



Board of Early Education and Care

October 11, 2016

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Department of Early Education and Care

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA 02210

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D., Chairperson

James Peyser, Secretary of Education

Ann Reale, Undersecretary of Education and designee of James Peyser, Secretary of Education

Patricia Mackin, Designee of Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Mary Walachy, Vice Chairperson

Joni Block

J.D. Chesloff

Katie Joyce

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Thomas L. Weber, Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Absent

Elizabeth Childs, M.D.

Sheila Balboni

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 p.m.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chairperson Lesaux welcomed everyone and explained that the Board Meeting will be a bridge for the next phase of the Department's work. She stated that within the two presentations today, clear

professional learning needs are highlighted, suggesting that the Department is on the right track with respect to workforce and the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). She noted that it is important to follow the Preschool Expansion Grant coaching model closely. Chairperson Lesaux stated that the public Pre-K partnership issue keeps surfacing, and the Department needs to think about three- and four-year-olds start to find their way into public school buildings.

Chairperson Lesaux explained that there is no update on the Workforce and QRIS Ad Hoc Committee today, because the meeting is later this month. She concluded by stating that she looks forward to celebrating former Board Member Sharon Scott-Chandler's long service on the Board and to the Department after today's Board Meeting.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Tom Weber updated the Board on the following:

EEC Budget:

Commissioner Weber informed the Board that late on Friday, October 7, 2016, the Department received feedback on its spending plan from the Executive Office of Administration and Finance ("ANF"). He noted that typically, the Department receives a response from ANF on its spending plan by late September, but this year the Department was informed that it would receive a response in early October. Commissioner Weber explained that ANF is concerned about revenues and the ability for the State to keep pace with projected spending. ANF's review of EEC's Spending Plan has occurred through the lens of the overall budgetary concerns. Commissioner Weber stated that spending plan approval came on Friday, and the Department will learn more from ANF about where revenues are with respect to projections. He added that there may be reductions in allotments to the Department for the year if revenues do not keep pace with projected spending. Commissioner Weber stated that the Department expects to have a better understanding of where its budget stands by the end of the week.

Child Care Financial Assistance ("CCFA") Application:

Commissioner Weber stated that he will provide monthly updates about CCFA until it is no longer necessary. CCFA is presently in its third month of billing and payments, and the Department has been successfully processing payments through CCFA. The Department successfully processed July and August billing, and the Department is presently fielding September billing. The Department is assisting programs with reconciliation for FY16 billing. He added that the reconciliation process will begin in earnest this month, with the Department either making payments to programs or recovering any overpayments made by programs. This is a deviation from last month's report, as the Department intended to start the reconciliation process last month but had to push it back one month due to development concerns. In addition, the Department is extending its reconciliation repayment period for providers who owe EEC money from four months to six months, with the process concluding in March or April 2017. Commissioner Weber stated that the Department is currently projecting a total recoupment amount of \$7M, which programs owe to EEC and will be collected over the six month period. The Department is

continues communicate about reconciliation to providers, and the Department will continue to work with individual programs. He added that the money the Department anticipates recovering is getting smaller, which means attendance is being entered and the Department is getting better data, leading to a smaller recovery by EEC.

Vice Chairperson Mary Walachy asked what happens with the \$7M and whether the Department has a plan to use the funding. Commissioner Weber responded that the money returns to EEC's caseload accounts. Vice Chairperson Walachy inquired whether this looks like an extra \$7M and whether this was a projected surplus. Commissioner Weber responded that as of today, EEC is projecting a \$6M surplus, not inclusive of this \$7M recoupment amount. Commissioner Weber emphasized that as of today there appears to be a \$13M surplus to manage, however, it is still too early in the year to accurately predict the final surplus amount. Vice Chairperson Walachy added that the field would be watching closely as to what we do with that funding. She asked whether there was an exercise to determine how to use the additional funding. Commissioner Weber responded that this is information that is regularly communicated through the Fiscal Oversight Committee.

