The Governance Structure of Florida’s Early Education Programs Presents Some Administrative Challenges

at a glance

Florida’s families with young children can receive early education services through a continuum of state and federal programs. The state’s largest early education programs, School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten, received approximately $1 billion in Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Currently, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Education, and Department of Children and Families are responsible for various aspects of implementing the state’s early education programs. However, each agency’s program responsibilities are not always consistent with its mission as perceived by stakeholders.

While the division of program responsibilities among three agencies has several strengths, it also has resulted in some instances of inconsistent program direction, insufficient coordination, and duplication. State agency managers acknowledged many of these issues and have begun taking steps to address them.

The Legislature may wish to consider three governance structure options to address the inefficiencies and duplication in the current system.

Scope

As directed by the Legislature, this report examines the state-level governance structure for Florida’s early education programs. The report addresses two questions.

- Does the current state-level governance structure for early education programs result in administrative challenges or inefficiencies?
- What alternatives could the Legislature consider to streamline the current state level governance structure?

A separate report will present our findings on local-level governance and financial issues related to the state’s early education programs.

Background

Florida’s families with young children can receive early education services through a continuum of state and federal programs. These programs provide educational, health, nutritional, social, and therapeutic services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and mentally ready to succeed in school. The early education programs include School Readiness, Voluntary Prekindergarten, Prekindergarten Disabilities, Early Steps, Head Start, and Even Start Family Literacy. Appendix A provides a more detailed description of the state’s early education programs.

The state’s two largest early education programs are School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK). The Legislature established the School Readiness Program in 1999 by combining multiple programs serving low-income or at-risk children with the federal Subsidized Childcare Program. This consolidation was intended to
provide comprehensive services for young children to prepare them for school. Using a private-public partnership model, 31 local coalitions operate, design, and manage early education programs according to the needs of their local communities. The 2004 Legislature created a free, voluntary prekindergarten education (VPK) program for Florida children four years of age beginning with the September 2005 school year. The program is available to all four-year-olds in Florida regardless of a family’s income level.

**Three state-level agencies are responsible for implementing various aspects of Florida’s early education programs.** The governance structure of the state’s early education programs has evolved over the past several years. The current structure resulted from recent legislative actions to create a comprehensive program of readiness services and to implement the constitutional amendment establishing the state’s prekindergarten program. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of key events affecting the governance structure of early education programs.

Pursuant to Florida law, the Agency for Workforce Innovation administers the VPK and School Readiness programs, and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network. Florida law provides that the agency is also responsible for coordinating the local early learning coalitions in Florida. The agency is responsible for improving the educational quality of the School Readiness Program, reviewing and approving coalitions’ School Readiness plans, providing technical assistance to coalitions, and developing and adopting program performance standards and outcomes. Federal law requires that the agency ensure the quality, availability, and affordability of childcare throughout the state. With regard to VPK, the agency’s duties include administering the program at the state level, adopting procedures governing the administration of the program including registering providers and enrolling children, paying providers, approving improvement plans of low-performing providers, financial management, and overseeing the 31 early learning coalitions.

### Exhibit 1
The Governance Structure of the State’s Early Education Programs Has Evolved Over The Past Several Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1999</td>
<td>Responsibility for School Readiness programs was divided among the state departments of Education and Children and Families and the federal Head Start Program. The Department of Education administered and funded school-based readiness programs such as the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program, Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities, Florida First Start, and Migrant Prekindergarten. The Department of Children and Families administered the Subsidized Childcare Program, which provided childcare services to at-risk and economically disadvantaged children since 1978.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Legislature authorized the School Readiness Act, creating the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, a state-level governing board to coordinate statewide program efforts and creating local School Readiness coalitions to plan and implement a comprehensive program of readiness services. The Partnership was assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor for administrative purposes (Ch. 99-357, Laws of Florida).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>To staff the partnership, the Legislature transferred Subsidized Childcare Program positions from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program in the Department of Education to the partnership (Ch. 2000-149, Laws of Florida).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Legislature transferred administrative support of the partnership from the Executive Office of the Governor to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (Ch. 2001-170, Laws of Florida). The Legislature also repealed the statutory authority for the individual school-based readiness programs thereby creating a single readiness program under the direction of the partnership and local coalitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The 2004 Legislature revised the School Readiness Program and created the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program pursuant to the voter approved constitutional amendment requiring prekindergarten for every four-year-old. The bill eliminated the partnership and transferred its responsibility for early education to the Agency for Workforce Innovation, making the agency responsible for state-level coordination of the School Readiness and VPK programs and of the School Readiness coalitions, renamed as early learning coalitions. This legislation also established a maximum number of early learning coalitions in Florida. The Department of Education was made responsible for developing educational standards and measuring program outcomes for the VPK Program (Ch. 2004-484, Laws of Florida).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1 On November 5, 2002, Florida voters approved Amendment 8 to Article IX of the Florida Constitution creating the state’s universal prekindergarten program.

2 Sections 411.01(4)(b)1, and 1002.75(1), F.S., and s. 17, Ch. 2001-170, Laws of Florida.
The Department of Education is primarily responsible for developing educational standards and measuring program outcomes for the VPK Program. This includes establishing performance standards, adopting a readiness screening instrument, and calculating school readiness outcomes for each provider. The Department annually publishes provider readiness rates based on how well each VPK provider’s children perform on the State’s kindergarten screening instruments. The screening instruments assess school readiness in three areas—alphabet recognition, initial sound recognition, and various indicators of classroom skills. 3

The Department of Children and Families does not have specific program responsibilities for VPK or School Readiness. It licenses childcare facilities and homes, many of which provide services to children participating in both the School Readiness and VPK programs. In addition, the Department provides basic state-mandated childcare training for childcare personnel, issues credentials for providers, including the Gold Seal designation to providers that meet certain standards, and performs health and safety inspections of all licensed childcare facilities and homes.

At the local level, 31 coalitions throughout the state are responsible for program administration and oversight. Coalitions serve one or more counties, and contract with providers, such as private childcare centers and public schools, to provide the School Readiness and VPK programs. The coalitions can also use subcontractors for certain administrative services related to the School Readiness and VPK programs.

The state’s two largest early education programs received $1 billion in 2007-08. In 2007-08, the agencies that administer the School Readiness and VPK programs received approximately $1 billion in state and federal appropriations to support program services for approximately 382,403 children (see Exhibit 2). For Fiscal Year 2007-08, the Legislature appropriated $1 billion to the Agency for Workforce Innovation to carry out its duties related to the VPK Program. 4 The Department of Education also received about $344 million in general revenue, which it transferred to the Agency for Workforce Innovation to fund the VPK Program. In addition, the Department of Children and Families received approximately $16 million to support its early education credentialing and licensing activities.

Exhibit 2
School Readiness and VPK Programs
Received $1 Billion in Fiscal Year 2007-08 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>General Revenue</th>
<th>Trust Fund</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency for Workforce Innovation</td>
<td>$508,348,881 2</td>
<td>$507,834,979</td>
<td>$1,016,183,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families</td>
<td>1,556,257</td>
<td>14,394,029</td>
<td>15,950,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>1,795,717</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,795,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$511,700,855</strong></td>
<td><strong>$522,229,008</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,033,929,863</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: While the School Readiness Program is primarily funded by federal sources (75%), Florida’s VPK Program is funded entirely by state sources.
1 Appropriated figures are adjusted for legislative reductions made during Fiscal Year 2007-08.
2 General revenue reported for the Agency for Workforce Innovation reflects a transfer of $343,750,562 (adjusted for subsequent legislative reductions) from the Department of Education to the Agency for Workforce Innovation for the VPK Program, pursuant to line item 85 in Ch. 2007-72, Laws of Florida.

Early education expenditures and staffing have increased significantly in the last five years due, in part, to the addition of the VPK Program and agency accountability efforts. As Exhibit 3 shows, state agency expenditures for early education have increased 42% in the last five years. Exhibit 4 shows that staffing increased by 51% over this period. Almost all of this staff increase has been at the Agency for Workforce Innovation, which serves as the primary state-level administrative agency. The new positions were concentrated in areas including monitoring, data systems, and support. During this period, the number of staff increased significantly in the last five years due, in part, to the addition of the VPK Program and agency accountability efforts.

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3 The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener is administered during the first 30 days of kindergarten. It is comprised of items from two assessments, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills, and the Early Childhood Observation System.

4 The Governor vetoed $1.6 million in general revenue appropriated for the department to assist teachers to assess student readiness for kindergarten. The Conference Report on House Bill 7009 further reduced this appropriation by $74,821.
period, the three agencies assumed responsibility for the administration and oversight of the VPK Program, and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network was transferred to the Agency for Workforce Innovation. (Appendix B shows that although program expenditures have increased, total state-level administration costs remain a small percentage of the overall expenditures.)

### Exhibit 3
**Early Education Expenditures Have Significantly Increased Since Fiscal Year 2002-03**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Expenditures by Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Five-Year Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency for Workforce Innovation</td>
<td>$671,941,179</td>
<td>$954,506,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families</td>
<td>14,385,134</td>
<td>17,161,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>3,271,042</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$686,326,313</strong></td>
<td><strong>$974,938,592</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The VPK Program began in fall 2005.

Sources: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, and OPPAGA analysis.

### Exhibit 4
**Early Education Staffing Has Increased Significantly Since Fiscal Year 2002-03**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Five-Year Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency for Workforce Innovation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>134%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The figures reflect both appropriated positions and other individuals whose job descriptions include specific responsibilities related to the School Readiness Program, Child Care Resource and Referral Network, or VPK Program. The figures do not include positions classified as "other personal services."

2 The positions for the Agency for Workforce Innovation do not include contracts for services provided by universities. Department of Children and Families’ positions include field staff such as family services counselors and operation review specialists. The positions for the Department of Education include VPK facilitators funded through grants to early learning coalitions.

3 The VPK Program began in fall 2005.

Sources: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, and OPPAGA analysis.

