



MASSACHUSETTS
**Department of
Early Education and Care**



April Data Advisory Commission Meeting

April 28, 2026

Agenda

Program Stability and Quality Data and Research

- Current EEC program stability and quality goals and data sources
- EEC work to better understand and support program quality
 - CLASS data collection
 - Program surveys

Preparing the Commission's FY26 Legislative Report

- Overview of report content
- Discussion and approval
- Next steps

Approval of Minutes



Program Stability and Quality Data and Research

Program Stability and Quality Goals

EEC's 2026-2030 Strategic Action Plan includes the following goals:

Program Stability

Programs licensed or funded by EEC are operationally stable and financially sustainable

- **Goal 1:** Program directors and administrators will have access to trainings and resources that empower them to succeed as small businesses, supporting their effective management of operations and business administration.
- **Goal 2:** Programs will have access to predictable funding opportunities that help support priority investment areas, including infrastructure and staffing.
- **Goal 3:** EEC will further analyze how current funding streams work together to support program operations and identify gaps to inform future funding opportunities.

Program Quality

Programs licensed or funded by EEC support children's health and safety and provide high quality environments that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and support children's learning and development in partnership with families.

- **Goal 1:** Programs will have sufficient time and support to meet updated state standards for safety, responsive and appropriate practice, and partnerships with families
- **Goal 2:** Educators, direct care workers, program leadership, and FCC system staff will have access to and participate in training and technical assistance to support ongoing skill development.
- **Goal 3:** Program leadership and FCC system staff will be supported in planning and organizing program-level professional learning and apply on-the-job supports towards ongoing continuous quality improvement
- **Goal 4:** EEC will manage funding strategically to support program investments in areas that drive quality, such as total compensation, professional development, curriculum, and comprehensive services.

Research Priorities by Strategic Areas of Focus

Family Access and Affordability



- Understanding and tracking child care supply, access gaps, and affordability
- Studying investments and strategies to expand access to early education and care and support families
- Measuring the impact of CCFA reforms and rate adjustments over time

Workforce Support



- Understanding who is in the workforce and common entry points, experiences, and pathways
- Examining rates, patterns, and contributors to workforce mobility, turnover, and attrition
- Evaluating how different workforce strategies, supports, and investments support recruitment, retention, advancement, and educator well-being

Program Quality



- Understanding current program practices and quality improvement efforts to shape existing and future EEC supports for programs.
- Assessing impact of existing EEC supports on leadership and educator support, curriculum, and assessment implementation, classroom interactions and family engagement

Program Stability



- Evaluating existing EEC strategies to support program stability
- Exploring strategies to promote financial and operational stability

Ongoing EEC Research

EEC is engaged in research to better understand existing program practices and supports and the extent to which they promote professional growth and continuous quality improvement.

- **CCFA Contracts & Quality Expectations:** Multi-year research effort to understand the impact of the new CCFA contract requirements on program quality.
- **Measuring Quality & Program Practices:** Gathering a baseline understanding of program quality among CCFA contract providers through classroom observations and surveys.
- **Current Cost-of-Care Work:** Continuing to refine and update EEC's cost models, with a particular focus on updating assumptions and inputs related to the cost of providing comprehensive services and higher-quality care.

Current EEC Program Data Sources

Licensing Education Analytic Database (LEAD)

Collected From: All Programs

Contains Data On: Program licensing, including license status, program openings/closings, licensing visits, investigations, hours of operation, tuition rates, etc.; also includes a new data element on the reasons why programs are closing

Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Applications

Collected From: All programs receiving C3 funds

Contains Data On: Staffing levels, educator wages, enrollment (part- and full time), whether FCCs employ an assistant, financial assistance provided beyond CCFA, willingness to accept CCFA

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Data Collection

Collected From: Programs participating in the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI), Early Childhood Support Organization (ECSO initiative), CCFA contracted providers

Contains Data On: The extent classroom interactions are organized to support children's development

