

Build Ohio Year Five Case Study

March 2008

■ Background and Overview

Organization and activities

As a collaborative group of a wide range of stakeholders, in 2007, Build Ohio acted as a separate entity from other early learning organizations or agencies. The Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (OCCRRA) was Build Ohio's fiscal agent. A full-time project director managed administrative and strategic operations. Build Ohio was governed by a board, with members representing public, private, and non-profit organizations. Members represented a range of fields and services, including education, public health, mental health, child care, and mental retardation and developmental disabilities. A larger group of more than 100 entities were considered Build Ohio "members."

In January 2007, Ted Strickland became Governor of Ohio, and has publicly committed his administration to strengthening Ohio's system of early care and education. Specifically, the Governor has committed to "align state policy to build a true Early Care and Education system that focuses on the whole child, supports access to affordable quality care for parents, and provides fair payment to providers." In this context, Build Ohio examined its priorities and work groups in order to align strategically with the Governor's priorities, as appropriate. In 2007, Build Ohio focused on the following priorities:

- Statewide implementation of Step Up to Quality (quality rating system)
- Designing and implementing professional development system components
- Implementing communication and public will building strategies with target audiences
- Convening a Social and Emotional work group
- Determining Build Ohio's connection to Ohio's Early Childhood Cabinet

Build Ohio's work in each of these priority areas was primarily accomplished through work groups. Work groups were usually chaired by board members, but individuals other than board members participated in work groups. In some cases, work groups were associated with other entities (e.g., the Professional Development work group is the Ohio Professional Development Network). In other cases, the work groups were formed by Build Ohio to accomplish Build's objectives (e.g., Communication/Building Public Will).

Selection of priorities

Build Ohio's 2007 priorities were both a continuation of last year's work, and reflective of Governor Strickland's early care and education priorities. The priorities were initially selected based on a statewide strategic framework for building an early learning system in Ohio. Also, they were based on Build Ohio's decision in 2004 to focus on developing infrastructure components of the early learning system, especially professional development, and public will and support.

Build Ohio's position

In recent years, Build Ohio has operated and prioritized its work in relationship to two other early learning system-building initiatives in Ohio: 1) the School Readiness Solutions Group of the State Board of Education (Solutions Group); and 2) Ohio GroundWork Campaign (GroundWork). All three initiatives described themselves as focusing on different strategies for achieving the same goal (Table 1).

Table 1
Strategies of Three Major Early Learning Systems-Building Initiatives in Ohio

Initiative	Focus
Build Ohio	Improving the system through a building block approach working in coordination with the field
GroundWork	Expanding resources and making early care and education a priority with state elected officials working in targeted communities
Solutions Group	Overarching design of an early learning system and legislative recommendations for moving forward through a state level task force

Build Ohio has always focused on building infrastructure components of the system. GroundWork began in 2003, largely because Build Ohio did not include advocacy in its scope of work. (Advocacy was perceived as a barrier to participation by public agencies and some philanthropic members.) The Solutions Group was created in 2005 by the State Board of Education to develop recommendations for policy changes and actions necessary to create an early learning system in Ohio. Over the last two years, Build Ohio and GroundWork have both aligned their activities and priorities with the Solutions Group recommendations, which were published in July 2006.

Throughout much of 2007, Build Ohio continued its focus on building infrastructure components of Ohio's early learning system. In March 2007, Governor Strickland - who campaigned on increasing access and funding to quality childhood education - fulfilled a campaign promise by establishing a new Early Childhood Cabinet (EC Cabinet), comprising leaders from six state agencies: Job and Family Services; Education; Health; Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities; Mental Health; and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services. Alicia Leatherman, former Executive Director of OCCRRRA, and a member of Build Ohio's administrative board, was appointed to lead the new cabinet. The EC Cabinet's stated mission is to unite these key state agencies around a common goal of promoting school readiness by setting and coordinating state policy and programs that serve Ohio's children, prenatal to six years of age.

Early Childhood Cabinet

The EC Cabinet began meeting in the summer of 2007. Initial meetings focused on bringing each of the agency directors up to speed on the network of state and local entities, programs, requirements, and standards that currently make up Ohio's early care and education system, as well as the infrastructure that supports that system and the many strengths and challenges the system currently faces. The Cabinet has begun to prioritize its work around benchmarks established as part of Governor Strickland's *Turnaround Ohio* Plan, upon which the governor based his campaign. More detail on these benchmarks is discussed in both the Shared Vision and the Alignment and Readiness sections of this report.

According to campaign literature, *Turnaround Ohio* is a plan to create and keep jobs in Ohio by investing in Ohio's strengths, such as energy production and entrepreneurship, while bringing Ohio the jobs of the future by making sure that the state has the most educated workforce possible. The foundation of the plan begins with the care and education of Ohio's children.

We know that healthy, happy children are able to learn; that good learners in effective schools become educated learners ready to contribute as workers; that able workers stay where there are worthy opportunities. We know that when good jobs are performed well, for fair pay, we start a cycle of success that builds its own momentum, creating opportunities for new investment, a growing tax base, stable families -- everything Ohio has been losing for almost two decades¹.

Among the seven key components of Strickland's *Turnaround Ohio* plan, providing "every child a fair start through access to high-quality early care and education" is listed first.

