



Board of Early Education and Care

May 8, 2012
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Bristol Community College
Faculty/Staff Lounge (G Building)
777 Elsbree Street
Fall River, MA 02720

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

J.D. Chesloff, Chairperson
Paul Reville, Secretary of EOE
Marilyn Anderson Chase, designee of JudyAnn Bigby, M.D., Secretary of EOHHS
Chi-Cheng Huang, M.D., Vice Chairperson
Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.
Elizabeth Childs, M.D.
Mary Pat Messmer
Carol Craig O'Brien
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.
Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Sherri Killins, Ed.D, Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Absent

Cheryl A. Stanley, Ed.D

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 pm.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chairperson J.D. Chesloff thanked Bristol Community College President John Sbrega for hosting the Board and invited him to give some opening remarks.

President Sbrega welcomed everyone and stated it was a pleasure for Bristol Community College (BCC) to host the board meeting. He noted the importance of the work around early childhood education, stating that he and Commissioner Killins sit on a working task force which assists in the development of pathways in higher education and beyond for early childhood education professionals and students desiring to enter the field of early childhood education. President Sbrega acknowledged his wife Joanne, stating that she is a lifelong practitioner of early childhood education. He noted that she has spent over 30 years in the early childhood education field. She owned the Little Miracle Early Childhood Center for over 22 years and is currently working on starting a children's museum in Fall River. He concluded by saying it was an honor to host the EEC Board on campus.

Chairperson Chesloff thanked Bristol Community College and President Sbrega. He remarked that the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, the organization for which he works, understands the vital role that community colleges have in educating the future workforce. Chairperson Chesloff also acknowledged the contributions of other BCC staff, including

Karen Giglio, Executive Assistant to the President, Joanne M. Preston, Dean of Humanities and Education, Ravitha Amarasingham, Department Chair and Professor of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, Melissa Cardelli, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, Laura Carlson, Director of Event Scheduling, Honorato DaCosta, Audio-Visual Equipment Technician, and Lisa Tavares, Administrative Assistant.

Chairperson Chesloff mentioned that the Board members visited BCC's onsite childcare facility, the Boyd Center for Child Care and Development at Elsbree, prior to the meeting and thanked its Early Childhood Director Melinda Machado for the visit. He also thanked EEC Regional Director Mike Avery and the EEC Southeast Regional Office staff for arranging the visit. He noted that there were at least 25 three, four and five-year old children who were enjoying themselves as they were reading books and preparing to eat lunch. Chairperson Chesloff thanked everyone involved in making the board meeting and the visit to the early childcare facility so successful.

Comments from the Commissioner

Relevant document included in the Board materials:

- *Commissioner's Report, dated May 8, 2012*

Commissioner Killins also acknowledged Joanne Sbrega's work to develop a children's museum in Fall River. She noted that EEC is funding a project through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant that supports libraries and museums. She, along with President Sbrega, Jackie Jenkins-Scott from Wheelock College and others, sit on the Higher Education working group to develop strategies to advance access in early education and care, ensuring that the knowledge and skills being developed are what the field needs. The working group has also established a larger agenda to address the needs of dual language learners. Commissioner Killins thanked President Sbrega and his family for all the work they have done for early childhood education.

Commissioner Killins then highlighted several of the events that occurred during Brain Building in Progress Week from such communities as Brockton, Boston, Worcester, and Ludlow. She noted that several communities developed high quality organic activities in which children participated and presented a video clip that captured some of the Brain Building activities in Fitchburg. Commissioner Killins also mentioned a Brain Building in Progress event held at the Statehouse which was attended by Lieutenant Governor Murray, Secretary Reville, several legislators and staff. Children from Associated Early Education and Care also attended the event and had stories read to them. Commissioner Killins cited some of the agencies that developed their own Brain Building in Progress activities which included United Way, Massachusetts Association of the Education Young Children (MAEYC), several Head Start programs, and Early Education for All, among others. She expressed the Department's appreciation for the work that has been done with the Board to create a larger reaching communication strategy and EEC will continue to support those activities moving forward.