Workforce and QRIS:

Commissioner Weber explained that EEC staff is working through the development of a core competency certificate based on the discussions that occurred throughout the summer and the fall of 2016. He noted that EEC is mindful of the requirements under the Child Care Development Fund to mandate ten required areas of training as well as requirements under licensing and information obtained during the QRIS Validation Study. EEC is considering how to develop a companion coaching model that is part of a core competency certificate. He explained that work is underway and will continue to feed into the Workforce and QRIS ad hoc Committee. He does not anticipate that any radical moves will occur.

Field and Legal Operations:

Commissioner Weber credited the Department's work on its licensing matters, specifically two recent major licensing actions, Wee Whalers and Terri's Little Pumpkins. There has been media activity around these actions and required significant work to close down the programs. Commissioner Weber noted the monumental effort taken to address serious non-compliances in both programs and to support the families impacted. Commissioner Weber thanked the efforts of EEC's regional and legal staff, specifically within the Southeast and Metro Boston regions, as well as the assistance from the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in these efforts.

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 Lesaux or Commissioner Weber.*

William Eddy, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of Early Education and Care (MADCA), stated that he is present to talk to the Board about EEC's finances and presented them with a letter. Mr. Eddy stated that the administration is entering unprecedented territory and stated that this is the first time he has seen the level of unspent funding this early in the fiscal year. He is anxious to have the administration release the rate reserve. He noted that typically when access is closed backfilling occurs, but now that vouchers are not being backfilled it is having a disparate impact. MADCA estimates \$18M worth of vouchers are attrited due to not backfilling. Mr. Eddy challenged the Board to ask questions of the administration regarding behind voucher policy, backfilling, and the rate reserve. Mr. Eddy concluded that he knows that there are 9C cuts coming, but money that is targeted toward poor children and early educators is not the best way to balance the budget.

Routine Business:

- **Approval of Minutes from June 14, 2016 Meeting - Vote**

Chairperson Lesaux offered one amendment to the June 14, 2016 minutes on page five, proposing that the group conducting the QRIS Validation Study be the "research team" instead of referencing the ad-hoc committee.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the June 14, 2016 Board Meeting as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Approval of Minutes from September 13, 2016 Meeting - Vote**

Board Member Chesloff offered one correction to the September 13, 2016 minutes on page eleven, proposing to strike the reference to the core credential as a burden.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the September 13, 2016 Board Meeting as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

No new business was raised.

- **Disclosures**

Board Member Eleanora Villegas-Reimers submitted a written disclosure that she is employed by Wheelock College, a recipient of EEC funding. Board Member Joni Block submitted a written disclosure that her position as the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Coordinator with Brockton Public Schools is funded by EEC.

Items for Discussion and Action:

I. Preschool Expansion Grant Evaluation - Discussion

Relevant resources included in Board Materials:

- *Preschool Expansion Grant Longitudinal Evaluation: Year 1 Findings, PowerPoint Presentation dated October 11, 2016*

Amy Checkoway and Barbara Goodson from Abt Associates, Inc., together with EEC Senior Research Specialist Jocelyn Bowne, presented the Preschool Expansion Grant ("PEG") Evaluation to the Board. Ms. Checkoway acknowledged the other members of her team in attendance and stated that the panel would be presenting on the findings from the first year of PEG. She thanked all of the individuals who assisted with the project, including EEC staff Jocelyn Bowne, Anita Moeller and Sarah Volkenant. She noted that Ms. Bowne has done an exceptional job on this work.

Ms. Checkoway stated that the panel would provide an overview of the PEG model, discuss the main components of PEG evaluation, present some high-level findings of PEG implementation, and then Ms. Goodson will share findings regarding classroom quality and children development. The first year of PEG's operations occurred from 2015 to 2016. Ms. Checkoway stated that PEG is administered through a mixed delivery system in five school districts to provide pre-school services and expand pre-school access for children. There are twenty-four different program sites serving approximately 850 children. Ms. Checkoway noted that in four of the five communities, PEG is first formal education for these children.

