



**EEC Board Committee
Planning and Evaluation**

Thursday, May 13, 2010
10:00am-12:00am

Department of Early Education and Care
10 Austin St.
Worcester, MA 01609

AGENDA

Members of the Committee Present

Sherri Killins, EEC Commissioner (Ex-Officio)
Carol Craig O'Brien, Board Member (by phone)
JD Chesloff, Board Chairperson (by phone)
Julie Culhane, Committee Chairperson

EEC Staff Present

Jennifer Louis
Kelly Schaffer

The meeting was called to order at: 10:00 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Committee members were welcomed.

Routine Business:

Minutes

Members had an opportunity to review the minutes. No changes were necessary for the April 8, 2010 minutes.

UPDATES

Staff member Kelly Schaffer updated the committee about a new contract just awarded to Oldham Innovative Research to look at the online and paper based assessment data from the UPK programs. Erin Oldham and her team of consultants will look at the data we have now, the completion rates in each of the domains, and outreach to 4 different groups to determine what other tools might be added to the menu of tools currently available to the UPK programs. The consultants will also look at what other states are doing. She will be going back to Arizona who was profiled in 2007 and is similar to Massachusetts where they are now compared to where they were in 2007.

On the subject of Assessment, Board Member Culhane would like to have an update on the Assessment Training contract awarded to Associated Early Care and Education. Board Member Culhane and Board Member Carol Craig O'Brien both heard concerns from the field. Both Board Members thought the trainings weren't fairly distributed across the state and Creative Curriculum was most common across the state. Staff Member Kelly Schaffer explained that trainings were allocated based on the applications Associated received.

Commissioner Killins wanted the training where the field wanted them, so for example if there weren't many applications for Work Sampling in one area there wouldn't be many trainings on Work Sampling. The west part of the state received notification of the trainings late so more training will be offered there in June.

Commissioner Killins asked the committee the question of should we replicate the trainings after July 1 with the ability to spread the trainings across the state over the year. The committee agreed that a decision should be made once an evaluation has been conducted to determine if the initiative was successful and what might need to be modified if the initiative was to continue next year.

Staff Member Kelly Schaffer noted that the publishers have some concern about the trainers who are conducting the assessment trainings. Teaching Strategies is conducting new training and reliability trainings on the new Creative Curriculum Gold. Associated will be sending people to this training. Commissioner Killins is interested in looking into a process and the development of expectations for consultants. Board Member Julie suggested a place to start would be to learn about ESE's process for trainers. DPH also has process to "qualify" trainers for their trainings. Trainers must register with ESE before they would be allowed to conduct trainings at conferences. Commissioner Killins noted EEC also needs to look at this for assessment and for 0-3 curriculum.

Carol Craig O'Brien disclosed she receives funding from EEC and is potentially interested in other funding opportunities.

Expansion and Alignment of UPK with ORIS

Discussion:

Commissioner Killins wanted the committee to look at the UPK Legislation and see what we have met and what we still need to pursue to meet the requirements in the legislation. One overarching issue EEC hasn't been able to do is to show age appropriate progress. EEC currently doesn't have a definition of a growth model. EEC doesn't have a way to talk about children's ability to make age appropriate progress.

Board Member Culhane acknowledged that if EEC has high quality programs following the Guidelines for Preschool Experiences than children are making progress. It's not the measure of a child's ability but the environment the child is in. Board Chairperson Chesloff expressed his difference of opinion and thought the UPK discussion and how to measure age appropriate progress would be a good discussion for the retreat this summer. Commissioner Killins expressed that this meeting would be a precursor to focus the discussion at the retreat.

Board Member Culhane thought Erin Oldham's report on UPK assessment data will be useful during the retreat as well. The report should give us a sense of what we know about the programs use of assessment, percentage of use of the tools and what we know about the children. Commissioner Killins also noted we should know what professional development needs are in the field based on the data and the completeness of data in each of the domains.

Legislation Section 13

- a. Establish the Massachusetts UPK program to assist in providing voluntary, universally accessible, high-quality early education and care programs and services.

Commissioner Killins noted that the Board and EEC need to establish a definition of high quality early education and care. Commissioner Killins posed the question of is the definition in QRIS and if so how do we point the criteria to UPK. Board Member Culhane noted that it has been determined that high quality includes child assessments. Board Chairperson Chesloff asked when we could use the tools' data as an assessment tool to determine outcomes. Board Member Culhane explained that at the beginning EEC wanted programs to get comfortable using the tool to improve teaching and individual instruction. Commissioner Killins also acknowledged that the 3 tools picked for UPK are designed to show progress for individual children and not as a collective assessment. Board Member Craig O'Brien suggested piloting something with programs that have been using assessments longer since there are programs who have been using the tool for more than 3 years and are comfortable with the tool. EEC should look at how ESE collects the Special Education indicators through OSEP. Public schools can use whatever tools they want and use a tool to filter the information into a common tool. Board Member Culhane thought this is a nice connection with ESE and the links with ESE will help with institutionalizing this process.

