



Board of Early Education and Care

September 18, 2012
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Department of Early Education and Care
51 Sleeper Street
Boston, MA 02210

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

J.D. Chesloff, Chairperson
Paul Reville, Secretary of Education
Marilyn Anderson Chase, designee of JudyAnn Bigby, M.D., Secretary of EOHHS
Elizabeth Childs, M.D.
Chi-Cheng Huang M.D., Vice Chairperson
Cheryl A. Stanley, Ed.D
Carol Craig O'Brien
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.
Mary Wallachy

Members of the Board of Early Education Absent

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.
Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.
Sherri Killins, Ed.D, Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chairperson J.D. Chesloff introduced new board member, Mary Walachy and complimented her work and leadership. Board Member Walachy is the Executive Director of the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation. Chairperson Chesloff stated that he looked forward to her contribution to the EEC Board. He continued by thanking former Board Member Mary Pat Mesmer for her many years of service, recognizing her expertise in and her passion for the field of early childhood education. Chairperson Chesloff noted that Commissioner Killins was absent from today's board meeting due to a family emergency. He stated that Sarah Harding, EEC Director of Operations and Human Resources was attending on the Commissioner's behalf.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Paul Reville welcomed Board Member Walachy and, on behalf of the Governor, thanked her for accepting this responsibility. He noted that Board Member Walachy had previously served on the Governor's Public Education Nominating Council and that they had a long history of working together. Secretary Reville also thanked former Board Member Mesmer for her period of service on the EEC Board.

Secretary Reville stated that he had recently completed an early literacy tour across the Commonwealth. He reported that he spoke to staff across the state and that the tour had been fun and enlightening. He added that he was impressed with the ongoing work being done by early education and care to infuse language and literacy instruction into programs. Secretary Reville concluded that the administration is preparing for a new fiscal year and stated that he is hopeful for an improved economy, and will consider adding additional resources as they become available.

Comments from the Commissioner

Relevant document included in the Board materials:

- Commissioner's Report, dated September 18, 2012

Sarah Harding, EEC Director of Operations and Human Resources reported on behalf of Commissioner Killins, highlighting the recent site visit by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. During this full day site visit, EEC Leadership had the opportunity to discuss the Massachusetts Early Learning Plan and how the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) investment has accelerated the work in Educator Quality, Program Quality, Screening/Assessment, and Family/Community Engagement to advance child and family outcomes. In the afternoon, three panels highlighted the following aspects of Massachusetts' RTTT-ELC work:

- Higher Education Support for Educator and Program Quality/QRIS Public/Private, Community and Family Partnerships;
- Public/Private, Community and Family Partnerships; and
- Closing the Proficiency Gap via Community Outreach.

Ms. Harding stated that Board members can find more information in the Commissioner's report.

Chairperson Chesloff inquired if there has been official follow-up from the federal government regarding the RTTT-ELC Grant. Ms. Harding responded that EEC has worked very closely with the federal government since submitting required information in March and continues to provide additional information on an as-needed basis. She noted that Commissioner Killins and she have monthly telephone meetings with the federal agencies to discuss the projects that comprise the Early Learning Plan.

Statements from the Public

The Board of Early Education and Care makes up to 30 minutes available for persons in the audience to address the Board on specific agenda items. In order to hear as many speakers as possible, the Board limits individuals to three minutes, although written material of any length can be submitted to Chairperson Chesloff or Commissioner Killins.

Lori Manfrim, Director of Little People's College, New Bedford and UPK recipient - expressed her concerns about the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grant criteria. She explained that her program, like many others, cannot meet the requirement that seventy five percent of the classrooms have a teacher with a Bachelor's degree. She expressed how difficult it was for staff to pursue a degree while working full time and taking care of families and noted that centers that provide services infants and toddlers are disadvantaged by the QRIS Level III requirement. She urged the Board to reconsider this criterion and submitted written materials in support of her testimony.