Board members then introduced themselves to the audience and explained their area(s) of expertise.

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 Chesloff or Commissioner Killins.

There was no public comment.

End of public comment period.

Comments from the Secretary

There were no comments from the Secretary.

Routine Business:

Approval of April 10, 2012 Board Minutes – Vote

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the April 10, 2012 Board meeting, as presented by the Commissioner. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Committee and Advisory Reports:

- **Policy and Research Committee**

Board Member Joan Wasser Gish reported the Policy and Research Committee reviewed the alignment of the Inclusive Preschool Grants with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and will report during that agenda item. The committee also discussed the Peer Assessment and Coaching initiative, which was outlined in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant application. Board Member Wasser Gish stated that the committee members were primarily in agreement with the idea of the initiative and most of their questions related to how the initiative will be structured. She noted that there was a proposed advisory group to help guide the work and some facets of implementation. Due to several questions raised, the committee asked EEC staff to report back on how this initiative is anticipated to be structured. The current plan is that EEC will spend \$2.3 million over a four-year period with EEC administering the initiative for the first 18 months and then broadening initiative's reach thereafter so that it becomes statewide with at least 20-5 coaches in each region.

Board Member Wasser Gish reported that transportation and accompanying recommendations were presented to the Fiscal and the Policy and Research committees in a joint presentation. She thanked EEC Policy Analyst Jay Swanson for his work in coordinating the Transportation Working Group with the support of external members in the field, particularly Bill Powers and Joanne Howell and thanked all the participating committee members who engaged in this important topic.

Most committee members supported the recommendations of the Transportation Working Group. She noted that questions arose around the use of electronic monitoring devices and whether they added value, the necessity of passenger logs, and the need for secondary vehicle inspections. Board Member Wasser Gish explained the committees' recommendation that EEC develop the proposed online training module in multiple languages. She noted that the committees also requested a separate online module developed specifically for drivers. Board Member Wasser Gish summarized the committees' discussion regarding transportation costs. The recommendation to pay round trip costs of \$12.25 is 36% higher than the current rate of \$9.00 per child per day. This increase would cost EEC approximately \$14 million across the income eligible, DTA, and supportive

accounts. Both committees had questions and concerns regarding the true costs of raising the rates and the impact of these costs on access, existing care, and safety as well as EEC's long term and short term objectives regarding transportation. Board Member Wasser Gish concluded by stating that the committees will continue this discussion at next month's meeting.

Chairperson Chesloff added that the Board should needs to take action on transportation training, financing and safety at its next meeting. The Department's long terms objectives should focus on broader transportation policies and this requires a larger conversation more suitable to the Board Retreat.

- **Fiscal Committee**

Board Member Beth Childs reported on the fiscal committee's response to the transportation presentation, reminding Board members that a transportation rate increase will impact EEC's ability to serve the greatest number of children and the decision cannot be made in a vacuum. She noted that currently EEC funds transportation for more than 18,000 children per month, reflecting one out of every three children that EEC serves financially.

Chairperson Chesloff asked if the committee has the information it needs to make decisions around transportation. Board member Childs responded that the EEC staff is doing a tremendous job getting the committees data, information, and analysis needed for decision-making. She stressed the importance of the Board's and the Department's decision regarding transportation costs, as the decision will result in a trade-off to serve 1,200 fewer children.

Board Member Childs acknowledged that due to the length of the transportation presentation, the Fiscal Committee did not convene. However, she stated that she would provide an update on the caseload and budget numbers. Board Member Childs thanked the EEC fiscal unit for their work on providing an almost stable projection for the second time in two months. For May 2012, there is a \$10.7 million surplus with \$6.1 million in the Income Eligible account, \$3.4 million in the DTA account, and \$1.2 million in the Supportive account. She stated that the issue right now is that access remains closed. Children can only come in through DTA voucher transfer or through contracted slots. Sibling access was opened from April 12 to May 2, 2012 and is now closed.

