



Board of Early Education and Care

January 10, 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

Mary Walachy, Vice Chairperson

Sheila Balboni

Joni Block

JD Chesloff

Katie Joyce

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Absent

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

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

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

Welcome and Comments from the Chairperson

Chairperson Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D. wished the Board and public a Happy New Year. She stated that Board Member Elizabeth Childs' term on the Board has come to an end, and the Board is planning an event to recognize her contributions to the Board and to the Department. Chairperson Lesaux stated that the Board will welcome Alison Schonwald, M.D. to the Board in February. Board Member JD Chesloff will chair the Board's Fiscal & Oversight Subcommittee and Board Member Sheila Balboni will also join the Subcommittee.

Chairperson Lesaux stated that today's agenda will pick up from the previous Board Meeting and describe the work that the Board plans to conduct in the future. She noted that although Information

Technology (“IT”) is a function of the Executive Office of Education (“EOE”), this work is an important part of the functioning of the Department. To this end, the Board will hear from Kim Rice, Chief Information Officer (“CIO”) of EOE. In addition, Chairperson Lesaux stated that the Board will hear about upcoming grants and changes that are consistent with prioritizing workforce supports.

Comments from the Secretary

There were no comments from Secretary James Peyser.

Comments from the Commissioner

Commissioner Tom Weber wished everyone a Happy New Year. Commissioner Weber stated that between December and today’s Board Meeting, the Department has been very active.

He updated the Board on the following:

Departure of Board Member Childs:

Commissioner Weber stated that he looks forward to celebrating Board Member Childs’s tenure on the Board, noting that her contributions have been outstanding.

Governor’s Budget Recommendation:

On January 25, 2017, the Department will receive the Governor’s budget recommendation, which is the night before the Governor will deliver his State of the Commonwealth Address. Commissioner Weber noted that the Department is responding to questions from the Executive Office of Administration & Finance (“ANF”) to help the Governor finalize his budget recommendation.

Agency-wide Webinar:

Commissioner Weber stated that he held his first agency webinar in December 2016. He noted that it is not easy to convene the entire staff for one meeting because the Department is spread out across the state. The webinar discussed the Board’s budget recommendation and planning for an in-person agency-wide staff meeting later in the year, which will likely take place in the fall.

Advisory Council:

Commissioner Weber stated that he met with the Advisory Council, which he noted is a signature component of Board Member Joni Block’s work. He wants to bring topics that relate to the ongoing Board discussion so that the “advisory” component of the Advisory Council is honored. During the Advisory Council Meeting, the attendees discussed workforce, QRIS revisions, and grant planning, and the Commissioner received positive and helpful feedback.

Residential Schools Working Group:

Commissioner Weber met with the Residential Schools Working Group that was convened by the Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”). He noted that Public Consulting Group (“PCG”) is working on the initiative, and he expects the working group to present recommendations this month, which will be presented to the Board. Commissioner Weber noted that some of the themes that are emerging during the working group include increasing communication and aligning the Department’s monitoring work with other state agencies.

Background Record Checks:

Commissioner Weber participated in a discussion with the Governor's Office on December 19, 2016 regarding background record checks. He noted that many of these checks cut across multiple agencies, and this meeting is the first of regular conversations to attempt to develop a statewide approach to background record checks. He noted that this is a big issue for the Department, because absorbing the state mandated background record checks has been challenging, but this difficult situation will be further exacerbated by the Child Care Development Block Grant ("CCDBG") requirements. He noted that all parties at the table acknowledged that this issue is a priority, and there was acknowledgement that the Department's current system was inadequate.

Interagency Monthly Meetings:

Commissioner Weber stated that the Department has commenced formal monthly meetings with the Department of Transitional Assistance ("DTA") and the Department of Children and Families ("DCF"). He noted that this will allow the Department to continue to advance shared policy work with other state agencies in a systemic way.