Amy O'Leary, Campaign Director, Early Education for All - congratulated Board Member Walachy on her appointment. Ms. O'Leary noted that the Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency is currently on the Governor's desk. This legislation will establish an Early Literacy Expert Panel to advise the Commonwealth's education departments on statewide strategies to promote language and literacy

development in children from birth to third grade. In addition, she stated that she had participated on one of the panels for the RTTT-ELC federal site visit and that one of the federal visitors revealed that they had selected Massachusetts for one of their first visits because the state sets a high bar for early education.

End of Public Comment period.

Routine Business:

- **Approval of Approval of June 12, 2012 Board Minutes - Vote**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the June 12, 2012 Board Minutes, as presented by the Commissioner. The motion passed by a majority vote.

- **Disclosures**

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers disclosed that her employer is Wheelock College and receives funding from EEC.

- **Board Committee and Advisory Reports**

Fiscal Committee

Board Member Beth Childs reported that EEC had only 2.5% uncommitted funds in FY2012. She congratulated Bill Concannon and his staff on this achievement. She noted that most of those funds were in the caseload account; the FY2013 budget forecast is that there will be a \$14.2M surplus which could provide care to 1600 children for ten months. Board Member Childs cautioned the Board about the volatility of these accounts and that it was still early in the fiscal year. She reported the waitlist is now up to 44,000 children.

Chair Chesloff commented that the main lever EEC had to balance accounts was to close access which prevented EEC from overspending in FY2012 but at the cost of serving fewer children. Board Members Childs replied that the Department began FY2012 with a projected deficit and agreed that this is not a perfect measure. Secretary Reville questioned whether the data is now more solid. Board Member Childs responded that although the data is still uncertain, EEC has worked hard to develop tools and reports that provide the Board with more solid figures.

Policy and Research Committee

Board Member Childs continued by reporting on the work of the Policy and Research Committee in Board Member Joan Wasser Gish's absence. The Department proposes to move unused funds from the FY2013 UPK first procurement to the current open, competitive grant and the committee agrees with this decision. Board Member Childs expressed the committee's appreciation for the efforts and work of Tan Gopal and her staff to transition EEC to the KinderWait waitlist system which allows for a deeper level of data. Lastly, the committee is soliciting input from board members about what needs to be included in future board agendas so that it can be addressed as substantively as possible.

Planning and Evaluation Committee

Board Member Carol Craig O'Brien reported that Board Member Villegas-Reimers, Commissioner Killins and she are participating in the QRIS validation Study group. She noted that subsidy review process steps have been developed and implemented and should move the review and appeal process forward in a more expeditious manner. Board Member Craig O'Brien announced that the next meeting of the Planning and Evaluation Committee will be September 27th and mentioned some of the areas that the committee will focus on in FY2013. These areas include updating the Strategic plan through the development of a two-year strategic direction; looking at additional funds for Head Start; and reviewing the potential use of the web-based technology, Footsteps 2 Brilliance, that utilizes an on-line application to engage children in literacy and other activities.

Chairperson Chesloff thanked board members for participating in the July retreat. He noted that it had been a terrific day and that the facilitator had produced a work product that captured the Board's discussions regarding the strategic direction. He invited board members to continue the process of refining the strategic planning document.

Advisory Council

Board Member Villegas-Reimers reported that the Advisory Council had met on June 29th and provided input and suggestions for board members to consider during the retreat. She announced that the advisory council will continue with the same structure in FY2013 with four meetings of the full advisory plus three meetings of the separate interest groups. The first full advisory council will meet on Friday, September 28th.

New Business – none noted

Items for Discussion and Action:

1. FY13 Universal Pre-Kindergarten Procurement – Discussion and Vote

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *FY13 Universal Pre-Kindergarten Procurement, PowerPoint, dated September 18, 2012*

EEC Policy Analyst Jay Swanson reviewed the three policy objectives for the FY13 Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program, which were discussed and approved by the Board at its February 14, 2012 meeting: (1) to further align UPK with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); (2) to increase access to UPK funding for high needs children; and (3) to increase the number of programs participating in UPK. He noted that the FY2013 allocation for UPK totaled approximately \$6 million to be distributed through two separate procurements. The first procurement for up to \$5.5 million was distributed through a competitive grant process for existing UPK grantees. The second phase was to be distributed as an open, competitive procurement for interested programs, with an anticipated budget of up to \$500,000. Mr. Swanson noted that the number of programs participating in UPK has decreased from 252 programs in FY2011, 208 programs in FY2012, to 186 programs in FY2013. Given the decreased participation, Mr. Swanson stated that additional funds were available for the open, competitive procurement and the Department recommends increasing the available funding from \$500,000 to \$800,000 for this initiative.

