/toddler) completed at each reporting period. In addition, each child has an Early Childhood Outcomes Report (ECO) completed for each reporting time period in order to meet federal reporting requirements.

9. Who enters the child outcome data into Work Sampling or Ounce?

It is recommended that the teacher/therapist who is observing the child and completing the WSO Checklist or OSO Developmental Profile enter the information into WSO/OSO.

WSO and OSO are user-friendly reporting systems that allow for quick data entry. The teacher who is comfortable with data entry in WSO/OSO will also be more likely to generate reports and use the data for informing daily instructional practice. If someone other than the teacher who observed the child enters the data, opportunities for errors increase, and the teacher/therapist becomes more removed from the process of using this information to make instructional decisions.

While teachers/therapists are encouraged to report child outcome data in WSO/OSO, the demographic data collected through PELICAN may be entered by other provider staff including program administrators or support staff.

10. How will providers get access to the Early Learning Network?

Each provider will receive a username and password for PELICAN and a separate username and password for WSO/OSO. OCDEL will begin disseminating usernames and passwords to Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, and Keystone STAR 3 and 4 childcare centers in mid August and will provide more information about the process at that time. .

11. How should providers prepare for their participation in the Early Learning Network?

Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, Keystone STAR 3 and 4 childcare centers, who will be reporting data in ELN for the first time in fall 2009, should evaluate their technology hardware, software and internet access needs to ensure they are prepared.

Providers will need a computer with internet access. While high-speed access is preferable, it is not required. No special computer software programs will be needed. The same computer can be used for entering PELICAN demographic information and for reporting child outcome data in WSO/OSO.

If a computer with internet access is not available, programs are encouraged to identify other local resources such as public libraries, school district buildings, or other community sites with internet access.

12. What professional development support and resources are available to those programs who are participating in the Early Learning Network?

Programs who are new to reporting data in the ELN should participate in the professional development activities that are available in summer 2009. A number of different professional development activities related to ELN and WSO/OSO are available.

- The Regional Keys are offering a **day-long training** on how to administer the WSS Checklist and the Ounce Developmental Profiles. An additional **3-hour training** session focuses on how to report data in WSO/OSO. These sessions are designed for program staff who will be reporting child outcome data using WSO/OSO. Check the professional development calendar on the PA Key website (www.pakeys.org) or contact your Regional Key.
- A series of **administrative webinars** are currently available for directors/administrators. These webinars focus on how to use WSO/OSO to manage the reporting of data by staff and to ensure high quality data. For additional information, contact your Regional Key or email a request for a flyer to earlylearningnetwork@pattan.net.
- A series of **conference calls** will be held statewide in July to provide an overview of the ELN and to describe the process for obtaining usernames and passwords for data entry. The hour-long calls will be held at a variety of times during the day, from early morning to early evening, in order to accommodate many schedules. Program administrators from Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, and Keystone STARS 3 and 4 child care center should plan to attend.
- In early August 2009, **ELN training sessions** will be provided across the state. These sessions are designed for program administrators from Accountability Block Grant Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Head

Start State Supplemental Assistance Programs, Keystone STARS 3 and 4 child care centers, and Pennsylvania PreK Counts Programs. The sessions will be computer-based, allowing participants an opportunity to practice entering data into ELN. The sessions will also describe the demographic data collection requirements, ideas for talking with families about ELN, and strategies for efficient data entry. A number of resources materials including flyers describing ELN for families, frequently asked questions and responses, and tips for using computers will be provided.

As training schedules and registration information is finalized, the information will be posted to the PA Key website at www.pakeys.org and will be disseminated through additional announcements, the BUILD listserv and the Regional Keys.

13. What kind of ongoing support will be available to those programs participating in the Early Learning Network as they begin to report data?

Technical assistance and ongoing support will also be available as programs begin to enter data in ELN. Email inquiries on ELN should be addressed to earlylearningnetwork@pattan.net. This email address is currently available for any procedural questions and concerns. A toll-free phone line will be available in August 2009 for issues related to data entry and computer use.