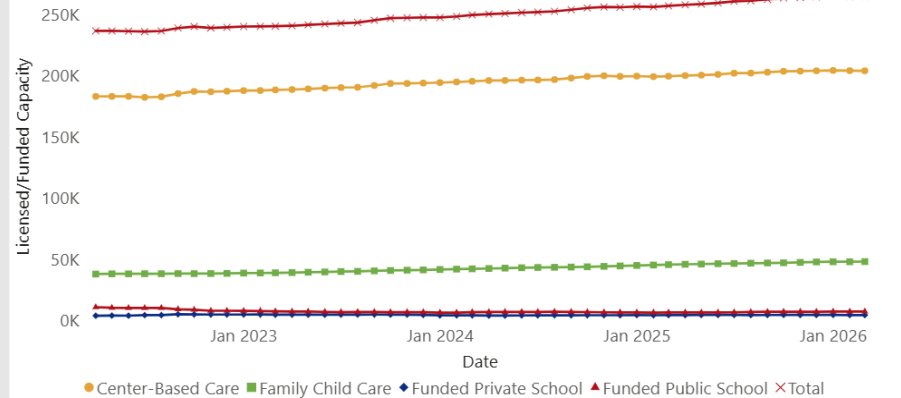
Other Program Surveys

EEC also leverages additional opportunities to gather program data via initiative-specific surveys, including biannual C3 surveys, surveys for programs participating in the CPPI and ECSO initiatives, and other surveys conducted as part of EEC research partnerships

Key Program Stability Metrics

In March 2026, all EEC licensed and funded programs have the capacity to serve 265,092 children statewide. This is a change of +7,800 from last year.

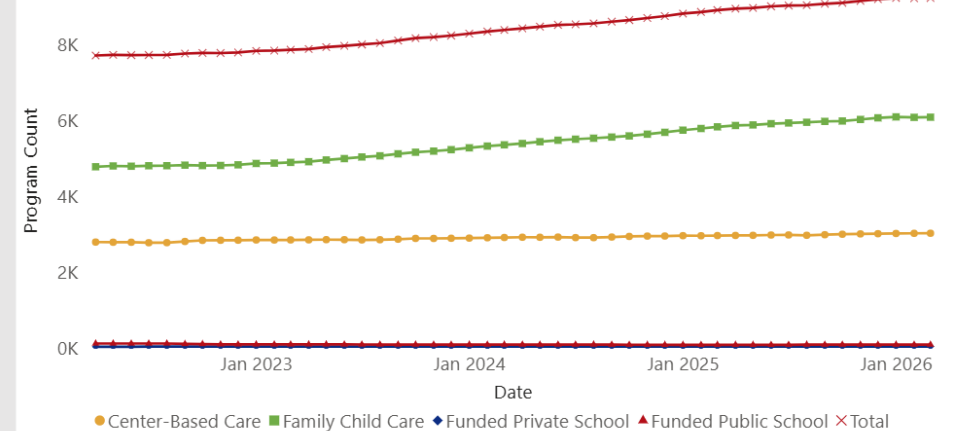
Aggregate Capacity of Licensed and Funded Programs



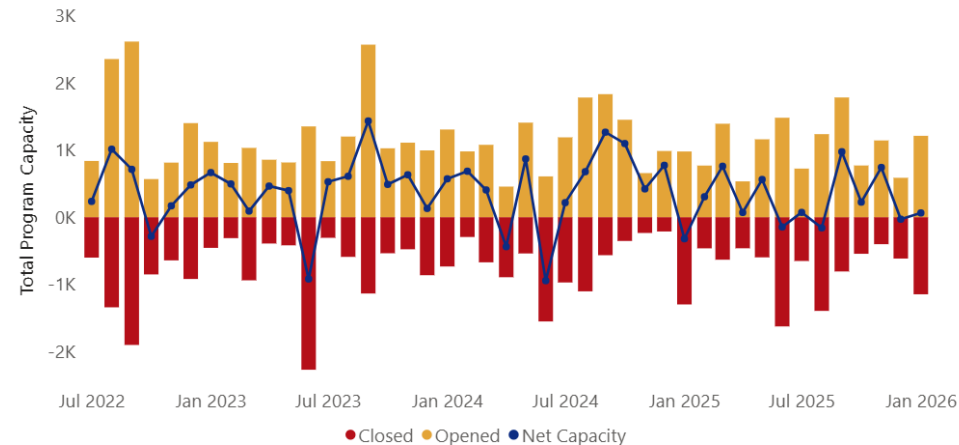
Source: LEAD via ECISDWH. Data are updated monthly and were last updated on 3/3/2026. Capacity refers to the licensed capacity of programs. Some programs may not be able or choose not to serve their full licensed capacity.