Board Chairperson Chesloff inquired about how SASIDs will play in. Commissioner Killins noted that it will help EEC get a sample to track these children over time. Unfortunately not all districts give SASIDs to preschool or Kindergarten children. It is not a universal practice. EEC needs to start getting on children outside the subsidy system; however EEC does not have access to the data from ESE. The data from ESE does not have any measureable data it is mostly demographic data. Public Schools can collect any additional information if they want. MCAS data is linked to the SASID later however, but early on there is only demographic data. Board Member Culhane noted that earlier on there was discussions about looking at 3rd grade MCAS score and looking backwards to the preschool environment (if applicable), child's health, family, etc. Commissioner Killins thought that a quicker and important field to collect and analyze is attendance in preschool, and child/family mobility.

Board Member Craig O'Brien mentioned the Governor's Readiness Project. Commissioner Killins is working with the group to have the passport be more strength based rather than deficit based.

Board Member Craig O'Brien asked about the UPK Evaluation being conducted by PCG. The deadline is tomorrow and was interested in knowing about the response rate to the survey. Staff Member Kelly Schaffer stated that the response rate is very low and that PCG will be reaching out again using Craig's List and other groups and sites along with extending the deadline so more responses could be received.

- b. Mixed delivery- flexibility and range of providers.

Board Member Craig O'Brien feels that the current UPK program does not cover the mixed delivery system well. First of all, the sample of 277 programs is too small and there are only 18 public schools in the sample. Staff Member Kelly Schaffer detailed that there are 138 centers, 114 System affiliated family child care providers, 6 independent family child care providers, 18 public schools and 1 private school. Forty-five percent of the center based providers are Head Start programs. Kelly went on to explain that it's difficult to get independent family child care providers involved as they usually are not using one of the assessment tools.

Board Members Culhane and Craig O'Brien noted that the issue with public schools getting involved is the requirement of full day full year and public schools use of assessments. The public school assessments are mostly for diagnostic and reporting. Staff Member Kelly Schaffer stated that accreditation is also a block for public school programs. However, the data might suggest otherwise as one third of accredited programs are public schools. Commissioner Killins did attend a principal meeting yesterday afternoon and some principals were complaining about NAEYC.

Board Member Culhane expressed a concern as well about the use of home grown tools and the quality of those tools.

The Committee started discussing alternatives to accreditation. ESE is currently working on alternatives and it might be that the QRIS might replace the requirement of accreditation. One alternative could also be a school accreditation. It was also suggested that EEC learns from ESE's full-day Kindergarten program.

Related to QRIS, there are issues that the public schools encounter. One is meeting licensing requirements to get to Level 1. Commissioner Killins stated that the newer schools are fine and can meet the licensing requirements but the older buildings have trouble. EEC should work with public schools to determine where the biggest issues are and how the standard might be modified for public schools. The second issue is that public schools require a higher ratio than the licensing regulations allow. This issue should not be relooked at as they should meet the licensing ratios. Even with these issues, the committee agreed that EEC should make sure it is including the public schools and not excluding a segment of the mixed delivery system. To accommodate the public schools, it is possible that Level 1 of QRIS could be licensing requirements or documentation of meeting the Preschool Standards; however this document does need to be updated and compared to the licensing requirements to determine the differences.

The committee discussed why historically public schools are licensed exempt. At the time the Office of Child Care Services had no authority over the public schools as they are regulated by ESE (formerly DOE). Public schools were required to follow the Preschool Program Standards which meet or exceed the licensing regulations. Public schools were monitored through a comprehensive site visits where volunteers from other districts go into other districts and look at the program and its connection with the school. The Licensing Requirements were to document health and safe environments for early education and care environments. It was assumed that public schools had the health and safety inherent in the fact they were a public school.

UPK funding

To help control cost and increase opportunities to expand access to UPK programs, the committee and the Board might think about using the Kindergarten Entry Enrichment Program funding strategy which includes programs getting an add-on rate on top of their base rate. In most cases, this takes programs to the 75th percentile. Programs at QRIS level 3 and 4 programs could receive the add-on rate to bring their rates up to the 75th percentile. Board Member Craig O'Brien mentioned that this is what the CPC's used to do in order to keep rates at the market rate.

Committee members discussed the future direction of providing access to UPK regardless of parent financial assistance status. Families should be referred to programs based on the child's needs and not on the parent's eligibility status. Board Member Culhane stated that we've paid attention to quality and now it's time to also pay attention to access. Commissioner Killins noted that high quality in the QRIS system is not tied to hours but to

the quality components and noted that programs implementing assessments that include the whole child and whole family are critical. For a universal system, requirements can't be completely tied to work status. Referrals to early education and care programs should be made on the child's needs and not family work status, however, in order to use CCDF funds family work status is a requirement. Along the same vein some families do not need full-day care and this should be an option allowed in UPK. Commissioner Killins noted that as state aid is cut to schools, districts will cut preschool programs.

c. Transition to Kindergarten

Commissioner Killins and Carol Thompson at ESE are working to develop a model MOU for school districts to work with community based programs. Community based programs and in particular head start programs feel the information they pass on when a child moves on to Kindergarten is ignored. Commissioner Killins envisions a document that schools and early education programs can sign onto. Head Starts currently require an MOU with the local schools.

