

Early Childhood Education Cabinet Meeting

March 25, 2010 • 9:30-11:30 A.M.

Wintonbury Early Childhood Magnet School

44 Brown Street, Bloomfield

ATTENDANCE

John Rathgeber Chairperson, CBIA	Chair, Representative of Business or Philanthropic Community	X	Norma Gyle Dept. of Public Health	Representative of State Agency responsible for Health or Mental Health Care	X
Beth Bye Representative	Member of the House of Representatives		Joan Parris Director, Early Childhood Education, Norwalk CC	Representative of Institutions of Higher Education	X
Claudette Beaulieu Dept. of Social Services	Representative from State Agency Responsible for Child Care	X	Patricia Rehmer Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services	Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Designee	
Dona Ditrio Director, New Opportunities, Inc.	Representative from Head Start Agency		David Title Superintendent, Bloomfield Public Schools	Representative of the Local Education Agency	X
Marisol Estrada-Soto Parent	Parent of child attending school in Priority District	X	Maria Synodi (Alternate for Anne Louise Thompson) Dept. of Education	Representative of the State Agency Responsible for Programs under 619 or Part C of the IDEA	X
Harriet Feldlaufer Dept. of Education	Representative of the State Education Agency	X	Eileen Ward Director, Children's Community Development Center	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
Tom Gaffey Member of the Senate	Senator		Grace Whitney Head Start Collaboration Officer	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	X
Linda Goodman Dept. of Developmental Services	Representative of Entity Determined Relevant by the Governor	X	Elaine Zimmerman Executive Director, Commission on Children	Executive Director of the Commission on Children	X
Kathy Guay Director, Office of Policy & Management	Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management Designee				

Documents Received:

The following documents were distributed:

- Letter regarding State Advisory Council
- Letter from Governor Rell regarding NGA Application
- NGA Application
- March 1 Strategic Report sent to the Connecticut General Assembly
- ARRA Application Subcommittee Work Overview
- Current Data Report on Connecticut's 2006 Birth Cohort
- Patient Protection and Affordability Act
- SAC Subcommittee Overview

A. Welcome and Introductions:

John Rathgeber opened the meeting at 9:40 A.M. Cabinet members introduced themselves.

B. Review of Minutes

The minutes from the February 18, 2010, meeting were approved.

C. Reports

Early Childhood Cabinet's designation as the State Advisory Council (SAC)

John Rathgeber noted that on February 4, 2010, Governor Rell issued a letter to Commissioner Mark McQuillan of the Department of Education designating the Early Childhood Cabinet as the State Advisory Council.

Statewide Strategic Report

Mr. Rathgeber stated that the Cabinet was required to submit a report by March 1, 2010, to the Connecticut General Assembly that provided Connecticut's current status in early childhood education, and plans of moving forward. He clarified that this report was not a strategic report required by the federal government, but a state statutory report.

Submission of NGA Application

Mr. Rathgeber thanked the team who put together the National Governor's Association (NGA) application on such a short timetable. Connecticut had applied for technical assistance through the NGA grant, but unfortunately did not qualify due to its level of membership.

Claudette Beaulieu wondered if other sources of technical assistance are available to us. Mr. Rathgeber noted that this grant was to follow-up on work that had already been done on the previous Research and Policy Council in regards to governance, but that it would be wise to see if other sources may be available.

ARRA Matching Funds

Representative Beth Bye has asked the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) to request state-level expenditures of each agency for early childhood education for the ARRA 70/30 match. The State Department of Education (SDE) was contacted by OFA and has compiled a summary of all state and federal commitments around early childhood. Linda Goodman noted that the Department of Developmental Services was not asked, and Claudette Beaulieu said that the Department of Social Services also was not asked either. Ms. Feldlaufer recommended that even though the SDE could possibly make the match on their own, it would be best if the request was broader than just the Department of Education. Ms. Beaulieu suggested that perhaps OPM and OFA could work together on ideas for matches as they both could know of match sources others may not think of. It was decided to move forward with that recommendation.

Website

Screenshots of the current Early Childhood Cabinet website (www.CTEarlyChildhood.org) were distributed for review. The website is subcontracted through WebSolutions and costs \$25/year for the domain name, \$30/month for web hosting, and \$100/hour for any maintenance. (Maintenance is considered any structural changes to the website, not just the posting of documents.) Currently, there is approximately \$1,700 left in private foundation funds in an account with CERC. It was noted that there are other options for web hosting, i.e., GoDaddy.com which is \$15/month or \$360 for three years. If the domain were to transfer to another host, CERC has said they would have to contact the foundations who

originally funded the website for approval. The question at hand is whether to move forward with the current website in its existing state and simply remove and archive all inapplicable header tabs that honor the work of the previous cabinet, or transfer the website to another hosting company.