### Questions

**Does the current state-level governance structure for early education programs result in administrative challenges or inefficiencies?**

The current governance structure splits primary program responsibilities relating to early education among three state agencies. This presents several challenges for local administrators who implement the programs. Coalition executive directors and other local-level stakeholders identified inconsistent program direction, duplication, and insufficient coordination among the state agencies involved in the current governance structure. State agency managers acknowledged many of these issues and have begun taking steps to address them.

To identify governance structure challenges, inefficiencies, and duplication, we surveyed a variety of early education stakeholders including early learning coalition executive directors, coalition board chairs and members, a variety of program providers, school districts, state agency administrators and staff, and select legislators. Respondents were encouraged to share the survey with other knowledgeable early education parties in an effort to collect widespread information and perspective. OPPAGA collected 143 survey responses. In addition, we conducted field visits to seven coalitions, interviewing key staff, board members, and providers.

**The current state-level governance structure has several strengths but poses some administrative challenges**

Currently the state does not have a single agency whose mission focuses exclusively on early education or whose mission encompasses the broad objectives of the state’s early education programs. Therefore, the programs are spread across three state agencies in an effort to match each agency’s program responsibility with its primary focus and expertise. This governance structure has created several challenges for the
agencies as they try to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate to effectively implement early education programs.

**Early education program responsibilities are generally consistent with each agency’s mission as perceived by stakeholders.** Early education program regulation, administration, and accountability is spread across the three state agencies based, in general, on their primary focus and expertise. For instance, the Agency for Workforce Innovation is responsible for administering the School Readiness Program that is delivered by private child care providers and public schools. The agency also is charged with administrative aspects of the VPK Program such as determining provider eligibility, enrolling children, paying providers, and maintaining records on attendance. In addition, the agency reviews and monitors the implementation of local coalition plans that address administrative, educational, and quality requirements related to the School Readiness Program. These responsibilities reflect the agency’s focus on workforce issues and leverage its existing relationship with the private providers that serve children participating in the School Readiness and VPK programs.

Similarly, program responsibilities assigned to the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families are matched to these agencies’ missions and areas of expertise. The Department of Education is responsible for VPK accountability-related functions, including establishing kindergarten readiness standards and identifying low performing providers. These functions are consistent with the department’s broad educational responsibilities and expertise. The Department of Children and Families is responsible for licensing childcare centers that provide School Readiness and/or VPK program services to ensure they meet specified health and safety standards, and for credentialing and training all childcare personnel.

While this division of program responsibilities is generally consistent with each agency’s primary mission, there are exceptions. The Agency for Workforce Innovation is currently responsible for ensuring that each VPK and School Readiness provider uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum and for reviewing and approving education improvement plans submitted by low-performing VPK providers. Some stakeholders believe that these responsibilities would be better assigned to the Department of Education, which is responsible for establishing VPK performance standards, adopting the kindergarten readiness screening, and reviewing and approving curricula for use by certain low performing VPK providers.

**The current division of responsibilities has created some administrative challenges for the three agencies.** Our statewide interviews and surveys of local stakeholders, including coalition executive directors and school district staff, identified concerns that state agencies can focus too narrowly on their specific responsibilities and do not effectively coordinate, communicate, and collaborate. Some stakeholders believed that the Agency for Workforce Innovation focuses too much on its mission of meeting the childcare needs of working parents and not enough on ensuring the educational quality of the School Readiness Program. The agency has recognized that this perception exists among some stakeholders but indicates that it has the educational expertise necessary to carry out its program duties. The agency has attempted to work with the Department of Education to build on the collective experience of the two agencies to develop teacher qualifications, curriculum requirements, and child-based developmental assessments for the School Readiness Program. However, state-level administrators reported that their collaboration on these issues has been limited to date.

In addition, the agencies have had difficulties sharing data needed to fulfill program responsibilities. For instance, due to federal restrictions that safeguard student data, it took considerable effort for the Department of Education and Agency for Workforce Innovation to negotiate a data-sharing agreement allowing the Agency for Workforce Innovation access to assessment data collected by the department on the readiness of kindergarten children who attended the School Readiness Program. Access to information on the kindergarten readiness of children who participated in the School Readiness Program is critical to fulfilling the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s responsibilities; the agency is charged with improving the educational
quality of all publicly funded school readiness programs and developing outcome measures for the School Readiness Program.

State agencies sometimes provided inconsistent program direction

Local coalition executive directors we interviewed indicated that they face challenges in receiving guidance from the state, including being unsure which agency to contact for information and receiving conflicting instructions from different agencies. Although the coalition directors provided few examples of inconsistent policy direction, state-level administrators acknowledged that this problem has occurred, primarily between the Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Department of Education.

State-level administrators cited several reasons for this problem, including fragmentation in information dissemination, the need to implement the VPK Program in a very short period of time, the desire of agency staff to provide quick answers to local questions, and staff turnover. The Agency for Workforce Innovation believes that much of the confusion that has surrounded questions about VPK requirements will continue to subside as time goes on and local stakeholders learn the roles of the various state agencies.

The two agencies’ field positions provide multiple contact and information points to stakeholders, which increases the chances for conflicting information. The Agency for Workforce Innovation employs 11 regional analysts who serve as liaisons to assist local coalitions with programmatic and fiscal questions. The Department of Education employs seven VPK facilitators around the state to help coalitions, schools, and private providers implement the VPK Program. To minimize confusion, the two agencies have taken steps to clarify the roles of their field positions and to centralize information dissemination to local stakeholders.

Furthermore, there has been high turnover in several policy positions in the Agency for Workforce Innovation, which has had four agency directors, three program-level directors, and four program-level deputy directors in the Office of Early Learning over the past five years. However, the agency’s deputy director responsible for overseeing the Office of Early Learning has remained unchanged during this same period. State-level administrators and coalition executive directors indicated that turnover and associated changes in agency priorities and philosophies have hindered cooperation, communication, and collaboration among state and local entities.

There are areas of duplication and inefficiency within the early learning program

Most of the local stakeholders who responded to our survey (115 of 150, or 77%) believed that there is unnecessary duplication and overlap among the state agencies that administer the early learning programs. Primary problem areas identified by survey respondents were data system limitations for early education programs and numerous time consuming and duplicative state reviews of local coalitions and program providers.

Data systems limitations result in duplication of coalition and provider effort and reporting inefficiencies. Forty-eight percent of survey respondents identified data system limitations as a cause of inefficiency and duplication. Currently, the state uses multiple data systems that each independently collect and maintain School Readiness and VPK program data. As a result, local coalition, school district, and state agency staff must enter the same data multiple times, convert data to formats to be compatible with different system requirements, and match data across systems.

The main data system that supports the School Readiness and VPK programs is the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Enhanced Field System, which contains programmatic and financial information related to the day-to-day operations of the School Readiness and VPK programs. Local coalitions must input and maintain this information. The Agency for Workforce

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5 The turnover in the agency director position reflects that prior to 2004, the Florida Partnership for School Readiness coordinated statewide program efforts for the School Readiness Program. In 2004, the Legislature eliminated the partnership and transferred its responsibility for early education to the Agency for Workforce Innovation, making the agency responsible for state-level coordination of the School Readiness and VPK programs and of the School Readiness coalitions.
Innovation extracts this information monthly to compile statewide information on the School Readiness and VPK programs. The Enhanced Field System also includes resource and referral information which is a central repository of contact information for School Readiness and VPK providers.

In addition, the Department of Children and Families uses its Child Care Licensing Information System to maintain licensing and inspection-related data for each licensed childcare center and home including School Readiness and VPK providers. Further, the Department of Education maintains its Automated Student Information System to collect and maintain kindergarten readiness screening data which it uses for VPK accountability purposes. Lastly, school district providers use their own data systems to record program information such as attendance information; these systems transfer data into the Department of Education’s Automated Student Information System.

These systems often maintain the same information. For example, the Department of Children and Families’ Child Care Licensing Information System maintains profiles on each VPK provider, which allows parents to view inspection reports and performance data over the internet. Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Child Care Resource and Referral Network also maintains provider information by county. Both systems contain information such as childcare provider names, business identification numbers, telephone numbers, staff, and number of locations. However, the two systems do not exchange information and local coalition and Department of Children Families staff must independently collect and input the same data.

In addition, local providers must manually submit information that they have collected electronically because the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Enhanced Field System is not designed to accept data extracts from other systems. For instance, although school districts typically record attendance in their own electronic systems, they must transfer this information to paper forms that they submit to the coalitions for data entry.

This is needed because the districts’ systems do not interface with the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Enhanced Field System, which is used to pay providers. School district staff indicated that this transfer is time-consuming, results in outdated information, and increases the potential for errors.

At the state level, similar data issues have arisen, most recently when the Department of Education attempted to match kindergarten screening data to VPK attendance data stored in the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Enhanced Field System. The Department of Education could not account for approximately 17% of students who attended the VPK Program due in part to its inability to match test scores in its system with student enrollment and attendance data files maintained by the Agency for Workforce Innovation system. The department cited inconsistencies in some key data elements, such as Social Security numbers, that the two agencies use to match records. In addition, the department believes that some children with incomplete or missing assessment data enrolled in private schools and were not screened although this step is required by Florida law. Over the past year the department and the Agency for Workforce Innovation have taken steps to improve data matching. However, the match rate for 2005-06 and 2006-07 remained around 83%.

The three state agencies indicate that they are working within existing resources to bridge gaps among their data systems to the greatest extent possible. For instance, the Department of Children and Families and Agency for Workforce Innovation are working to automate data collection forms and share information between their two systems. In addition, the Department of Children and Families has granted access to its Child Care Information System to early learning coalitions and resource and referral staff for both input capability and management report access. The three state agencies report that they are continuing their efforts to identify and implement other short-term enhancements to improve data sharing and reduce duplication.