In addition to establishing initial benchmarks that are aligned with the Turnaround Ohio plan, other activities on which the EC Cabinet has focused include establishing a work plan, which will ultimately be guided and implemented by work groups, similar to those employed by Build Ohio. Initial plans call for topic-specific work groups focused on:

- Fiscal Model – the EC Cabinet has established a work group to examine the costs for programs to achieve star ratings through Step Up to Quality. The outcome is to have information and cost data that can inform future funding strategies to achieve and retain quality programs.
- Articulation – the EC Cabinet will work with the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education to convene this work group to establish recommendations for the development of a fully articulation Early Childhood degree program at state-sponsored higher education institutions.
- Infants and Toddlers – a work group will develop program standards for infant and toddler settings. These standards will be aligned with the existing Early Learning Program Guidelines, which serve as the foundation for all programs funded through the Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness. The

¹ State of Ohio website, Ohio Workforce 411. Retrieved March 22, 2008.
http://www.ohioworkforce411.gov/docs/Attach_C_TurnaroundOhio-JFS.pdf

infant and toddler standards will provide care teachers with information on how to create appropriate and nurturing settings for babies.

- Policy Matters audit – the EC Cabinet will revise the policy audit that was completed for early childhood policies in 2005. The audit will act as a guide for the EC Cabinet in development or prioritizing policy changes and implementation.
- Core Competencies and Training for Social and Emotional Development – a work group will create competencies for professionals in the field, along with high quality professional development standards in order to create a common understanding and supports for professionals working with young children.
- Coordination – with Ohio Family and Children First and the Partnership for Continued Learning. Quarterly meetings will be held between the three entities in order to coordinate resources, supports, and access to information for local communities.
- Stakeholders – this work group will be designed to provide the EC Cabinet with advice and input on the design and implementation strategies of the cabinet.

Issues faced and addressed

Following the establishment of the EC Cabinet, members of Build Ohio’s administrative board began to question how the cabinet’s work might affect the role Build Ohio played in building a comprehensive, well-integrated early care and education system in Ohio. As *the* entity charged with coordinating state policies, standards, and programs around early care and education, it seemed to many that the EC Cabinet was in a position to affect enforceable, system-wide change. The questions that Build Ohio faced were how to support the cabinet’s efforts, how to continue its own efforts in ways that were not duplicative, and whether and how Build Ohio should establish a formal relationship to the cabinet. Then in August 2007, Build Ohio’s Project Director, Chris Stoneburner, resigned from her position to become the new Executive Director of OCCRRA. The culmination of these events brought Build Ohio to a critical juncture in its five-year history and resulted in a series of meetings and conversations focused on one critical question: where does Build Ohio go from here?

Initial discussions on this question focused on realigning the structure of Build Ohio to coordinate with and complement the work of the EC Cabinet. It was agreed that at its core, the work of the EC Cabinet was focused on facilitating the connections and intersections that were necessary to achieve alignment across agencies and programs. Whereas, the work of Build Ohio was focused on making the components of the early care and education system (i.e., the programs themselves) work “on the ground.” Although the priorities and proposed work group structure of the EC Cabinet was similar to those of Build Ohio’s, it was also agreed that Build Ohio’s public/private collaborative structure, and the role it has played in making connections to local stakeholders were unique.

Could Build Ohio, then, restructure itself as an advisory group to the EC Cabinet? The question begot more questions. Would Build Ohio be formally accountable to the cabinet? Would the cabinet actually direct the work of Build Ohio? If so, would there still be a place for the public members at the Build Ohio table? On the positive side, it

seemed a formal connection to the EC Cabinet, in whatever form, could add credibility to Build Ohio's work and also open doors to new grant funding, especially from state agencies.

In November 2007, the Build Ohio administrative board convened a meeting to officially, and collectively, decide the future direction of Build Ohio. The meeting was facilitated by Jacqueline Romer-Sensky, former director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Mission critical questions posed to the group were:

1. What does Build Ohio do or produce?
2. What is Build Ohio's additive value?
3. Is this additive value worthy of the time and resources invested?
4. Does the value Build Ohio produces play a critical role in the big picture?
5. If Build Ohio were not here tomorrow, what would not happen that happens today?

The discussion that followed was rich in the history of Build Ohio and the many accomplishments it had achieved and facilitated throughout its five years. Board members praised the work of Build Ohio for its transparency, its shared accountability, and its ability to create a framework and momentum around early care and education issues at a time when the state lacked both gubernatorial and legislative leaders to take up the cause. There was universal agreement that the work of Build Ohio had paved the way for Governor Strickland and his administration to make early care and education a state-level priority in Ohio.

In light of all of Build Ohio's successes, and the new mission and charge of the EC Cabinet, the group found itself considering the possibility that Build Ohio had actually worked itself out of a job. This was seen as a very positive outcome, and a testament to the belief that the work of Build Ohio had infused leadership with the knowledge and tools it needed to continue Build Ohio's mission to the highest levels of state government.

At the close of the meeting, after several possible scenarios for the future direction of the organization were discussed and weighed, the board voted to suspend the operations of Build Ohio. A transition team was appointed to determine appropriate close-out activities, and a final meeting to review these decisions, and to celebrate Build Ohio's accomplishments was planned. In addition, an ad-hoc committee was appointed to determine whether, and how, Build Ohio's Making Connections initiative (the key component of Build Ohio's work that many among the group thought would be lost if Build Ohio were not here tomorrow) could continue.

Next steps

Listed among the EC Cabinet's proposed work group structure is a stakeholders advisory work group, which is intended to provide the EC Cabinet with advice and input on its design and implementation strategies. Ultimately, there will be a role for many former members of Build Ohio to play within this group. Additionally, work that has historically been the focus of Build Ohio's public and private partner organizations will continue. National Build funding will also continue to support system-building work in Ohio, only now it will be funneled directly through the EC Cabinet. These topics are outlined in the Discussion section of this report.