In March 2026, there were 9,228 EEC licensed and funded programs statewide. This is a change of +319 programs from last year.

Number of Licensed and Funded Programs



Capacity of Newly Opened and Closed Licensed and Funded Programs





Understanding and Supporting Program Quality

High-Quality Care Supports Positive Outcomes

Decades of research support investments in high quality early education & care

- High-quality learning and care environments show relationships with improved child outcomes
- Impact evaluations have demonstrated school readiness and life success outcomes resulting from high-quality early education for 3- and 4-year-olds



Skills of the workforce drive the quality of interactions and the teaching and learning in the classroom/home

Defining high-quality learning and care environments



Characterized by frequent warm, supportive and stimulating interactions



Children have opportunities to play and explore in a safe and engaging environment



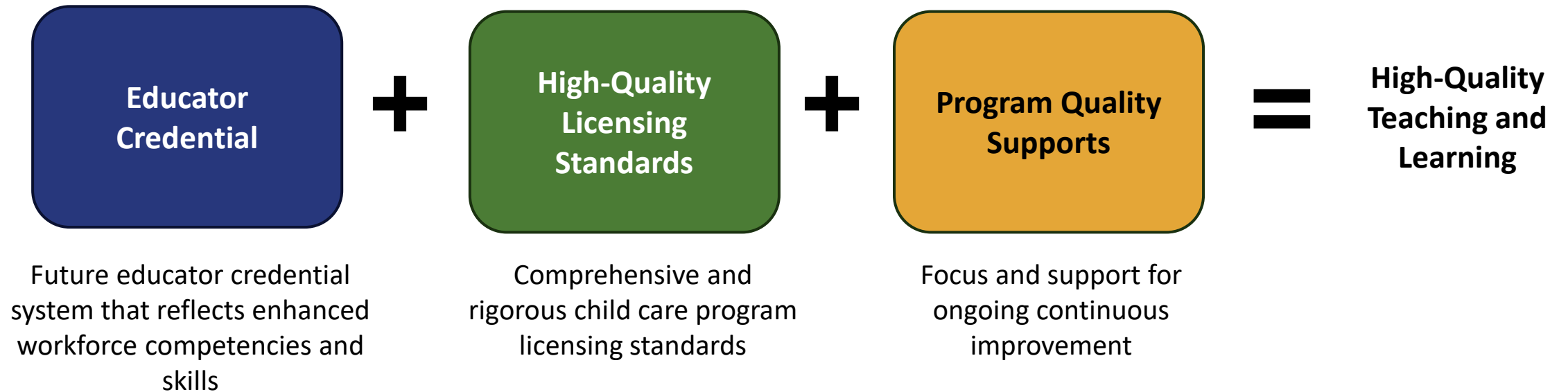
Curriculum shapes opportunities to learn through active experiences in ways that are responsive to individual needs



Families are empowered to engage in collaborative partnerships and programs are inclusive and supportive to the diversity of families and children served

Theory of Quality

EEC'S WORK TO SUPPORT QUALITY



Transitioning to Educator Credential System

THEORY OF QUALITY

Develop new system that supports professional advancement across the field

- Inclusive and accessible to all educators and program types
- Built around competencies needed to provide high-quality education and care
- Provides clear and accessible entry points
- Creates a system to support professional advancement including clear career ladder
- Engage with field broadly to ensure system aligns with/meets the needs of all program types and roles

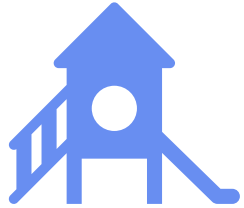
Staged launch of system to ensure easy access and seamless transition