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6 For more information, refer to 61% of Voluntary Prekindergarten Children Are Ready for Kindergarten; Accountability Process Needs Improvement, OPPAGA Report No. 08-23, April 2008.
The Agency for Workforce Innovation reports that it is working to develop a long-term solution to these problems. It plans to implement the Early Learning Information System in 2010 to replace its current system. The new system will enable state agencies and local providers to share information across the state. However, according to the state’s Technology Resource Workgroup, the system plans have increased significantly in scope and cost since the original 2005-06 feasibility study and the system is at least five years away from full implementation. While the new data system was originally estimated to cost $15 million, the agency requested approximately $10 million in general revenue for Fiscal Year 2008-09 and $36 million over the next three years for the system. With the state’s current budget crisis, it is unlikely that the Early Learning Information System will be developed and implemented as currently planned.7

Numerous and duplicative state agency reviews are time-consuming for local coalitions and program providers. Many (65 of 150, or 43%) of the local stakeholders who responded to our survey asserted that state agencies’ audit activities are duplicative, as did the majority (24 of the 41) of contract service providers and coalition executive directors responding to our survey. Appendix C contains information reported by state agencies on state audits and reviews, including their timing, frequency, requested documentation, and estimated duration.8

The early learning coalitions undergo several state-agency reviews each year. Typically, coalitions are subject to four to six reviews from the Agency for Workforce Innovation that examine areas such as program eligibility records, invoice expenditures, and fiscal monitoring. The agency indicates that these reviews are necessary to ensure that early education programs are implemented in line with state and federal requirements. The reviews range in scope and depth from desktop reviews of select invoices to multi-day on-site visits to review eligibility determinations. The agency also conducts a performance and program review of each coalition once every three years. In addition, the agency conducts special reviews of coalitions as it deems necessary. Furthermore, the Department of Education conducts an annual desktop review of coalition grants to low-performing VPK providers and VPK facilitators.

In addition to coalition reviews, state agencies reported that they conduct approximately 10 other annual reviews. For instance, the Department of Children and Families reported that it annually conducts numerous licensing and credentialing reviews. In addition, the Department of Education indicated that it collects information from school districts on their implementation of components of the VPK Program. Provider contracts are also monitored by the local early learning coalitions.

While stakeholders acknowledged the need for state oversight, they asserted that the reviews were time consuming and often duplicative. Some of this duplication is the result of federal requirements. For example, federal law requires each coalition to contract with an independent accounting firm for a single audit of the coalition’s operations. Although coalitions share these audits with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the audits do not satisfy a separate federal requirement that it monitor the coalitions.

Other areas of duplication appear to be the result of state or local requirements. For example, several providers questioned whether the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s announced intention to establish rules for monitoring providers for health and safety standards would duplicate the Department of Children and Families’ childcare facility inspections. When the agency began proposing these rules, many local coalitions began developing such standards in anticipation of the agency’s final directive. Although the agency ultimately did not propose the standards, state-level program administrators did not require coalitions to stop using the standards to monitor program providers. As a result, to some degree, some coalitions are duplicating the Department of

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7 Conference Report on House Bill 5001, the General Appropriations Act, provided a total of $500,000 to the Agency for Workforce Innovation for the Early Learning Information System for Fiscal Year 2008-09.

8 The Florida Auditor General currently is conducting an audit that includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the policies and procedures established by the Agency for Workforce Innovation for monitoring the activities of early learning coalitions and VPK providers in accordance with state law applicable to the VPK Program.
Children and Families’ health and safety inspections of childcare centers.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation indicates that it has increased its oversight efforts to respond to problems identified in state and federal reviews and audits. For instance, the agency instituted annual eligibility reviews of local providers after a review of coalition records found that a high proportion of local coalition child eligibility determinations did not meet federal criteria. The agency also reported that it increased oversight after Auditor General and OPPAGA reports identified monitoring weaknesses.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation indicates that it is working to reduce the burden that various audits and reviews place on local coalitions as well as on providers. Agency managers have met with coalition directors to discuss their concerns and to identify ways to streamline review activities. In addition, in December 2007 and January 2008, the agency held internal meetings to identify and, to the extent possible, streamline and eliminate duplication across fiscal, performance, and eligibility reviews in the future. The agency’s Office of Early Learning has reduced the scope of some audits and worked to schedule audits to ensure the least disruption to coalition staff. The agency also is working with Department of Children and Families and Department of Education staff to identify options for coordinating their monitoring of providers, such as having staff from one agency conduct audit tests required by another agency during a single visit.

What alternatives could the Legislature consider to streamline the current state-level governance structure?

Florida’s early education governance structure is similar to governance structures used by many other states. Of the 39 other states with both School Readiness and state prekindergarten programs, 30 have assigned administrative responsibilities for the programs to multiple agencies. (See Appendix D for additional detail on the governance of early education programs in other states.) However, the Legislature could consider alternatives to address the inefficiencies and duplication in the current system. We identified the advantages and disadvantages of three broad options.

- **Option 1** – Maintain the current state-level governance structure but address coordination and collaboration issues through stronger interagency agreements and oversight.
- **Option 2** – Centralize all early education programs in one of three state agencies currently jointly involved in the administration of School Readiness and VPK.
- **Option 3** - Place early education programs in an independent state agency whose sole mission is early childhood education.

There was no consensus among survey respondents regarding which option they favored. Their support appears to depend on which group they represent. Appendix E outlines and assesses several models for implementing each of these options.

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*The Agency for Workforce Innovation conducted this review as part of a U.S. Health And Human Services Department pilot program.*
Option 1: Maintain the current state-level governance structure but address coordination and collaboration issues through stronger interagency agreements and oversight

Under this option, Florida would continue to divide responsibility for the state’s early education programs among Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Education, and the Department of Children and Families. However, the agencies would increase their coordination efforts to address the problems identified in our review.

Survey respondents who expressed an opinion on the governance options favored Option 1 the least. However, respondents did identify advantages associated with maintaining the current structure. These included avoiding the need to fund a new centralized data system and program disruptions that would occur if programs were reorganized. However, this option requires extensive coordination between and within three state agencies.

To help increase coordination the Legislature may wish to charge an entity (such as a chancellor of early education or an oversight body external to the three agencies) with holding the agencies accountable for making needed improvements. This entity would have the specific responsibility of resolving early education program coordination and collaboration issues, and have the authority to require agencies to implement recommended changes. The entity might also help create a higher statewide profile for early education programs and help to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers and the public.

Florida’s Children and Youth Cabinet could potentially serve in this capacity; the cabinet consists of state agency heads, legislators, appointees and other stakeholders and has the mission to strengthen collaboration, coordination and communication among agencies that serve children. 10 The cabinet could forge interagency agreements among the three agencies to streamline monitoring/auditing activities and improve communication. However, assigning such responsibilities to the cabinet could cause it to devote a disproportionate amount of time and resources to early education issues at the expense of its broader mission. Furthermore, the cabinet may not currently have sufficient authority to compel the three state agencies to address critical issues.

Option 2: Centralize all early education programs in one of the three state agencies jointly involved in the administration of School Readiness and VPK

Under this option, responsibility for managing Florida’s early education programs would be centralized within a single state agency, and all related programs and staff would be transferred to the designated agency. This option has the potential advantages of providing clearer policy direction, improved communication, better integrated data and reporting systems, and streamlined operations.

Respondents who favored this option varied in the agency in which they would like to see the programs placed. Of the 48 respondents who favored placing the program in the Department of Education almost half were school district personnel; most other stakeholder groups responding to our survey did not favor placing the program in the Department of Education. Only one individual responding to our survey favored placing the programs into the Department of Children and Families.

Placement in any of the three agencies could present several challenges. A key challenge is that none of the three agencies has a primary mission of managing early childhood education programs that are provided by a mixture of public and private providers. The perceived advantage of placing the programs in the Department of Education is that it could increase the programs’ focus on education. However, some stakeholders asserted that the department lacks expertise in working with private sector childcare providers, who have different needs and orientations from school districts. An advantage of placing the programs in the Agency for Workforce Innovation according to some survey respondents, is that it could increase the programs’ focus on childcare delivery. However, some respondents believed

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10 On July 11, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed House Bill 509 into law to create the Children and Youth Cabinet.
such a change could diminish the programs’ educational component. Respondents believed that placing the programs in the Department of Children and Families could increase the programs’ focus on child welfare, but could diminish its education and workforce missions. These individuals asserted that the department has little expertise in early education or expertise in working with school districts.

Another concern raised with option 2 is that placing regulatory and administrative functions in a single agency may cause the appearance of a conflict of interest. This is because the same agency would be charged with ensuring that childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, without ensuring the availability of childcare services. Coalition executive directors, school district officials, and state agency program staff responding to our surveys also raised concerns that consolidation could cause short-term disruptions in administrative services. In addition, the state would incur transition costs in transferring programs, staff, and data. Finally, the state could incur substantial costs if the new agency attempted to consolidate the data systems used by the current agencies.

**Option 3: Place early education programs in an independent state agency whose sole mission is early childhood education**

Under this option, responsibility for managing Florida’s early education programs would be transferred to a new unit that would have the single mission of administering these programs. There are several alternative ways to implement this option, including creating a new independent agency, consolidating the programs in an autonomous unit within an existing agency, or housing the unit in the Office of the Governor.

This option was favored by most (17 of 23) coalition executive directors who expressed a preference for one of the three options. The perceived advantage of this option is that it would create a higher statewide profile for early education programs and help to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers and the public. The option would also help coordinate funding and policy direction for the programs. However, as with Option 2, consolidating the programs in a new entity would create implementation costs and short-term disruptions as programs, staff, and resources were transferred. This option could also increase overall state costs if the entity had to establish new finance, personnel, and legal services units, which are currently supported by the current administering agencies. In addition, once created, the new state agency would require significant resources annually to operate and would be difficult to eliminate should it not resolve the identified problems.

**Agency Response**

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), Florida Statutes, a draft of our report was submitted to the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Education, and the Department of Children and Families to review and respond. The agency’s and departments’ written responses have been reproduced herein.
Florida’s Early Education Programs

Florida’s families with young children can receive early education services through a continuum of state and federal programs. These programs provide educational, health, nutritional, social and therapeutic services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and mentally ready to succeed in school. The following is a list and description of each of Florida’s early education programs, including the lead agency responsible for program implementation, the program’s goals and functions, the target population, the legal mandate, funding sources, and the number of children served.