Board Chairperson Chesloff questioned how this will be affected with the national core curriculum movement. It has not been decided if Massachusetts will sign on to this when a national core curriculum is developed.

The transition to Kindergarten involves assessments, family involvement and curriculum. The MOU should assist in alignment of these areas. Springfield for example uses Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum in the public schools. There are efforts being made to get community based providers to use the same tool. If successful in Springfield and Lowell, these communities could be models to demonstrate how successful the model could be. One challenge is that every school district has its own Kindergarten entry age date. ESE has up to date information that we should look at to look at the spread of dates.

d. Assure Access to Preschool Programming for Children of disabled parents

The Committee Members discussed where this came from as programs cannot discriminate. Commissioner Killins will speak with Dena and Marilyn from EOHHS about where this came from and why it is in the legislation.

Topics for discussion at Retreat

- Definition high quality and UPK (UPK as it relates to quality).
- Program inputs and child outcomes- program inputs and child growth
- Access- defining access/ universal- define who needs access/universal.
- Impact of various elements on mixed system moving to QRIS- public schools- what's their impact to participate.
- How we fund it both for quality and access (quality- add on, access- state funds, possibly CCDF).

The Commissioner stated the importance of looking at QRIS level 3 for a definition of high quality and comparing this against the current definition of UPK high quality programming. She also noted that with all of the upcoming initiatives (i.e. Kindergarten Entry Enrichment Program, 18-month open access) EEC should be able to get most preschoolers off of the wait list. Board Member Culhane asked what the wait list tells us. Commissioner Killins noted that some families are offered slots in programs turn them down to wait for a voucher or remain on the waitlist while their child is enrolled in a program. She continued to say that the PCG survey will help the Department better understand who is on the waitlist and what their needs are.

Board Member Craig O'Brien thanked Chairperson Chesloff for his leadership at Tuesday's Board meeting.

Next Steps:-

- Create a definition of quality from QRIS level 3 and compare it against the current definition of UPK
- Follow up with PCG to see how their survey might give the Department information about the degree to which children of disabled parents are being served through EEC programs

Review of Scope and RFR for Fund 391 Inclusive Preschool

Discussion:

Commissioner Killins described that the 391 program requirements have become more flexible in the last few years. Commissioner Killins has heard from Joni Block in Brockton that low/middle income families are not able to be served well since the CPC grants were merged into vouchers and contracts. Fund code 391 grantees should be providing us more information in the Fall on the following:

- Who are the children
- Information in order for SASIDs to be assigned
- Accreditation (yes/no, in process (where are they in the process)
- Income- low income- does program use a sliding fee and use income.
- Language spoken at home (ELL)
- Educationally at risk children
- Parents education
- Previous out of home care
- Parents employment (full/part time)
- Participation in QRIS
- Do they follow Guidelines for Preschool Experience and/or Preschool Program Standards
- How they work with other initiatives (MFN, CFCE, PCHP, etc.)
- What is the process to select peer learners? If more applications for peer learners than spaces, what is the process to choose.
- What does the program do if application for peer learner is not accepted? Do they refer elsewhere?
- What training and support do programs need from EEC to increase quality.
- What is the transition plan for children going to Kindergarten. What is the relationship within the building for Pre-K to 3 programs. What support is needed to manage and sustain these relationships?
- Are there planned professional development opportunities that could be opened to the whole field?
- What screening tools are used? How many children were screened? Provide aggregated results
- As of the date of the grant application are there open slots in the classrooms?

Board Member Culhane noted that accreditation is no longer a requirement in the RFR from FY10.

Next Steps:-

- Summarize the above questions and add them into the RFR
- Which districts got 391 grants?

Update on QRIS Grants and QRIS Evaluation**Discussion:**

Since the Policy and Fiscal Committee met, 90 additional grants were reviewed. These grants were only missing the self-assessment piece of the application. These programs were given 3 days to complete and send in the self-assessment piece of the application. Eighty-nine programs returned the missing piece. Some of the applications were well done and others were not very specific. Part of the evaluation will be to look and learn at the quality of the applications.

The committee looked at the maps of where the grantees were located and there is a noticeable lack of programs in the northwest area of the state.

Board member Culhane was interested in knowing the number of applications in each QRIS level that came in for the grants.

Next meeting July 8, 2010, 10:00AM – 12:00 PM, TBD**Agenda items:**

- o Discussion of Reports- EDC for QRIS pilot and grant, PCG- Waitlist analysis, program access analysis and continuity of care. Associated- Assessment Trainings
- o Expectations of Trainers- Review of ESE and DPH's process for trainers

The committee convened at 12:10pm