- Foundational certificate available at 14 community colleges to launch higher education pathway
- Professional development pathway is under development in partnership with field subject matter experts
 - Feedback on content from regional offices, field working group and Academy/ PDCs
 - Planning with Academy/ PDCs around facilitation and expectation structures
- Collaboration with DAS has launched new apprenticeship opportunities aligned with the future state
- Ongoing feedback sessions/ communication supporting credential policies development and licensing revisions

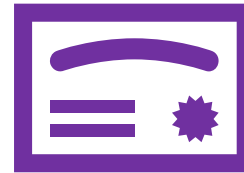
High-Quality Licensing Standards

THEORY OF QUALITY

Mandate comprehensive health and safety standards grounded in child development



Safe physical environments with developmentally appropriate and accessible materials



Staff qualifications that require ongoing early childhood specific training and experience



Appropriate staff to child ratios and group sizes



Expectations regarding developmentally appropriate practice and curriculum



Strong administrative practices and documentation of internal policies and procedures, including staff oversight, observation and supervision



Expectations around meaningful engagement with families

Program Quality Supports

THEORY OF QUALITY

Professional Development

Strengthen program-led professional learning for educators



Mental and Behavioral Health

Support mental and behavioral health for children and educators



Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Focus on ongoing continuous improvement with support from the EEC Program Quality team and EEC funded coaches