Public Early Education Programs in Florida

School Readiness Program

Lead Agency – Agency for Workforce Innovation

Goals/Functions/Services/Duties - To offer a comprehensive program of services to prepare at-risk children for school, including assessment and health screenings, use of a developmentally appropriate curriculum and referral to other community programs. The educational program is designed to be developmentally appropriate, research-based, involve parents as their children's first teacher to enhance the educational readiness of eligible children, and support family education. The program offers qualified parents financial assistance for childcare through a variety of settings including private centers, homes, and school-based programs. These services include extended-day, extended-year, and school age care for children to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient.


Legal Mandate - Section 411.01, Florida Statutes (The School Readiness Act), 42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq. (the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Act), and 42 U.S.C. 603 et seq. (the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act)

Funding Sources - In 2007-08, the School Readiness Program received a total of $664.5 million in funding from all sources. Funding sources included: $371.8 million from the Child Care Development Fund; $134.5 million from the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant; $156 million from the state’s General Revenue Fund; and $2.2 million from other fund sources. In addition, the Agency for Workforce Innovation received $3.9 million for a development of a computerized data system known as the Early Information System (ELIS).

Number of Children Served – During 2006-07, the School Readiness Program provided preschool education and childcare services to approximately 258,013 children.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

Lead Agency – Agency for Workforce Innovation

Goals/Functions/Services/Duties - To provide a free, voluntary prekindergarten education (VPK) for every Florida child four years of age. The state’s VPK program is intended to increase children’s chances of achieving future educational success, be developmentally appropriate, and be provided free to all four-year-olds in the state of Florida.
Primary Target Population - Children four years of age.

Legal Mandate - In 2002, the electors approved Amendment 8 to the State Constitution requiring the Legislature to establish a new early childhood education program for every four-year-old child in the state by the 2005 school year. The program allows a parent to enroll his or her eligible child (four years old by September 1 and residing in Florida) into a free VPK program. The program is voluntary for children and providers.

Funding Sources - For 2006-07 the VPK Program received $350 million in general revenue funding to the Department of Education for transfer to the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The Department of Education received an additional $1.9 million in general revenue to support improving early learning standards and accountability.

Number of Children Served - For Fiscal Year 2006-07, there were 124,390 children served in a VPK program.

**Prekindergarten Disabilities Program (Students with Disabilities within ESE Program)**

Lead Agency – Department of Education

Goals/Functions/Services/Duties - To ensure that all children with disabilities have available a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living.

Primary Target Population - Children 3 to 5 years of age who are developmentally delayed.

Legal Mandate – Section 1003.21(1)(e), Florida Statutes.

Funding Sources – The Legislature annually appropriates funds for Exceptional Student Education through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Florida also receives federal funds under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Number of Children Served – 19,885 with all exceptionalities.

**Florida Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program (Early Steps)**

Lead Agency – Department of Health, Children’s Medical Services, Early Steps State Office

Goals/Functions/Services/Duties – The Early Steps Program offers early intervention services for families with infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or an established condition likely to result in a developmental delay.

Primary Target Population - Families with infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) who have developmental delays or an established condition likely to result in a developmental delay.

Legal Mandate – Sections 391.308 and 1003.21(1)(e), Florida Statutes, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C.

Funding Sources - The Early Steps Program is funded through a combination of federal grants, general revenue, and tobacco settlement funds. In Fiscal Year 2006-07, total Early Steps received $47,757,772, comprised of $20,569,052 in general revenue, $3,817,556 in tobacco trust funds, and $23,371,164 in federal funds.

Number of Children Served - For Fiscal Year 2006-07, Early Steps served 37,853 children.
Title I Prekindergarten Program

**Lead Agency** – Florida Department of Education

**Goals/ Functions/ Services/ Duties** - A federally funded preschool program serving three- and four-year-olds who are economically disadvantaged.

**Primary Target Population** - Children three- and four-years-olds who are economically disadvantaged.

**Legal Mandate** - Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.)

**Funding Sources** - Title I, Part A federal funds (spending these funds on the prekindergarten population is optional for school districts).

**Number of Children Served** – 5,862.

The William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program

**Lead Agency** – Agency for Workforce Innovation

**Goals/ Functions/ Services/ Duties** – The program is designed to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities for families. Even Start provides an integrated program of adult literacy or adult basic education, early childhood education, and parenting education. It is implemented through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to promote achievement of the national education goals and assist low-income children and adults to achieve state content and student performance standards.

**Primary Target Population** – Provides services to the most-in-need families and their children, birth through age seven years.

**Legal Mandate** – Section 411.0105, Florida Statutes, Early Learning Opportunities Act and Even Start Family Literacy Programs.

**Funding Sources** – $3.4 million for Fiscal Year 2007-08. No parent fees are required for this program. Funding is provided from the U.S. Department of Education to the Florida Department of Education and to the Office of Early Learning at the Agency for Workforce Innovation through an inter-agency agreement.

**Number of Children Served** - Fiscal Year 2006-07: There were 895 children served by the Even Start Program; this includes 448 aged 0-2, 259 aged 3-5, and 188 aged 6-8. Also, this number represents a total of 604 families receiving services.

Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY) Program

**Lead Agency** – Agency for Workforce Innovation

**Goals/ Functions/ Services/ Duties** - HIPPY is a home-based, family focused program that helps parents provide educational enrichment for their preschool child. Parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school through activity packets, home visits, and groups meetings. Highly trained paraprofessionals provide parental support through meeting with the family on a weekly basis for the 30-35 weeks of the program. Their efforts are supported by monthly meetings of other participants and the local program coordinator. Parents are also directed to community agencies as needed to provide a comprehensive array of services.

**Primary Target Population** - Families with children ages three to five.
Legal Mandate - The Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance Center was established in 1995 with funds from a Federal Title IV Parental Involvement Project (PIP) grant. In 1997 The Florida State Legislature appropriated funds to fully support the Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance Center.

Funding Sources – The Legislature appropriated $1.4 million for Fiscal Year 2006-07 and $2.4 for Fiscal Year 2007-08 from the Welfare Transition Trust Fund. Funding has also been provided through early childhood education initiatives including Title I, Even Start, Head Start, job training programs, public housing initiatives, a myriad of prevention and early intervention programs (such as child abuse prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, and crime prevention) and foundations, businesses and civic organizations. HIPPY programs are provided through local School Readiness coalitions, school districts, and/or local community based organizations.

Number of Children Served - In Fiscal Year 2006-07, there were 2,104 children served in 14 HIPPY programs in 14 counties. Of this total, state HIPPY funding supported 765 children in 13 HIPPY programs in 13 counties.

Head Start (includes Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and American Indian Head Start) Program


Goals/ Functions/ Services/ Duties – The program is designed to facilitate child development and promote school readiness by enhancing social and cognitive development through the provision of health, educational, nutritional, social and other services to meet the comprehensive needs of economically disadvantaged children and families.

Primary Target Population - Children three to five years of age; targeted at families at or below 100% of the federal poverty level.

Legal Mandate - The Head Start Act, as amended: U.S. Code Citation: 42 USC 9801 et seq. and the Head Start Program Performance Standards & Other Regulations (45 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1301-1311).

Funding Sources - For Fiscal Year 2005-06, $260,267,233 was allocated to Head Start programs in Florida. Funding for all Head Start programs flows directly from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to local agencies. Communities provide a 25% local match to federal funds. There are no parent fees for this program.

Number of Children Served - For Fiscal Year 2005-06, there were 35,514 children enrolled in Florida's Head Start Program.
Appendix B

Early Education Program Expenditures

For Fiscal Year 2006-07, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Child and Families, and the Department of Education reported expenditures of $975 million on School Readiness, Voluntary Prekindergarten, and childcare provider licensing activities. As shown in Table B-1, local early learning coalitions spent the vast majority (79%) of these funds on early childhood services delivered by childcare providers. The next largest expenditure (9%) was used by coalitions to provide training, technical assistance, and resources to support and improve the quality of early childhood environments. The coalitions also spent 6% on non-direct services to determine eligibility and to enroll children and families in School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs. The early learning coalition non-direct category also includes $1.3 million in expenditures that the Agency for Workforce Innovation incurred related to the Early Learning Information System. Overall, 4% of the expenditures was spent on administrative functions at both the state and local level. The Department of Children and Families spent 2% of the total funds to license and inspect childcare facilities and homes for health and safety, provide basic state-mandated childcare training for childcare personnel, and issue credentials for providers. In addition, the Department of Education spent less than 1% to provide grants to assist low performing VPK providers and to develop on-line training materials for VPK providers. OPPAGA will examine the appropriateness of the classification of early education program expenditures in our upcoming report on financial issues related to the state’s early education programs.

Table B-1
State Agency-Reported 2006-07 Expenditures for School Readiness, Voluntary Prekindergarten, and Childcare Provider Licensing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$42,462,699</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning Coalition Slots</td>
<td>$767,865,495</td>
<td>(79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning Coalition Quality</td>
<td>$38,475,686</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning Coalition Non-Direct</td>
<td>$58,030,658</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$42,462,699</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families Licensing</td>
<td>$16,172,463</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>$932,190</td>
<td>(&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Education.
Table B-2 shows how administrative costs are spread among the local learning coalitions and the three state agencies. The vast majority (70%) of administrative expenditures were incurred by the local early learning coalitions. At the state level, the Agency for Workforce Innovation accounts for the largest portion (22%) of administrative expenditures, followed by the Department of Education (6%) and the Department of Children and Families (2%).

Table B-2
State Agency-Reported Administration Expenses for Early Education Programs in 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Agency</th>
<th>Administration Expenses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning Coalition Administration</td>
<td>$29,735,829</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families Administration</td>
<td>$988,992</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education Administration</td>
<td>$2,338,852</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency for Workforce Innovation Administration, $9,399,026</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Education.
Appendix C
Early Education Monitoring Activities

OPPAGA collected information on the number of audits, evaluations, and reviews that early learning coalitions must undergo annually. Tables C-1 and C-2 provide an overview, by administering agency, of these reviews as well as their frequency/duration, what types of materials coalitions must provide, and the statutory authority or legal directive for the review.

