**EEC Board Committee
Planning and Evaluation**

Thursday, July 8, 2010
10:30am-12:00am

Department of Early Education and Care
95 Liberty Street, Suite 1124
Springfield, MA 01103

AGENDA

Members of the Committee Present
Sherri Killins, EEC Commissioner (Ex-Officio)
Carol Craig O'Brien, Board Member (by phone)
Julie Culhane, Committee Chairperson

EEC Staff Present
Jennifer Louis (by phone)
Kelly Schaffer

Guest Presenters
Erin Oldham, Oldham Innovative Research
Christine Johnson Staub

The meeting was called to order at: 10:30 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 May 13, 2010 minutes.

UPDATES

Commissioner Killins updated the committee on the budget. EEC will be able to manage the cuts however it does not look promising about the funds from FMAP.

The Commissioner is also committed to keep access open while watching the balance in the accounts. If need be access will be closed at a later time.

Commissioner Killins mentioned that her and some EEC staff met with the new CCR&Rs to discuss what is expected of them under their contract and to bring them all together as a statewide network.

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Commissioner Killins was in DC a few weeks ago meeting with the Administration of Children and Families Child Care Bureau staff. The conversations with the federal agency included their commitment to parental choice. This conversation brings the issue of the Governor's guidance in how we are spending the ARRA funds and the concern of how quickly (or slowly as the case may be) the funds are being spent. The Governor's Office of the Reinvestment and Recovery has stipulated that 15% of the ARRA funds must be spent by July 31 and 30% of the ARRA funds must be spent by August 31. Since half the ARRA funds are being spent through access, this will not be able to be met. Any contract that could be restructured to spend the money quicker will be restructured. By August 31, EEC plans to spend 24.9% of the ARRA funds. Since approximately $12.1M is in access, these funds will trickle out since according to contract rules, the funds cannot be prepaid. However EEC plans to provide the following options for access to families based on the age of the children:

- Infants and Toddlers will continue to access subsidies through the child care development block grant.
- Care for summer only- subsidies will be used through the summer only ARRA funds
- Preschool age children- subsidies will be funded through the ARRA funding through the KEEP program (summer only) or through the 12-13 month voucher program.

Regarding continuity of care, preschool children who still need care after their ARRA voucher expires will get another voucher if money is available.

Commissioner Killins updated the Committee on the Kindergarten Enrichment Entry Program (KEEP). There have been many bumps along the way. The Public Schools are struggling with how to collect parent fees. This will need to be looked at closer since schools do have mechanisms for collecting fees for sports, transportation, etc. Committee Chair Culhane thought the Board should discuss this for next year's program to see if there is any room to negotiate with the public schools for next year and to meet the requirements for fund use set forth by the Child Care Bureau (ACF). She also thought it might be helpful to provide the public school districts a menu of options or vehicles to collect this money. Both Committee Chair Culhane and Committee Member O'Brien agreed that some schools are and have done this in the past and that possibly it is a miscommunication between school personnel. EEC staff member Kelly Schaffer will contact those districts who dropped out of the KEEP program due to the parent fees to gather more information. Boston Public Schools in particular has had many issues and wanted to conduct the program differently then what is allowable through the contract. Boston will not be participating in the program this year.

Though it hasn't been officially announced yet, a vendor has been selected to provide the Statewide Telephonic System. The vendor will be Mass211. In addition, a vendor was selected for the Improvement of Physical Environments work.

The remaining ARRA funded projects that have not yet been awarded are the Communication Campaign and the Strategic Planning project. The Strategic Planning RFR is currently posted.

Commissioner Killins acknowledge that this is Committee Chair Culhane's last meeting. Her Board appointment has expired. Commissioner Killins acknowledged and praised Chair Culhane's focus and continuing work on the whole child and child outcomes. Committee Member O'Brien stated that she has enjoyed working with Chair Culhane on both the Board and the Committee and appreciates her focus on the whole child and child assessments.

Though not on the agenda for this Committee, EEC contracted with a consultant to look at the public colleges' and 4 private colleges' early education programs. The Higher Education Report mapped out the early education course from each institution and developed a matrix showing their difference. The report did not provide a comparison of course work or a comparison on core course but was a good first step in this process.