High Quality Curricula

Invest in high-quality curricula, assessment and learning materials

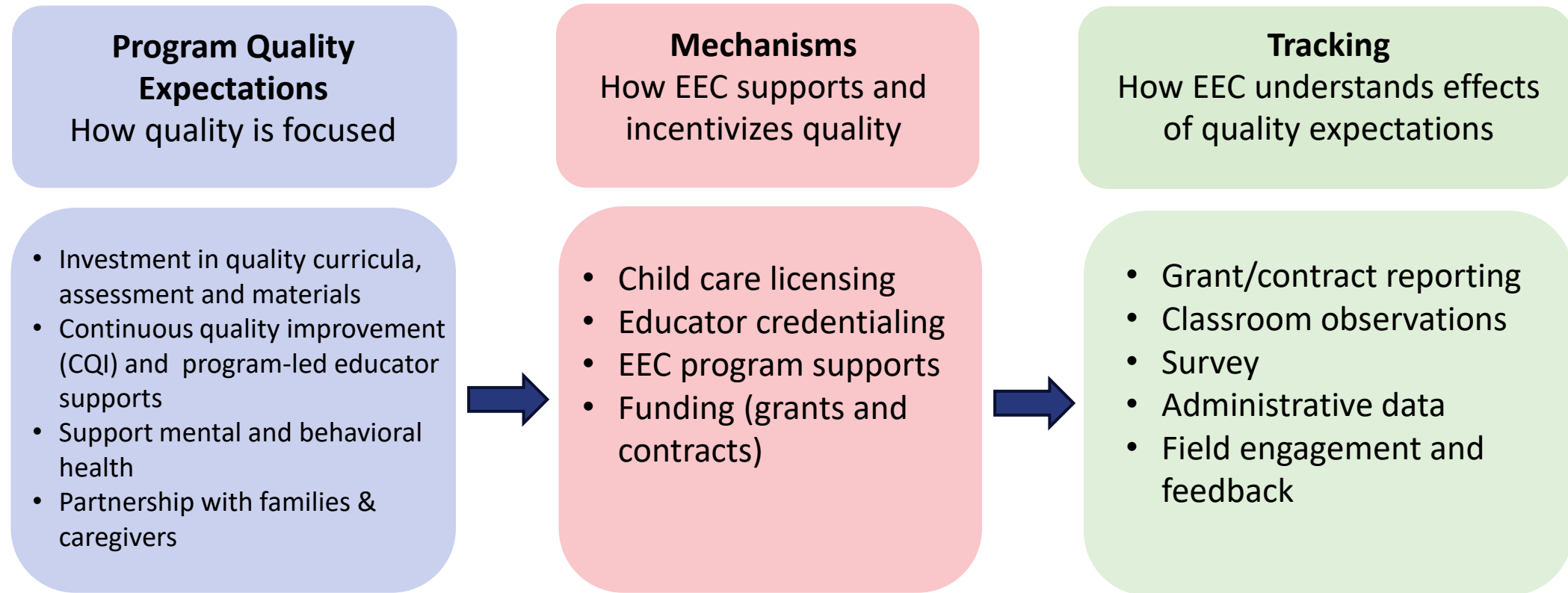


CLASS Observations

CLASS observations as mechanism to understand quality and monitor system progress



Pilot, Monitor, and Evaluate EEC's Support System



Quality early education and care is built through clear expectations, strengthened by system supports, and improved through aligned tracking and evaluation.

CLASS Observations as Mechanism to Understand Quality and Monitor System Progress

The CLASS observation tool measures the extent classroom interactions are organized to support children's development. Scores above key thresholds have been shown to predict children's language development, social-emotional skills, and engagement in learning.

CLASS Focus Areas

- **Emotional Support** where high quality reflects a warm and responsive classroom where children feel safe, valued, and supported in learning
- **Classroom Organization** where high quality reflects a well-managed, productive classroom where children's behavior is guided in positive ways to focus on engaged learning and interactions
- **Instructional Support** where high quality reflects a classroom where the foundations for rich learning are in place and teachers are effectively supporting children's thinking and communication

Use of CLASS in State and National Contexts

CLASS is widely used across state systems, research and evaluation in ECE, FCC and OST contexts.

EEC is leveraging CLASS to understand baseline quality and monitoring change over time to better understand quality and inform the supports EEC provides.

EEC prioritizes sharing CLASS data with participating educators and program leaders to inform improvement efforts and program supports.

- Previous EEC endorsed or funded evaluations (in partnership with Abt Global)
- Preschool Expansion Grant (2019)
 - ECSO Initiative (2025)

- CLASS is currently used to understand quality in state and federal programs:
- Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI)
 - Head Start

EEC is piloting CLASS at greater scale through a sample of programs (ECE, FCC, OST) that participate in CCFA contracts.

Understanding Program Quality: Surveys

Educator and leader surveys are a feasible mechanism to understand current practices, program characteristics, and supports. EEC uses surveys to inform improvement efforts and program supports.

- Research and evaluation
 - Preschool Expansion Grant Evaluation (2019)
 - Early Childhood Support Organization Initiative (ECSO) Evaluation (2025)
 - Massachusetts Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grant: Embedding Quality Improvement in Child Care Contracts to Improve Availability and Utilization of High-Quality Care (CCPRP) Research Partnership (Boston University, anticipated mid-2026)
- Policy, program design, and continuous improvement
 - C3
 - ECSO
 - CCFA contracted provider surveys (Fall 2025/Winter 2026)

Discussion

As EEC continues to use the CLASS tool and surveys to better understand program quality across several initiatives:

