

Early Childhood Education Cabinet Meeting

July 28, 2011 • 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

State Department of Education

Room MCR 3

25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown

ATTENDANCE

			Joan Parris Director, ECE, Norwalk Community College	Representative of Institutions of Higher Education	X
Catherine Abercrombie State Representative	Member of the House of Representatives		Edie Reichard Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care	Representative of a State- funded Child Care Center	X
Peter Palermino (for Claudette Beaulieu) Dept. of Social Services	Representative from State Agency Responsible for Child Care	X	Andrea Stillman State Senator	Member of the Senate	X
Marisol Estrada-Soto Parent	Parent of child attending school in Priority District		Kevin Sullivan Dept. of Public Health	Representative of the State Agency Responsible for Health or Mental Health Care	X
Harriet Feldlaufer Dept. of Education	Representative of the State Education Agency	X	Maria Synodi (for Anne Louise Thompson) Dept. of Education	Representative of the State Agency Responsible for Programs under 619 or Part C of the IDEA	X
Linda Goodman Dept. of Developmental Services	Representative of Entity Determined Relevant by the Governor	X	David Title Superintendent, Fairfield PS	Representative of a Local Education Agency	
Anzelmo Graziosi	Representative from the Business or Philanthropic Community		Eileen Ward Director, Children's Community Dev. Center	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
Rudy Brooks (for Janice Gruendel) Dept. of Children & Families	Commissioner of the Department of Children & Families	X	Grace Whitney Head Start Collaboration Officer	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	X
Kathy Guay Director, Office of Policy & Management	Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management Designee	X	Elaine Zimmerman Executive Director, Commission on Children	Executive Director of the Commission on Children	X
Vacant	Representative from Head Start Agency				

Documents Received:

The following documents were distributed:

- Minutes from the June 30, 2011 meeting
- Draft Connecticut CCDF Plan 2012-13
- Project Director Report on Workgroups
- "QRIS and P-3: Creating Synergy Across Systems to Close Achievement Gaps and Improve Opportunities for Young Children"
- Child Trends Fact Sheet

A. Welcome and Introductions

Harriet Feldlaufer opened the meeting at 9:35 A.M. Edie Reichard, Director of Sleeping Giant Day Care Center, and Rudy Brooks (on behalf of Janice Gruendel) from the Department of Children and Families were welcomed as new members of the Cabinet. Harriet announced that John Rathgeber received correspondence from Governor Malloy advising him that as of July 15th his service as a representative from business or philanthropy and chairperson would no longer be needed. Cabinet members expressed their appreciation for Mr. Rathgeber’s service to the Cabinet and commitment to early care and education.

B. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the June 30, 2011 meeting were approved with minor revisions. Senator Stillman abstained.

C. Work Group Updates

Sherry Linton-Massiah, Project Director for the Cabinet, distributed copies of the project director report. This report, as well as all of the work group summaries, can be found on the Cabinet website (www.ctearlychildhood.org).

Data Systems:

The Data Systems work group is focusing on the importance of unique identifiers for programs, children and staff, and are completing a Cross Agency Unique Identifier Map. They are working with the P-20 Council to receive technical assistance for building the infrastructure. An MOU is being developed to assist agencies to support the development of an interoperable data system.

Professional Development/Workforce:

The Professional Development/Workforce work group is focusing on the data that Connecticut has on early childhood community staff to see how the state will meet the requirements in Public Act No. 11-54. There has been discussion regarding consideration of a work group to examine licensing regulations.

Early Learning Standards:

The Early Learning Standards work group is focusing on the definitions of standards, frameworks, guidelines and grade-level expectations. They have reviewed standards from 46 states and four countries (Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom and Australia) and will use the information gathered from this review to guide their discussion on the development of new early learning standards in Connecticut.

Family Engagement/Home Visitation:

The Family Engagement/Home Visitation work group is focusing on fatherhood. Doug Edwards, a work group member, has developed an instrument known as the Fatherhood Audit which can be embedded into many initiatives to ensure fatherhood involvement and work towards improved family engagement.

D. Child Day Care Program Transition

The Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Education (SDE) have successfully amended all contracts to 53 contractors serving 4,200 children in 104 sites. All contracts have been extended to June 30, 2012. There have been no glitches in services or payments.

The DSS/SDE/OPM study group charged with developing a plan to integrate child care centers and School Readiness centers into a unified, coordinated system will meet on July 29, 2011. The group is charged with developing a plan by January 1, 2012.

E. Child Care and Development Fund Plan Update

Peter Palermino reported that the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan was transmitted to the federal government. He thanked those who helped draft language and offered input and reminded the Cabinet that though DSS is the lead agency for this federal grant, the plan is submitted on behalf of the state.

The plan is considered a draft and can be amended until it is approved. The goals of the priority area work groups directly align with the CCDF Plan and will play a critical role in the process. Mr. Palermino urged group members to be aware of the questions asked in the plan, as these questions will need to be answered in the near future. In the plan, the federal government defined Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and indicates that though it is not a requirement to have a system in place, there must at least be a planning process for the development of a system. There are similar expectations for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). In 2008, the Cabinet issued a report on QRIS. It was recommended that this report be reviewed and compared to what the federal government has requested so that next steps can be considered.