UPK Assessment Data Evaluation and Next Steps (Oldham Innovative Research)

Discussion:

EEC contracted with Oldham Innovative Research to conduct and evaluation on the UPK assessment data. Erin Oldham and Christine Johnson-Staub attended the meeting to present their findings and recommendations.

EEC contracted with Oldham Innovative Research to look at 3 tasks regarding the UPK assessment data. The first research task was to analyze the UPK data that was submitted by the UPK programs through the online system for the assessment tool, by email or by regular mail. The second task was to talk with other states about how and if the states use assessment data to provide a statewide look at early childhood education. The third task was to make recommendations of other tools that should be looked at to provide a broader menu of assessment tools for programs to use.

Through their research, Oldham Innovative Research provided the following recommendations. More details for each recommendation are included in the executive summary and the report:

Recommendation 1: **Using web-based (or on-line) submissions as a way of collecting data should be a requirement of UPK grantees.**

Recommendation 2: **Department of Early Education and Care web-based licensees should indicate if they are a UPK grantee and specify the program's UPK children.**

EEC Staff Member Kelly Schaffer and Committee Chair Culhane noted that EEC allowed the Assessment Planning grantees to purchase the online version through the state contract. In addition, some agencies with UPK grants already were online with all their programs. These programs were migrated over to the state contract.

Recommendation 3: **While UPK grantees should be allowed to assess all of the children in their programs through the on-line license, they must delineate the children that are enrolled in UPK.**

This issue was discussed a few years ago when EEC and the assessment publishers discussed that state contract. At the time, EEC thought it would be more beneficial for all the children in the programs, whether they were in UPK classrooms are not, to be assessed through the assessment tool chosen by the program. Because of this, EEC allowed programs to purchase licenses that included all the children in their program and not just for children in the UPK classrooms. EEC did request that programs put UPK in front of the children's

nickname and in front of the classroom name to delineate the UPK children and classrooms from the non-UPK children and classrooms.

Recommendation 4: **Increased and efficient communication with family child care grantees that belong to a family child care system needs to be systematically planned in order to raise submission rates.**

The Committee discussed that the only responsibility the family child care system has in this grant (which most are taking administration costs for) is to submit the assessment reports. More information should be obtained as to why the family child care systems are not submitting the reports.

Recommendation 5: **Domain completion rates could be increased with professional development.**

The committee had a question on whether the 80% of incomplete domains was incomplete within children or within agencies or in other words is there missing data per child or for groups of children in the program.

Erin Oldham stated that when a state looks at aggregated data there is an issue with data trends being covered up. When programs look at their own data the program's trends are seen. The question then becomes should EEC be collecting aggregate reports or move toward having the program analyze their data and report to EEC what the program has done in response to the data analysis.

The idea of coaching and mentoring arose. Coaching and Mentoring is an important process for programs to being using their data. Erin Oldham mentioned that she had been working with the United Way of Mass Bay and the Merrimack Valley conducting mentoring groups on assessment for early childhood educators. It's important for programs to build an internal capacity for child assessment. Committee Chair Culhane stated that Work Sampling does have a coaching/mentoring model but it takes about a year. Christine Johnson-Staub stated that assessment needs to become a systematic part of the day with the program providing or participating in introductory trainings, follow up training every year. Colorado has developed a public/private partnership to provide continual trainings, mentoring and coaching.

Commissioner Killins noted that she would like EEC to put out an Assessment grant for FY11, and use the United Way scope that Erin Oldham worked on as a guide to incorporating coaching and mentoring more thoughtfully into the grant structure. Staff Member Kelly Schaffer will follow up with United Way and begin drafting the RFP, which will be modeled after the FY10 Assessment grant with Associated Early Care and Education.

Committee Chair Culhane raised the concern that the assessment tool publishers are concerned about who is providing the training. EEC needs to figure out how much control we want to give the publishers on who conducts the trainings and how much control EEC keeps. A solution might be to participate in a train the trainer model.

The issue of low submission rates was also raised. If programs aren't submitting their data, are the programs using assessment data not submitted to improve programs or are they really doing assessments.

Recommendations related to Professional Development

Recommendation 6: **Professional development on how best to utilize the web-based system of assessing children should be offered annually.**

The Committee discussed that if the goal of the assessment is program improvement, EEC showed provide technical assistance on helping programs analyze their own data and from that analysis report back to EEC what professional development is needed in order to improve their programs.

