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SREB Launches Early Childhood Commission



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SREB.org/EarlyLearning

SREB Commissions

In 2014 and 2015, the

Southern Regional

Education Board

convenes the SREB

Commission on College

Affordability in the South,

as well as the SREB

Early Childhood

Commission, which is

chaired by Kentucky

Governor Steve Beshear.

These commissions

continue SREB's

long-standing role of

bringing together state

leaders from across the

region to focus on critical

Early Childhood Commission Begins Work This Week

"Every child deserves a good start in life and in school"

Frankfort, KY — November 13, 2014 — The Southern Regional Education Board Early Childhood Commission convenes leaders this week from 16 states to study effective ways to improve preschoolers' access to high-quality early learning. The Commission's charge is to recommend policies that will give more young children a solid start when they enter school.

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear chairs the Commission. [Members](#) include legislators, heads of state school agencies, leaders of national education organizations and early childhood education advocates.

Governor Beshear charged members with recommending policies that promote healthy development through the early years to build a sturdy foundation for success in school, employment and

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education issues that span the K-20 spectrum. Reports from two 2013-14 commissions are forthcoming late this year: the SREB Commission on Community Colleges and the SREB Career and Technical Education Commission.

The Southern Regional Education Board works with states to improve public education at every level, from pre-K through Ph.D. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.



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citizenship. The Commission's focus is access to high-quality programs and the importance of highly skilled teachers to young children's learning experiences.

"Every child deserves a good start in life and in school," said Governor Beshear. "Early learning experiences have lifelong effects on a child's opportunities to succeed. The importance of getting our youngest learners off to the best start possible cannot be overstated."

At its first meeting Thursday and Friday at the Kentucky Governor's Mansion in Frankfort, Commission members focus on two topics: **teacher quality** and **program quality**. Expert presenters include Bob Pianta, dean of the University of Virginia Curry School of Education, whose research focuses on building and measuring effective teaching in classrooms from preschool through high school; Debi Mathias, director of the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) National Learning Network; and Abby Thorman, early childhood consultant.

Commission members will consider the public policy implications of improvements and recommend actions and state policies to improve effectiveness so more students have access to high-quality experiences. The Commission will meet through spring 2015 and present draft recommendations to the SREB Board next summer.

"The Commission's work will elevate best practices and policies to help more young children arrive at school ready to learn," said SREB President Dave Spence. "We need to start very early in children's education to get them to high school graduation, ready to move on to college and careers."

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Achievement gaps during childhood are early warning signs for potential to fall behind later in school and in life,” said SREB Vice President Mark Emblidge, noting that children who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school on time. “Our communities need policies that start our youngest and most at-risk children on the path toward success as students, employees and citizens.

Governor Beshear has led a number of improvements to early childhood education in Kentucky, beginning with the 2009 Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education. In 2011, he created the Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. During his administration, the Commonwealth has adopted a comprehensive definition of kindergarten readiness, begun using a common readiness screening for every child entering kindergarten, expanded preschool eligibility, and secured a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant to further transform early childhood systems.

Governor Beshear is serving a second one-year term as SREB chairman. Last year, he also chaired SREB’s [Career and Technical Education Commission](#), which will report recommendations late this year on statewide policies for academically demanding pathway programs aligned with career opportunities in demand in the SREB region.

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Early Childhood Commission
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