Early Educator Scholarships:

Commissioner Weber stated that later this week, he will share information regarding the Board of Higher Education's vote on the early educator scholarship. He noted that current guidelines allow for degrees related to early education and care to qualify, which has proven over time to be problematically broad. Board Member Joan Wasser Gish raised concern about narrowing the number of qualifying degrees, because it may preclude people from participating in the scholarship program given that many types of degrees may lend themselves to the early education field. Board Member Block applauded the Board of Higher Education for tackling this issue.

Preschool Expansion Grant:

Commissioner Weber updated the Board on the Preschool Expansion Grant ("PEG"), stating that the Department received its third year of funding in December 2016. He noted that the Lawrence and Lowell programs both opened with full enrollment this year, and the other three communities are between 80%-85% enrollment. All communities have been focused on lessons learned from the first two years of the program, including receiving support from both EEC and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition, all communities are employing coaching supports this year, and all communities are assembling steering committees to focus on comprehensive services. Vice Chairperson Mary Walachy inquired what challenges remain surrounding enrollment within the PEG programs. Commissioner Weber responded that transportation was a concern, as well as the requirement to prioritize children with no prior formal early education experience.

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.

No statements from the public were made.

Routine Business

- **Approval of Minutes from December 13, 2016 Meeting – Vote**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

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

Advisory Council:

Chairperson Lesaux updated the Board on the Advisory Council meeting held on December 16, 2016. She was present at the meeting and stated that it was positive and she found that the Council was receptive to many of the Board's initiatives. Commissioner Weber stated that there are minutes from the meeting that will be distributed. Chairperson Lesaux stated that the plan will be to have the Board Members attend the Advisory Council meetings when the Advisory Council addresses areas that align with Board initiatives.

- **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. Board Member Sheila Balboni submitted disclosure that she is employed by Community Day Care d/b/a the Community Group, Inc., that receives EEC funding.

New Business

No new business was raised.

Items for Discussion and Action

- I. Board Planning, January-August – Discussion
Relevant resources included in Board Materials
 - *EEC Board Meeting Planning for FY2017, PowerPoint presentation dated January 10, 2017*

Commissioner Weber set forth a proposed agenda for the Board Meetings and Board Subcommittee Meetings for the rest of FY17, with the goal of maximizing coordination and effectiveness.

January 2017:

- Board Meeting: Board planning for the remainder of FY17, FY18 Grant Review, EOE IT presentation.
- Workforce Working Group and QRIS Ad Hoc Committee: Draft of QRIS revision from Dr. Joanne Roberts, Update on RFR for coaching and foundational workforce.
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: EEOST presentation, standing agenda items.

February 2017:

- Board Meeting: QRIS revision update, foster care/adoption regulations, 2016 Legislative Report, and OCA report (tentative).
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: Contract bids update (tentative), standing agenda items.

Commissioner Weber noted that the plan is to bring the regulatory changes to the adoption and placement regulations for your vote, and the intent is to present the legislative report and possibly the Office of Child Advocate Report for your consideration.

March 2017:

- Board Meeting: Child Care Development Fund (“CCDF”) State Plan update and draft subsidy regulations.
- Workforce Working Group and QRIS Ad Hoc Committee: Debrief on the March board meeting and next steps.
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: Update on transportation study, standing agenda items.
- Advisory Council: QRIS revision with report out at April meeting.

Board Member Joan Wasser Gish inquired whether the Board could have a discussion around the subsidy regulations. She requested additional information about what changes are within the subsidy regulations and noted that the challenge is that it is extremely complex and bumps up against Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”).

April 2017:

- Board Meeting: House Budget, Listening Tour.
- Workforce Working Group and QRIS Ad Hoc Committee: QRIS revisions.
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: tiered rates discussion, standing agenda items.

Although there is a listening session is presently scheduled for Thursday, April 13, 2017 from 4-7pm, it is possible the date may be changed to Wednesday, April 12, 2017. The plan is to schedule another evening listening session in the spring. The intent during this month is to begin a discussion about tiered rates with the Fiscal & Oversight Committee.

May 2017:

- Board Meeting: QRIS revisions update and Senate budget update.
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: Transportation study discussion, contract bids update (tentative), tiered rates, standing agenda items.

