

CT Early Childhood Cabinet Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2017 • 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

The Lyceum, Hartford, CT

ATTENDANCE

| Member | Statutory Designation | Member | Member Type |
|---|---|--|---|
| Nancy Wyman <i>Lieutenant Governor</i> | Co-Chair | Jenn Johnson <i>Director, Connecticut Head Start Collaboration Office</i> | State Director of Head Start Collaboration X |
| Linda Goodman <i>Acting Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood</i> | Co-Chair | Cathy Battista <i>Family Resource Alliance</i> | Representative from Family Resource Centers X |
| Peter Palermino , <i>Program Manager, Department of Social Services</i> | Commissioner of Social Services, or designee | Patricia Bryant -Beausoleil <i>Director, Putnam Family Resource Center and Early Childhood Coordinator</i> | Representative from a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program X |
| Ellen Cohn <i>Deputy Commissioner, State Department of Education</i> | Responsible for administering the provisions of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act | Marisol Estrada-Soto <i>Parent</i> | Parent of a child attending or attended a school in an education reform district X |
| Kimberly Karanda <i>Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services</i> | Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or designee | Helene Figueroa <i>Director, Child Care Division CSEA/SEUI Local 2001</i> | Representative of the CT State Employees Association X |
| Harriet Feldlaufer <i>Director, Early Care & Education, Office of Early Childhood</i> | Administrator of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) | Linda Francovich <i>Executive Director, Grossman Family Foundation</i> | Representative from the Philanthropic Community X |
| Leah Grenier <i>Budget Analyst, Office of Policy & Management</i> | Secretary, Office of Policy & Management, or designee | Laura Post, Senior Director, <i>Vice President, LEGO Systems</i> | Representative from the Business Community X |
| Kimberly Nilson <i>Program Manager, Department of Children & Families</i> | Commissioner of Children & Families, or designee | Karen Rainville, <i>Executive Director, Bridge to Success Community Partnership and Member, CT Association for the Education of Young Children</i> | Representative of an association of early education and child care providers X |
| Evonne Klein <i>Commissioner, Department of Housing</i> | Commissioner of Department of Housing | Edie Reichard <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i> | Representative of a State-funded Child Care Center x |
| Rosa Biaggi, <i>Public Health Section Chief, Department of Public Health</i> | Commissioner of Public Health, or designee | Vacant | Representative from the Head Start Association X |
| Tammy Garris, <i>Fiscal Team Program Manager, Department of Developmental</i> | Commissioner of Developmental Services, or designee | Eileen Ward <i>Director, Children's Community Development Center</i> | Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education X |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <i>Services</i> | | | | |
| Joan Parris <i>Director, Early Childhood Education, Norwalk CC</i> | Designee for President of Board of Regents | x | Steven Hernandez <i>Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children and Senior</i> | Executive Director of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, or designee |
| Maria Synodi <i>Special Education Consultant, State Department of Education</i> | Responsible for administering Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act | X | Vacant | Board of Education for a town designated as an Alliance District, appointed by the Speaker of the House |
| Louis Tallarita <i>State Coordinator, Bureau of Health, Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, State Department of Education</i> | Responsible for coordination of education services to children and youth who are homeless | X | Vacant | Parent of child attending or attended a School Readiness program, appointed by the Minority Leader of the House. |
| Dianna Wentzell <i>Commissioner, Department of Education</i> | Commissioner of Education, or designee | | | |

A. Welcome and Introductions

Linda Goodman, OEC Acting Commissioner, opened the meeting. The January 20, 2017 minutes were not yet adopted due to insufficient copies.

Liz Donahue from the Governor’s Office delivered a Governor’s proclamation thanking Linda Goodman for her leadership and service.

B. Access to Child Care in Connecticut

Mary Farnsworth, Director of Strategic Planning for the Office of Early Childhood, delivered a presentation on some findings from the Unmet Need Report on demand and capacity for preschoolers and infants/toddlers and a preview of the larger analysis of access to come in the full report. A draft data brief was handed out. A series of webinars will be held after the report is released to discuss findings with stakeholders.

C. Project LAUNCH

Tizrah Kemp, Local Child Wellenss Coordinator, and Heather Black, State Child Wellness Expert, presented on the latest activities of Project LAUNCH. The project is focusing on the following processes and outcomes: Screening and Assessment (development screening in pediatric practices, ASQ, and maternal depression), Integration of Behavioral Health, Enhanced Home Visiting, Mental Health Consultation, and Family Strengthening. There is a two-generation Young Child Wellness Workgroup with a particular focus on homelessness and substance abuse and a Public Awareness Campaign in development with input from families. There was a question from the Cabinet about the impact of cutting Help Me Grow funding on the Project’s screening efforts.

D. Building a Quality, Recognition and Improvement System

Jennifer Johnson, OEC Quality Improvement Division Director, provided an overview of the pilot planned for the Quality Recognition and Improvement System, THRIVE! The Thrive! recognition rubric will be star-based with five categories scored separately and combined for an overall score. The categories rated will be Health and Safety, Learning and Environment, Workforce, and in the future Family Engagement, and Leadership. It is based on past work and feedback from the listening tour.

Thrive! will be piloted throughout the coming year with early adopters in 2018, voluntary statewide participation beginning in 2019, and required for state-funded programs in 2020. Family engagement will roll out in 2021 and Leadership in 2022. A set of forums statewide will be held this spring to share the Thrive! recognition rubric and pilot plans and receive feedback.

There were a few questions about the Thrive! Pilot.

- Why wait for the Leadership and Family Engagement stars? It was answered that this was due to feedback received at the listening tours.
- Does this require that programs serve food through CACFP? No, it gives stars based on alignment with the nutrition and portion size guidelines of CACFP, but not fully participating in the program.

E. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Ellen Cohn, Deputy Commissioner at the State Department of Education, presented on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. It includes many early childhood provisions, many of which were incorporated from the February 2 forum's recommendations. To get feedback, SDE conducted focus groups, 80+ stakeholder engagement groups, 6,500 survey responses and 1,000 pieces of feedback on the plan. The plan has passed its completeness check at the federal level and is awaiting full approval.

This plan offers a great opportunity to revise and retool strategies, but comes with no additional funds. There is not as much an opportunity to build new things, but instead to refocus on practical solid strategies. One good change is that public schools will be able to assess based on growth in academic achievement vs. scoring against grade level which will help the state support and recognize accelerating growth in student achievement and focus on all children. Other priorities will include graduation rates and English language learning.

Best practices will be shared through appreciative inquiry. The lowest performing schools will be offered comprehensive support through cross divisional teams and tiered levels of support. Guidance will be evidence-based, assessments will require comprehensive stakeholder engagement, an electronic grant/improvement plan platform will be available, and evidence-based professional development will be made available. Early childhood will be incorporated by inviting OEC staff to be involved in writing guidance, participating in cross divisional teams, engaging the early childhood community throughout, and supporting early childhood transitions to school with best practices. Consolidated State Plan Components highlights were distributed.

F. Regulations and Background Checks

Cynthia Isales, OEC Chief Legal Counsel, provided an update regarding regulations and background checks. The cost of background checks will increase by \$50 as of July 1, 2017 due to a change in DESPP policy.

G. Announcements/Public Comment

Linda Goodman announced that David Wilkinson has been nominated as the new Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood. His confirmation is pending. There were no public comments.

H. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m.