Table C-1
Audits, Evaluations, and Reviews Focusing Mostly on Coalitions and Contracted Service Providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Audit/Evaluation/Review</th>
<th>Frequency and Duration</th>
<th>General Purpose and Scope</th>
<th>Requested Documentation</th>
<th>Statutory Authority or Legal Directive</th>
<th>Entities Involved at the Local Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Performance/Program Reviews</td>
<td>Once every three years/approximately six months</td>
<td>Programmatic review covering Governance, Contracting, Educational services, Child Care Resource and Referral and Access</td>
<td>Personnel/staffing documentation for coalition, contracted service provider and child care provider; contracts and provider agreements, articles of incorporation; coalition annual report; Operational and Personnel Policies and Procedures, Eligibility and Training and Quality Assurance Manuals and documentation; fiscal reports, Cost Allocation Plan; Board composition and meetings; Resource and Referral, public relations/outreach documentation; needs assessments and resource tracking; curriculum-related documentation; screening and assessment tools and data results.</td>
<td>Ch. 411.01(3)(l), F.S.; Ch. 1002.75(1), F.S.; Federal 45 CFR 98.11(b)(6)</td>
<td>Coalition, contracted service providers, and child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School readiness VPK eligibility reviews</td>
<td>Annually/four-six months</td>
<td>Reviews sample of cases to validate the eligibility determination made by the coalition or contract provider</td>
<td>Enhanced Field System, client files, attendance records, VPK instruction files</td>
<td>45 CFR 98.11; s. 1002.75, F.S.; s. 411.01(4), F.S.</td>
<td>Coalition and contracted service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Invoice Desk Reviews</td>
<td>Quarterly/four to eight weeks</td>
<td>Review a sample of non-direct service expenditures</td>
<td>Detailed supporting documentation to substantiate reasonableness and necessity of expenditures</td>
<td>45 CFR 98.11; s. 1002.75, F.S.; s. 411.01(4), F.S.</td>
<td>Coalition and contracted service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Fiscal Monitoring</td>
<td>Annually/approximately eight weeks</td>
<td>Reviews compliance</td>
<td>Monitoring Plan and Reports, coalition plan and Corrective Action Plans; OMB A-133 single audit financial statements; bank statements and general ledger; contract management files; reports prepared by the Office of the Inspector General, Auditor General or other</td>
<td>s. 411.01(4)(l), F.S.; 45 CFR 98.11; OMB Circular A-133</td>
<td>Coalitions and material service organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Audit/ Evaluation/Review</td>
<td>Frequency and Duration</td>
<td>General Purpose and Scope</td>
<td>Requested Documentation</td>
<td>Statutory Authority or Legal Directive</td>
<td>Entities Involved at the Local Level</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Contracts</td>
<td>Annually/ 2-4 months</td>
<td>Consists of both program and financial review</td>
<td>Files, data and other information necessary to document completion of contract terms and conditions</td>
<td>45 CFR 98.11; s. 1002.75, F.S.; s. 411.01(4), F.S.</td>
<td>Service providers under contract (not coalitions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Reviews</td>
<td>As needed/varies</td>
<td>Targets specific issues from a statewide perspective</td>
<td>Contract terms and conditions</td>
<td>45 CFR 98.11; s. 1002.75, F.S.; s. 411.01(4), F.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Department of Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Audit/ Evaluation/Review</th>
<th>Frequency and Duration</th>
<th>General Purpose and Scope</th>
<th>Requested Documentation</th>
<th>Statutory Authority or Legal Directive</th>
<th>Entities Involved at the Local Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Grants to Low Performing Providers; Coalition Grants for VPK Facilitators</td>
<td>Annually; desktop review; ongoing</td>
<td>Verify compliance with state requirements for grants administered by the Department of Education</td>
<td>Grant-related information</td>
<td>s. 1008.32, F.S.</td>
<td>Coalitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the VPK Facilitator Network</td>
<td>Bi-annually; three months</td>
<td>Determine the level of effectiveness of and identify areas to improve services provided by the facilitators to early learning coalitions, public schools, and private providers in: implementing adopted standards; coordinating and delivering professional development and technical assistance; supporting Department of Education accountability and quality assurance initiatives; and collaborating and coordinating with other stakeholders.</td>
<td>Training attendance records, training evaluation results, qualification certificates and interviews</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Department of Education, coalitions; VPK providers; school district facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District Monitoring of District VPK Programs</td>
<td>Annually/one month</td>
<td>Collect information on the methods school districts use to monitor components of their districts' VPK programs.</td>
<td>District responses/data submitted</td>
<td>s. 1002.67(3), F.S.</td>
<td>School districts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Education, Department for Children and Families, and early education stakeholders.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Audit/Evolution/Review</th>
<th>Frequency and Duration</th>
<th>General Purpose and Scope</th>
<th>Requested Documentation</th>
<th>Statutory Authority or Legal Directive</th>
<th>Entities Involved at the Local Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Licensure</td>
<td>Commences at time of application/up to 45 days</td>
<td>Pre-licensing activities to ensure compliance with standards prior to licensure</td>
<td>Review health and safety requirements, background screening and training documentation pursuant to 65C-22 (facilities) and 65C-20 (homes)</td>
<td>ss. 402.308, 402.313, 402.3131, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine Inspection(s)</td>
<td>Two times/year (facilities) up to one day; one time/year (homes)</td>
<td>Ensure health and safety compliance and appropriate documentation</td>
<td>Review health and safety requirements, background screening and training documentation, student health records and personnel records pursuant to 65C-22 (facilities) and 65C-20 (homes)</td>
<td>ss. 402.302 - 402.319, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-inspections</td>
<td>Varies – as needed; up to one day</td>
<td>Ensure compliance with corrective action requirements</td>
<td>Review non-compliant items from previous routine inspections</td>
<td>ss. 402.302 - 402.319, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>Annually up to 45 days prior to re-licensing; 1 day up to 2 weeks</td>
<td>Ensure health and safety compliance and appropriate documentation prior to re-licensing</td>
<td>Review health and safety requirements, background screening and training documentation, student health records and personnel records pursuant to 65C-22 (facilities) and 65C-20 (homes)</td>
<td>ss. 402.302 – 402.319, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated Inspections(s)</td>
<td>Two times/year for facilities, if eligible; up to ½ - ¾-day</td>
<td>Ensure compliance with key indicators of health and safety</td>
<td>Review key indicators of quality as established by the department</td>
<td>ss. 402.3115, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints Inspections</td>
<td>Varies – as needed; up to ½ day, not including collateral contacts; approval review may take up to 45 days</td>
<td>Investigate noncompliant allegations</td>
<td>Review alleged non-compliant health and safety items; coordinate with CPIs on abuse and neglect complaints</td>
<td>ss. 402.302 – 402.319, F.S.; s. 39.302, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Operations</td>
<td>Varies – as needed; up to 5 days</td>
<td>To determine licensure or legal exemption possibilities</td>
<td>Review program components to determine if meets statutory requirements for licensure or registration</td>
<td>ss. 402.302, 402.308, 402.312, and 402.313, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of family day care homes</td>
<td>Annually; up to 45 days</td>
<td>Ensure home meets statutory requirements for registration</td>
<td>Review application, immunization records, background screening, training records, health and safety checklist requirements and competent substitute plan</td>
<td>ss. 402.313, F.S.</td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff /Director Credential Review</td>
<td>At time of application; up to 2 weeks</td>
<td>Ensure eligibility for staff and director credential requirements and issue credential (includes VPK endorsement)</td>
<td>Review transcripts and training documentation</td>
<td>ss. 402.305(2) and (3), F.S.</td>
<td>Individual child care personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Audit/Evolution/Review</td>
<td>Frequency and Duration</td>
<td>General Purpose and Scope</td>
<td>Requested Documentation</td>
<td>Statutory Authority or Legal Directive</td>
<td>Entities Involved at the Local Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of child care providers or other early learning providers</td>
<td>Varies by coalition, ranging from weeks to months</td>
<td>Purpose: Verify contractual compliance. Scope: Health and Safety Monitoring, School Readiness Monitoring, VPK Monitoring, Attendance audits</td>
<td>Physical environment, classroom practices, program administration, file monitoring, sign-in sheet records post attendance monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child enrollment and eligibility</td>
<td>Annually: varies from one week to months</td>
<td>Purpose: To ensure compliance with eligibility and enrollment procedures for VPK and School Readiness child enrollment. Scope: Sampling of School Readiness and VPK child files</td>
<td>Child eligibility and enrollment files</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child care providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Education, Department for Children and Families, and early education stakeholders.
Appendix D

Other States’ Early Education Program Governance Models

Thirty-nine other states have both a School Readiness and Prekindergarten program. Like Florida, most states split program administration among more than one state agency. The following table outlines the number of agencies that implement the states early education programs.

Table D-1
States Vary in the Number of Agencies They Use to Govern Early Education Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model (Number of States)</th>
<th>States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One State-Level Agency (9)</td>
<td>Arkansas (Department Of Human Services/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education), Georgia (Department of Early Care and Learning), Hawaii (Department of Human Services), Maryland (Department of Education), Massachusetts (Department of Early Education and Care), New Mexico (Children, Youth and Families Department), Pennsylvania (Department Of Public Welfare and the Department of Education - both departments have the same director), Washington (Department of Early Learning), and West Virginia (Department of Health and Human Resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared by Two State-Level Agencies (22)</td>
<td>Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared by Three State-Level Agencies (8)</td>
<td>Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OPPAGA based on Early Child Care and Education: State Governance Structures, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, September 2007.
Appendix E

Early Education Program Governance Options

OPPAGA identified three primary alternative governance structure options, each with various potential implementation models. Table E-1 outlines the three options, the related models, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each model. OPPAGA solicited information on these options and models from a variety of stakeholders, including early learning coalition executive directors, coalition board chairs and members, program providers, school districts, state agency administrators and staff, and select legislators. In addition, we encouraged recipients to forward the options and models to other knowledgeable parties for input. We received 94 responses and the findings are summarized in the table below.