There will be an ongoing discussion about tiered rates within the Fiscal & Oversight Committee. There may be changes to the schedule with respect to the QRS Ad Hoc Committee.

June 2017:

- Board Meeting: QRIS Revision (tentative vote), Licensing regulations, Conference budget, 2017-18 Board Meeting schedule.
- Fiscal & Oversight Committee: Transportation study discussion, standing agenda items.

- Advisory Council: Tiered rates & professional learning in QRIS for August retreat.

During this month, the plan is to bring the QRIS revisions to the board for a discussion and vote. The Department also plans to bring forth revisions to EEC's licensing regulations as precipitated by CCDDBG. The plan is to have a preliminary discussion in May prior to the Board Vote in June 2017. The transportation study will be discussed during the Fiscal & Oversight Committee Meeting. An Advisory Committee Meeting is being scheduled to share where the tiered rate discussion has progressed over the spring as well as professional learning and QRIS work.

Summer Retreat 2017:

- Workforce and professional learning, Regulation Revisions, FY19 Grants, Contracting Updates.

There is a chart of proposed activity within the Board's binders. Board Member Wasser Gish stated that overall she finds the chart very helpful. With respect to licensing requirements, she suggested that EEC consider the changes in coordination with the QRIS revisions because ultimately there is a connection between requirements and costs. Board Member Block stated that she likes the chart as a roadmap, but she anticipates that there will be many detours and areas we may want to address in the future. Chairperson Lesaux stated that this serves as a first look at the Board's overall priorities and the Department's capabilities.

II. EOE IT Presentation on EEC IT Systems – Discussion

Relevant resources included in Board Materials:

- *EOE IT Presentation to Board of EEC, PowerPoint presentation dated January 10, 2017*

Kim Rice, CIO of EOE, presented on EEC's IT systems. Ms. Rice briefly discussed her background, including her previous work with the Boston Public Schools. She stated that the most important phrases in EOE IT's mission statement is "connect and empower" and "build and support", noting that EOE IT is a service organization. She noted that EOE IT is still trying to find the true value of IT consolidation within EOE. There are 90 people working for EOE IT, split approximately 50/50 between staff members and contractors. EOE IT supports the five education agencies in Massachusetts, with the goal of having data flow across all of the agencies.

Ms. Rice provided an overview of the general services provided by EOE IT, including desktop support as well as application development, maintenance, and support. She noted that there are many great applications developed at EEC, but that many applications have been developed by different individuals in relative isolation. The goal of MassIT is to reorganize the structure, and added that better data and analytical services would allow for the public and other agencies to use EEC's data.

Board Member Block asked how the Department is collecting data to determine outcomes. Ms. Rice responded that many applications collect data, and that a future state will move some of this data to a portal. Commissioner Weber added that the goal is a data warehousing system that streamlines a largely disparate set of systems. He noted that this will require an immense effort and resources. Chairperson Lesaux asked about a timeframe for completing these future state projects. Ms. Rice responded that EOE IT is doing an "under the hood" review of the general state of all the systems and that there are certain applications that are more advanced than others. She added that she is in the process of putting together capital proposals that will chart out what can be done in the next fiscal year.

Board Member Balboni asked what role Ms. Rice would have had with CCFA in the beginning stages. Ms. Rice responded that first she would work with leadership to determine business rules and then go through a “build v. buy” conversation. She added that in general she tries to stay out of the software development business where possible. Commissioner Weber added that the caliber of work on CCFA has improved dramatically over the last year and a half. Secretary Peyser stated that Ms. Rice also interfaces with MassIT. Board Member Wasser Gish asked how much the Department is tethered to existing application. Ms. Rice responded that the barriers are time and resources, and although each application is functioning, each is advanced separately. She also noted that many of the decision points come from prioritization, and that IT consolidation should help on those efforts.