Ms. Checkoway stated that the study has multiple components, including an implementation study, which is the focus of today's presentation. Ms. Checkoway also stated that they would conduct a longitudinal study into early elementary school. In addition, they are beginning an impact study, which will be conducted over next few years.

Ms. Checkoway stated that, regarding the families and children served, family income was required to be below 200% of the federal poverty level, and a sizeable portion of families were making below 100% of federal poverty level. In addition, 40% of families' primary home language was not English. The research group conducted significant data collection this year, including surveys, focus groups, classroom observations, and direct assessments of a sample of children in PEG classrooms. She noted that the parents' response rate to the survey was 44%, which may not be representative of all parents.

Ms. Checkoway stated that the implementation study focused on the core quality elements of PEG. The research group found that many structural elements of PEG were fully implemented in the first year, including full-day full-year preschool, classroom ratios, and teacher degrees. In terms of teacher compensation, teachers were paid commensurate to pay at public schools, with teachers paid an average of \$54K/year. Board Member Block inquired how teacher compensation was determined. Ms. Bowne responded that the PEG programs tried to make salaries as commensurate as possible based on level. She also noted that salaries are commensurate with the public schools but expectations are higher for PEG teachers because they must teach for a full-day and year-round. Board Member Chesloff asked if the research group has seen any impact of higher salaries on recruiting and retention of staff. Ms. Checkoway responded that the research group has not yet looked at retention, but it will be part of the research. Ms. Bowne stated that recruiting teacher for the PEG programs was no problem, but noted that some programs had trouble recruiting for the third teacher position.

Ms. Checkoway stated that all of the PEG classrooms were implementing formal curricula, although they varied across communities, and in some instances, programs. All programs were using the TS Gold formative assessment system. The research group found that some of the core components were partially implemented. Ms. Checkoway noted that the available level of supports for teachers and families varied across the PEG programs. The research group surveyed PEG leadership about collaboration and found that most were positive about the collaborative governance structure. Ms. Checkoway noted that challenges varied by community, but overall, leadership was positive about the importance of structure.

Regarding teacher supports, Ms. Checkoway stated that PEG programs were able to design their own support programs. She noted that actual professional development varied in intensity across communities and that many of the programs were still implementing their models. She added that programs were trying to get a lot off the ground quickly, but teachers were relatively positive in their experience as PEG teachers, which may bode well for retention.

Board Member Chesloff stated that it seems like there are two policy problems: underpayment of teachers and empty classrooms because providers are unable to recruit teachers due to low pay. He added that the PEG model feels like lead teachers are just being elevated and given better pay, but it does not seem like it is attracting new teachers to the field. Ms. Bowne responded that attention is being paid to how assistant teachers are being trained and there are conversations on how the lead teachers can support the assistant teachers. The third teacher position is still ambiguous. Board Member Chesloff commented that this is not really addressing the pipeline, which is a bigger problem. Ms. Goodson stated that it may be worth measuring whether there are more people becoming certified and over time how many staff are recruited. The number of programs that have the opportunity to follow the PEG model is small and it has been only one year into PEG. She continued that it may be worth measuring over time whether this model can serve as a pipeline, but that the change would probably need to be institutionalized.

Vice Chairperson Walachy asked whether PEG classroom staff were already employed by the programs. Ms. Goodson responded that this year it was a mix, and that some teachers were offered to work in the PEG classrooms but did not want to leave their current classrooms. She added that the research group can look at where PEG program teachers originated. Ms. Checkoway added that she heard of issues within programs regarding PEG classrooms and non-PEG classrooms, noting that the average assistant teacher salary was \$44K, which is well above average salary numbers in other programs. Commissioner Weber stated that the average salary in Boston's PEG programs is quite different than other communities and wondered whether Boston's average salary skews the overall average.

Ms. Checkoway stated that family engagement efforts will create a better sense of connection and increase the understanding of child development. She noted that programs reported differing levels of family engagement, although all reported engaging parents. She added that there was room for improvement as far as how to reach all families. Regarding the provision of comprehensive services, nearly all programs reported referring families to all services, and nearly half of programs provided services directly. She noted that programs built relationships with resources in the community to provide services. Ms. Checkoway stated that parents were extremely positive about their child's PEG program, and focus groups reported similar findings.