Board Member Childs concluded by thanking the Governor and Secretary Reville for their advocacy in the FY 13 budget process. She noted that the House final budget and the Governor's budget, although they contain minor differences, are quite similar and favorable to EEC.

- **Planning and Evaluation Committee**

Board Member Carol Craig O'Brien reported that the Planning and Evaluation Committee's meeting in May focused on the alignment of Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments with QRIS, the management process for subsidy reviews, the QRIS validation study, and the intersection of EEC's work with the Department of Higher Education.

Board Member Craig O'Brien noted that in December 2011, the committee hosted a joint meeting with the Department of Higher Education. The committee continued its discussion in May with Deputy Commissioner Aundrea Kelley and reviewed alignment across the education agencies. She expressed that both departments hope to create an advisory

group of stakeholders in higher education and early childhood education to begin to discuss ways both departments can work together in a more efficient manner.

- **Advisory Council**

Commissioner Killins reported that the full Advisory Council met in May and discussed transportation, specifically around the availability of transportation for school age children regardless of parents' work status and how to find resources to support a transportation rate increase. The Advisory Council also discussed the Peer Assistance and Review Project and was overall supportive of the project. The group requested information about how peers can support providers regarding indoor and outdoor environments. They also wanted to be clear that there is a relationship between the program and the coach and requested flexibility so a wide arrange of people can participate. Commissioner Killins stated that the Council also discussed how public schools can participate, specifically principals but also entire groups. It was explained that this project is about practice and is not linked to evaluations. The Council encouraged a peer-to-peer model.

Chairperson Chesloff thanked all the Board members for reporting on their specific committees. He added that Jennefer Raymond was leaving EEC to become a lead teacher at a child care center affiliated with the Children's Hospital in Boston. He thanked her for her work on the Help Me Grow grant.

- **Disclosures**

Board Member Craig O'Brien verbally disclosed that her employer, Westwood Public Schools, currently receives CFCE and Early Education 262 funding and is interested in receiving additional funding. Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers verbally disclosed that her employer is Wheelock College and receives funding from EEC.

Items for Discussion and Action:

I. Alignment of Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments with the QRIS – Vote

Relevant documents included in Board materials:

- *Alignment of Inclusive Pre-school Learning Environments and Quality Rating and Improvement System, 391 Grant Funding, Board Presentation, PowerPoint, dated May 8, 2012*
- *Board of Early Education and Care Motion to Approve Guidelines and Policy Objectives to Align the Fiscal Year 2013 Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Renewal Grant with the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System, dated May 8, 2012*

EEC Director of Operations and Human Resources Sarah Harding presented the alignment of Inclusive Preschool learning Environments with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). She explained that Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments funds, often referred to as 391 funding, are state funds designed to support inclusive preschool learning environments for preschool children with disabilities. All applicants must meet specific standards and services can be provided in public schools, Head Start programs, or EEC licensed group care programs.

In FY2012 95 grantees received \$9 million in 391 funding. Renewal grants totaling \$9,019,276 in FY2013 are available to 97 public school districts. Funds support direct services and are typically used for educator salaries and children's transportation. Ms.

Harding provided a historical perspective of the grantees and their participation in QRIS:

- In FY 2011, funding supported 6002 children, 2209 with disabilities.
- In FY 2011, 15 programs self-reported they were engaged in QRIS.
- In FY 2012, funding supported 5512 children, 3323 with disabilities.
- In FY 2012, 15 programs have QRIS applications submitted to final; 9 of which are public school programs.