Table E-1
The Legislature Could Consider Several Options for State-Level Early Education Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1 – Keep the current state-level governance structure but address coordination and collaboration issues through stronger interagency agreements and oversight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Make no structural changes but improve current operations</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches program administrative responsibility with each agency’s mission and maintains current agency relationships and responsibilities with which most stakeholders are familiar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not require reorganization of existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, or realigning lines of authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimizes disruption of day-to-day administrative services</td>
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<tr>
<td>High likelihood that key issues of inefficiency and duplication will not be resolved because it continues to rely on the willingness of agencies to cooperate and collaborate through stronger interagency agreements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early education issues likely would continue to receive lower priority among agencies’ other programs and priorities that more directly align with their core missions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative committee jurisdiction does not fit with early education issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Create an independent umbrella entity to provide oversight and coordination such as a chancellor for early education</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches program administrative responsibility with each agency’s mission while creating an independent entity to better bridge coordination and cooperation among individual administering agencies</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a mechanism to be accountable for reviewing and eliminating impediments to the effective and efficient administration of the state’s early education programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not require reorganization of existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, or realigning lines of authority</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizes disruption of day-to-day administrative services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May help establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May help create a higher statewide profile for early education programs and help to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers and the public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduces another level of bureaucracy and oversight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not directly address key issues but rather relies heavily on the willingness of agencies to cooperate and collaborate, and to establish interagency agreements</td>
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<tr>
<td>May take a longer period of time than other options to address key issues due to the infrequency of meetings and the need for consensus among the members</td>
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<tr>
<td>An umbrella entity may not have sufficient authority to compel agencies to address critical issues and thus the recommendations may be ignored</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The membership of the entity may not include agency heads and other key stakeholders necessary to ensure that agencies make needed changes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
c. Use the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet to provide oversight and coordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matches program administrative responsibility with each agency’s mission while creating an independent entity to better bridge coordination and cooperation among individual administering agencies</td>
<td>Introduces another level of bureaucracy and oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides a mechanism to be accountable for reviewing and eliminating impediments to the effective and efficient administration of the state’s early education programs</td>
<td>Does not directly address key issues but rather relies heavily on the willingness of agencies to cooperate and collaborate, and to establish interagency agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raises the profile of early childhood issues in Florida by making recommendations to the Governor</td>
<td>May take a longer period of time than other options to address key early education issues due to the infrequency of meetings, the variety of issues within the cabinet’s purview, and the need for consensus among cabinet members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The membership of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet includes legislative members, agency heads, representatives from the Governor’s office, and other stakeholders needed to establish early education policy and ensure that program-level staff make changes</td>
<td>May cause the cabinet to devote a disproportionate amount of time and resources to early education issues at the expense of its broader mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consistent with the mission of Governor’s Children’s Cabinet which is to ensure that the public policy of Florida relating to children and youth promotes interdepartmental collaboration and program implementation.</td>
<td>The cabinet may not have sufficient authority to compel agencies to address critical issues and thus the recommendations may be ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not require reorganization of existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, or realigning lines of authority</td>
<td>May make the role of agency heads confusing as they would be placed in a position that both reports to the Governor and to staff within the new office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimizes disruption of day-to-day administrative services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May help establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May help create a higher statewide profile for early education programs and help to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers and the public</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Option 2 — Place early education programs in one of the state agencies currently jointly involved in the administration of School Readiness and VPK

Implementation Alternatives

a. With the exception of licensure, place all early education functions in Agency for Workforce Innovation

| | Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of most early education programs within one agency |
| | Could improve communication and direction by unifying the bulk of early education programs’ administration under one agency head |
| | Strengthens the workforce aspect of early education programs |
| | Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review most administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes |
| | Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolving data sharing issues among Department of Education and Agency for Workforce Innovation; timing may coincide with Agency for Workforce Innovation’s overhaul of its current data system |
| | Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, may be able to be absorbed by existing units within Agency for Workforce Innovation |
| | May help to establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs |
| | Has the potential to lose focus on the educational component of early education programs |
| | The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues |
| | Requires reorganizing existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, realigning lines of authority |
| | Does not consolidate all programs, and thus requires collaboration and cooperation between Agency for Workforce Innovation and Department of Children and Families |
| | Agency for Workforce Innovation could experience a learning curve as it takes over the inherited functions from Department of Education, which would likely result in a period of transition |
| | Changes in policy direction that result from such a merger may cause frustration at the local level |
| | May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its current data system possibly causing delays and additional costs |
| | Early education issues may receive lower priority given |
### Option b. Place all early education functions in Agency for Workforce Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one agency</td>
<td>Has the potential to lose focus on the educational component of early education programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs under one agency head</td>
<td>May cause the appearance of a conflict of interest because the same agency would be charged with ensuring childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, and with ensuring the availability of childcare services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens the workforce aspect of early education programs</td>
<td>The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unifies most programs that serve children ages 0 – 5</td>
<td>Requires reorganizing existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, and realigning lines of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review all administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes</td>
<td>Agency for Workforce Innovation could experience a learning curve as it takes over the inherited functions from Department of Education and Department of Children and Families, which would likely result in a period of transition, possible disruption of day-to-day administrative services, and uncertainty at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolve data sharing issues among Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families; timing may coincide with Agency for Workforce Innovation’s overhaul of its current data system</td>
<td>Changes in policy direction that result from such a merger may cause frustration at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, may be able to be absorbed by existing units within Agency for Workforce Innovation</td>
<td>May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its current data system possibly causing delays and additional costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
<td>Early education issues may receive lower priority given Agency for Workforce Innovation’s other programs and priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Option c. With the exception of licensure, place all early education functions in Department of Education, under a new, separate chancellor for early education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of most early education programs within one agency</td>
<td>Has the potential to lose focus on the workforce component of early education programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could improve communication and direction by unifying the bulk of early education programs’ administration under one agency head</td>
<td>Department of Education will have to make adjustments to effectively work with small private sector businesses that cannot easily absorb the costs of additional state mandates by shifting resources and through economies of scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens the education aspect of early education programs</td>
<td>The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review most administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes</td>
<td>Requires realigning existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, and realigning lines of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolve data sharing issues among Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families</td>
<td>Does not consolidate all programs, and thus requires collaboration and cooperation between Department of Education and Department of Children and Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, may be able to be absorbed by existing units within Department of Education</td>
<td>Department of Education could experience a learning curve as it takes over the inherited functions from Agency for Workforce Innovation, which would likely result in a period of transition, possible disruption of day-to-day administrative services, and uncertainty at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing the programs under a chancellor may help ensure that early education issues do not receive lower priority among Department of Education’s K-12 or higher education programs and priorities</td>
<td>Changes in policy direction that result from such a merger may cause frustration at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May help to establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
<td>May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option</td>
<td>Perceived Advantages</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| d. Place all early education functions in Department of Education | - Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one agency  
- Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs under one agency head  
- Strengthens the education aspect of early education programs  
- Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review most administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes  
- Unifies most programs that serve children ages 0 – 5  
- Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolve data sharing issues among Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families  
- Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, may be able to be absorbed by existing units within Department of Education  
- Would establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs | - Has the potential to lose focus on the workforce component of early education programs  
- May cause the appearance of a conflict of interest because the same agency would be charged with ensuring childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, and with ensuring the availability of childcare services  
- Department of Education would have to make adjustments to effectively work with small private sector businesses that cannot easily absorb the costs of additional state mandates by shifting resources and through economies of scale  
- The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues  
- Requires reorganizing existing staff and resources, additional infrastructure costs, realigning lines of authority  
- Department of Education could experience a learning curve as it takes over the inherited functions from Agency for Workforce Innovation, which would likely result in a period of transition, possible disruption of day-to-day administrative services, and uncertainty at the local level  
- Changes in policy direction that result from such a merger may cause frustration at the local level  
- May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its current data system possibly causing delays and additional costs  
- Early education issues may receive lower priority among Department of Education K-12 and higher education programs and priorities |
| e. Place all early education functions in Department of Children and Families | - Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one agency  
- Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs under one agency head  
- Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review most administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes  
- Unifies most programs that serve children ages 0 – 5  
- Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolving data sharing issues among Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Education, and Department of Children and Families  
- Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, may be able to be absorbed by existing units within Department of Children and Families  
- Would establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs | - Has the potential to lose focus on the workforce and educational components of early education programs  
- May cause the appearance of a conflict of interest because the same agency would be charged with ensuring childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, and with ensuring the availability of childcare services  
- The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues  
- Requires significant reorganization of most early education program staff and resources (currently in Agency for Workforce Innovation and Department of Education), additional infrastructure costs, realignment of lines of authority  
- Department of Children and Families will experience a steep learning curve as it takes over the majority of early education functions from both Agency for Workforce Innovation and Department of Education, which will likely result in a long period of transition, disruptions of day-to-day administrative services, and uncertainty at the local level |
### Option 3 – Place early education programs in an independent state agency whose sole mission is early education