Theory of change

Progress made in 2007 by Build Ohio and others in building an early learning system in Ohio is described next using the national Build theory of change as a framework. This theory outlines the following critical elements of building an early learning system: political leadership; recognition of need; shared vision; actions and achievements; infrastructure development (state and local); political mobilization and advocacy; public awareness and support; and alignment and readiness.

■ Political Leadership

During an August 2006 strategic planning retreat, Build Ohio board members reflected on how much had been accomplished in early care and education in Ohio despite a lack of leadership from Ohio's former governor, Bob Taft. At the time, one board member said there was a "parade" of organizations in Ohio working on early childhood issues, just waiting for a governor to take the lead. They felt that a supportive governor might be the "tipping point" for a major leap forward in Ohio.

One year into Ted Strickland's administration, and indeed, there is renewed focus on improving the quality of early childhood care and education in Ohio. In addition to the creation of the EC Cabinet, some examples of political progress made in 2007 include:

- The General Assembly's approval of a landmark FY 2008-2009 budget that includes an additional \$270 million in early care and education funding;
- Governor Strickland's Executive Order to increase the child care provider market rate to the 65th percentile of the 2006 market rate survey, a \$112.3 million investment;
- The General Assembly's standardization of eligibility for child care subsidies at 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) beginning in FY 2009;
- The EC Cabinet's development of a fiscal model for building and sustaining, in the long-term, comprehensive early care and education programs in Ohio;
- The General Assembly's approval of an expansion of eligibility for the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to families earning up to 300% FPL; the expansion also allows families with incomes up to 300% FPL to buy into Medicaid.

■ Recognition of Need

In Ohio, two different departments with differing missions oversee early childhood education – the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Traditionally, ODJFS has been responsible for implementing programs like federal Head Start and other programs geared toward assisting low-income families with young children. The ODE's primary focus has been on education, setting standards for teachers, teaching, and curricula. The current two-part system, in which both departments set regulations and standards, can be confusing for educators, early care centers, and families.

Governor Strickland's administration appears to recognize the confusion that currently exists in Ohio's early care and education system. One of the main goals of the EC

Cabinet, in fact, is to assess the state's current system and create a more seamless pre-k delivery system. One component of this is to develop common evaluation and compliance programs and benchmarks among ODJFS and ODE-operated early care and education programs. The intended result is to reduce confusion, disconnects, and duplication between child care licensing, public preschool programs, and Step up to Quality (the state's quality rating system and early childhood teacher professional development initiative).

On the ground, the availability and accessibility of data about the early learning system in Ohio have also increased, due in large part to the efforts of Build Ohio and GroundWork. Through its communications campaign, Build Ohio continued to focus on disseminating key information about the value and benefit of high quality early care and education to parents, early childhood professionals, elementary education professionals, and the business community. Build Ohio's message campaign that "Early Experiences Last a Lifetime" is currently being used on ODJFS publications and OCCRRA materials. In 2007, Build Ohio provided training and distributed brochures and communication tool kits to Public Policy chairs of the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (OAEYC) affiliates. These materials were then distributed to local affiliate members, and are available on Build Ohio's website for easy access and distribution. In 2007, work also began on reformatting the Infant and Toddler Guidelines into brochures for parents.

GroundWork also contributed to increasing the availability and accessibility of data about early learning systems. The organization has created a series of policy briefs, research summaries, and other resources to help individuals and organizations easily understand the current state of early childhood services and systems in Ohio and the research base for intervention and policy strategies. On its website, GroundWork describes itself as "one of Ohio's leading early care and education research resources for state policymakers, the media, and other opinion leaders through its ability to develop and disseminate credible, relevant research."

■ Shared Vision

In August 2006, the Solutions Group published its recommendations for the design of an early learning system that "ensures that high-quality early learning experiences are available to every Ohio child, and that all families have access to information and services that allow them to be their children's first and most effective teachers." The report included 10 recommendations, centered on four strategies: (1) improving the quality and capacity of early education and care settings; (2) creating an effective governance structure, and improving access to and coordination of services among child-serving and family-serving systems; (3) supporting parents and families in their efforts to promote their children's early development and readiness for school, and engaging them in the governance of Ohio's early learning system; and (4) creating a reliable financing system for early learning services and strengthening accountability for public and private investments in that system.

Despite some compromise, disagreement, and the fact that not all of the Solution Group's recommendations were universally endorsed by the field, the group's vision and many of its specific recommendations have been taken up by the newly established

EC Cabinet. As adopted by the Solutions Group, the EC Cabinet describes the elements of Ohio's early care and education system as one which promotes:

- **Quality early care and education settings**

Early care and education settings are safe for children and establish the conditions necessary to promote child development and early learning that prepares children for school and life success.

- **Professional and workforce development**

Practitioners working with young children are well prepared with the competencies, skills, and knowledge necessary to promote children's development, learning, and school readiness.

- **Governance and accountability**

Management and accountability structures exist to oversee the early care and education system to ensure operational efficiencies, fiscal responsibility, and desired results for children, families, early care and education settings, schools, and communities.

- **Financing**

Stable, sufficient funding is available to support high-quality early care and education programs, family supports, and the early care and education system infrastructure essential to the effectiveness of programs and services.

- **Involved families and an informed public**

Families have the knowledge, skills, and supports they need to foster children's early development and learning. Families participate as partners with early care and education practitioners. The public, including policy makers, is informed of the importance of early development and learning in a way that creates demand for high-quality early care and education programs and family supports.

■ **Actions and achievements**

The system-level achievements of strategies that Build Ohio has helped to initiate or support in 2007 are described in this section: Step Up to Quality; Professional development; and Social and emotional.