Secretary Peyser asked if there was a non-PEG control group studied. Ms. Goodson responded that they have not yet, but noted that it is hard to find anyone who says they do not like where they put their child. She added that many parents did not have their children in formal early education environments prior to PEG, and parents noted that it is difficult to schedule things regarding parent engagement activities.

Ms. Goodson stated that we know from research that what really matters is alignment between home and school. Ms. Checkoway stated that the research group will be looking at family level outcomes, including what is going on in the home learning environment. She added that a majority of parents reported reading to children and playing with them at home, which is comparable to other programs.

Ms. Goodson stated that PEG classrooms in their first year were moderate to high quality. She added that there is variation, and that the average is not representative to the kind of variation. Across all forty-eight classrooms, programs used different curricula, but most are high literacy and language focused. One quarter of classrooms are using additional formative assessment tools, including English language assessment tools.

Ms. Goodson provided a snapshot of activities in the PEG programs, which focused on quantity, not quality. She noted that there are interesting stories of what a day looks like for children. She stated that there was a lot of time spent in teacher-structured learning activities, a chunk of time spent in transitional activities, and some time on child-directed activities. Chairperson Lesaux asked if the

snapshots would look the same if all sites were lined up side-by-side. Ms. Goodson responded that the snapshots would be similar by site, but different by program. She added that teachers have made individual decisions of how to run their classrooms. She cautioned that the snapshots were a very high-level view and did not pick up the multiple goals of any specific learning activity. She added that it is hard to get a high score on a structural support unless you are spending time with smaller groups of kids.

Chairperson Lesaux acknowledged that this is where professional learning comes in regarding managing and orchestrating a classroom. Ms. Goodson stated that she has seen programs where the first hour is all transitional activities. Other teachers can make learning experience out of transitional activities; this is hard to do that all the time, but there are teachers that can do this. She added that training teachers to do this is important. Vice Chairperson Walachy stated that since there are three teachers in each classroom, we would imagine that we would see smaller groups. Ms. Goodson stated that if the assistant teachers were well trained and well paid, classrooms could break into smaller groups more easily. However, the more kids you have, the more you tend to move them through as a group.

Board Member Joyce asked what is an ideal percentage for small group activities. Ms. Goodson responded that the more PEG classrooms had small and medium group activities, the higher their scores were in the assessment. Secretary Peyser asked if small group that makes a difference with respect to quality, or whether both small and medium groups make a difference. Ms. Goodson responded that programs that spent more time in small groups performed better than programs that spent significant time in full-class groups. Ms. Goodson provided some data regarding how PEG programs performed on different ratings scales.

Board Member Villegas-Reimers asked when in the school year where the analyses taken. Ms. Goodson responded that most were taken in March. Regarding the ratings scales, Ms. Goodson noted that there are a few classrooms that are highly achieving. Secretary Peyser asked where there are PEG classrooms in programs that have pre-existing classrooms, whether they demonstrate the same performance. Ms. Goodson responded that the research group does not have enough resources to measure this. Ms. Goodson added that instructional supports. Chairperson Lesaux asked if the instructional support scale was driving up the emotional support scale. Ms. Goodson responded affirmatively. Ms. Goodson stated that curriculum is a platform but not a recipe. Chairperson Lesaux added that this also prevents teachers from being tied up with designing and delivery, noting that if you only provide frameworks and guidance, teachers have to design and deliver in real time, which is really difficult.

Ms. Goodson stated that PEG is an opportunity, with the program providing teachers proper pay and resources, and focusing on kids that could really use a boost. She added that we would like for this to be a model program and we have to show that we can do this in community based programs. Regarding literacy and math scores, there are many children in the broad center, but in early math and early literacy, there are some kids on the lower end of the scale. Ms. Joyce asked that since the PEG student

population is all low income, if we were to break out national averages to where PEG is, where would PEG stand. Ms. Goodson responded that PEG classrooms would be doing well. She added that there is some variation and there are some programs not doing as well. However, there are some classrooms where 100% of the children were at age level.