Ms. Harding summarized the initiative around pre-K to third grade alignment, noting that all programs must demonstrate such alignment with the school district in which they are located. Ms. Harding briefly explained how QRIS is structured. She also described some of the supports available to 391 grantees and explained that the Readiness Centers will provide on-going educator support to grantees beginning in FY13. Ms. Harding noted that the proposed alignment of Inclusive Pre-School Learning Environments with QRIS was vetted through several subcommittees. Ms. Harding stated that programs must be participating in QRIS in order to be eligible for FY2013 391 funding with grant funded programs at Level 2 in QRIS by June 30, 2013.

Board Member Wasser Gish voiced the Policy and Research Committee's appreciation for extending the deadline to give grantees time to participate in QRIS. She stated that the committee requested that the process be as streamlined as possible.

Board Member Craig O'Brien spoke reported on the Planning and Evaluation Committee's discussion, noting that they wanted to broaden the lens on how we as a department can align efforts with ESE around engagement with the public schools and public preschools to increase participation in the QRIS.

Board Member Childs noted the differences between FY2011 and FY2012 in the number of children with disabilities. She asked if this increase was due to a newly identified cohort of children, whether providers are able to recognize and identify children with disabilities more effectively, or has a policy change happened. She also asked what the impacts (if any) were on programs. Ms. Harding responded that grantees are asked to project the numbers of children with disabilities they expect to serve. She noted that this is not a clean number and suggested that grantees should report on the actual number in their final reporting to EEC.

Board Member Craig O'Brien proposed that the Board convene an ad hoc working group that will work with pre-K programs and the public schools for a short term to look at best practices.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the Department's guidelines and policy objectives to align the FY2013 Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments renewal grant with the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System as described in the May 8, 2012 Board Presentation. The motion passed by a majority vote.

II. Information Technology Support of EEC's System Building Efforts - Discussion

Relevant documents included in Board materials:

- *Information Technology Support of EEC's System Building Efforts, PowerPoint, dated May 8, 2012*

Tanuja Gopal, EEC Chief Information Officer (CIO), presented the Board with an overview of how information technology (IT) is used to support the Department's system building efforts. She explained EEC's vision for leveraging IT to meet the Department's Strategic Goals involves support and feedback at the Secretariat, Agency, and User levels. Ms. Gopal identified and defined EEC's existing business applications (QRIS, Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR), Licensing Manager, and KinderWait). She then highlighted some of the major FY2012 IT initiatives, including:

- KinderWait, the web-based application that replaced EEC's legacy waitlist system;
- Voucher Management, to streamline the voucher re-assessment process; and
- Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA), which will be a web-based application for attendance, billing, payment, and compliance.

In addition to the new applications, Ms. Gopal reviewed some of the enhancement activities made to current existing applications. In the QRIS application, Level 1 verification for licensed programs in good standing has been automated, users can copy data from one application to another, and the application summary page has been enhanced to display the standards a program must achieve to move to the next QRIS level. In the Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) application, monthly emails are now issued to registrants and administrators regarding expired registrations and pending registrations, instructions pages have been streamlined, and improved matching criteria prevents multiple registrant records.

Ms. Gopal discussed the importance of end-user communication in implementing and enhancing IT applications. She noted that end-users have expressed concerns about being unprepared for past application implementations or failing to have a full set of expectations conveyed in advance of such implementations. Constant communication is critical to the success of a project, including training and end-user guides. She also noted that EEC's HelpDesk is necessary to streamline implementations by providing ongoing/daily user support and to ensure cross-training of staff.

Ms. Gopal stated that EEC's vision for the future is built upon an IT environment that:

- provides efficient and innovative technical solutions for families, providers and EEC staff;
- allows for open and transparent business practices;
- establishes accurate and timely data for policy making, service delivery, and results evaluation; and
- ensures applications are appropriately integrated and linked.

