Colorado’s Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant strengthens the effectiveness of the early childhood workforce by adopting an aligned, tiered set of performance-based competencies, collecting and analyzing data about Colorado’s early learning professionals and creating mechanisms of support.

**Early Childhood Competencies Framework**

Competencies are the foundational element of Colorado’s professional development system. Colorado’s Early Childhood Educator and Administrator Competencies identify what professionals providing early care and education experiences need to know, and be able to do, in order to facilitate child learning and development for children from birth to age eight. The Competencies are designed to take place within a larger, aligned and supported system that embodies continuous improvement, and opportunities for meaningful feedback, through professional development aligned with the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. The 8 Competency Domains:

- Child Growth, Development and Learning
- Child Observation and Assessment
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Guidance
- Health, Safety, & Nutrition
- Professional Development and Leadership
- Program Planning and Development
- Teaching Practice

Competencies supporting social/emotional development, cultural competence and children with special needs are present in all eight domain areas.

**The Four Levels:**
The Competencies are built on a framework of four levels. They begin with the basic knowledge and skills needed to enter the field and progress, according to degree of mastery, to advanced levels of academic preparation and a wide range of experiences. The four levels are cumulative, meaning that early childhood educators at the top level have the skills and knowledge to meet all the competencies in the lower levels.

**Professional Development Information System**

Colorado’s Early Childhood Professional Development Information System has two parts, a database and a learning management system. The database will be a centralized, coordinated system for tracking early childhood professionals’ demographics, contact information, experience, education, credentials and training. The learning management system will be a place where early learning professionals can register for, participate in, and track online professional development.

**Milestones**

**KEY MILESTONES:**
- Colorado’s Early Learning Professional System Plan (2010)
- Colorado’s Early Childhood Educator and Administrator Competencies (May, 2013)

**CURRENT WORK:**
- Aligning the EC Competencies with CDHS Child Care, CDE Effective Educator and CDE Educator Licensing
- Launching Colorado’s Professional Development Information System in April, 2015
- Connecting to Colorado Shines QRIS through targeted training and credentialing
- Building a well-supported and credentialed statewide coaching network based on recognized coaching competencies
- Distributing Scholarships and Incentives to Early Childhood Professionals based on the EC Competencies Framework
- Supporting Colorado’s statewide Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory
Benefits of a Professional Development Information System:
The Professional Development Information System will allow an individual professional to track and store all professional development information in one place accessible from any online location; it will also allow professionals to plan for future professional development based on career goals and credentialing requirements. Individuals, programs and communities will be able to see strengths and areas of growth by competency. Efficiencies will be created which allow information to be accessed by Licensing Specialists and Quality Rating and Improvement System raters prior to a site visit. Professionals will be able to access high quality professional development opportunities online and connect to scholarship opportunities from a variety of sources. The system will allow data to be collected to support targeted professional development and to provide information to policymakers.

Colorado Shines E-Learning Courses

With the implementation of the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System, CDE’s Early Childhood Professional Development Team collaborated with the Colorado Department of Human Services to create training modules designed to support the workforce to learn about this new system. The Level II Modules:

- Introduce the elements of the Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Familiarize early childhood professionals with the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines and the Colorado Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators
- Provide more depth to various aspects of the framework including social and emotional well-being, family partnerships, cultural competence and supportive learning environments

Statewide Early Childhood Coaching and Technical Assistance Network

Research confirms that coaching, in conjunction with quality education and training, creates the strongest outcomes in demonstrated competency and consistent practice for early childhood educators. Using the efficiencies created by the Professional Development Information System, Colorado will be able to increase and professionalize its Statewide Coaching Network by providing support to professionals around the state. This will be accomplished through:

- Implementation of a recognized set of Colorado Early Childhood Coaching Competencies which builds on the skills in Colorado Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators and provides guidance for developing the expertise necessary for successful coaching interactions.
- Creation of a tiered level of coaching credentials assuring support for coaches entering the field and using the strong skill set of competent and experienced coaches statewide.

Scholarships & Incentives

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant includes two million dollars in workforce incentive funds. These funds are being distributed as scholarship funding for education and training of the workforce as well as to provide support for 2 and 4-year colleges and universities as they revise their coursework to align with the Colorado Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators.

Where can I learn more?

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- http://www.cde.state.co.us/early/earlychildhoodprofessionaldevelopmentteam
- PDIS - http://ecpd.costartstrong.org