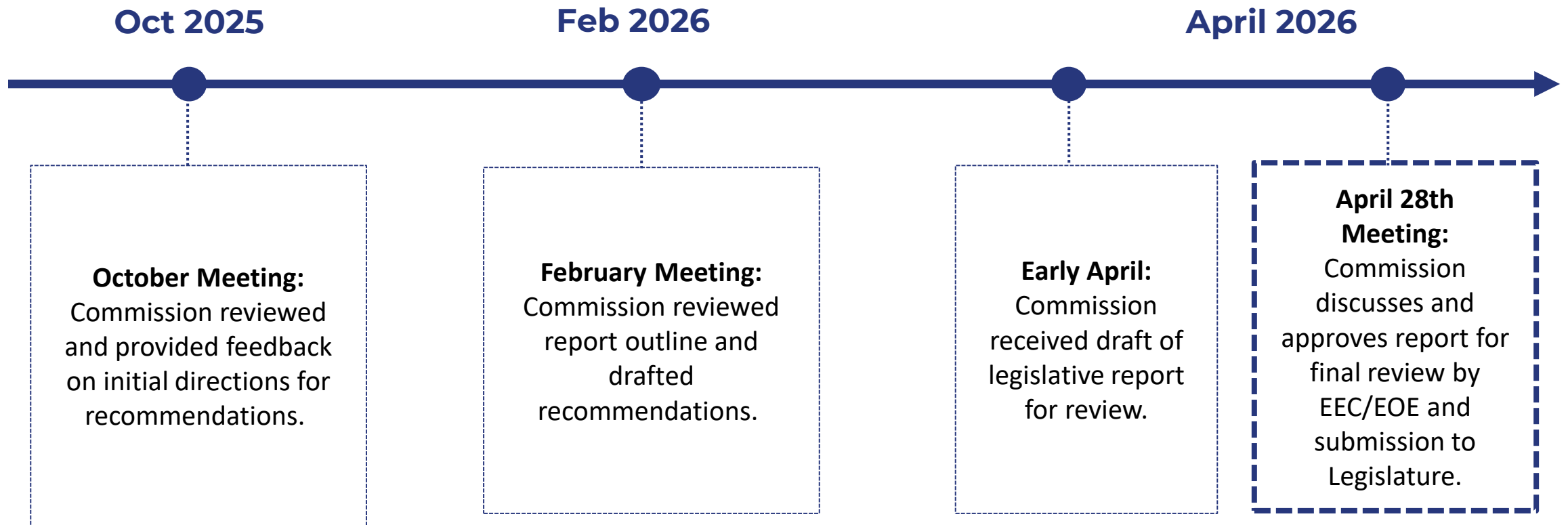
- 1) What should we be attentive to moving forward?
- 2) If additional resources become available, how should we think about expanding CLASS or other data collection (e.g., expanding to additional initiatives or more programs within existing initiatives)?
- 3) Are there other quality metrics or tools we should consider?



Preparing the Commission's FY26 Legislative Report

FY26 Legislative Report Timeline

“The Data Advisory Commission shall utilize data received by the department [...] to identify, analyze and make recommendations on high-impact, cost-effective data strategies for assessing the needs of families and children...”



FY26 Legislative Report Goals

1

Share update/summary on Commission focus and discussions to date.

2

Provide overview of relevant EEC data, research, and IT infrastructure developments and plans.

3

Make recommendations to guide future EEC research and data strategy.

Report Content

I. Data Advisory Commission FY26 Updates

- a) Overview of content and key themes from meetings
- b) Additional context on EEC IT modernization efforts

II. Commission Progress and Recommendations

- a) Summary of recommendation development process
- b) Recommendations across four topics (see following slides)
 - a) Identifying Key Questions and Data Needed to Understand the Landscape and Inform Policy Decisions
 - b) Expanding Public Access to EEC Research, Data, and Analyses
 - c) Improving Data Quality
 - d) Streamlining Data Collection

For each of the four data and research strategy focus areas, the report includes:

- 1) A summary of progress** that EEC has made in the focus area over the past few years
- 2) Specific recommendations** from the Commission under the focus area
- 3) Additional details** under each recommendation about the recommendation itself as well as the "how"

Recommendations

Identifying Key Data and Analyses Needed

Recommendation 1: EEC should continue to maintain an up-to-date research agenda that is aligned with the administration and agency's strategic priorities, reflects emerging policy needs, and incorporates input from EEC staff and external stakeholders including the Data Advisory Commission.



Recommendation 2: EEC should continue to build and deepen research capacity and external research partnerships focused on the priorities identified in the agency's research agenda.

Recommendation 3: EEC should develop and implement a multi-year plan to measure, track, and report on the data metrics identified in the agency's new 2026-2030 Strategic Action Plan.

Recommendation 4: EEC should regularly assess data needs and gaps to identify where new data collection may be needed to ensure that the highest-priority policy, operational, and research questions can be answered.

Recommendations

Expand Public Access to EEC Data and Research



Recommendation 5: EEC should continue to expand and enhance its public-facing KPI dashboards by incorporating additional metrics, improving user-friendly functionality, and making available underlying data sets where appropriate.

