

**TESTIMONY ABOUT THE DISRICT OF COLUMBIA EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS COMMON
CORE K-12 ALIGNMENT**

DR. ROBERT GUNDLING

JANUARY 23, 2013

GOOD EVENING AND THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY ABOUT THE REVISED EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS. MY THOUGHTS ARE OFFERED IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMMITMENT TO SERVE YOUNG CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THEM WELL.

I AM DR ROBERT GUNDLING, DEPUTY OPERATING OFFICER OF SUNSHINE EARLY LEARNING CENTER AND SOUTHEAST CHILDREN'S FUND. THESE ORGANIZATIONS, LOCATED IN WARD 8, SERVE OVER 250 CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, AS WELL AS THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THEM. SOUTHEAST CHILDREN'S FUND INCLUDES A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE OFFERING THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE CREDENTIAL COURSE AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

IT SEEMS TO ME THE STANDARDS, AS WRITTEN, REFLECT CURRENT RESEARCH OF WHAT YOUNG CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW, BE ABLE TO DO AND THE WAY TO APPROACH LEARNING TO SUCCEED IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY. WHAT MATTERS MOST IS HOW THE STANDARDS ARE IMPLEMENTED IN THOSE PROGRAMS THAT CHOOSE TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN, BIRTH TO 8 YEARS OLD.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE STANDARDS SUCCESSFULLY WILL REQUIRE INCREASING THE COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION OF ALL INCLUDED IN THE EARLY

CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM. THESE THREE C's ARE THE THREAD STRENGTHENING THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE CITY, THEREBY MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF ALL CHILDREN TO REACH THESE STANDARDS. THE COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS THE PATHWAY TO A HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS BASED ENVIRONMENT. THIS IS BECAUSE OF THE EXPECTATION THERE BE A UNIFIED EFFORT TO IMPLEMENT THE STANDARDS IN A MEANINGFUL WAY BY CREATING A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF EACH STANDARD AND THE INDICATORS AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT NECESSARY TO ENSURE CHILDREN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO REACH THE STANDARDS. THE ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES NEEDED TO REACH THE STANDARDS SHOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH PROGRAM.

FOCUSING ON THE CHILDREN AND STANDARDS, RATHER THAN THE PLACE WHERE FAMILIES CHOOSE TO PLACE THEIR CHILDREN CREATES THE POSSIBILITY OF GRADUALLY ELIMINATING THE SILOS AND FRAGMENTATION CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CURRENT EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM. WITH THE STANDARDS, WE ARE AWARE OF THE END GOALS AND CAN HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHAT CURRENT RESEARCH AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE OFFER TO IMPROVING THE PROBABILITY THE CHILDREN WILL REACH THE STANDARDS. THE UNIVERSAL SCHOOL READINESS CONFERENCE THAT IS SCHEDULED FOR LATER THIS YEAR PROVIDES A FORUM FOR ALL THREE SECTORS SERVING YOUNG CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME AWARE OF THE EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS ALIGNED WITH THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND

START DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS AND THE VARIOUS ASSESSMENTS TO MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF EACH CHILD.

A SENSIBLE PLACE TO BEGIN IS WITH THE PRE-K LEGISLATION, ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS OF THOSE ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE ABLE TO ACCREDIT EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS AND LOCAL ASSESSMENTS DESIGNED TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF PROGRAMS IN PROVIDING CHILDREN WITH THE FOUNDATION THEY DESERVE TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE.

A CRITICAL PIECE TO THIS WORK IS EQUITABLE FUNDING, SO PROGRAMS HAVE THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOUNG CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO REACH THE STANDARDS, FAMILY MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO ASSIST PROGRAMS IN MAKING SURE THE CHILDREN REACH THE STANDARDS AND TEACHERS HAVE THE MATERIALS, RESOURCES AND EDUCATION TO GUIDE CHILDREN THROUGH EXPERIENCES THAT LEAD TO REACHING THE STANDARDS. THE FUNDING IS ALSO NEEDED TO MAKE SURE PROGRAMS HAVE THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR AN ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM ABLE TO SUSTAIN HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS- BASED PROGRAMS. THE FUNDING SHOULD INCLUDE THE EXPENSE OF ESTABLISHING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALL CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO THRIVE RATHER THAN MERELY SURVIVE AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MOVE AS CLOSE TO REACHING THE STANDARDS AS POSSIBLE.

THE FINAL AREA I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS IS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. IT IS IMPERATIVE WE TRANSITION FROM PARENT INVOLVEMENT TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. THE CHILDREN IN OUR PROGRAMS HAVE A VARIETY OF FAMILY MEMBERS WHO CARE FOR AND ABOUT THEM AND

ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY TO SERVE AS AN IMPORTANT TEACHER IN THE LIFE OF THE CHILD.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT BEGINS WITH RESPECTING FAMILY MEMBERS AND PROVIDING THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS TO CREATE A HIGH QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHERE CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO REACH THE STANDARDS. THERE NEEDS TO BE A COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT WITHIN THE CITY, SO FAMILY MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN AND ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM, TEACHERS AND STAFF IN DECIDING WAYS THEY CAN BE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE STANDARDS IS A COMPLEX PROCESS. EVERYONE IN THE CITY WHO TOUCHES THE LIVES OF YOUNG CHILDREN, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, MUST COMMIT TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THE CHILDREN REACH THE STANDARDS AND AS A RESULT HAVE THE FOUNDATION THEY DESERVE TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND A GLOBAL ECONOMY.

I WOULD BE GLAD TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE, AT THIS TIME.

THANK YOU.