Policy, Research and Communications Committee
of the Board of Early Education and Care

January 5, 2015
10:00AM - 12:00PM

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

Members of the Committee/Board Present:
Joan Wasser Gish, Board Member/Policy, Research and Communications Committee Chair
Sharon Scott-Chandler, Board Member (by phone)
Joni Block, Board Member
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Board Member

EEC Staff Present:
Jennifer Amaya-Thompson, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office
Liz Belsito, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Project Director
Betsy Edes, Early Education Coordinator
Sean Faherty, Chief of Staff
Kathleen Hart, Director of Communications and External Affairs
Chau Ly, Program Manager for Statewide and Community Supports
Evelyn Nellum, Policy Analyst
Carol Nolan, Director of Policy
Jay Swanson, Policy Analyst
Carmel Sullivan, General Counsel
Felicia Sullivan, Assistant General Counsel
Vicki Van Zee, Interagency Liaison

Members of the Public Present:
MaryAnn Anthony, Director of the Child Care Division, Catholic Charities
Kaela Chevalier, Communications and Policy Associate, Child Development and Education
Bethanie Glass, Assistant Director, Early Childhood Services, Department of Children and Families
Pam Kuechler, Director, Massachusetts Head Start Association
Kate Roper, Assistant Director, Early Childhood Services, Department of Public Health
Sandy Wixted, Assistant Director, Early Childhood Services, Department of Mental Health
Wayne Ysaguirre, President, Nurtury

The meeting was called to order at 10:04am

Disclosures:
Joni Block disclosed that she is employed by Brockton Public Schools and the Brockton Public Schools receive
EEC funding.

Minutes:
Minutes from the December 1, 2014 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Agenda Items:

1. Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Grant FY16 - Discussion

Jay Swanson presented on UPK, specifically on the revisions for the proposed FY16 UPK grant based on discussions and feedback from the Policy, Research and Communications Committee meeting on December 1, 2014 and the EEC Board meeting on December 9, 2014. The primary revisions to the FY16 UPK grant proposal include:

- A purpose of the FY16 UPK grant is to create a group of high quality preschool programs that can serve as models of excellence, engage in communities of practice, and support the process of continuous quality improvement across the Commonwealth. The recipients of the open competitive grant ($6.3M) may be entitled to receive funding for two subsequent years (renewal grants), contingent upon the recipients satisfying the grant requirements. The eligibility criteria for the open competitive grant will differ from the eligibility criteria for the FY15 Renewal Grant. To be eligible to apply for the FY16 UPK Grant, programs must satisfy all seven (7) of the criteria.

- The seven criteria include: **#1)** must have, at a minimum, a Level 2 application with the status of "QRIS Rating Granted" AND a self-assessed Level 3 application with the status of "Final - Submitted to EEC" or above in the QRIS Program Manager; **#2)** must have an income-eligible contract and/or voucher agreement in place and be willing to accept EEC-subsidized or low-income children; **#3)** must provide access to full-day, full-year services for working families; **#4)** must have current accreditation or a non-expired Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher for family child care educators (AA, BA, or Master's degree); **#5)** must demonstrate serving preschool-aged children (age 2 years 9 months to kindergarten eligible); **#6)** must demonstrate serving "high needs children" in the preschool classroom(s); **#7)** must demonstrate that formative assessment data is collected and entered for each child in the preschool classroom(s). The matriculation requirement for eligibility criterion #1 is as follows:

QRIS Status at Time of Application	Expectation(s)
Level 2 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted" **AND** a self assessed **Level 3** with status of "Final-Submitted to EEC" or above.	Required to be at Level 3 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted" **by June 30, 2016.**
	Required to be at Level 4 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted" **by June 30, 2018.**
Level 3 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted"	Required to be at Level 4 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted" **by June 30, 2018.**
Level 4 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted"	Required to **maintain** Level 4 with status of "QRIS Rating Granted" throughout the three year grant cycle.

- Programs receiving UPK funds are required to provide developmentally appropriate programming to preschool children as evidenced by: **a)** *Early Childhood Program Standards for Three and Four Year Olds*;* **b)** *Massachusetts Frameworks for Math and Literacy*; **c)** *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences*; **d)** *Pre-K Science and Technology/Engineering Standards*; **e)** *Massachusetts Guidelines to Serve Dual Language Learners*; and **f)** One of the three EEC-approved formative assessment tools (Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, or High Scope COR).

    (*The use of *Early Childhood Program Standards for Three and Four Year Olds* does not apply to family child care educators.)

- UPK grantees are required to participate in EEC's QRIS Online Learning Community as well as have the ability to provide best practices advice/support to those early education and care programs that might need guidance within their respective local communities.

- Additionally, UPK grantees are required to provide competitive compensation packages for preschool educators as demonstrated by: Written salary scale; Annual salary increases; Compensation plan that provides for merit increases in addition to annual salary increases; Health insurance benefits; Paid sick/personal days; Paid vacation days; Contribution to retirement plans; Reimbursement for professional development; and Tuition reimbursement.

- The FY16 UPK funding formula is intended to address the $10,000 salary gap between public preschool educators and private/community based educators. It is a tiered funding formula with 3 steps: 1) classroom level based on QRIS status, 2) number of preschool children in the classroom, 3) number of program hours/days per year. Given this proposed funding formula, there will be 68 out of the 224 existing UPK programs that will *not* be eligible for the FY16 UPK grant.

The discussion focused on questions raised about the timeline for programs to meet criterion #1, financial support for UPK classroom teachers to earn their degrees, funding formula, compensation for educators given the salary gap between community based programs and public preschools, and the pros and cons in supporting quality in a UPK classroom versus a program.