Step Up to Quality

In moving from a pilot program that Build Ohio helped to catalyze and support to a statewide initiative, Step Up to Quality (Step Up) continues to represent a noteworthy achievement in systems building in Ohio in 2007. Build Ohio strategically selected Step Up as a priority three years ago, because Ohio did not formally have a quality rating system in place. The expansion of the program statewide is described in more detail in the Infrastructure Development-State section.

As discussed in last year's report, research conducted by The Ohio State University on the Step Up pilot project (active in nine Ohio counties) suggested that the voluntary

quality rating system had produced systems-level changes.² Step Up is continuing this research component through a contract with Ohio State to identify the correlation of child outcomes to star-rated programs and identify child demographics linked to the most significant outcomes.

Professional development

A significant goal of Build Ohio's professional development work group in 2007 was to engage major early care and education funders and stakeholders involved with professional development toward agreement on a comprehensive plan for Ohio's professional development system, through which a single training approval system would be adopted. This goal received momentum when it became clear that Governor Strickland was interested in providing additional funding to the Professional Development Registry, which is hosted by the Ohio Professional Development Network (OPDN). The registry provides Ohio's early childhood and afterschool professionals with a centralized, coordinated system to track and be recognized for their experience, education, credentials and training. As part of the statewide roll-out of Step Up, the state's objective was to integrate approved training for both Step Up and Ohio's Early Learning Initiative into the registry. This objective is on its way to being achieved, with implementation expected early in 2008.

As Build Ohio's work group recognized during its April 2007 planning retreat, however, there is a difference between integrating existing approval systems into the registry and creating a single, comprehensive training approval system that is inclusive of all early care and education programs. To this end, work group chairs met and worked with stakeholders to develop a proposed training approval framework that is integrated across programs, is linked to the *Ohio Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* document (discussed in more detail in the Infrastructure-State section) and that utilizes a committee to review trainer qualifications and training content. This work could bring clarity to the field regarding the need for professional development and the best methods for obtaining it, and may also decrease unnecessary training approval duplication. As of November 2007, this framework had been drafted and was awaiting stakeholder buy-in.

Other components of the professional development system that are currently in place or under final development because of Build Ohio's involvement include: profiles of current early learning programs and degrees; a professional development plan that aligns with the *Core* document and may be linked to the Professional Development Registry; and financial support for continuing education for professionals (e.g., T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood ® Ohio). These components, together with the *Core* document, must be fully accessible in order for Ohio's quality rating system to be successful and before early learning professionals are required to have more formal education as proposed in the Solutions Group recommendations.

² Buettner, C.K. (2006). *Presentation of Step Up to Quality pilot data*. Retrieved December 27, 2006, <http://www.jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/OSUQualityResearch.pdf>.

Social and emotional

In 2007, Build Ohio established and integrated a Social and Emotional work group into its structure. The work group comprised members from the Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Committee, which advised the Department of Mental Health's Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative under Governor Taft, and other early childhood professionals. Build Ohio prioritized the formation of the Social and Emotional work group in response to advisory committee members' interest in joining with Build Ohio in order to leverage resources, and in response to a growing sense that, as one Build Ohio board member said, "stars have aligned around mental health." The group secured funding from the Department of Mental Health for several initiatives, described below.

A major accomplishment of the work group in its first year was the development of a logic model for social and emotional development and early childhood mental health providers (described in more detail in the Infrastructure Development-State section). The group also secured TSIG (Transformation State Incentive Grant) funding through the Department of Mental Health to develop materials to inform and educate physicians and parents on the social/emotional development of young children. These materials are being distributed through a partnership with the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Other goals upon which the group worked in 2007 were to identify screening and assessment tools for early childhood mental health services; to work collaboratively with the Center for Social Emotional Foundations and Early Training (CSEFEL) to identify specific social/emotional core knowledge and skills for early childhood teachers and to develop training modules; to host a statewide conference call on social/emotional development.

■ Infrastructure development

State

Throughout its existence, Build Ohio has focused on infrastructure development. This section describes progress in four areas of state infrastructure: Quality rating system; Professional development; Social and emotional; and Systems linkages.

Quality rating system

Step Up To Quality (Step Up) is a voluntary three-star quality rating system for early childhood programs licensed by ODJFS. Step Up recognizes and promotes early care and education programs that meet quality benchmarks over and above minimum health and safety licensing standards. These benchmarks include low child to staff ratios, group size, accreditation, staff education, specialized training, improved workplace characteristics and early learning standards.

As described in previous case studies, Build Ohio catalyzed and supported the Step Up pilot project when it began in April 2005 in nine Ohio counties. During 2007, Build Ohio continued to support the statewide implementation of the program, which is administered by ODJFS, through updates and discussion at monthly Build Ohio board meetings. Many Build Ohio administrative board members participated with GroundWork advocacy through the budget process, which resulted in an additional \$25

million in state funds being allocated for statewide expansion of Step Up. Build Ohio's Public Communications and Building Public Will work group also hosted a statewide conference call about Step Up (see Public Awareness and Support section).

As of November 2007, more than 1,000 child care centers across the state were participating in Step Up. Over 700 licensed centers had submitted applications, and more than 300 programs were star-rated. Another 75 programs were participating in the Emerging Stars technical assistance support model to assist them in achieving and maintaining compliance with serious risk licensing rules and to prepare them for a star-rating.

A key component of the statewide plan was to enhance financial awards for centers to support quality improvements. In 2007, the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association routinely processed Quality Achievement Awards to star-rated centers, distributing up to \$5 million in available funds. Awards are a formula-driven financial reward based on license capacity, percent of enrolled children funded through ODJFS subsidy, and level of star-rating. Awards range from \$3,000 to \$36,000 annually.