Ms. Zimmerman shared that she met with webmasters in the state and said that they found the WebSolutions prices to be quite high. She said community involvement is key for the vitality of the website and that though an immediate decision on what to do with the remaining funds need not be made, in the future, it is important to see what other state options and skill sets are available to us. Linda Goodman suggested the website stay where it is to get through the rest of the year and look to other options when we receive the Advisory Council grant money. Eileen Ward suggested that an interactive feature where people could leave comments, for instance a password-protected blog, would be a helpful component to add to the website.

Mr. Rathgeber mentioned that there is some confusion in the public regarding the current website as members of the community have bookmarked this page. He suggested we find a way to reformat the current website to show what had been done in the previous Cabinet, while also providing information regarding the activities of the current Early Childhood Education Cabinet.

The general consensus of the group is to keep the website with WebSolutions for a few months and make only necessary minor updates and changes while other options are explored.

Upcoming NAEYC Professional Development Institute (PDI) Conference

There is a need for a representative from the State Advisory Committee to attend the annual NAEYC PDI conference in June. This pre-conference session is devoted to cross-sector professional development and addressing the training needs of individuals in the field of early childhood education. Mr. Rathgeber felt it should be the Cabinet membership, not the chairperson, who make this appointment. Grace Whitney clarified that four members are required for the state team, with one being a representative from the State Advisory Council. The members thought that it would be a good idea to include a Cabinet member who is also a state legislator. Representative Bye was recommended to represent the State Advisory Council and will be contacted.

This item was tabled for further discussion.

Current Data Report on Connecticut's 2006 Birth Cohort

Linda Goodman presented an overview of Connecticut's 2006 birth cohort. She highlighted that 53% of all children born in Connecticut in 2006 were receiving Women, Infants and Children (WIC) services at some point, with 8,400 children still being active. Goodman then noted that she then went on to view each cohort (since 2000) each cohort showed similar results with 18% of children being referred to special education and 10-11% actually receiving services. Claudette Beaulieu noted the HUSKY numbers seemed high. Peter Palmerino of the Department of Social Services clarified that this number represented point-in-time data. Mr. Rathgeber asked if there was any trend data for. Ms. Goodman noted that currently there is only the original data; she will try to go back three years.

A copy of this information will be posted on the CT Early Childhood Education website.

D. Discussion

ARRA Grant Application

Elaine Zimmerman distributed an overview of the subcommittee's work regarding the procedure for applying for the ARRA grant. The ARRA grant, due August 1, 2010, is for approximately \$580,000 over three years. The grant application must include goals for early care and education as well as the objectives for each goal and matching funding sources. The subcommittee recommends that July be the month for final revisions/approval, leaving April, May and June for writing the grant. Another requirement is for a public hearing to be held for input. It is recommended that the public hearing be held the end of May.

Ms. Zimmerman then shared the list of six recommendations for priorities and suggested the Cabinet review them and choose/collapse them into 3 or 4 priorities. Volunteers will be asked to participate on subcommittees for each of the priorities. Two half-day meetings will be scheduled as working sessions. Subcommittees are recommended to be no larger than 12 people.

John Rathgeber suggested that each member of the Cabinet choose a priority they felt most strongly about. He asked that priorities be chosen based on what can actually be accomplished with the amount of money given. Goals will need to be concrete and measurable. The six priorities are as follows:

- Data to measure progress and outcomes.
- Creating a cohesive system of workforce and professional development.
- Redefine quality and competence across all age groups and settings in early care and education.
- Reexamination and alignment of early learning standards (infant/toddler and pre-k) in alignment with K-12 standards.
- Substantively involve families, including vulnerable families, in quality early care and home visitation.
- Connectivity for children and programs at the state and local level – creating a culture of partnership.

After discussion, the priority goals were collapsed down to four: data, workforce, Early Learning Standards and parental outreach. Information will be posted on the SDE CT Early Childhood Education website to solicit volunteers, and disseminate this information on the Early Childhood Listserv.

E. Public Comments

Mary Penniston of ChildFIRST noted that ChildFIRST would be happy to enter discussions about the ARRA grant and matching funds. She said this is a politically opportune time to think about how the state will coordinate and get the most out of work we've been doing and reinforced the need to have concrete, specific goals that require inter-agency sharing of data to make the work more doable and real.

Carlota Schecter of the Department of Higher Education said that although there is limited funding, it is the Cabinet's responsibility to serve in a leadership role in trying to keep early childhood on the table in the different initiatives happening in the state and that data desperately needs an early childhood voice.

F. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 22, 2010, at CBIA from 9:00-11:00 A.M.

G. New Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 A.M.