Chair Joan Wasser Gish asked members of the Board if they were comfortable voting on the FY16 UPK grant proposal and they said yes.

2. Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Fund 391 Grant FY16 - Discussion

Evelyn Nellum presented on the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Grant, specifically on the revisions for the proposed FY16 Fund 391 grant based on discussions and feedback from the Policy, Research and Communications Committee meeting on December 1, 2014 and the EEC Board meeting on December 9, 2014. The primary revisions to the 391 grant proposal include:

- "High needs children" is defined as children who have two or more risk factors shown to be linked to poor school and life outcomes: children from low-income households; eligible for free or reduced priced meals; with special needs/ disability (IEP/or 504 plan); previously participated in Early Intervention (EI) (IFSP); homeless or move more than once a year, as defined under the McKinney Vento Act; are Dual Language Learners - whose home language is not English (DLL/ELL/LEP); parental education less than a high school diploma or GED; parental chronic illness or disability affecting care-giving ability; have experienced multiple trauma or losses; whose family recently immigrated to U.S. (parent who came to the U.S. within the past 10 years); families and children involved with multiple state agencies; parents who are deployed and are not living on a military base.
- Provide grant oversight that supports program(s) capacity to offer high quality, inclusive preschool learning environments in EEC-licensed, center-based programs, Head Start programs, and/or public school preschool programs. Support access and effective transitions for children and families through communication, collaboration, and coordination.
- Lead agencies must meet all requirements set forth in *Lead Agency Role and Responsibilities and Subcontracting Requirements* and must ensure that there is a system in place to conduct screenings for three and four year olds and for children who are of age to enter kindergarten, within the communities to be served (with parental consent).
- Funding provided through this grant must support the cost of salaries and fringe benefits of the preschool lead teacher and preschool paraprofessional/ assistant teachers who provide direct program services within these designated classroom setting(s). Preschool Lead Teachers funded through this grant must hold a Bachelor or advanced degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field, hold appropriate certification / licensure as required by EEC, ESE and/or; Head Start, and have experience or coursework in working with diverse learners and young children with disabilities.

- IPLE funded setting must use individualized embedded instruction (Universal Design for Learning) that includes a system that provides multiple opportunities throughout the year to measure children's developmental growth and progress, gather input from families and other caregivers, and ensure that all educators and family members are aware of the strategies that are necessary for supporting the child in all environments, including outdoor settings.
- Programs are required to engage in efforts that furthers the incorporation and implementation of: the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the CSEFEL model and the Social-Emotional Learning standards (when available). Programs have a minimum requirement to maintain QRIS Rating of Level 1 in accordance with the QRIS Rating Policies and Procedures for FY2016 (QRIS Rating Granted of Level 2 or higher is preferred), develop a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan, at least once annually, and must have at least one designated QRIS Program Administrator.

The discussion centered around the alignment of all the curriculum standards for the UPK and 391 grants, the need to provide more CSEFEL training to programs and the role of regional school districts in administering the 391 grant.

3. Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) - Update

Betsy Edes presented on the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA). MKEA provides districts with a formative assessment tool which allows teachers to assess children's growth and learning across all essential developmental domains (e.g. cognitive, physical, social-emotional; as well as use observational data to inform instruction, leading to more individualized teaching and planning. MKEA also provides districts with new sources of data that can be used for a variety of purposes including: sharing information with families through report cards and other forms of communication; tailoring professional development and individual goals to support administrators and educators in working effectively with the students in their specific classroom or school; informing IEPs, grade level meetings and planning, and supporting transitions. Observational formative assessment happens while children are involved in learning activities; provides in-the-moment information used to tailor instruction, supporting the learning outcomes of individual students; and systematizes and guides observation to help teachers support all areas of development and learning.

Some of the strengths of MKEA initiative include MKEA is a developmentally appropriate way to assess young children; the assessment happens alongside learning and, when fully implemented, considers all essential areas of learning; teachers use MKEA to obtain information that can be used in the moment to support a student's learning; the data can be used for a variety of purposes such as generating report cards, facilitating discussions with families, and supporting transitions; some districts have begun to align MKEA with other systems and are using the date to inform IEPs, monitor student progress over time, and to support lesson planning. Some of the challenges include MKEA can be time consuming if teachers are not strategic about data gathering, many educators and administrators are still learning about formative assessment and how to effectively use the data, many districts are hesitant to engage in aligning MKEA with existing systems as there are concerns about the funding of support the initiative beyond the end of the RTTT-ELC grant.

The discussion centered on questions raised about the purpose of MKEA, the timing of when teachers enter data, the lack of pre-service training in higher education on formative assessment and authentic observation, and and the need for teacher preparation programs to more robustly cover early childhood development.

4. Interagency Partnerships - Update

Vicki Van Zee, Kate Roper, Bethanie Glass, Sandy Wixted presented on interagency partnerships. Kate Roper spoke about the interagency cross-systems training efforts of the Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and

Department of Children and Families (DCF) to coordinate training efforts and built the health infrastructure so that there is a two generational approach to helping the adults and the children. Training modules have been developed. Sandy Wixted spoke about DMH's work to train pediatric practices on early childhood mental health and DMH's interest in funding an early childhood mental health specialist position after the RTT-ELC grant ends. Bethanie Glass spoke about the changes to DCF's internal policies and practices to include more early childhood knowledge and practices (such as a new training on early childhood development for new social workers).

There was discussion on how the interagency partnerships would be sustained after the RTT-ELC grant ends, how this work connects with the existing Coordinated Community and Family Engagement (CFCE) grant, and statewide systems building to ensure that children and their families have comprehensive support.

The committee applauded the work of the interagency partnerships and requested that they present at the EEC Advisory Council meeting as well as a Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.