She acknowledged that EEC leadership is proactively seeking ways to increase productivity through the use of technology such as mobile Internet access, single sign-on, and data quality. Ms. Gopal affirmed that streamlined child care system processes, which address user feedback, improve application workflow, ensure ease of connectivity and support, and apply consistent rules and practices, will positively impact the field as well as other state and federal agencies. It is EEC's vision to enable data driven management. Ms. Gopal noted that EEC requires some enhancements to its existing applications in order to facilitate technological connections for a robust, streamlined, and comprehensive system.

Chairperson Chesloff thanked Ms. Gopal and her staff for their efforts and stated that this is exciting and represents a significant step in the improvement and development of all of EEC's applications. Board Member Wasser Gish echoed this praise.

Board Member Chi-Cheng Huang asked if the data that is being collected by EEC will be shared among agencies and maintained in a secure fashion. Commissioner Killins replied

that outside session budget language allows for data sharing across agencies and that EEC is currently working with the Executive Offices of Education and Health and Human Services on data sharing initiatives to improve services to children.

Undersecretary Tom Weber commented that Commissioner Killins deserves credit for her understanding and strong leadership on the value of data; she has pushed forward an ambitious, aggressive, and appropriate vision of what the Commonwealth can do with data. He also stated that Ms. Gopal deserves a great deal of credit for advancing EEC's existing data systems. Undersecretary Weber briefly explained the Patrick Administration's work around a Readiness Passport, which is a set of data elements that will be used to follow children from early childhood throughout the education continuum. These data elements will assist in assessing or determining possible services a child may need throughout their educational development. He affirmed that the purpose of this initiative is to start delivering education to meet the individual needs of students.

Board Member Anderson Chase noted her appreciation of Commissioner Killins' collaborative work around data sharing and the trend that she is setting. She conveyed to the Board a need to develop an accessible, cohesive data system where parents can be linked to services across state agencies through streamlined eligibility criteria.

Undersecretary Weber reminded Board members that IT costs are now reflected in EOE's budget due to the consolidation of IT services across the secretariat. He provided an update that the FY2013 House budget proposal reflects a 15% cut to EOE's IT funding. Since many projects and initiatives underway in Massachusetts require robust IT systems to move forward, he urged the Board to continue to advocate for additional funds while protecting existing IT funding levels.

Board Member Childs requested that the Fiscal Committee be provided with a monthly update on the status of EOE's IT funding. Commissioner Killins agreed to this suggestion.

III. Management Process for Subsidy Reviews – Discussion

Relevant documents included in Board materials:

- *EEC Subsidy Review Process, PowerPoint, dated May 8, 2012*

Carmel Sullivan, EEC's Acting General Counsel, acknowledged that last month's Board vote to approve the amendments to the child care subsidy regulations included a requirement that EEC return to the Board within 90 days with a plan to improve the management of the review process, to be developed in conjunction with the Planning and Evaluation Committee.

Ms. Sullivan explained that due process requires EEC to establish an appellate process to review any denial, termination or reduction of a child care subsidy. She then highlighted the reasons whereby a family's subsidy may be denied, terminated or reduced:

- Lack of service need (i.e. not working or working less than 20 hours per week)
- Lack of financial eligibility (i.e. income exceeds eligibility thresholds)
- Failure to submit required documentation to verify eligibility
- Non-payment or late payment of required parent fees
- Unexplained or excessive absence
- Submission of false or misleading information/documentation
- Failure to comply with EEC, CCR&R or contracted provider policies
- Service need changes from full time to part time

Ms. Sullivan provided a brief overview of the review process and addressed the notification requirements, document submission deadlines, decision process, and opportunities for further appellate review within the Department and in Superior Court. She then addressed the past two year history of requests for review received by EEC. Ms. Sullivan noted that EEC received 847 requests in 2010 and 1,226 requests in 2011. In the first quarter of the 2012, EEC has received 326 requests. Due to the volume of these requests and limited staff resources, EEC has experienced a large backlog. To address this backlog, EEC proposes the following plan: (1) conduct weekly meetings with Review Officers to expedite outstanding reviews; (2) develop a template for CCR&Rs to quickly determine whether families have remained in care, are no longer in care, and have been recently re-assessed; (3) for open cases, establish weekly contacts with CCR&Rs and contract providers to expedite outstanding caseload and obtain outstanding documentation in order to complete reviews; and (4) triage requests when received to determine what can be immediately acted on or that can be forwarded to an Assistant General Counsel for review. In addition, she reported that EEC will be strictly enforcing deadlines for submission of requests and documentation.

