



## Context for Regional ESSA Early Childhood Meetings Prepared for ED to accompany the “Making ESSA Work for Early Learning in Your State – Part 2” Agenda

In December 2016, the MACC@WestEd conducted an initial gathering of early learning teams from the states in the region to share how they were approaching various opportunities within ESSA for strengthening the quality of PreK-grade 3 learning opportunities. Given the amount of information that states wanted to discuss, we were not able to cover all the relevant topics at the first meeting and participants were enthusiastic about meeting again to continue the discussions. The February 14, 2017 meeting is the follow-up session. The Delaware team was unable to attend the first meeting but MACC@WestEd staff have had a separate “catch up” session with them.

The initial session was an outgrowth of an original request from PA’s Office of Child Development and Early Learning for assistance from the MACC@WestEd in identifying the requirements and, more challenging, all the opportunities for early learning within ESSA. The result was a guidebook prepared for PA in August 2016 and shared with others in the region. After seeing the wide range of options, PA staff were eager to hear how their colleague agencies were approaching early learning planning—especially to help them advocate for the place of early learning in state plans. MACC@WestEd staff held an initial discussion with PA and then later with OSSE staff about what they would want to get out of such a session.

Based on those discussions and our experience in preparing the guidebook, MACC@WestEd staff drafted an agenda and support materials to facilitate engagement among all participants. From working with the law ourselves, we knew how overwhelming it can be and so we prepared materials to focus discussion on segments of the law, along with providing information needed as background. Knowing that CEELo was also working on similar topics, MACC@WestEd invited them to participate in the initial session and CEELo suggested including CCSSO given their work on ESSA early learning.

The goals of both the initial session and its continuation are the same: share strategies and approaches across states; provide clarifications about ESSA provisions, as needed; encourage states to raise questions, problem solve, and generally brainstorm options; identify areas where MACC@WestEd technical assistance could be helpful.

We have already seen some impact from the first meeting. For example, participants at the meeting said they could immediately use one of the tools (a crosswalk of the state plan template contents with early learning opportunities) to go back to their state ESSA committees to explain how to incorporate early learning. Last month, the MD Early Learning Branch Chief let us know that as a result of the information she was able to share with her MSDE colleagues after the first meeting, this summer’s professional development for MD educators will be devoted to working with elementary principals and PreK-2 teachers on alignment of curriculum, assessment and instructional practice.

We hope to hear more such examples of the impact at the outset of the upcoming Feb 14 meeting.