An expansion of Step Up, effective in December 2007, permits Type A homes (licensed large group homes) to be eligible for the program.

Professional development

During 2007, Build Ohio continued to support the work of the Ohio Professional Development Network (OPDN), which acts as a forum for input and involvement of early childhood advocacy and professional organizations. Specifically, three Build Ohio teams worked within the OPDN to design core knowledge/articulation, compensation and retention, and trainer and training approval process components of Ohio's professional development system for early care and education.

The *Ohio Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* (the *Core*) document was released in November 2006, and defines what all adults who work with young children need to know, understand and demonstrate in order to ensure that children have the best possible environments, experiences and relationships in which to grow and learn. The OPDN created the *Core* using a writing-teams process that focused on child growth and development; child observation and assessment; family and community relations; professional development; health, safety, and nutrition; and learning environments and experiences. Many Build Ohio board members participated in or facilitated writing teams. In 2007, a Core Knowledge/Articulation team continued to make final edits to the document and copies were made widely available, especially to higher education institutions. The team also worked on a companion document for early childhood professionals.

On the compensation and wages front, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Ohio scholarship program for early childhood teachers also continued to expand during 2007 and into 2008. At the end of the fiscal year (July 2007), ODJFS had awarded 309 Child Development Associate (CDA) scholarships statewide with an additional 38 associate degree scholarships awarded through Step Up. Historically, the number of scholarships awarded in a year tended to fall well below the number that was approved for the fiscal year. This is largely because associate degree scholarships supported through state funding are only offered to early childhood professionals in rated Step Up centers. Also,

centers have to share costs and provide release time for scholars, making it difficult for one center to support more than one scholar. It was anticipated that scholarships would be more widely used as Step Up was implemented statewide, and current figures for fiscal year 2008 (July 2007-June 2008) show that to be the case. From July 2007 to February 2008, 56 new associate degree scholarships were awarded through Step Up – 18 more than all of fiscal year 2007. The number of CDA scholarships awarded through February 2008 was also up, compared to the same time last year.

Finally, a Build Ohio team focusing on trainer and training approval processes made progress within the OPDN toward integrating trainer/training approval processes into its Professional Development Registry. As of November 2007, design work was underway for integrating trainer information into the registry, and a plan had been developed for creating a single, comprehensive training approval system that would utilize a committee to review trainer qualifications and training content. Currently, the OPDN website lists in-service training opportunities that are offered by OCCRRA and approved for Step Up to Quality professional development. Plans are also underway to list all approved training for Step Up and the Early Learning Initiative.

Social and Emotional

As explained previously, in 2007 Build Ohio established and integrated a Social and Emotional work group into its structure. Upon organizing, the group set about to build upon the previous work of the Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Committee and to build professional development, infrastructure, and family and community engagement components to its scope of work.

The work group's first order of business was to develop a logic model for use by practitioners providing early childhood mental health consultation to early childhood programs. The group worked with Dr. Benjamin Kearney to develop the logic model. In 2005, Dr. Kearney was asked by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Voices for Ohio's Children to complete an analysis of the continuum of care for early childhood mental health services across the state. The published analysis was called *Helping Ohio's Children: Understanding the Impact of Early Childhood Mental Health Services*.

As explained by Dr. Benjamin Kearney, "logic model implementation enables providers to understand what changes a program produces and how the program produces those changes in clients, holds clinicians responsible for delivering services in a manner consistent with the program model, and clarifies when to make changes to a theoretical framework, model, or intervention to produce more significant levels of change." Together with Dr. Kearney, the work group hosted meetings across the state to inform providers and gather input on the model. The logic model creation process permitted the state to implement a number of recommended "next steps" from the *Helping Ohio's Children* document³, bringing the state ever closer to achieving one of Build Ohio's

³ Specifically: (1) services are closer to being defined in a way that permits replication; outcomes will be examined for both categorical (clinical) and statistical significance; (2) Client functioning is being examined in all child/family focused services so that an exact count of children being maintained in their early childhood setting will be available; (3) Engagement rates for all child/family focused services will be available and the reasons for cases not being opened will be tracked; (4) The teacher's perspective of the child's behavior is included as an outcome for all child/family focused services; and (5) key outcome and output measures have been created.

ultimate goals, which is to create infrastructure supports that facilitate system linkages, quality settings, and involved families. Currently, the Ohio Department of Mental Health is using the logic model to gather information about programs statewide.

Systems linkages

Throughout 2007, as in years past, Build Ohio facilitated state-level communication and collaboration about early learning system-building efforts. The primary forum for this was monthly Build Ohio administrative board meetings. These meetings included featured presentations about topics of interest and allowed opportunities for board members to share information and updates from their agencies or work groups. Frequently, board members asked clarifying questions or shared relevant information in response to what others had shared. New in 2007 were regular updates from Alicia Leatherman on the establishment and early work of the EC Cabinet.

Build Ohio also continued to facilitate communication and coordination between the three major state-level early learning systems building initiatives (Solutions Group, GroundWork, Build Ohio). In addition to regularly sharing information from each initiative at Build Ohio board meetings, leaders and work group members from Build Ohio met with leaders and participants in the other initiatives to discuss specific strategies and activities (e.g., Solutions Group implementation plan, GroundWork's state budget campaign, etc).

Local

Build Ohio's Making Connections initiative was designed to increase local-to-state and local-to-local communication and collaboration for systems building activities. A specific goal is to help inform state policy through local experiences. As was discussed in the 2006 case study, there have been challenges related to Making Connections. Key among the many questions facing the initiative was whether or not to expand and include more communities. The current Making Connections communities are diverse in terms of their early learning systems at the local level and their previous involvement in systems-building activities at the state level. There was a sense among Build Ohio board members of an inherent competitiveness associated with local community involvement at the state level because of the potential for additional – but limited – future funding. Despite pressure from outside communities to be included in the Making Connections initiative, the original six resisted expansion, and in 2007, board members reported that there was a lack of consensus, trust, and respect among the six communities.

