

Early Childhood Education Cabinet Meeting

May 27, 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	Kevin Sullivan (for 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	X	Joan Parris Director, Early Childhood Education, Norwalk CC	Representative of Institutions of Higher Education	X
Karen Foley-Schain (for Claudette Beaulieu) Dept. of Social Services	Representative from State Agency Responsible for Child Care	X	Cheryl Jacques (for Patricia Rehmer) Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services	Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Designee	X
Dona Ditrio Director, New Opportunities, Inc.	Representative from Head Start Agency	X	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
Betsy Morgan (for Tom Gaffey) Member of the Senate	Senator	X	Grace Whitney Head Start Collaboration Officer	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	
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	X			

Documents Received:

The following documents were distributed:

- *Early Childhood Education in CT: What do we know?* – presentation by Karen Adesso

A. Welcome and Introductions:

John Rathgeber opened the meeting at 9:40 A.M.

B. Review of Minutes

The minutes from the April 22, 2010, meeting were approved.

C. Early Childhood Education in CT: What do we know? – Presentation

Karen Adesso, Education Consultant from the State Department of Education provided the Cabinet with a data/statistical overview of early childhood education in Connecticut. A copy of the annotated presentation is attached and is also posted on the Cabinet website.

D. Early Childhood Conference - PEW

John Rathgeber explained that the previous Cabinet had applied for funding to conduct a statewide early childhood conference. This application was prior to the financial crisis affecting our state and therefore, the conference was put on hold for a year. By Friday, May 25th, a decision has to be made on whether we would still like to move forward with this conference. Funding for this conference includes \$10,000 from PEW (\$5,000 now and an additional \$5,000 if we intend to move forward) and \$5,000 from the Graustein Foundation. PEW would like the conference to be held by September. If we decide not to go forward, the money would then be returned to PEW and Graustein.

Linda Goodman stated that the Cabinet will not know about the ARRA grant status by September seeing as though the application is due on August 1, but *will* know if the report has been accepted, and what the identified priority areas will be.

Kathy Guay reminded the Cabinet that the fiscal problems have not gotten any better since the previous Cabinet had applied for this funding. She also shared her concern with the amount of time that will be needed from those in the executive branch of government, and asked Mr. Rathgeber who would be putting together this conference.

John Rathgeber stated that in the past, our partnerships have shown great support, and that if the purpose of the conference is to support early childhood as a whole, as well as to reengage businesses and stakeholders, data collection will not have to be a primary focus. The role of early childhood is extremely important in the closing of the achievement gap, and therefore, discussion regarding barriers we are facing lends an opportunity for businesses to help.

Linda Goodman added that if businesses were asked to attend this conference, they would expect to offer their support. She also suggested this conference will give the Cabinet visibility, as well as credibility.

Elaine Zimmerman stated that we've had previous experiences with engaging businesses that were not data-driven, but instead, were more focused on studying the implications of early childhood as it related to school readiness. She also stated that we've lost a generation of business leaders on this issue, and emphasized the importance of re-engaging these important stakeholders. If we decided not to conduct this conference, it would be a lost opportunity to rebuild business partnerships we had 20 years ago.

It was decided to move forward with the conference and use the \$15,000 for a speaker(s) and other costs. The Cabinet will reach out to stakeholders to receive support and assistance.

E. ARRA Grant Application Workgroup Update

Elaine Zimmerman gave an overview of the work of ARRA Grant subgroups: Data, Families/Home Visitation, Professional Development/Workforce, and Early Learning Standards. Each subgroup was asked to identify priority goals, as well as strategies, activities and deliverables for meeting these goals,

with the understanding that this was a three-year process. The expectation was for the goals to be realistic, as there is only a little over \$500,000 in federal dollars over three years.

Data Workgroup Update

Linda Goodman spoke on behalf of the data workgroup and reemphasized the fact that there are gaps in data and the fact that there is still no early childhood information system. The goals of the Data workgroup are:

- 1.) Assign unique identifiers to all young children, early childhood programs, and early childhood staff.
- 2.) Develop (or use an existing) data architecture project that will enable data to be matched in an unduplicated manner across agencies while still observing all privacy requirements.
- 3.) Facilitate a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding concerning the deliverables and standards of data accessibility.