**Implementation Alternatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Create an Office of Early Education in the Executive Office of the Governor and place early education programs completely under the direction of the office</td>
<td>- Establishes an entity with a mission that focuses exclusively on early education issues&lt;br&gt;- Placement of such an office in the Governor’s Office may elevate the awareness of early education issues among policymakers, establish the governor as the state’s chief advocate for early education issues, and thus, ensure resources are available to address early education needs&lt;br&gt;- Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one office&lt;br&gt;- Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs under one director&lt;br&gt;- Combining major administrative functions enables one office to review most administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes&lt;br&gt;- Unifies most programs that serve children ages 0 – 5&lt;br&gt;- Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolving data sharing issues among Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families&lt;br&gt;- Would establish a unified budget and goals for early education to help address early education needs</td>
<td>- Will result in additional costs to create an entirely new office and require reorganization of existing staff and resources at three state agencies and realignment of lines of authority&lt;br&gt;- The new office could experience a steep learning curve because it traditionally does not directly administer programs, which would likely result in a period of transition, change in policy direction, and frustration and uncertainty at the local level&lt;br&gt;- As an office under the Governor, has the potential to be highly influenced by a single political party&lt;br&gt;- The related legislative committees’ jurisdiction may not fit with early education issues&lt;br&gt;- May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its current data system possibly causing delays and additional costs&lt;br&gt;- Early education issues may receive lower priority among Department of Children and Families other programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Create a new state-level agency or department of early education</td>
<td>- Has a mission that focuses exclusively on early education issues so these issues will not be lost among the programs and priorities that exist in an entity with a broader mission&lt;br&gt;- Establishing as an independent department or agency at the state level will help to elevate the profile of early education issues in the state&lt;br&gt;- Has the potential to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers&lt;br&gt;- Provides a separate, unified budget and goals for early education, and thus, may help ensure that resources are available to address early education needs&lt;br&gt;- Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one agency or department&lt;br&gt;- Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs</td>
<td>- Will result in additional costs to create an entirely new office or department and require reorganization of existing staff and resources at three state agencies and realignment of lines of authority&lt;br&gt;- May cause the appearance of a conflict of interest because the same agency would be charged with ensuring childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, and with ensuring the availability of childcare services&lt;br&gt;- State costs will increase to pay non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, that are currently paid for by existing units within Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families&lt;br&gt;- Once created, the new state agency would require significant resources annually to operate and would be</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Perceived Advantages</th>
<th>Perceived Disadvantages</th>
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</table>
| c. Create a new, independent agency that is administratively placed under one of the state agencies currently jointly involved in the administration of School Readiness and VPK | - Has a mission that focuses exclusively on early education issues so these issues will not be lost among the programs and priorities that exist in an entity with a broader mission  
- Establishing as an independent agency at the state level will help to elevate the profile of early education issues in the state  
- Has the potential to increase awareness of early education issues among policymakers  
- Provides a separate, unified budget and goals for early education, and thus, may help ensure that resources are available to address early education needs  
- Facilitates collaboration and cooperation by placing the administration of all early education programs within one agency  
- Could improve communication and direction by unifying the administration of all early education programs under one agency  
- Combining major administrative functions enables one agency to review all administrative processes, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and streamline processes  
- Unifies most programs that serve children ages 0 – 5  
- Would facilitate combining separate databases and resolving data sharing issues among Department of Education, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Department of Children and Families  
- Non-program-related support functions, such as personnel and legal services, will be absorbed by an existing agency | - Will result in additional costs to create an entirely new agency or department and require reorganization of existing staff and resources at three state agencies and realignment of lines of authority  
- May cause the appearance of a conflict of interest because the same agency would be charged with ensuring childcare centers meet minimum licensure requirements, which can limit the number of childcare centers and staff, and with ensuring the availability of childcare services  
- The new agency or department would experience a learning curve which would likely result in a period of transition, change in policy direction, and frustration and uncertainty at the local level  
- May require the need for a new consolidated data system which may negate work the Agency for Workforce Innovation has already done to overhaul its current data system possibly causing delays and additional costs  
- Once created the new state agency would require significant resources annually to operate and would be difficult to eliminate should it not resolve the identified problems |
May 12, 2008

Gary R. VanLandingham, Ph.D., Director
Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability
The Florida Legislature
111 West Madison, Room 312
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475

Dear Dr. VanLandingham:

Thank you and your staff for your work on behalf of the early learning programs in our state. We appreciate the time and effort spent on this important review.

Attached, please find our response to your report entitled: "Governance Structure of Florida's Early Education Program Presents Some Administrative Challenges." If you have questions or require additional information, please contact James F. Mathews, our Inspector General at 245-7141.

Sincerely,

Monesia T. Brown
Director

cc: James Mathews

Attachment
The Agency for Workforce Innovation commends the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) for its diligence in analyzing Florida’s vitally important early learning system. OPPAGA’s report on the governance structure of Florida’s early learning Programs focuses attention on the administration of the learning and care needs of Florida’s children, families and communities and helps the Agency for Workforce Innovation as we continue to lead Florida toward a world-class system for our state.

As the lead agency for Florida’s early learning programs, the Agency for Workforce Innovation welcomes recommendations and suggestions to enhance early learning program administration and reduce duplication. Our partnerships with other state agencies, including the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Education, strengthen our ability to coordinate a comprehensive early learning system and improve early learning programs and services for Florida’s parents and children.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation provides the following response to OPPAGA’s report.

I. Governance of Florida’s Early Learning System

A. The current governance structure is efficient and effective.

As reflected in the report, the Agency for Workforce Innovation is responsible for the vast majority of activities associated with the VPK and School Readiness programs and for 98% of the total early learning system funding. The division of functions (regulatory, administrative, and accountability) among the three state agencies have resulted in a comprehensive early learning system with appropriate checks and balances. The Agency for Workforce Innovation brings together a combination of early learning programs and partnerships to help ensure an efficient and effective early learning system.

Early learning is a system to ensure that children have quality care to promote their development as learners and to ensure that parents are able to work by having quality care for their children. Within that system, the Agency for Workforce Innovation creates synergy among the related programs. As the State Administrator for the federal Child Care Development Fund, the Agency for Workforce Innovation is responsible for the quality, availability, and affordability of child care in Florida (45CFR 98.1). Administration of the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program directly aligns with this responsibility (s. 1(b), Art IX of the State Constitution). The Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Office of Early Learning also provides support services to low income working families through the School Readiness program and all families through the Child Care Resource and Referral program (s. 411, F.S.). To accomplish this, the Agency for Workforce Innovation works with 31 Early Learning Coalitions serving all 67 counties in Florida.

Another strength of the current governance structure results from the link between child care and workforce development. Child care is a necessity for many working families. Operating jointly with the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Workforce Services enables families to access information on career development and training as well as the child care necessary to take
advantage of workforce opportunities. Many of the benefits of the current governance structure are still being realized and the Agency for Workforce Innovation will continue to work with internal and external partners to improve the School Readiness and VPK programs.

B. The Agency for Workforce Innovation’s Office of Early Learning is creating success.

As the agency with the primary early learning system development responsibilities, the Agency for Workforce Innovation has developed a team of child development, public administration, and family support experts to ensure comprehensive public policy related to the early learning experiences for children. This team has been able to lead initiatives, workgroups, and trainings designed to create improvements in system coordination, data quality, professional development, and service delivery. The Agency for Workforce Innovation works to include the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Education in these initiatives so that cohesive system development is ensured.

The current structure was put in place three years ago with the creation of the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. The multi-agency administration is efficient and appropriate. The Agency for Workforce Innovation continues to support enhanced coordination between all elements of the early learning system to maintain a focus on quality, service, stewardship of federal and state funds, and efficiency.

II. Needed Technology Improvements

The Agency for Workforce Innovation agrees with OPPAGA that the current data systems result in duplication of effort. An enhanced data and information system is crucial to delivering quality services, ensuring accountability, improving statewide collaboration and developing Florida’s early learning programs. Development and implementation of a modern early learning information system is the most significant way to improve the administration of Florida’s early learning system. The current decentralized data system was developed in the 1980s when Chapter 411, Florida Statutes, the Early Learning Coalitions, and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Education program did not exist. It is both technologically and programmatically outdated.

The Early Learning Information System (ELIS)

A modern system would provide a wide-range of benefits including increased accountability, enhanced communication and cost savings that can be used to address significant child care waiting lists throughout the state. The Agency for Workforce Innovation has initiated the development of ELIS. Over the past year, system requirements have been identified which will streamline administrative processes including attendance tracking, eligibility determination, and provider payments.

Specific highlights of the Early Learning Information System include the following:

- ELIS will be a centralized technology system that will provide critical information to early learning parents, partners, and providers. This includes 300,000 families whose
children attend the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education and School Readiness programs, 31 early learning coalitions, and several state agencies.

- ELIS will be used to administer a $1.1 billion early learning budget where currently no interconnected technology system exists.

- A feasibility study was completed March 2008 by a third-party vendor estimating a cost savings of $22 million a year due to enhanced efficiencies in program operations. Cost savings could potentially be used to fund 5,500 more children every year in the School Readiness program.

- Benefits of ELIS:
  - Streamline administrative processes including attendance tracking, eligibility processing, and provider payments
  - Reduce potential fraud and overpayments
  - Provide data sharing capabilities between educators, parents, providers, and state agencies
  - Provide parents with easy on-line access to child care resource and referral information along with a wealth of child development and early learning information

The Agency for Workforce Innovation is fully committed to ELIS because a modernized early learning information system will enhance efficiency and effectiveness more than any change to governance and administrative structures.

III. Itemized Responses

A. Report Statement

Section: The current state-level governance structure has several strengths but poses some administrative challenges

Page 4, column 2, paragraph 3: “Currently the state does not have a single agency whose mission focuses exclusively on early education or whose mission encompasses the broad objectives of the state’s early education programs.”

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

While other agencies share some responsibilities for these programs, the Agency for Workforce Innovation serves as the lead agency with the primary responsibility for ensuring the success of these programs. Except for the low performing VPK provider mini-grants, only one agency has a direct relationship with the Early Learning Coalitions who directly administer the services provided at the local level. Improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of early learning for every child and every program in the state is the charge and the mission of the Agency for Workforce Innovation.
B. Report statement

Section: The current state-level governance structure has several strengths but poses some administrative challenges

Page 5, column 1, paragraph 4: "The Agency for Workforce Innovation is currently responsible for ensuring that each VPK and School Readiness provider uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum and for reviewing and approving education improvement plans submitted by low performing providers. Some stakeholders believe that these responsibilities would be better assigned to the Department of Education, which is responsible for establishing VPK performance standards, adopting the kindergarten readiness screening, and reviewing and approving curricula for use by certain low performing VPK providers."

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

The Agency for Workforce Innovation shares OPPAGA’s focus on collaboration and clear division of system responsibilities, but consolidating improvement plan tasks within the Department of Education would actually increase duplication. Currently, the Department of Education identifies low performing providers and provides mini-grants to help support their improvement process. The Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Early Learning Coalitions are responsible for working directly with providers to help them draft and implement improvement plans whether or not mini-grant funds are distributed. The simplest division of duties would place the mini-grants and implementation of the improvement plans within the Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Early Learning Coalitions while keeping the identification of the low performing providers with the Department of Education.

C. Report Statement

Section: The current state-level governance structure has several strengths but poses some administrative challenges

Page 5, column 2, paragraph 2: "Some stakeholders believed that the Agency for Workforce Innovation focuses too much on its mission of meeting the childcare needs of working parents and not enough on ensuring the educational quality of the School Readiness Program."

