



**Board of Early Education and Care**

Minutes

November 13, 2007

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA 02210

**Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present:**

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq. Chairperson

Ben Russell

J.D. Chesloff

Carole Thomson, MA Department of Education Designee

Patricia F. Plummer, Ph.D

Elizabeth Childs, M.D

**Routine Business:**

**Welcome from the Chair:**

It was noted that an additional Board meeting was held to orientate Board members. The agenda included reviewing EEC's mission and responsibilities, future planning, and obtaining input from stakeholders (the public and parents). This meeting gave Board members a chance to do some long-term and short-term planning. Notes from this meeting will be available at the December Board meeting.

**Agency Updates from the Commissioner:**

**Congratulations**

To Ben Russell and family, on their new baby girl Addyson Grace!

**Safe Sleep Campaign**

As part of EEC's Safe Sleep Campaign a series of "train the trainer" sessions are being held throughout the state starting on November 14, 2007. Five regional trainings will be held for child care systems, R&Rs, CPCs, and licensing staff. The trainings will focus on steps needed to take in order to reduce the risk of SIDS. Resource kits will be provided thanks to the US Department of Health and Human Services. Commissioner Reale thanked the group effort on behalf of FCC Systems, R&Rs, Department of Health and Human Services, and EEC staff person Pam Roux. Materials at the trainings will be shared in English and Spanish. The information and kits provided at these trainings will then be used to train other providers - the goal is to extend the training to all FCC providers, beginning with FCC System providers. The Commissioner also thanked Deputy Commissioners Amy Kershaw and Dave McGrath for their work on this project.

Chairperson Sharon Scott-Chandler asked if the training was for parents and Commissioner Reale stated that EEC shared a handout for parents (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese). This training is more of a chance to get the resource kits to providers and an opportunity to educate them on SIDS awareness.

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)**

All FY 2008 continuation grants have been sent out. The UPK RFR, which the Board voted on last month, was released on Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> and will close on Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup>. The online questionnaire takes only 15 minutes for applicants to fill out and contains 9 questions. Within the first hour of its release, 20 programs applied, 100 by the end of day one, and to date about 200 applicants have applied for this grant. Selected grantees will be brought to the Board for a final decision. The UPK application was significantly streamlined.

### **EEC and DTA Improve Child Care Access for Homeless Families**

EEC and DTA have developed new policies and procedures to provide immediate access to child care financial assistance to homeless families. There are 2,700 children living in DTA homeless shelters and EEC currently serves 700 of those children.

### **Contract Child Care Providers- Rate Increases**

Contracted providers received their rate increases last week. EEC streamlined this procedure and created an automated process through the IT unit. The voucher rate increases will be processed this month followed by the CPC direct service rate increase.

### **Workforce Task Force/Scholarships**

The Workforce Task Force is meeting regularly. The team is looking forward to bringing the Board updates in advance of the June or July report. EEC received 1,200 applications for the Early Childhood Educator's Scholarship, by the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Of those, 800 are currently approved which puts EEC over budget for the appropriation. Current timing is not ideal given that students often are not notified of funding before they must enroll. The Building Careers Grant was granted a \$600K supplemental budget. We are currently in the process of determining how additional funding will be spent.

### **EEC Welcomes New Staff**

Cindy Campbell is the new Communications Manager for EEC. As our next phase of reorganization, the Commissioner announced that our Regional Directors have all now become acting Associate Commissioners for Field Operations.

### **"EEC at a Glance" Report**

*EEC at a Glance* report shows significant changes in the number of children served. DSS supportive expansion cases decreased and the cause of that is being analyzed. In contrast, the DTA case numbers went up and EEC is working with DTA to try to understand this shift. Both impact EEC's spending level for this year and the Board will be provided an update shortly. Commissioner Reale agreed to Chairperson Sharon-Scott Chandler's request for the presentation of a summary of this information that compares changes from month to month.

### **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 3 minutes, although written material of any length can be submitted to Chairperson Sharon Scott-Chandler or Commissioner Ann Reale.

- Gale Brown from Enable, Inc.  
Ms. Brown has administered a Family Child Care System since 1980. Her comments were relative to the re-procurement for income eligible contracts. She would like to see increased qualifications for Systems staff and accommodations made to ensure that the FCC providers get

necessary supports, aligned with the services they are asked to provide (i.e., special needs referrals).