Without clear direction and waning motivation on the part of the Making Connections participants, goals and activities for the initiative in 2007 seemed difficult to articulate. The Making Connections communities did host several meetings in 2007 to review and comment on the Solutions Group draft implementation plans; a process that included outreach and invitation to bordering communities and other regional networks. Also, Build Ohio hosted a reception for local teams from Making Connections communities in conjunction with a policy summit held in Cleveland, entitled *In Our Own Backyards: Local Initiatives that Change Young Children's Lives*.

Despite the challenges that have faced the Making Connection initiative, when the Build Ohio administrative board voted to suspend operations at the close of 2007, many among the group identified Making Connections as a critical and unique component of

Build Ohio's work – one that might not easily be replaced or taken up by the work of the EC Cabinet. This topic is discussed in further detail in the Discussion section of this report, under Opportunities and Challenges.

■ Political mobilization and advocacy

GroundWork, a coalition of early care and education professionals, advocates, community leaders, and organizations, is primarily responsible for political mobilization and advocacy in Ohio. As part of its advocacy activities around Ohio's fiscal year 2008-2009 budget, GroundWork and its network of over 1,000 volunteers accomplished the following:

- Every member of the Ohio General Assembly (132 members) attended at least one site visit with early care and education providers in their districts;
- 100 media spots in local newspapers across Ohio – including letters to the editor, op-eds, and articles – due in large part to 26 editorial board meetings and thousands of letters sent by early care and education advocates;
- 1,000 individuals and organizations signed a letter urging Ohio Governor Ted Strickland to include additional state dollars in his executive budget;
- 30 advocates testified on behalf of GroundWork in front of the Ohio House and Senate Finance Committees;
- Three legislative candidate forums were held in September 2006 in different parts of Ohio; more than 550 people attended to hear 20 candidates answer questions about early care and education.

Due in no small part to GroundWork's budget campaign, over \$270 million in additional funding was secured for early care and education programs in Ohio for the next two years. GroundWork categorized these budget successes around 4 main areas of focus. Highlights include:

Access

- \$39.6 million in additional funds for increased access to full-day kindergarten (7,537 additional children served)
- \$13 million (additional) for increased access to school readiness services (6,500 children)
- \$29.5 million (additional) for Ohio's Early Childhood Education Program, designated for school districts in the development and continuation of preschool programs for income eligible 3- and 4-year-old children and their families (2,447 children in 61 school districts served)
- \$19.5 million investment to harmonize eligibility for the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) and child care subsidies at 200% FPL (2,000 additional children have access to ELI; 4,300 additional children have access to child care)

Quality

- \$112.3 million investment to increase the market rate reimbursement for child care providers to the 65th percentile of the 2006 market rate survey
- \$22 million (additional) to increase pace of statewide expansion of Step Up to Quality
- \$2.7 million (additional) for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships (360 new scholarships available)

Behavioral Health

- \$1.7 million (additional) for behavioral health screening, assessment, and treatment for children ages birth to age 7

Health

- \$47 million investment to expand coverage under SCHIP up to 300% FPL (recently rejected by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a decision that was publicly criticized by Governor Strickland)
- \$23.5 million (additional) to Help Me Grow, a program that provides early intervention services for expectant parents, newborns, infants, and toddlers (6,102 additional children served)

Following the passage of the new state budget, GroundWork has turned its attention to a “thank you” campaign to Ohio legislators, and is hosting advocacy trainings across the state for early care and education providers and others interested in learning how to work with legislators and the media to advocate on behalf of the children they serve. Field efforts and candidate forums will also continue, in light of the fact that 26% of state legislators will be term-limited in 2008 and new legislators will join the assembly.

■ Public awareness and support

During 2006, the Build Ohio Communication/Building Public Will work group began implementing a communication campaign that had been designed in 2005. The communication campaign centered on the theme “Early Experiences Last a Lifetime” and was targeted toward early childhood professionals, elementary school professionals, parents, and the business community. Among the multiple products developed for the campaign, an Action Tool Kit included op-eds and sample letters and ads for local groups to customize, a PowerPoint presentation, and brochures. In 2007, the work group continued to develop mechanisms by which these tools could be distributed to the field. Members provided training and distributed tool kits and brochures to Public Policy chairs of OAEYC affiliates. These materials were then distributed to local affiliate members. The “Early Experiences” message is also being used on ODJFS publications and OCCRRA materials, where appropriate.

In 2007, there was also a concerted effort to get information to the “provider level.” In response to a perception that many early care and education professionals are not aware of, or do not completely understand state-level programs or how they fit together, Build Ohio’s Communication/Building Public Will work group hosted a series of web-based conference calls with the provider community. Topics included T.E.A.C.H., Ohio’s Professional Development Network and Professional Development Registry, Step Up to

Quality, and Help Me Grow. Other calls were topic-specific, and included social/emotional development, and Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections. For each call, registrants were emailed fact sheets, a PowerPoint presentation, and other related guidance documents. The calls were facilitated online, with each registrant calling in to a centralized number and following along with a web-based presentation. At the end of each presentation there was an opportunity for callers to email questions and hear the moderator's response to their question over the phone. All materials, including the audio, from each of the conference calls is currently posted on Build Ohio's website. Participation in the calls was high - over 400 callers participated in the first four calls.

■ Alignment and readiness

With Governor Strickland's support of early childhood issues, and the establishment of the Early Childhood Cabinet as proof of his commitment, Ohio is poised to take major strides toward the common goal of building an integrated and comprehensive early care and education system in the state. The establishment of the EC Cabinet acknowledges the need for a consistent system of child care, to ensure that Ohio children receive the services they need to be healthy, safe, and have positive early learning experiences. The cabinet's charge, to set and coordinate state policy and programs for young children, should have the effect of reducing the challenges that families face when seeking services from multiple providers. The EC Cabinet is building upon existing resources and initiatives across the state, including Build Ohio, GroundWork, the School Readiness Solutions Group, and the Ohio Family and Children First Council. The EC Cabinet is also building upon the recommendations from a team of early childhood stakeholders convened to serve as a resource for early care and education during Governor Strickland's transition into his first term.

Key systems-level targets and measures, upon which the EC Cabinet has agreed to organize its agenda and priorities, are:

1. **Increase Access to High Quality.** By 2011, Ohio families will have increased access to high quality early care and education experiences. This may be measured by increasing the number of programs that meet quality standards, as defined by Step Up to Quality and ODE's Early Learning Program Guidelines.
2. **Increase Access to Development Screening, Consultation, and Treatment to Address Social, Emotional, and Physical Development.** By 2011, Ohio children and their families will have increased access to developmental screenings, consultation and treatment to address their social, emotional, and physical development. This may be measured by the number of children enrolled in SCHIP/Medicaid who receive appropriate child care and developmental screenings, and by increasing the number of babies and toddlers who transition from Help Me Grow into preschool special education, Early Childhood Education, or the Early Learning Initiative.
3. **Highly Skilled and Educated Workforce.** By 2011, Ohio will have a highly skilled and educated early childhood workforce, that is properly compensated, to facilitate the optimum development of young children. This may be measured by increasing

the number of lead teachers in Ohio with associate degrees or higher in early care and education degree programs.

■ Discussion

Opportunities and challenges

Although Build Ohio, as a formal board and organizational alliance, will not continue into 2008, many of the programs it championed, and the infrastructure improvements and efficiencies that Build Ohio facilitated throughout its five years, will continue. In addition, new work at the EC Cabinet will begin. Opportunities for the year (and years) ahead, and the challenges the field face along the way, include:

Step Up to Quality

Statewide implementation of Ohio's quality rating system will continue to be administered by ODJFS, ODE, and OCCRRA. The EC Cabinet has been briefed about the program, and potential targets have been discussed with respect to increasing the number of participating centers that achieve a star-rating. The challenge, as was articulated by the Build Ohio representatives who attended Build's annual conference in Denver, is that despite all of the development work that has gone into areas of professional development and expansion of Ohio's quality rating system, in hindsight, there was not enough thought given to what impact Step Up would have on Ohio's Professional Development Network. The emphasis, it seems, has been too much on the requirements of the quality rating system, and not on what providers in the field need to know and demonstrate. As one Build Ohio member said "we've let requirements drive content instead of the other way around." As a result, individual child care centers, and the providers within those centers, do not necessarily know how to define their own success (apart from achieving a star-rating).

Another Build Ohio member expressed concern over the fact that statewide implementation of Step Up, and some of the program changes that were incorporated into that roll out (e.g.; enhanced quality achievement awards), have increased the responsibilities (and strains) on the staff who administer the program. This may be an issue of both clarity, regarding the requirements of the program and how they are communicated to the field, and staff capacity.

Professional Development

The work of Ohio's Professional Development Network will continue into 2008. In addition, the EC Cabinet has already established a professional development work group, which has met and laid out a tentative agenda for the year ahead. The largest challenge facing both groups is to clearly define and articulate, first between the two groups and then to the larger field, the nature of the relationship between the OPDN and the EC Cabinet. To that end, work will proceed along three fronts:

1. Defining the relationship between the EC Cabinet and the OPDN - the OPDN's leadership was invited to participate in an exploratory leadership conversation with the EC Cabinet regarding both entities' ongoing agendas. Ultimately, the goal of both groups is to use the OPDN and the Professional Development Registry as the core repository for early childhood professional development opportunities,

statewide. At minimum, professional development that is funded, delivered, or sponsored by any of the EC Cabinet member agencies will be linked to the registry by the end of 2008.

2. Trainer and training approval processes – the EC Cabinet will presumably take up where Build Ohio left off in articulating the goals of a single, comprehensive trainer and training review approval system, the framework for which had been drafted by the end of 2007. There is agreement within the EC Cabinet that the Professional Development Registry has the potential to provide cross-system support related to trainer and training information.
3. Coaching, mentoring and technical assistance definitions and goals – the EC Cabinet plans to develop information and reference sheets for the field on existing coaching, mentoring and technical assistance networks available to professionals in Ohio.

Stakeholders/Making Connections

From the beginning, a principle of the EC Cabinet has been to involve and engage stakeholders within the early care and education field to advise the cabinet on policy and resource development priorities. Establishing a formal advisory council to the cabinet would also fulfill the requirements of Head Start Reauthorization, which mandates that the governor establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care that will: 1) conduct statewide needs assessments on the quality and availability of early care and education, and development programs and services; 2) identify barriers to collaboration; and 3) develop recommendations to the Head Start Collaboration project director. The advisory group would also play a role in recommending how existing stakeholder groups could or should relate to the EC Cabinet, and assist with ongoing communication strategies between the cabinet and the field at large.

Convening such a group represents a significant opportunity to stakeholders to impact the direction of state policy. If the group had the ability to not only advise, but assist with the design or re-design of programs, the road to implementing those programs on the ground would, in theory, progress more easily and with greater stakeholder buy-in.