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

According to state and federal mandates (45CFR 98.1; s. 411, F.S.), the School Readiness program serves a dual function of providing a safe and quality early learning experience for young children while enabling low-income families to afford child care so that parents can work. The Agency for Workforce Innovation prioritizes both of these responsibilities. However, level funding for seven years makes this a significant challenge since provider reimbursement rates have lagged well behind increases in the cost of living. The Agency for Workforce Innovation helps the state cope with the lack of adequate funding through creative solutions to improve quality and working with coalitions and state agency partners to use quality funds targeted by the federal government as well as other state and local funds to improve the quality of child care throughout the state.
D. Report Statement

Section: The current state-level governance structure has several strengths but poses some administrative challenges

Page 5, column 2, paragraph 2: “The Agency has attempted to work with the Department of Education to build on the collective experience of the two agencies…”

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

The Agency for Workforce Innovation works diligently with the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Education to capitalize on resources and opportunities to improve the early learning system. We fully expect the relationships between the three agencies to result in continued meaningful system improvements that will benefit children, families, and early learning partners. The Children and Youth Cabinet has rightly recognized that access to information about children and their outcomes is necessary to improving early learning quality and outcomes. In the last year, the Agency for Workforce Innovation has taken the lead at the request of the Children’s Cabinet to facilitate access to early learning data throughout the state. This collaboration will make child outcome data as accessible as possible within the constraints imposed by federal confidentiality requirements.

E. Report Statement

Section: State agencies sometimes provided inconsistent program direction page 6, column 1.

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

The Agency for Workforce Innovation understands that inconsistent communication was an issue during the development of VPK, however this is not an on-going problem. Implementing the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program in just a matter of months required extraordinary efforts on the part of all three responsible agencies. During this time and continuing into the program’s early development, local stakeholders may have been unclear about agency roles or who to contact for a given question or concern. In an effort to be responsive, agency staff may have answered questions better suited for another agency. As noted in the report, few examples of contradictory program direction have been identified. Over time, as local stakeholders have become more familiar with the VPK program and the specific responsibilities of each agency such incidents have diminished.

Finally, the report suggests that considerable turnover has negatively impacted the program. The summary of staff changes overstates the impact of turnover. Since the Agency assumed full responsibility for the state’s early learning programs in 2004, there have been three agency directors and two program-level directors. Such turnover is not atypical for state agencies and in our opinion has not been disruptive or harmful to the program. Additionally, two of the changes
Agency for Workforce Innovation
Attachment to Response to OPPAGA Report

cited involved one individual being promoted. Such an internal promotion reinforces continuity and should not be considered turnover.

F. Report Statement

Section: There are areas of duplication and inefficiency within the early learning program

Page 7, column 1, paragraph 1: “The Enhanced Field System also includes resource and referral information which is a central repository of contact information for School Readiness and VPK providers”

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

The report understates the role and significance of the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program. CCR&R collects information for the more than 23,000 providers in the state, including those not participating in the School Readiness and VPK programs. CCR&R provides information to help parents find a child care provider, identify a quality program, find support services for children with special needs, and more. The program serves all families, regardless of income with more than 180,000 referrals provided last year.

G. Report Statement

Section: There are areas of duplication and inefficiency within the early learning program

Page 8, column 1, paragraph 1: “However, according to the state’s Technology Resource Workgroup, the system plans have increased significantly in scope and cost since the original 2005-06 feasibility study and the system is at least five years away from full implementation.”

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

The scope for ELIS has only changed because of increased requirements of the early learning system due to the addition of the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program and advances in technological options. The initial feasibility study was updated based on a comprehensive requirements gathering process. This process led to three changes to the scope in the updated feasibility study:

- Support for the statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program is now included in the scope of the project. This program did not exist in 2004 and was retrofitted into the current data system. The new system must support both VPK and School Readiness in a seamless and integrated manner to address significant issues with the current data system.

- Statewide reporting is now included in the scope of the project. Statewide reporting is tightly integrated with the current data system and must be replaced with the new system.

- Replacement of Early Learning Coalition’s accounting systems is now out of the scope of the project. Based on the unanimous input from the Coalitions and the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the ELIS system does not include a full accounting system
replacement for the Coalitions and/or their Service Providers. The approach prescribed includes automated interfaces between the system and the Coalition’s / Service Provider’s accounting system for the transfer of detailed accounting data.

In all other cases the scope of the system has remained unchanged. During this process, however, the Agency developed a greater level of detail for the system’s requirements, including opportunities for automation. These opportunities may affect the cost of the system but will result in greater efficiencies and savings long-term.

H. Report Statement

Section: There are areas of duplication and inefficiency within the early learning program

Page 8, column 1, paragraph 2: “Numerous and duplicative state agency reviews are time consuming for local coalitions and program providers.”

Agency for Workforce Innovation Response

This section of the report mixes issues related to monitoring child care providers with those related to monitoring coalitions.

Monitoring of Child Care Providers

With regard to the monitoring of child care providers, they are subject to reviews by multiple state agencies. In particular, the Department of Children and Families and the local Early Learning Coalitions both monitor providers, though for different reasons. The Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Department of Children and Families are working to identify areas of duplication and to reduce them by leveraging staff efforts and sharing information.

Monitoring of Early Learning Coalitions

By contrast, Early Learning Coalitions are reviewed and monitored almost exclusively by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The Agency for Workforce Innovation monitors coalitions for compliance with program requirements and adherence to their grant agreement. The Department of Children and Families does not have any oversight authority for the Early Learning Coalitions. The Department of Education’s only oversight over coalitions is for the mini-grants that are provided to low performing providers. If the mini-grant process was the Agency for Workforce Innovation’s responsibility, there would be no duplication of coalition monitoring across the three agencies.

Over the past two years the Agency has taken several steps to improve its own monitoring processes. The report correctly states that some of the increases to monitoring efforts were prompted by findings from OPPAGA and the Auditor General. Some coalitions, however, have raised concerns over potential duplication and the level of effort required to respond to these reviews. The Agency for Workforce Innovation is committed to eliminating any duplication in its own monitoring processes and to ensuring that monitoring does not cause an undue burden while maintaining programmatic integrity. We will continue to work with the coalitions to create
efficiencies in monitoring. Many efforts to improve internal monitoring have already been implemented and have been noted in the report.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation is committed to continually improving services to its stakeholders

The effective integration of Florida’s early learning programs into our fundamental mission has always been a high priority for the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The report notes some concerns and perceptions held by stakeholders. We have already begun to directly address those perceptions and will continue and expand these efforts.

- Last year the Agency for Workforce Innovation amended its vision statement to be “Children Ready to Learn, Floridians Ready to Earn” in order to strengthen the link between early learning and life-long academic success.

- The mission of the Agency for Workforce Innovation is to “Advance the economic well-being and self-sufficiency of all Floridians through premier early learning and workforce services.”

- The Agency for Workforce Innovation has explored the idea of changing its name to expressly acknowledge the role of early learning. This process was placed on hold, in part, to await the recommendations of this report.

The Agency will continue to reach out to community stakeholders to address their concerns and perceptions. Changing the Agency’s name, vision, and mission are only partial steps. Through outreach and partnerships the Agency will seek to clarify its roles and responsibilities within Florida’s early learning community.

We have built a strong infrastructure by enhancing existing early learning system components, building solid partnerships and leading the system through the recent creation and implementation of the early learning coalitions and VPK program. We draw upon that strength to continue to lead Florida’s two largest early learning programs while seeking the realization of an information system that brings together all elements of the system, including our community customers.

Ultimately, success in early learning is necessary for success in the workforce. For Florida’s workforce to reach its full potential child care must be affordable, accessible, and of a high quality. To be productive at work parents must know that their children are in safe, quality programs. To lay the foundation for future educational and workforce success, children must have access to high quality early learning experiences. The mission of the Agency for Workforce Innovation is to serve Floridians by meeting those needs.
May 7, 2008

Mr. Gary R. VanLandingham
Office of Program Policy Analysis
And Government Accountability
111 West Madison Street, Suite 312
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

While we agree that there continues to be some administrative challenges for Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, we know that the VPK Program works. As illustrated by the Department of Education’s release of the 2006-07 VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rates, children who participated in the VPK Program performed better on all three kindergarten screening measures than children who did not participate. Specifically, on the:

- Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS), which measures mastery of selected kindergarten skills, such as oral comprehension, counting objects, and writing, 93% of the children who completed the VPK program in 2006-07 scored “Ready for Kindergarten” (Consistently Demonstrating or Emerging/Progressing) as opposed to 84% of children who did not participate in VPK.

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Letter Naming Fluency, which measures a child’s ability to recognize letters of the alphabet, 84% of the children who completed the VPK program in 2005-06 scored “Ready for Kindergarten” (Above Average or Low Risk) as opposed to 64% of children who did not participate in VPK.

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Initial Sound Fluency, which measures a child’s ability to recognize the beginning sounds of words, 72% of the children who completed the VPK program in 2005-06 scored “Ready for Kindergarten” (Above Average or Low Risk) as opposed to 62% of children who did not participate in VPK.
We believe that these outcomes are the direct result of developmentally appropriate expectations/standards for what children should know and be able to do at the end of their VPK experience (VPK Education Standards), and the creation and delivery of high-quality professional development to our VPK instructors and directors.

We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts with the VPK partner agencies to ensure the continued success of Florida’s VPK program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric J. Smith  
Commissioner of Education

EJS/sgg

cc: Monesia Brown  
Robert Butterworth
April 29, 2008

Mr. Gary VanLandingham
Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability
111 West Madison Street, Room 312
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

Thank you for providing the Department of Children and Families (DCF) a copy of the final April 2008 report, “The Governance Structure of Florida’s Early Education Program Presents Some Administrative Challenges.”

We appreciate the thoroughness of the report’s evaluation and the proposed alternative governance structure options and have no additional concerns or comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and we appreciate the hard work of your staff in completing this report. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Ms. Deborah Russo, Director of Child Care, at (850) 488-4900.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary