

NEW OFFICE, OLD CHARGE

CECI Seeks True Pipeline Success

In 2013, Gov. Mike Pence created an entity that does not exist (at least in this form) in the other 49 states. How will the success of the Center for Education and Career Innovation (CECI) be measured?

Plenty of numbers and statistics will help provide that answer. But Jackie Dowd, one of two people charged with creating that success, offers a more straightforward guideline.

“It will be what we are hearing from employers about their ability to fill the kinds of jobs that they have available,” she says. “The governor hears this anecdotally as he travels the state: ‘I have needs; I’m not able to fill those needs because the applicants don’t have the tangible skills.’ We certainly should be hearing a lot less of that in the future.”

Dowd is special assistant to the governor for career innovation. Her partner is Claire Fiddian-Green, carrying the same title in the

area of education innovation. They and their team of 15 have staff responsibilities for Indiana’s Education Roundtable, the State Board of Education and two entities created by the Indiana General Assembly in 2013 – the Indiana Career Council and Indiana Works Councils.

Fiddian-Green poses several questions in defining CECI’s role. “Are there things we can and should be doing differently that are going to have a better impact faster – and by the way be more efficient? What are we doing now with our state dollars? How can we work with our federal counterparts to perhaps reshape and redirect to those efforts that are actually going to lead to better outcomes for students and adult workers? It’s our job to take that step back.”

Strategic approach

In separate interviews, the CECI leaders admittedly throw out words that are not new to this discussion. Those include: education and career pipeline, lifelong learning, silos that impede progress, seeking proper alignment and a system that is seamless and transparent. Going from phrases to results will be critical.

Each offers an example of how that might be accomplished.

Fiddian-Green, citing the hiring of accountability and assessment expert Molly Chamberlin in late October, contends, “That’s what the Center is all about, with her background in K-12 and higher ed. She can take that pipeline view and then say: ‘This is what we should actually be doing, and in an ideal world this is what we want to be

doing.’ We’re meeting, talking about this and communicating it to the policymakers on these governing bodies.”

Dowd: “It’s important to move away from being program centric and move toward being client centric. What I mean by that is it is very natural with federal, state and even private funds to operate



“This impacts every person in every community around the state. If it were easy, then we could all go home. Sustainability is key. A lot of smart people have been working on these things for a long time.”

Claire Fiddian-Green

By Tom Schuman

Average Numeracy Proficiency in OECD Countries

(Working pop.: ages 16-65)

1. Japan: 288
2. Finland: 282
3. Belgium: 280
3. Netherlands: 280
5. Sweden: 279

Average: 269
21. United States: 253

Average Numeracy Proficiency in OECD Countries

(Young people: ages 16-24)

1. Netherlands: 285
2. Finland: 285
3. Japan: 283
3. Belgium: 283
5. Korea: 281

Average: 271
21. United States: 249

Numeracy: Ability to reason and apply simple numerical concepts

Average Literacy Proficiency in OECD Countries

(Working pop.: ages 16-65)

1. Japan: 296
2. Finland: 288
3. Netherlands: 284
4. Australia: 280
5. Sweden: 279

Average: 273
16. United States: 270

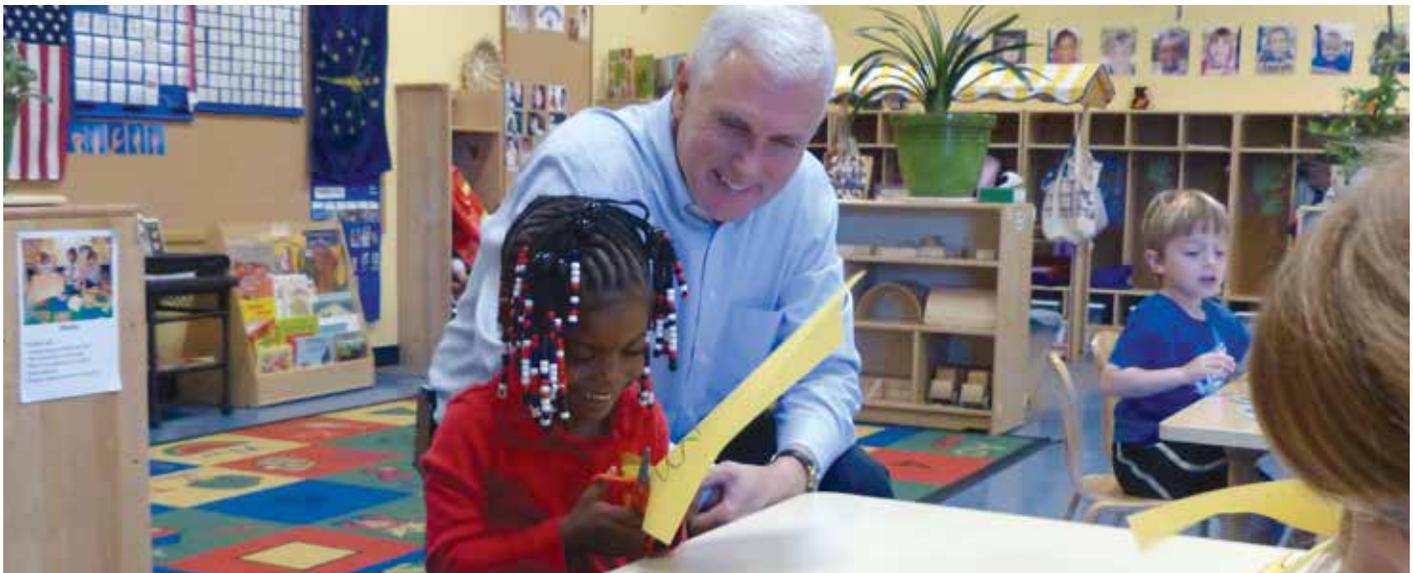
Average Literacy Proficiency in OECD Countries

(Young people: ages 16-24)

1. Japan: 299
2. Finland: 297
3. Netherlands: 295
4. Korea: 293
5. Estonia: 287

Average: 280
18. United States: 272

Source: Survey of Adult Skills, OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.



Governor Mike Pence emphasized education and workforce development on the campaign trail and has continued that focus since taking office.

in such a way to live out programs in the way the funding comes to you. Instead, we want to be creative; move away from the silos that naturally exist, thinking about how we can serve individuals across the entire spectrum, but especially those already in the workforce. Put the client at the center and pull in some of these funding streams.”

The Department of Education, the Commission for Higher Education and the Department of Workforce Development are the three state agencies that must work together effectively. Fiddian-Green points out that they serve some of the same populations with different sources of money.

“If they aren’t, they should be connected. Sometimes they’re going off in different directions. “(Our job is to) bring that to light and say to policymakers that maybe you should be approaching this in a different way.”

Council connections

Dowd works closely with the two new entities under the CECI umbrella. The Indiana Career Council is charged with providing a strategic plan focused on alignment of education and training by July 1 (CECI will have the task of coordinating it with various other strategic initiatives). It also is responsible for the data component, the Indiana

Workforce Intelligence System, and finding a way for more informed decisions to be made utilizing better data.

The Indiana Works Councils were a priority for Pence on the campaign trail and in the first year of his administration. Business, education and community partners in the 11 economic growth regions of the state are to identify career and technical training required to support business needs – and reduce those employer complaints to the governor.

“The governor wants to see two ‘Plan A’s’ for students,” Dowd shares. “A Plan A traditionally might be thought of as postsecondary; career and technical education might have been thought of as Plan B. The governor wants to elevate career and technical education so it’s seen equally as Plan A.”

All about innovation

Indiana may be the only state with a CECI operation, but most are tackling similar challenges with slightly different approaches. One potential area of advantage for Indiana is its past innovation in education and career programs (charter schools, vouchers, adult reform, etc.).

“Our Center has innovation in its name and that is intentional,” Fiddian-Green claims. “We’re also tasked with looking for innovations, whether that’s technology, governance structure, a program. We want

to scale those innovations that are actually working.”

With a finance background and previous experience as founding executive director of the Indiana Charter School Board, Fiddian-Green is used to an analytical approach. That is exactly what is taking place at CECL.

“We’re mindful that we’re going to have the greatest impact if we focus. At this point, we’re still honing in on what are those three, maybe four, areas where we should be focusing very intently to have the greatest impact.”

Joining the team

Pence did not have an overly difficult time convincing both his special assistants to join his team. Dowd came from the Department of Workforce Development, where she was the deputy commissioner of policy, education and training. Earlier, she worked in internship and career services at Butler University.

“The governor’s emphasis on education and workforce alignment was tremendously appealing,” she acknowledges. “I can continue to work with foundations across the country, along with associations and research institutions. I find that to be very inspiring and it gives me purpose. The governor and I had two conversations; it was pretty easy to convince me at that point.”

Her bottom line is thinking in terms of “outcomes that are meaningful for individuals to be in self-sustaining careers. At the end of the day, that’s what we’re here for – to help individuals of all ages be in a career where they can prosper, engage in something that has meaning for them and that allows them to support their families.”



“We want to be creative; move away from the silos that naturally exist, thinking about how we can serve individuals across the entire spectrum, but especially those already in the workforce. Put the client at the center and pull in some of these funding streams.”

Jackie Dowd

Fiddian-Green asserts that she moved from a job she loved at the charter board to an opportunity to have an even bigger impact. During several discussions with Pence, she “gained an enormous respect for his commitment to young people. It was an easy decision to say yes to a governor who has that kind of focus on kids and adults.”

The challenge is one she welcomes.

“This impacts every person in every community around the state. If it were easy, then we could all go home,” she continues. “Sustainability is key. A lot of smart people have been working on these things for a long time. We want to structure it so there are a sustainable set of processes that can live beyond all of us.”

RESOURCE: Center for Education and Career Innovation at www.in.gov/ceci

#1 More Than 1.2 Million Hours of Community Service in Indiana and Beyond

The 2013 *Washington Monthly College Guide* places Indiana State at the top of its list of 281 national universities in the category of community service participation and hours worked by students, faculty, and staff.

THERE’S MORE TO BLUE.

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