- Kate Roper from Department of Public Health, Director of the Massachusetts Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (MECCS) project, has facilitated meetings for the past year around appropriate medication administration at child care centers. Ms. Roper is very supportive of the new health and safety regulations. The population of children with chronic illness has doubled in the last few years and there is no sign of that stopping. As a result, providers may be asked to administer medication to children in their care. Ms. Roper wants to see providers trained in proper medication administration, including correct dosages, correct timing of dosages, and what documentation to look for or expect when asked to medicate children. DPH is pledging to work with EEC to support in this training as well as sharing child care health consultants to provide support around these issues in the field.
- Maureen Pasek from MA CPC distributed information on MA CPC. MA CPC is an organization of CPC coordinators who meet monthly to review all of the things that they do, and upcoming issues. Pasek gave the Board a one page handout outlining MA CPC budgetary concerns and priorities.
- Carol Upshire from Together for Kids Coalition and UMASS Medical School Works with the evaluation of social-emotional issues in early childhood programs. Upshire is happy to see the Commissioner and the Board supporting this initiative. She would like to see the funding allocated towards mental health be increased. She provided research showing that for each \$1 spent on mental health issues in early childhood, the return on investment is \$1.67. Upshire respectfully encourages the Board to ask the governor for a funding increase in line 3000-6075 for early childhood mental health services and hopes that EEC will support expansion of this grant in FY09.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: unanimously, that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the October 9, 2007 regular meeting as presented by the Commissioner.**

**Items for Discussion and Action:**

*1. Universal Pre-K Planning Grants – Discussion and Vote:*

Deputy Commissioner Kershaw presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining EEC's multi-prong strategy for supporting appropriate child assessment at early education and care programs – both for existing UPK sites and those interested in becoming UPK sites. Deputy Commissioner Kershaw acknowledged that this will be a transition year leading to a more established state infrastructure for assessment support. In FY07, EEC awarded \$1.3M in one-time funding to 60 agencies to implement on-going child assessments.

EEC learned from the FY07 UPK grantees, that they need additional technical assistance on: use of the online assessment systems; improving observation skills; how to use assessment data. UPK grantees felt it could be more efficient for the state to play a more active role in supporting and organizing assessment support activities. Based on this feedback EEC is planning to hire an Assessment Specialist focusing on both early childhood special education and UPK, which will help move this work forward.

Deputy Commissioner Kershaw also presented additional activities EEC is proposing to support on-going child assessments including direct grants to programs, technical assistance tools, and coordination of regional trainings to help current UPK quality classroom use assessment tools more effectively. The presentation included a revised budget to reflect these activities.

Board member Chesloff asks if there is a lot of feedback from the UPK grantees around needing more technical assistance, and will the proposed budget be enough? Deputy Commissioner Kershaw responded that some of the funding used directly for planning grants will go towards the training initiatives and would be built into the planning grants themselves.

Chancellor Plummer asks if this assessment will record developmental delays. Deputy Commissioner Kershaw stated that that could be part of it, but the primary purpose of the assessment tools are focused around looking at the progress of all children across all domains, and that is different from the purpose of screening tools that are specifically designed to identify specific developmental delays.

Chancellor Plummer asks if the UPK providers will know when to refer the child elsewhere for services? Deputy Commissioner Kershaw responds that yes, that is one purpose of these assessment tools but the broader function is also to improve overall instruction in the classroom.

Board member Russell further explained that from the teacher perspective assessment tools help pose the question: what can be done to ensure that each child gets services that they need in my classroom. Commissioner Reale clarified the distinction between assessment and screening – the UPK assessment tools are not the same as screening tools, but may help identify the need for screening and other services to support quality early education.

Chairperson Scott-Chandler clarified the term assessment can be confusing. She suggests thinking about a different name. She believes that what the UPK grant is referring to is much more than assessment, it is a measure of the quality and of how the children are progressing in a classroom.

Chancellor Plummer asks what is the motivation for a small center to refer out the child who is not doing well. Is there a way to have some accountability?

Deputy Commissioner Kershaw recognized that this is an enormously challenging question. Chancellor Plummer asks if you are getting extra money is there going to be a level of accountability put into place. Commissioner Reale answered, yes, because they are directly connected to UPK now. Deputy Commissioner Kershaw added that the FY08 activities are geared towards both monitoring for accountability and providing technical assistance.

Board member Chesloff agrees that the use of the term assessment is confusing. Going forward something to think about is strengthening the message in order to make it clearer that the assessments will be utilized to enhance program quality.