To date, the EC Cabinet has compiled a list of potential advisory group members, starting with those who served as resources for early care and education during Governor Strickland's transition into his first term. This group comprised representatives from local communities, legislators, and various membership organizations. Additional members will include required members identified through Head Start Reauthorization, and former members of Build Ohio's administrative board.

The EC Cabinet is also developing a communication plan, which will lay out the framework for establishing and maintaining on-going communication from the cabinet to the field, and will also define the means by which the field can access and communicate back to the cabinet.

One outstanding question that poses a potential challenge to the EC Cabinet is whether and how to incorporate Build Ohio's Making Connections initiative into its communication plan. At the final meeting of Build Ohio's administrative board, an ad-hoc committee proposed to submit a formal letter to the EC Cabinet detailing the

importance of Making Connections. The committee agreed that Making Connections represented a public/private effort to bridge relationships between communities and the state, and community-to-community, and served as a good example of how communities can be linked in support of a state platform. There was fear, among the members of the ad-hoc committee, that of all of Build Ohio's initiatives, the piece that was most likely to get left behind – without continued funding or even within a government structure – was the Making Connections piece.

Key elements of Build

Under Build Ohio, some of the key elements of the national Build initiative had mixed influences on moving an early learning system forward in the state. For example, under Build Ohio, being a public/private partnership with the flexibility to set its own agenda had a positive influence by allowing Build Ohio to identify and address gaps in other system-building efforts and evolve as the gaps and opportunities changed. But because Build Ohio limited its own agenda to infrastructure building, purposely not addressing advocacy and broad system design, other initiatives emerged to fill those roles, resulting in somewhat fragmented efforts.

Additionally, while Build Ohio appreciated the outside technical assistance, the learning community, and recognition by national funders provided through the national initiative, Build Ohio board members generally felt that they had broad access to similar tools outside of Build. Finally, while Build Ohio integrated evaluation in many of its activities, this was not due to the presence of the local evaluator or national evaluation team.

In the year ahead, the formal relationship between the Build initiative and the EC Cabinet will be negotiated and articulated. For the time being, Build and Gund Foundation dollars will be used to fund a fiscal model that includes all elements of the early childhood system.

■ Conclusion

The collaboration that was Build Ohio represents “one of the most effective, wide-ranging public/private collaborations ever organized to improve the quality of early care and education” in Ohio⁴. And although Build Ohio's formal board structure no longer exists, its work continues at the highest level of state government. Thoughts taken from Build Ohio's last administrative board meeting reflect the outstanding advancements initiated and facilitated by Build Ohio. These thoughts will be compiled into a final report, written by Build Ohio's marketing consultants from Murphy Epon. A preview of that report highlights many of Build Ohio's accomplishments through its five years of existence, including⁵:

■ Foundational changes

Build Ohio changed the way we think about early childhood, moving the public from a “baby sitting” orientation to quality early care and education settings for

⁴ Draft report entitled *Build Ohio: A Legacy of Quality for Ohio's Young Children*. Commissioned of Murphy Epon, Inc. Columbus Ohio, 2008.

⁵ The following bullets are excerpts taken directly from the draft report

young children. Build Ohio helped birth and sustain the concept of the whole child, which includes family support, school, social and emotional development, health care, and nutrition.

- **Build Ohio laid the foundation of an early learning system known for quality**

Step up to Quality, Infant and Toddler Guidelines, social and emotional development, the Ohio Professional Development Network and Registry, the *Ohio Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* document, and the *Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Ohio* document are listed among the most significant accomplishments of Build Ohio over the years.

- **Build Ohio forged connections**

Build Ohio facilitated candid, honest, open conversation on tough issues. From the very start, Build Ohio saw the rewards of fostering state and local connections. Making Connections is seen by many as the single most important achievement of Build Ohio.

- **Build Ohio gave the profession a proud voice**

“Early Experiences Last a Lifetime” emerged as the slogan for Build Ohio, which ultimately launched a statewide training effort to provide advocates and early childhood professionals with tools to promote the benefits of quality care and education. The message made its way into homes across the state – “that Ohio children deserve to grow up in a quality environment that nurtures self-confidence, positive social and emotional skills, and a love for learning.”

Challenge to the EC Cabinet

The establishment of the EC Cabinet represents a significant opportunity for Ohio to affect broad-based, lasting improvements to the quality of early care and education in this state. Despite Build Ohio’s efforts, and the many efforts of advocacy organizations across the state, Ohio still has a long way to go toward improved, system-wide change. An advocacy group called Catalyst Ohio summed it up well when it described Ohio’s system as one in which “learning standards remain vastly uneven, teachers continue to lack training, program assessment is spotty, and a complicated bureaucracy managed by two different agencies tends to slow progress.”⁶

The overriding goal and challenge for the EC Cabinet is to limit the time it spends “churning” on ideas and strategies, and to take concrete steps toward implementation. Allowing opportunities for professionals in the field and other stakeholders to provide feedback is a necessary and critical piece of the process, but it should not take precedent over or allow for too much delay in implementation. Otherwise, as one Build Ohio board member said at the annual conference in Denver, “we setting up programs to not be successful because of [the way we] churn” over ideas. How the EC Cabinet and other leaders in the field intentionally communicate policy decisions and listen to others’ recommendations will ultimately determine how successful those leaders are in

⁶ Article entitled *Access and Quality Still Uneven* (February 2008) by Feoshia Henderson. Retrieved March 16, 2008 at <http://www.catalyst-ohio.org/print/index.php?item=627&cat=23>

affecting system-wide improvements to the policies, programs, and standards that govern Ohio's early care and education system.