F. Alliance for Early Childhood Finance Policy Framework

Anne Mitchell and Louise Stoney, two consultants from the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance have drafted a policy framework to look at policy initiatives for early care and education. They are asking that states review the framework and provide comments. This framework is available on the Cabinet website (www.ctearlychildhood.org).

G. Legislative Updates

On July 1, 2011, Governor Malloy signed Senate Bill No. 983: An Act Concerning Children Affected by Disaster and Terrorism. This bill requires the development of disaster response plans. ARRA funds are being used to help create the plan. Elaine Zimmerman thanked Senator Stillman for her efforts with this bill.

H. Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTTT-ELC)

Liz Donahue, Policy Director for Governor Malloy thanked everyone for their help with the RTTT-ELC grant thus far and reported that funds for a lead planner will more than likely come from a matching grant from philanthropy and possibly some Cabinet funds. The federal government is supportive of using the federal ARRA funds that have been made available to the Cabinet to help

fund this position as Connecticut looks to build a sustainable coordinated system of early care and education. The lead planner will help move the process and put Connecticut in an excellent position moving forward. A planning team is in process of soliciting funds for a grant writer as well as technical assistance through The Early Learning Challenge Collaborative; a collaboration between BUILD and The First Five Years fund. The Collaborative will distribute surveys to states to identify the level of technical assistance they are requesting – general, individualized, intensive/individualized. Connecticut is completing their survey to indicate the need for intensive/individualized technical assistance. It was noted that the states who had received technical assistance for the previous Race to The Top applications were more likely to receive awards.

I. New Cabinet Chair

Liz Donahue reported that David Title has tentatively accepted the role of chair for the Cabinet and thanked John Rathgeber for his work and support.

J. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Copies of the 2008 draft QRIS document were distributed. The group that developed this draft plan met eight times between February and September 2008. Cabinet funds were given to Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) to support administrative, logistical and management responsibilities for the group.

There were five components of the report:

- 1.) Standards
- 2.) Accountability
- 3.) Program and Practitioner Supports
- 4.) Financing Incentives
- 5.) Parent Education

A Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations was published in April 2010 by Child Trends and Mathematical Policy Research Inc. “provides definitions, description, and analytic framework for assessing the critical elements of QRS and QRS evaluation”.. This report can be found on the Cabinet website (www.ctearlychildhood.org).

Issues raised were around: (1) money and resources; (2) incentives for programs not part of the system; (3) additional reporting providers must complete; and (4) licensing and safety standards in public schools.

The Cabinet recommend that a group meet prior to the next Cabinet meeting to review the 2008 draft and make recommendation to the Cabinet for moving forward, as QRIS is a significant requirement of the RTT-ELC. The group is to include the work group co-chairs and a representation of others that were involved in the creation of the 2008 draft plan.

K. Public Comment

QRIS:

Judy Goldfarb was part of the QRIS work group and stated that many of the issues addressed today are much the same as the issues from 2008. The focus now should be on building off of the basic foundations we have in place that meet the federal government's requirements.

Darlene Ragozzine from Connecticut Charts-a-Course reported that states that have QRIS systems are now revisiting them because they are costly due to the need for financial incentives. There are ways to structure the system to almost make it voluntary without having to embed in it the financial rewards that are the basis for many of these tiered rating systems.

Sue Wilson from Connecticut Charts-a-Course was on the original QRIS work group and stated that money was the biggest problem when the plan was drafted in 2008. She suggested the Cabinet review the draft plan and make it more practical.

Juleen Flanagan from Education Connection stated that the Early Childhood Alliance received funding from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund to conduct a Community Conversation about QRIS in the fall. Ms. Flanagan suggested that the feedback received from programs and parents can be used for the upcoming RTTT-ELC application.

Cabinet Letter of Support:

On behalf of EASTCONN, Michelle Levy from the Department of Education, requested a letter of support from the Cabinet for an application being submitted by EASTCONN for an Investing in Education (I3) grant due on August 2. The project, Aligning for Success, provides professional development and coaching for five districts to help community preschool programs align and connect with school systems around standards, performance assessments and data-sharing. A draft abstract was distributed to Cabinet members. Peter Palermino suggested the Cabinet develop a process for letters of support and stated that he would not support this request. Senator Stillman stated that as the Cabinet does not currently have criteria for letters of support, it would be unfair to penalize a group that has done good work and recommended the Cabinet consider drafting a letter of support. In a vote of 10/3, it was decided that the Cabinet would submit a letter of support for the EASTCONN grant and will work on the development of a process for future requests. In the absence of a chair, the leadership team will sign the letter of support.

L. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM.

M. Next Meeting

The next Cabinet meeting will be held on August 25, 2011, at the State Office Building in Middletown, Room MCR3 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.