Early Learning Standards Update

Sherry Linton reported on the development of the early learning standards and emphasized that a rubric will need to be developed in order to review national and international early learning standards as part of the preliminary research. Leadership will need to be involved to achieve overall buy-in and ensure stakeholders come together. The goals of the Early Learning Standards are:

- 1.) Conduct a review of existing standards and research on early learning.
- 2.) Involve and engage cross-sector stakeholders throughout the process.
- 3.) Engage leadership to ensure the promotion of the understanding and buy-in of the early learning standards and their relationship to K-12.
- 4.) Develop a document outlining early learning standards for children ages birth to age five, in all areas of development, designed for appropriate use with all children, including those with disabilities and dual language learners.
- 5.) Plan for implementation and professional development.

Ms. Linton also stated that it is vital for all four ARRA grant workgroups to work together as one large group to ensure none of the work is siloed.

Professional Development/Workforce Workgroup Update

The goals of the Professional Development/Workforce Workgroup are:

- 1.) Offer scholarship funds to staff in ALL settings, with financial commitments by all state agencies that fund programs serving children 0-5.
- 2.) Revise DPH licensing requirements regarding the qualifications of newly hired teachers who work in programs licensed by DPH.
- 3.) Make higher education more accessible to a greater number of early childhood staff and address the capacity of higher education to deliver B.A./B.S. and A.A./A.S. degrees. This includes supports for individuals and programs in order to assure access and persistence of the incumbent as well as the future workforce.
- 4.) Create a system/continuum of home visitation services.

Kathy Guay questioned if these changes would be for all settings, for example a church-funded program. She was concerned that if qualifications were raised, small, privately funded programs would not be able

to pay higher salaries, which ultimately raises operating costs . The unintended consequence may be that it will drive more children out of these programs.

Eileen Ward explained that would be the purpose of the scholarship money; for staff to be able to get their CDA, and also raised the issue on quality. If quality is raised, it will need to be raised in all settings. Marisol Estrada-Soto mirrored this comment and claimed that if quality is not raised across the board, the achievement gap will continue to grow.

Mr. Rathgeber stated that this was an area in which he felt we were trying to do too much with the money allotted over the next three years. Joan Parris and the Professional Development/Workforce members will work to narrow the goals of their workgroup.

Families/Home Visitation Workgroup Update

Elaine Zimmerman reported that the overarching goals are to foster partnerships among families and communities in the early years; create a system of home visitation services; educate professionals on the importance of parents as partners; and promote parent leadership.

This area has two components: home visitations/parent education and parent leadership. There is an opportunity for federal dollars in both of the components. Ms. Zimmerman stated that currently, we are looking at the home visitation models in the state because national research shows that high-quality home visitation results in a decrease in adverse behavior in children.

In the parent leadership component, data in our state shows that when parents are engaged, children do well in school, literacy is improved and dropout rates decrease, therefore, the goal is to create a continuum of leadership to involve the public and link initiatives together.

F. Public Hearings on the Cabinet's Strategic Report

The first public hearing will be at Norwalk Community College on June 14th at 6:00-8:00 PM in the East Campus, followed by a second public hearing in Hartford on June 16th at 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM in the Legislative Office Building, Room 2-D. A notice of these public hearings will be sent via e-mail. Those who receive the e-mail will be asked to share the information with their networks. All information will also be posted to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet website at www.ctearlychildhood.org.

Elaine Zimmerman suggested that each member of the Cabinet agree to be present for at least one of the public hearings so that those who attend from the public feel they are being listened to.

G. Public Comments

Sherry Linton stated that the ARRA grant's purpose is to outline the objectives Connecticut as a state would like to accomplish in terms of early childhood, as well as detail what is intended to be done with the ARRA federal dollars. She was concerned that if too much emphasis is placed on what can be accomplished with just the ARRA funds, and not on the overarching goals and objectives, it significantly lowers the standard of what Connecticut is capable of accomplishing. She noticed that in the Race to the Top grant, the states who were awarded funding had a clear picture of all that can be done, rather than what can be done with specific pots of money.

H. New Business

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

I. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 24, from 9:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. at the Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, in Newington, Connecticut.