Recommendation 7: **To determine specific professional development needs for teachers as related to early childhood assessment, EEC will need to depend on director interviews, teacher interviews and/or focus groups or observation.**

Recommendation 8: **Professional development coupled with technical assistance should be a systematic part of offering UPK grants and incentives.**

Recommendation 9: **Provide professional development and technical assistance to UPK grantees on how they can use their aggregated child assessment data at the local level** (i.e., with a local school district to show Pre-K growth and school readiness).

Committee Member O'Brien and Committee Chair Culhane explained that in the legacy agency Early Learning Services, there was a lot of training provided on transitions to Kindergarten and how programs can analyze their data to be useful at a local level. The mechanisms (full day kindergarten grantees and CFCE's) are still available to provide these trainings and technical assistance. This would be a great relationship building at the local level.

Recommendations related to Child Assessment Tools

Recommendation 10: **Massachusetts should continue its practice of encouraging UPK programs to assess children using evidence-based assessment tools through grants and incentives to track child outcomes.**

There is strong support for both QRIS and child assessment in the Obama Administration, so this practice of assessment should be continued.

Recommendation 11: **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should consider whether it wants to add additional tools to its approved list, or whether it would in fact be better to narrow the choices to one or two tools that are most often used.**

Christine Johnson-Staub discussed that some states are narrowing their list of tools for in order to look at data at a state level. If EEC is going toward using the assessment data at the local level rather than at a state level, EEC should consider broadening the list.

Changes to the list might be recommended depending on the goal of EEC. High Scope COR is the least used tool. High Scope is used mostly by Head Start programs however some are changing to Creative Curriculum. The question of whether to drop High Scope COR from the list was discussed by Committee Members. Committee Chair Culhane stated that she would be happy to take COR off the list because she has heard that the checklist is too extensive and doesn't have the infrastructure behind it. Committee Member O'Brien stated that we should not take the COR out unless we are moving to just one tool. Commissioner Killins felt that as long as the tool is evidence based we shouldn't remove it from the list. It could create a battlefield as to why the tool was removed but the other tools are still acceptable. Staff member Kelly Schaffer stated that less resources could be applied to High Scope COR trainings if the demand is less. This is what happened with Associated's Assessment training. High Scope COR trainings were offered where there was a demand.

Recommendation 12: **Examine whether the *High Scope COR Child Observation Record* should remain one of the four EEC-approved child assessment tools due to low use.**

Recommendation 13: **Investigate the new versions of the ASQ[1] and the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum to determine what, if anything, grantees need to incorporate them into their data collection system.**

Teaching Strategies which produces Creative Curriculum has revamped the curriculum and assessment tool that will completely replace Creative Curriculum. This new version is called Teaching Strategies Gold. Programs must transfer over by next summer. Erin Oldham suggested that even though it's an automatic switch for programs with no additional costs added there will still be anxiety over this switch and it might be helpful to have some technical assistance regarding the transition.

Ages and Stages also has a new version Ages and Stages 3. This will not replace the old version, however if EEC continues to use Ages and Stages as an assessment tool, programs should be able to use the new version. Programs however should be encouraged to transition from using Ages and Stages to using one of the other assessment tools as EEC fazes out the use of Ages and Stages as an assessment tool.

Recommendation 14: **Consider whether ASQ should remain an approved tool.**

Since Ages and Stages is a screening tool, programs using Ages and Stages should be encouraged to transition to one of the other tools. Erin Oldham suggested packaging this message by saying Ages and Stages was a stepping stone to a more rigorous assessment tool. Ages and Stages assisted programs in familiarizing staff with the process of observation and assessment of children.

Recommendation 15: **If considering the approval of new tools, an in-depth examination of the *Brigance Early Childhood Complete System* and the *Galileo Pre-K* for use by UPK programs is warranted.**

Erin Oldham discussed the possibility of new tools. Erin found that the Brigance and Galileo assessment tools should be looked at for addition to the menu of tools.

Recommendation 16: **Continue to provide clear explanations and delineations between child assessment systems and child screenings and discuss rationale for approved systems.**

During interviews, Erin Oldham found that people in the field are still confused and do not fully understand the difference between screening and assessment. More technical assistance should be provided to help the field understand this difference.