Board Member Mary Pat Messmer commented on an agency decision that she had recently read upholding a subsidy termination. She stated that she found the report to be very thorough and written in a way that the parent was not held in contempt. The report gave a more human side to our work in the Department.

Board Member Craig O'Brien reported that the Planning and Evaluation Committee had discussions around how the backlog of reviews occurred and what are the ways EEC can eliminate the backlog through corrective processes. She commended the Legal Unit for taking a hard look at the management of subsidy review process.

IV. Informal Supports through Community and Family Engagement - Panel Discussion

Relevant documents included in Board materials:

- *CFCE Grant Priorities – Panel Discussion, PowerPoint, May 8, 2012*
- *Panelist Bios dated May 8, 2012*

Gail DeRiggi, EEC Senior Policy Analyst, introduced the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) panel with representation of coordinators and staff from across the Commonwealth. The panelists included Barbara Allard, Director of Early Childhood for the Fall River Public Schools and CFCE Coordinator; Margaret Waddicor, CFCE Parent Outreach Coordinator; Michele Dunse, CFCE Parent Support Coordinator and Social Worker; Angela Silveira, Southbay Early Intervention Clinical Supervisor; Pam Hagberg, CFCE Grant Manager at PACE Child Care Works and Grant Coordinator at Freetown-Lakeville-Berkley CFCE; Leslie Dunn, Project SHARE/Sachem Coordinator and Grant/Fiscal Specialist; and Gina McGarrigle, Parent Support Educational Specialist.

The panelists described various activities supported as a result of grant priorities from the CFCE grant. Activities ranged from creating and distributing resource calendars to families with updates in English, Spanish and Portuguese, implementing community playgroups in areas lacking public transportation, family literacy support groups for hard to reach families including a program held at MCI-Norfolk for incarcerated fathers and their children, financial literacy groups, and outreach and support to homeless families. The panelists also discussed the community partnerships they have developed with libraries, public schools, children's museums, local businesses and home visiting programs.

Board members asked the panelists about the impact of CFCE grant funding and whether they could continue their programs without it. All panelists emphasized that they would be unable to fund and support staff without the grant.

Board Member Anderson Chase questioned how a new family learns about CFCE activities or activities sponsored by CFCE partners such as Home Visiting. Ms. Allard responded that her program likens itself to one stop shopping and parents are referred from community entities like United Neighbors or Early Intervention. She explained that the Fall River school district has created a parent information center that is located in the same space as school registration. Ms. Dunn explained that her organization sponsors a holiday project each year and that events provides an opportunity for parents to find out about additional available services.

Board Member Scott-Chandler thanked the CFCE panelists for all their work around children and families, especially hard to reach populations and expressed her excitement to hear about the outreach and connections grantees are making with these families. She asked how EEC's restructuring of the grant criteria has changed or challenged their work. Ms. Allard responded that Community Partnership Councils (CPCs) used to provide more direct services to preschool programs and acknowledged that it was difficult for CPCs to give up that direct service connection. Over the past couple of years, CFCE grantees have had time to transition are now able to focus more on supports for all family situations. Ms. Dunn echoed this sentiment, explaining that the focus has shifted away from families with children already in care to reaching out and supporting those families that are not in care, including those families that are not in the mixed delivery system. She added that CFCE grantees have found renewed energy in the new grant goals.

On motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 3:37 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherri Killins, Ed.D
Commissioner of the Department and
Secretary to the Board