Ms. Rice set forth four main areas of work this year: data integration and migration, CCFA, LEAD, and BRC. She stated that CCFA and LEAD require continued application support. For BRC, EOE has been talking with other agencies and secretariats. She added that an IT governance group has been convened to help identify resources when needed. Board Member Balboni asked if consultants have been brought in to make recommendations. Ms. Rice responded that consultants are often brought in and MassIT and other state partners have committed to supporting projects. She explained that it is important to lay out business requirements when managing large applications. Commissioner Weber noted that he believes there will be a major company brought in as a consultant for the BRC project and noted that EEC is partnering with the Governor’s Office. He explained that one thing EEC learned from CCFA was the importance of having strong oversight and capacity within the project. Board Member Wasser Gish asked if Ms. Rice has any guidance for the Board regarding how to think about IT with respect to resource constraints and budget cycles. Ms. Rice responded that EOE IT is still learning to work with EEC to take a new idea, put something together, and move it into production. She added that an important step will be bringing in capital funding and determining a funding source. Commissioner Weber added that as things are brought forward, it is important that there is an assessment of the practical application of how things work within the system. One of the things learned from CCFA, is that we should have begun with an assessment and simplification of the subsidy regulations and overly-complex subsidy rules. It is important to think through the practical implications of operationalizing our regulations, after recognizing the challenges with CCFA and the complexity of the CCDF regulations.

III. Fiscal Year 2018 Grant Overview – Discussion

Relevant resources included in Board Materials:

- *Workforce Development Strategy Impact on EEC Grant Development, PowerPoint presentation dated January 10, 2017.*

EEC Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Anita Moeller presented the Fiscal Year 2018 Grant Overview to the Board. She noted the need to balance expectations of programs with the resources they are provided, which is a theme that runs through all of the work. The goal is to create conditions for growth and change. She stated that the goal is to move away from one-time funds to development systems for the entire workforce in a manner that limits destabilization. Deputy Commissioner Moeller noted the need for IT capacity and the need to purchase a learning management system, as well as develop technical assistance capacity such as coaching. She discussed the need to develop a competency-based credentialing system and to provide more upfront supports to programs.

Regarding the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (“IPLE”) Grant, Deputy Commissioner Moeller explained that the plan is that beginning in FY18, EEC will transition the funding from IPLE into workforce with a 1/3rd decrease in funding each year with a \$30,000 floor. She stated that the Educator Provider Support (“EPS”) Grant and the Early Childhood Mental Health Grant will be revised, increased, and bid competitively. The Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (“CFCE”) Grant will also be bid competitively, and the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (“UPK”) Grant will be renewed for one year.

Vice Chairperson Walachy stated that the change to the IPLE Grant will affect public schools. Deputy Commissioner Moeller responded that the IPLE funds mostly go to paying for salaries for teachers and paraprofessionals. Commissioner Weber added that the funding only speaks to 20% of the public school pre-K classroom. Secretary Peyser stated that it is thoughtful to phase out the IPLE grant across a number of years, which would allow schools to adjust to the change. Deputy Commissioner Moeller stated that this will challenge the Department to remain connected to the public schools. Commissioner Weber added that PEG will still grant the Department a lane into the public schools, where IPLE was more of a pass-through.

Board Member Block appreciated that the Department is looking at a systematic approach, and noted that she found a 2004 report that framed the development of the Department. She added that at the time, the Department was looking at a mixed delivery system and promoting universal preschool. She expressed that the Department has other opportunities to engage with the public schools, such as with CFCE and QRIS. She added that the Advisory Council was worried that a reduction in the UPK grant would destabilize the field. She expressed that it is critical to have the conversation about the change up front, because affected schools may not anticipate the change and will have already created budgets. She inquired why the discussion did not begin with reducing the UPK grant. Commissioner Weber stated the Department had to start somewhere with looking at the grants, having to balance and decide what is best among competing resources. Board Member Block responded that the idea of moving funds to sustainable initiatives rather than operational initiatives is the clear direction to go. She also stated that the Department should still look at how we support inclusive learning environments.

Deputy Commissioner Moeller stated that communication and timing will be very important, and that building IT systems will help the Department get the data it needs. She also stated that renewing UPK for one year will give the Department time to develop other initiatives. Chairperson Lesaux stated that the idea of shifting dollars to real capacity building lessens the problem.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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