Recommendations related to the Strategic Use of Child Assessment Data

Recommendation 17: **If aggregate child assessment data is going to be used by the Commonwealth to inform policy at the state level, develop a strategic plan that clearly indicates how the child assessment data will be used.**

Christine Johnson-Staub discussed her interview and research on how other states used the data. There was only 1 state who used assessment data at the state level however the state only used it for OSEP reporting. Christine Johnson-Staub also noted that Pennsylvania is conducted a long term evaluation on the effects of their UPK program. The evaluation includes the collection of assessment data but it is only one piece of the evaluation.

The Committee began a discussion as to whether the UPK programs should be used as a pilot to gather the data at a state level. The model to follow would be similar to how the OSEP data is currently being collected and reported to ESE. Committee Member O'Brien thought the collecting and using the data would be a way to build the infrastructure for transitioning to Kindergarten.

Overall

EEC should confirm the goal of having programs conduct assessments. Commissioner Killins stated that if there is no value to aggregate data at the state level, then EEC should provide training or technical assistance and how programs can analyze their assessment data and report on what the program has done in response to analyzing their assessment data.

Commissioner Killins stated that she fights every day to protect the UPK funding. It becomes more difficult when programs don't show the good things that UPK funds by not reporting their assessment data. The Committee discussed the idea of withholding funds from UPK programs who did not submit reports. Since this is the only requirement for UPK

programs to receive funding there needs to be consequences for those programs that do not fulfill the reporting requirement. Commissioner Killins suggested that for programs who did not submit their reports, the programs should only receive 25% of the funds upfront. At the end of the first reporting period (January 2011), programs would get another 25% that would be performance based. The remaining 50% would be withheld for technical assistance to these programs on-site. Committee Member O'Brien agreed with Commissioner Killins however did state she felt the programs should not get any of the funds at all if they did not fulfill the requirements.

Erin Oldham will go back and check what's missing and determine if there is one type of setting that is reporting overwhelmingly and if programs are missing a lot of information on each child or on a specific population of child. This information will provide EEC and the Committee if it's a technical assistance issue or a non-reporting issue. Additionally, EEC staff member Kelly Schaffer stated that programs were required to provide an explanation if less than 80% of the UPK programs children were assessed. It would be useful to combine this information with Erin's information to determine the issues that result in non-reporting.

Waitlist Analysis, Program Analysis and Continuity of Care Studies (PCG)

Discussion:

Commissioner Killins gave a brief review of the PCG waitlist analysis. Some interesting findings were that 28% of those on the waitlist have been on the waitlist for 13 months or more. However, some of those are currently in care but still on the waitlist, declined care when letter of availability was sent or were not eligible at the time, among other reasons described in the report. Additionally, access to care had been closed for about 13 months when families were asked for this study. Another interesting note was that families that were interviewed by telephone were less diverse than those on the waitlist.

Committee Member O'Brien noted that what is not on the waitlist is clear. Indicators such as is the child(ren) currently in care, is the child(ren) born yet, is the family income eligible, etc. is not asked when the family is put on the waitlist.

Commissioner Killins briefly spoke about the findings from the Continuity of Care study regarding families switching from subsidized child care to family, friend and neighbor care due to cost. However, families state they value continuity of care for their children. The issue seems to be about the parent fees and the families ability to pay them. Commissioner Killins questioned why she hasn't been hearing this issue from providers. Committee Member O'Brien commented that parent fees are pretty low.

Next Steps:-
- Kelly Schaffer will coordinate a conference call with PCG and committee for either Wednesday July 14th or Wednesday July 21.
- Send Carol PCG in word format.

QRIS Pilot Evaluation (EDC, Inc.)

Discussion:

Commissioner Killins touched briefly on the QRIS pilot evaluation. She mentioned the feedback and the quick turnaround for applications. This evaluation was about the process and not the content of the self assessments or application. There will be a Part II of the evaluation beginning this summer that will go deeper into the contents submitted by programs.

Committee Member O'Brien thought the feedback from programs was interesting. She was happy to hear that programs did not argue about the criteria but that programs had learned something throughout this process.

Committee Chair Culhane noted that there was good representation from each area of the early childhood field.

Commissioner Killins requested that as the Committee reviews the report, if there are aspects that the Committee would like more information or to have a deeper understanding to please let her know and it will be added into the evaluation this summer.

Next meeting September 16, 2010, 10:00AM – 12:00 PM, TBD
    Agenda items:
- Higher Education Report
- Follow up from call with PCG

The committee convened at 12:00pm