Board member Childs added that the challenge will be when to make a referral for an individual child versus when the classroom is not working? We must develop a way to view the data to allow us to make sure a clear distinction between when tools are to be used at the whole classroom level and when to use it for individual kids.

Deputy Commissioner Kershaw stated that eligibility for assessment planning grants would track to the UPK quality classrooms with the exception of the assessments. Board member Childs asks if for a future meeting there could be a discussion about the research around the BA level of training and the outcomes or achievements. Chairperson Chandler responded that spring may be a good time to have that discussion.

Board member Thomson asks about accreditation data for the public schools. Deputy Commissioner Kershaw noted that 15% of public schools are accredited.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:  
VOTED: unanimously, that the Board of Early Education and Care approves the Department's allocation plan for \$1 million in fiscal year 2008 UPK funding.**

## ***II. FY09 Budget Expansion Priorities***

Deputy Commissioner, Rego-Weathers reviewed a memo to the Board from Commissioner Reale that outlines the Department's FY09 budget priorities. The budget request is \$98.5 M, which is above the maintenance funding needed that was discussed at the October Board meeting. She explained that there are 3 key areas for expansion: Supporting Program and Educator Excellence; Increasing Parent Access, Affordability and Awareness; and Building a Thriving System for Children's Success.

Deputy Commissioner Rego-Weathers reviewed the following items:

### **\$57.9 Million – Supporting Program and Educator Excellence**

- \$25M for continued implementation of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) including critical new support for expanding UPK Quality Grants to qualifying programs, assisting emerging programs to prepare for participation in UPK in coming years, and ensuring program accountability through expanded evaluation, monitoring and oversight. (*Line-item 3000-5075*)
- \$5M to support early education and care and out-of-school time programs achieve national accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC), National School Age Child Care Association (NSACCA). (*Line-item 3000-6000*)
- \$1.1M to expand access to services to support children's behavioral and emotional health in early education and care programs (*Line-item 3000-6075*)
- \$200K for the development of the Quality Rating System (QRS) to fund a consultant to assist with the development of the system and a staff person to oversee and implement the initiative. (*Line-item 3000-1000*)
- \$17.4M to increase the reimbursement rates paid to providers of subsidized care to low-income, working and at-risk families. (*Line-item 1599-0042*)
- \$4.9M to increase transportation rates to provide a cost of living increase for providers that deliver transportation services to our low-income and at-risk families (this would equal a 10% increase and would be only the second increase in more than a decade). (*Line-item 1599-0042*)
- \$270K to provide a cost of living increase to the state's supplement of the federal Head Start programs. (*Line-item 3000-5000*)
- \$2M for expanded access to the Early Educators Scholarship Program to allow early childhood and afterschool educators to pursue and complete higher education degrees. (*Line-item 7070-0065*)

- \$1.2M for the Building Careers program to replace federal funding with state funding to build capacity at higher education institutions for educators seeking degrees in early education and care. *(Line-item 3000-6050)*
- \$350K for Child Development Associate scholarships to fund application and renewal fees for income eligible educators pursuing this national credential. *(Line-item 3000-6050)*
- \$400K to enhance and expand training and professional development opportunities related to new requirements embedded in the proposed child care licensing regulation. *(Line-item 3000-6050)*

Commissioner Reale stated that UPK funding would go to fund new and current quality grantees, and towards planning and assessment grants. The Commissioner also mentioned that an increase in funding for accreditation would allow expansion to school-age accreditation programs and would also acknowledge the more rigorous accreditation currently being implemented by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Board member Plummer pointed out that the Early Educators scholarship does not require an income eligibility level of applicants, but only that applicant must be active in the field. Comments indicated that given the range of salaries levels in the field it is assumed that these scholarships are in fact likely going to those with a minimal income level.

Chairperson Chandler asked if the proposal for professional development related to the new regulations was sufficient. Deputy Commissioner Rego-Weathers answered that a piece of this funding is intended to address a direct change in the regulations around increasing the number of required training hours.