Board Member Villegas-Reimers asked if the research group has data about teacher preparation. Ms. Goodson responded in the negative, but Ms. Checkoway responded that the research group has some data regarding teacher degrees and number of years of experience. She noted that a low percentage of teachers were in their first year. Ms. Checkoway stated that the research group has a rough analysis of costs, with projected budgets. She stated that the takeaway is that that bulk of funds were for teacher salaries, and what is not represented is an "other" category that involved administrative costs. She added that there are smaller amounts projected for services. She also acknowledged that Boston is not reflected in the graph because PEG funds are blended with other funds. Secretary Peyser asked if the per-child calculation is based on full enrollment. Ms. Checkoway responded that it is. Board Member Wasser Gish asked from where the districts receive additional funds. Ms. Bowne responded that some administrative costs that were not factored in. Ms. Checkoway added that in-kind contributions were also not reflected.

Secretary Peyser asked for clarification regarding costs in Boston. Ms. Bowne responded that Boston is not represented in the full-child cost. She added that most of Boston's costs were the additional salary costs to get the salaries to be commensurate with public school educators. Boston costs do not reflect the full costs of running these classrooms. Board Member Wasser Gish asked, with the preliminary cost information, if the agency could generate some information for the Board to understand options related to expansion. Specifically, she spoke to the broad model of combining public school and community-based programs, noting that we know what some of these high-quality components are. Ms. Goodson stated that the research group will evaluate sustainability, noting that the group will be trying to get to the cost to get each piece of quality, and which ones are making the biggest difference.

Ms. Checkoway stated that the research group will begin the impact study. Ms. Bowne stated that the goals for next year are continuing collaboration and will be looking for ways to support more consistent levels of quality.

II. Preschool Planning Grant Update - Discussion

Relevant resources included in Board Materials:

- *Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (Planning Grant), PowerPoint presentation dated October 11, 2016.*

EEC Senior Research Specialist Jocelyn Bowne and EEC Senior Professional Development Specialist Sarah Volkenant presented the Preschool Planning Grant Update to the Board. Ms. Bowne stated that the panel will speak about the nature of the grant as well as some of the themes and lessons learned. Ms.

Bowne stated that in 2016, \$500K was allocated for planning grants for communities across MA to foster collaboration between public schools and community-based programs to plan for a PEG-like model for children aged 2.5 to 5 years old. Thirteen communities received the grant, and all had to develop a comprehensive plan to provide design of the program. All grantees had to provide some estimate of the cost to address sustainability. In instances where a grantee received less than \$40K, it is because this is the amount they requested a lesser amount. Grants were awarded in January/February 2016 and the final strategic plan was due in June.

Ms. Bowne stated that the collaborations tended to be broad-based and included higher education institutions, philanthropic organizations, and municipal groups. All communities were required to conduct a needs assessment of children and families in the communities. There was a need for full-day, full-year care across all communities. Ms. Bowne stated that many programs did not have capacity to serve the identified needs. All plans thought about where to find seats, or to enhance existing preschool options in place, and there were concerns of overall lack of physical space.

Ms. Volkenant stated that certain design components included partnerships in governance between the public school and center-based or family child care programs and the envisioning of birth to grade three alignment. Ms. Volkenant stated that there were a variety of governance structures communicated, with all communities prioritizing working low-income families, especially those with no previous formal early education exposure. She noted that some communities mentioned a mixed-income model, funding children together with private pay children. Some plans identified a central location, while others offered classrooms across the community. With respect to teacher qualifications, most plans called for at least one BA teacher in the classroom. Most plans saw increased compensation as a way to retain qualified staff. Plans included consideration of services for children with special needs, with the goal of providing services in primary education setting.

Ms. Volkenant stated that, with respect to costs, the grantees provided a variety of levels of detail, with these costs even more tentative than PEG costs. All programs stated the need for state funding to implement their programs, and some mentioned requiring local and philanthropic support. All grantees noted the need to account for one-time start-up costs, operating costs, in-kind contributions, and utilities costs.

Ms. Bowne concluded that there is a clear need for expansion in these communities. Secretary Peyser asked if any of the communities went through this exercise and determined that this model was not the best approach. Ms. Bowne responded that, in large part, communities stuck with the model. Secretary Peyser added that there is some implicit theory of change here of model programs that stands along other programs, and asked if there been any conversation stimulated by this to use funds to have a greater impact, or a lesser impact among more students. Ms. Bowne responded that this was not clear within the Planning Grant process, but there is communication within the PEG communities.

Board Member Wasser Gish asked whether all communities expressed the desire for new facilities. Ms. Bowne responded that only a few of the communities wanted to renovate new facilities. Ms. Bowne also stated that funding is important to think about, noting that PEG provides its own funding stream. Vice Chairperson Walachy stated that, using Springfield as an example, one of the challenges that we have is a plan that was comprehensive and did what the community wanted to do, but it was difficult to figure out who should own it. Who is going to wake up in these communities and designate who is responsible in the city or town to implement these plans. Ms. Bowne responded that it is implicit that the school system tended to take that primary role. Vice Chairperson Walachy added that one of the frequent challenges becomes when the money gets put on the table, it becomes less clear about who is in charge. Chairperson Lesaux stated that third grade reading campaigns have this problem; when money is on the table, the game changes.

Commissioner Weber stated that the PEG grant required that the grantee be the public school district, so there is no variation in those five communities. He added that this Planning Grant was born out of statutory language that used PEG as a framework, so there was an inherent bias in this way this was approached. However, it did leave communities some latitude as to who would take the lead on it. Communities may need some flexibility as to who takes the lead, and who takes on a secondary or tertiary role in this.

Other Business

Following the Planning Grant discussion, Chairperson Lesaux called for more information about the freeze on backfilling slots from the income eligible account. Chairperson Lesaux stated that there is reason to think through the Oversight Committee agenda to circle back on these issues and to think about MADCA's letter. Board Member Wasser Gish stated that the Board would benefit as to a better understanding as to what is happening. She added that the combination of historic pressures on the income eligible account combined by new pressures and overall state budget picture would require the Board to think about what is happening both short and long term. Board Member Wasser Gish noted that when she first joined the Board, the Department was running a huge deficit, and the Board worked hard to close the gap and move in a fiscally responsible direction. Chairperson Lesaux stated that more information and clarity in the coming weeks will be critical. Vice Chairperson Walacy stated that she acknowledges that Board Member Childs and the Oversight Committee may have a more complete picture.

Chairperson Lesaux called up former Board Member Sharon Scott-Chandler, whose term on the Board recently expired. She stated that, in 2007, Governor Patrick named Ms. Scott-Chandler the Board Chairperson. Chairperson Lesaux thanked Ms. Scott-Chandler for her nine years on the Board. Secretary Peyser stated that Ms. Scott-Chandler's role on the Board is historically significant, with her leadership and persistence making a huge difference. Secretary Peyser presented Ms. Scott-Chandler with a citation from the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

Commissioner Weber recognized Ms. Scott-Chandler's service on behalf of the Department. He stated that nine years on the Board is extraordinary. Ms. Scott-Chandler served the Department through its infancy and led its agenda. Commissioner Weber observed Ms. Scott-Chandler's unique role as not only Board chair, but also serving as a provider representative. He stated that Ms. Scott-Chandler handled all challenges with good humor, intelligence, and placing children and families' interests at the forefront. Commissioner Weber presented Ms. Scott-Chandler with flowers and a gift certificate to a local spa, presented as a token of respect and perhaps a symbol of need for some self-care.

Ms. Scott-Chandler stated that she is speechless. She stated that she did not join the Board for accolades, but because the work is important. She stated she was grateful for the kind words and for the opportunity to serve and chair the Board. Commissioner Weber stated that there would be a small reception for Ms. Scott-Chandler after the meeting adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas L. Weber
Commissioner of the Department and
Secretary to the Board