Chairperson Chesloff asked if EEC knew what is driving the downward trend. Mr. Swanson responded that some programs could not identify high needs children as required by the FY2013 grant and surmised that the \$15,000 per classroom cap may have had an impact on programs. Board Member Craig O'Brien added that the new requirement to self-assess at QRIS Level 3 was expected to affect the numbers, even

if existing grantees were grandfathered for FY13.

Chairperson Chesloff and Board Member Chi-Cheng Huang requested further analysis of the consistent decline in UPK numbers. Mr. Swanson agreed to provide the board with a chart reflecting UPK program participation. Board members were then asked to approve EEC's recommendation to increase the UPK funding allocation to \$800,000 for the FY2013 open, competitive grant.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the Department's proposed amendment to increase the funding associated with the Universal Pre-Kindergarten Open Competitive Grant in Fiscal Year 2013 from \$500,000 up to \$800,000, in accordance with the goals and the criteria described in the February 14, 2012 and September 18, 2012 board materials. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Utilizing the Waitlist for Subsidized Early Education and Care to Understand and Support Families – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *Access Needs as Defined by the EEC Wait List – PowerPoint, dated September 18, 2012*

Tanuja Gopal, EEC's Chief Information Officer accompanied by Audrey Willoughby, Director of User Services, began the presentation by reporting that EEC launched a new web-based, centralized waitlist system, known as KinderWait, in the summer of 2011. Ms. Gopal noted that through KinderWait, EEC is able to collect and use data to meet the following goals:

- To determine the need for access to child care based on waitlist data
- To establish policy priorities for serving children and families on the waitlist
- To determine the average amount of time children are on the waitlist by age group

Ms. Gopal then provided an overview of the data that has been collected in the system and emphasized the potential for this data to inform EEC policy. She noted that the current waitlist has over 44,000 children. Ms. Gopal summarized next steps, which include monitoring the amount of time children are on the waitlist prior to receiving services, understanding parent choices for program types and geographic preferences, understanding the impact of policy decisions on waitlist reductions, and reviewing access to care as a result of attrition in contracted slots.

Chairperson Chesloff asked if closing access is the sole reason that the waitlist has almost doubled since last year. Ms. Willoughby responded that there are several reasons for the growing waitlist, including the fact that families were added to the list, but not removed, in accordance with policy. She explained that families are now receiving removal letters and as a result, EEC should see more realistic numbers.

Board Member Childs stated that there had been some conversation at the policy and research committee as to whether the renewal process could have such a profound effect on the numbers. Ms. Willoughby replied that EEC is issuing about 2,000 renewal letters per month and that MASS 2-1-1 receives approximately 200-250 calls each week to update contact information, family size and to renew interest in response to these letters. She added that EEC has issued approximately 7,000 waitlist renewal letter to families, whose contact information is no longer valid. She noted that these records will be archived and should also have an impact on the waitlist numbers. Board Member Huang asked if archiving these records will mean the waiting list will be reduced by 7,000. Board Member Childs

responded that the total number will decrease but we don't know what that number will be and opined that she did not think the trend would change.

Ms. Gopal reported that in the past year approximately 24,000 available funding letters were sent, resulting in 9,000 children being enrolled. The presentation reflects one year of data using the new waitlist system; EEC will have better trending and analysis capacity moving forward.

Board Member Childs emphasized that there needs to be a regional match between capacity and need, which has important policy implications. She noted that when the waitlist numbers continue to grow, it suggests that the system is "grinding to a halt." Board Member Cheryl Stanley contributed that new policy decisions slow down the process, as it takes time for providers to understand and implement those changes.

Board Member Craig O'Brien thanked Ms. Gopal for the data, adding that this is a tremendous body of work. She asked the Board to remember that every number is a child. She also noted that we need to make sure children, who are identified as Head Start eligible are connected to that resource.