Recommendation 6: EEC should develop additional public-facing data briefs, tools, and resources and continue to share research findings through accessible reports and presentations.

Recommendations

Improving Data Quality



Recommendation 7: EEC should continue its focus on developing new technology systems that are user-centered, accessible, and improve data quality.

Recommendation 8: EEC should strengthen data quality across its systems by implementing consistent data standards, clearer guidance for data entry, validation processes, and ongoing quality monitoring.

Streamlining Data Collection



Recommendation 9: EEC should explore additional opportunities to streamline data collection for families, educators, and programs and reduce administrative burden, including and not limited to leveraging automation, improving data integration, and revisiting reporting frequency and format, while preserving essential information for reporting and decision-making.

Report Approval and Discussion

1) Report Approval – Commission Vote

2) Discussion

- Do Commission members have any reflections on the report development process?
- Are there any suggestions or lessons from this process that EEC should keep in mind for the next report?

Future Meeting Focus/Proposed Topics

- 1) Are there particular topics or issues you would like the Commission to focus on in the coming year?
- 2) Do Commission members prefer continuing the current thematic approach — rotating meetings across family access, workforce support, and program stability and quality — or exploring a different structure?



Appendix

EEC Research Agenda: Program Quality & Stability Questions



Program Quality

Understanding Existing Program Practices that Promote Quality

NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES

- How are programs supporting continuous quality improvement, staff professional development and planning time? What are the characteristics of the programs that have these supports in place? What are the barriers for programs to engage in these practices and how can EEC better direct/design resources to address these challenges?
- How are programs supporting the behavioral health of children, promoting social-emotional learning, and supporting educator wellness? What is the incidence of exclusionary practices across programs?

LONGER-TERM PRIORITIES

- To what extent are programs using high-quality curriculum and assessment? What is the nature of interactions between educators and children within programs according to formal observational measures and other data sources?
- To what extent are programs engaging with families and providing or coordinating family supports and resources? What types of services do families value and need and to what extent are existing programs meeting that need?

Promoting Professional Learning & Improving Educator Effectiveness

NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES

- To what extent are EEC funded supports such as the Statewide Professional Development Academy, Professional Development Centers, Early Childhood Support Organizations, CPPI, and PRISM grants impacting programs in key quality areas (e.g., leadership and educator support, high quality curriculum and assessment implementation, classroom interactions and instruction, and family engagement)?
- To what extent are continuous quality improvement, staffing and educator training/support-focused expectations in EEC's child care financial assistance contracts leading to higher quality of care?*

LONGER-TERM PRIORITIES

- To what extent are behavioral health supports (e.g., Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program (ECMHC), Pyramid Model) improving program processes, supporting educator wellness and building educator skills to support the social-emotional development and behavioral health of children? What impact is the program having on reducing the incidence of exclusionary discipline and promoting inclusion?



Program Stability

Strengthening Program's Financial and Operational Stability

NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES

- How does the cost of operating an early education program vary by region, program characteristics, and compensation levels? How can our understanding of program costs inform CCFA rates, operational funding, and other state investments?*
- What investments do operational funding allow programs to make? To what extent is operational funding stabilizing programs, building program capacity, improving recruitment and retention of the workforce, and bolstering program quality? What are remaining program needs?

LONGER-TERM PRIORITIES

- To what extent does pre-licensing and/or early licensing support for family child care programs improve licensing compliance and program sustainability? What additional early supports are needed to support family child care programs and promote program longevity and quality?
- To what extent have EEC's capital investments for programs improved program operations and created fiscal stability through facility upgrades? How have these investments been used? What are some of the limitations of existing capital improvement programs and how can these inform any future policy and program design efforts?
- What promising strategies exist to provide business support to early education programs in Massachusetts and to what extent are they having an impact on programs' financial and operational stability? What lessons can we learn from innovative approaches in other states?
- What are the most common reasons Family Child Care (FCC) programs close? What are the characteristics of recently closed FCCs? To what extent does the family child care closure rate and reasons for closure differ from small business closures in other sectors? How can any identified trends inform potential policy and program solutions?