

*Early Childhood Education Cabinet Meeting
CBIA, 350 Church Street, Hartford, CT
9 – 11 a.m., February 18, 2010*

Minutes

Attendance:

Chair John Rathgeber, *CBIA*, Dona Ditrio, *New Opportunities Inc.*, Harriet Feldlaufer, *State Dept. of Education*, Linda Goodman, *Birth to Three System Dept. of Developmental Services*, Rep. Beth Bye, Joan Parris, Norwalk Community College, David Title, Bloomfield Public Schools, Eileen Ward, *Children's Community Development Ctr.*, Grace Whitney, *Head Start*, and Elaine Zimmerman, *Commission on Children*. Others in attendance were Maria Synodi alternate for Anne Louise Thompson, Peter Palermino, alternate for Claudette Beaulieu, Leah Grenier, alternate for Kathy Guay and Elizabeth Morgan as alternate for Sen. Tom Gaffey.

Documents Received:

The following documents were distributed:

- Early Childhood Education Cabinet Implementer Bill No. 2053 and Head Start Act of 2007 outline and comparison.
- Summary of the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices grant application and associated background materials
- Copy of the Head Start Act as amended December 12, 2007
- NGA Center for Best Practices Issue Brief
- Summary of ARRA funds available for State Advisory Councils and associated application materials and FAQ's

Welcome and Introductions

John Rathgeber opened the meeting at 9 a.m. Cabinet members and members of the public introduced themselves. He noted the importance of the Cabinet and the challenges they face in light of the state's depleted fiscal resources.

Review of Cabinet's Responsibilities

Harriet Feldlaufer distributed materials on the Head Start Act and the Early Childhood Education Cabinet Implementer Bill No. 2053, outlining the goals and responsibilities of each. Ms. Feldlaufer noted that there is no funding for the implementer bill however, there is potential ARRA funding through the Head Start Act that requires a 70% state match. The grant application is due by August 2010. She then reviewed the particulars of the Head Start Act and the reporting requirements. Under the implementer bill, the cabinet must file a report on March 1, 2010, with the Governor and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and human services.

Items for Immediate Action

The timetable for submitting the application in response to The National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices RFP for technical assistance was reviewed and the Cabinet discussed the requirements necessary to submit an application for technical assistance.

Members also discussed the three-year federal grant through ARRA Head Start for the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school preparedness. This grant also requires a non-Federal share of 70% matching funds, through cash or in-kind contributions.

Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and voted to apply for the NGA grant for technical assistance in the area of governance. Harriet Feldlaufer, Linda Goodman, Maria Synodi and Elaine Zimmerman volunteered to work on the grant application. Mr. Rathgeber will speak to the Governor and ask for the letter of support required for the application.

The Cabinet members then discussed the August 1 deadline for the Federal ARRA Head Start grant and the state's requirement for \$1,360 million in matching funds. It was proposed that since many state organizations are already dedicating funds from their current budgets to early childhood, the application may be able to include these as part of the matching fund requirement along with philanthropic donations. Rep. Bye said she will ask the Office of Fiscal Analysis how much the state is currently spending on early childhood initiatives.

Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and voted to develop guidelines for the application. Rep. Bye, Joan Parris, Linda Goodman, Elaine Zimmerman and Grace Whitney volunteered to work on the application guidelines.

John Rathgeber noted that there were comments about access to the Cabinet meeting schedule and materials on the web. It currently appears on the State Dept. of Education's web site. Ms. Zimmerman said the Commission on Children could also put a link to the information on their site to enhance accessibility by the public.

Mr. Rathgeber also indicated that he would contact the Governor's Office to ensure that the Cabinet has been designated as the State Advisory Council as required by the Head Start Act.

There will be a joint committee informational forum at the Legislative Office building by the Education and the Human Services Committees on March 8th to look at federal funding opportunities.

Dialogue – Expectations and Challenges

John Rathgeber noted that the state, historically, is a leader in early childhood education and we want to maintain that standing.

Linda Goodman said that Developmental Services finished their three-year tracking of children born in 2006, and proposed that the state continue to track children in school readiness programs. She urged the Cabinet to make the measurements more beneficial and to look at the school readiness program measurements being used to achieve outcomes.

Public Comments

There were comments concerning the status of quality rating system (QRIS); and the need for the Cabinet to address it. John Rathgeber agreed that it should be part of the Cabinet's agenda and will bring it up for consideration at a later meeting. There was also concern expressed about the ability of the state to identify existing resources necessary to meet the 70 – 30% match required by the federal grant.

Next Meeting Dates

At the next meeting, we will report on the NGA grant application and Elaine will give feedback on the federal grant application.

March 25, at 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Wintonbury Early Childhood Magnet School
44 Brown Street
Bloomfield

April 22, 2010 Location TBD

May 27, 2010 Location TBD

There being no further business to come before the cabinet, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.