3. Community Support Grant: Strategic Planning for Birth to Age 8 Assessment, Screening, and Curriculum Alignment – Panel Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *State Advisory Council Birth to Age 8 Assessment, Screening, and Curriculum Support and Alignment – PowerPoint, dated September 2012*
- *Panelist Biographies dated September 18, 2012*

Jessica Fix, EEC Program Funding Specialist, provided the Board with an overview of the State Advisory Council - Community Support Grant (CSG), and highlighted the two core functions of the grant: (1) support for strategic planning at the community/local level that was awarded to existing Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees; and (2) alignment of the Birth to Age 8 assessment, screening and curriculum that was awarded to non-profits working in partnership with public schools, school districts and/or charter schools. Ms. Fix then introduced the panelists, who represent CSG grantees from different regions of the Commonwealth: David Thomas, Barnstable Public School Early Education & Care Coordinator; Rita Celia, CFCE Coordinator for Triumph, Inc. in Taunton; and Dr. Anne McKenzie, Executive Director at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

Dr. McKenzie stated that her community uses the CSG funding to facilitate meetings and dialogue between community-based and public school providers. She mentioned that while there was reciprocal respect, there is a "chasm" between these partners. Lower Pioneer Valley had surveyed participants about assessment and screening tools and discovered that there was no common understanding of the difference between screening and assessment. Although the project has ended, she reported that her program is looking at how it can facilitate a "communities of practice" framework with questions that are meaningful across all levels. Dr. McKenzie commented that participants need to shift their thinking from "these are problems to be solved" to "these are opportunities to be seized." She noted that there needs to be a bridge from the early learning standards to the common core standards and that higher education, ESE and EEC are resources. She emphasized the need to build a culture and common language with a group of learners and their parents.

Ms. Celia noted that Triumph had applied for the CSG grant as a Gateway community in an effort to bring people together to discuss curriculum, screening and alignment. Faith based organizations, public schools, family child care providers, Early Head Start and Head Start, and Kindergarten and Preschool teachers participated in these discussions. Ms. Celia shared that the CSG funds have helped increase communication to advance the goals of the grant.

Chairperson Chesloff asked if efforts were flowing down to families participating in the programs. Mr. Thomas suggested that it depends on where a community is in the process. He noted that Barnstable is at an end stage, while Triumph is at a beginning stage, thus his community would be in a better position to demonstrate impact on families. Ms. Celia responded that the dialogue helped to better understand what was happening in the community, and gave an example of addressing the transition from Head Start to public kindergarten, which previously did not include parents. As a result of this dialogue, her community has made affirmative efforts to expand the transition process to include parents of preschool aged children in a “Kindergarten Day” at the public school.

Mr. Thomas noted that Barnstable, as a Gateway Community, was already working on curriculum alignment prior to the issuance of the CSG funding opportunity. Through the CSG funds, his community was able to expand the ESE kindergarten committee to include other providers. By increasing the dialogue among local stakeholders, they discovered a growing gap between expectations for kindergarten entry between public schools and community providers. As a result, Barnstable created binders for early education and care programs that include the kindergarten guidelines so that all community providers know what will be expected when children leave their programs to go to kindergarten. The binders also introduce the Common Core standards and contain the kindergarten entry assessment and screening. Mr. Thomas noted that Barnstable public school representatives meet with preschool directors and teachers to review curriculum to ensure alignment.

Chairperson Chesloff asked if there are any efforts for the grantees to share information and best practices with each other. Secretary Reville offered that the Readiness Centers are a resource to facilitate and continue this dialogue. Dr. McKenzie stated that there is an inability to share child data from preschool to kindergarten and asked about EEC’s participation in the longitudinal data system to facilitate data transfer.

Board Member Craig O’Brien noted that ESE’s kindergarten grant requires schools to conduct kindergarten entry assessment and requires community participation by grantees. She recommended that we ramp up connections between early childhood and the nearly 200 full day kindergarten grantees.

On motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 2:45 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherri Killins, Ed.D.
Commissioner of the Department and
Secretary to the Board