Deputy Commissioner Rego-Weathers then reviewed the following budget priorities:

**\$32 Million – Increasing Parent access, Affordability, and Awareness**

- \$30M for Financial Assistance:
  - \$20M for expanded financial assistance access to early education and care programs for approximately 2,700 children of working low-income families. In some cases, this funding may also be necessary to provide stability and continuity for families experiencing changing circumstances. More than 22,000 children of low-income working Massachusetts families are waiting for access to financial assistance.
  - \$10M for expanded capacity for procurement of the income eligible contracts. This funding would provide additional capacity in underserved areas and continuity of care for families currently enrolled in contracted programs. *(Line-item 3000-4060)*
- \$1M to help new and existing families accessing EEC services receive timely, responsive and up-to-date information on EEC financial assistance and options for enrolling in quality programs for their children. *(Line-item 3000-2000)*
- \$1M for Family Support and Engagement to increase access to the Parent/Child Home Program and the Massachusetts Family Network Program for families. *(Line-item 3000-7050)*

A discussion ensued regarding the EEC waiting list for financial assistance including the current number of families waiting and current policies with regard to priority populations. A request was made to discuss this at an upcoming meeting.

Deputy Commissioner Rego-Weathers then reviewed the following final budget priorities:

**\$8.6 Million -- Building a Thriving State System for Children's Success**

- \$5.7M for the implementation of EEC's Information Technology Strategic Plan to develop the statewide practitioner registry, centralized provider database, and enterprise support. *(Line-item 3000-1000)*
- \$1.7M to increase the Department's ability to meet current and increasing responsibilities, as a first of its kind new agency, through additional licensors, fiscal monitors, and program development and oversight professionals working in the central and regional offices. *(Line-item 3000-1000)*
- \$1M for the successful implementation of regulation reform to build a quality foundation through licensing regulations by providing:
  - Communication support (translations, materials, booklets, forms, templates);
  - Information Systems Re-programming;
  - Training – External and Internal; and
  - Implementation Project Manager. *(Line-item 3000-1000)*
- \$200K to fund a study of the comprehensive “add-on” services. *(Line-item 3000-1000)*

Commissioner Reale explained that EEC is currently operating at a deficiency; the overhead rate in proportion to EEC responsibilities is likely unheard of in organizations of similar size and scope, including those that we oversee and monitor. Discussion focused on the need for additional administration funding, in order to meet the agency's accountability to the Commonwealth and the federal government, which requires extensive monitoring.

Commissioner Reale explained the need for a study of “add-on services” describing how we currently bundle many services, including transportation, into a single rate. She also noted that current policies with regard to who gets these “add-on” services are inconsistent and need to be studied and addressed. How these add-ons are purchased is a big unanswered question, and under the current admin constraints EEC does not have the capacity to analyze this. The funding for a study would give EEC the opportunity to bring someone in to look at the full range of policies and make solid recommendations for change as we request additional resources.

Chairperson Chandler stated that she is not a fan of the study mode, however she is not saying there is not a need for one. She wonders if there is another way to get at this information.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: unanimously, that the Board of Early Education and Care approves the Department's fiscal year 2009 budget expansion priorities.**

**III. Restructured and Revised Child Care Licensing Regulations**

Acting Associate Commissioner Phil Baimas presented an overview of EEC's proposed new approach to Group, School-Age and Family Child Care Regulations.

Proposed changes were highlighted, including:

- Three new program types: family child care, small group and school-age care, large group and school-age care;
- the use of the word “educator;”
- more locations allowed to qualify for family child care license;
- all programs must have a plan to avoid suspensions and terminations;
- emphasis on the importance of interactions between educators and children;
- a new focus on successful transitions, more physical activity, and family involvement; and
- updated/expanded professional development requirements.

Staff qualifications and ratios will not be changing at this time. It was discussed that the changes to the regulations, when finalized would be most useful if highlighted in the new document. Associate Commissioner Baimas also updated the Board on the Workforce Task Force and highlighted how the proposed regulations link to their work. The next step is for the regulations to go out for formal public comment.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: unanimously, that the Board of Early Education and Care authorizes the Commissioner of Early Education and Care to solicit public comment on the proposed regulations, subject to final Board approval.**

Chairperson Chandler moves to close the Board meeting and revisit the Income eligible Re-procurement Overview at the next meeting. She volunteers for Re-procurement Subcommittee. Board member Russell also volunteers. The Board will solicit another round of volunteers once the subcommittee is formed.

Board member Russell asks if any progress has been made on finding a parent for the Board. Chairperson Chandler responds not at this time. If anyone has potential nominees let Chairperson Chandler know or send a nomination to the Governor’s office.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: unanimously that the meeting adjourn at 4:00 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairperson.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann J. Reale  
Commissioner of Early Education and Care