



# Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet

## Meeting of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet

February 27, 2014 • 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Middletown State Office Building

### ATTENDANCE

Member	Member Type Required by Federal Statute		Member	Member Type Required by Federal Statute	
<b>Leah Grenier, Chair</b> <i>Principal Budget Specialist, Office of Policy &amp; Management</i>	Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management Designee	X	<b>David Morgan</b> <i>Director, TEAM, Inc.</i>	Representative from Head Start Agency	X
<b>Catherine Abercrombie</b> <i>State Representative</i>	Member of the House of Representatives		<b>Joan Parris</b> <i>Director, ECE, Norwalk CC</i>	Representative of Institutions of Higher Education	X
<b>Dante Bartolomeo</b> <i>State Senator</i>	Member of the Senate	X	<b>Laura Post, Senior Director,</b> <i>Strategic Planning &amp; Insights, LEGO Systems</i>	Representative from the Business or Philanthropic Community	X
<b>Cathy Battista</b> <i>President, FRC Alliance</i>	Representative from Family Resource Centers		<b>Ellen Cohn</b> <b>(for Stefan Pryor)</b> <i>Commissioner, Dept. of Education</i>	Representative of the State Education Agency	X
<b>Peter Palermino</b> <i>Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Social Services</i>	Representative from State Agency Responsible for Child Care		<b>Edie Reichard</b> <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i>	Representative of a State-funded Child Care Center	X
<b>Patricia Bryant -Beausoleil</b> <i>Director, Putnam Family Resource Center</i>	Representative from a Local Education Agency	X	<b>Maria Synodi</b> <i>Special Education, Dept. of Education</i>	Representative of the State Agency Responsible for Programs under 619 or Part C of the IDEA	X
<b>Marjorie Chambers</b> <i>Section Chief, Dept. of Public Health</i>	Representative of the State Agency Responsible for Health or Mental Health Care	X	<b>Stephen Tracy</b> <i>Supt. Unified School District #2, Dept. of Children and Families</i>	Representative from the Department of Children and Families	
<b>Marisol Estrada-Soto</b> <i>Parent</i>	Parent		<b>Eileen Ward</b> <i>Director, Children's Community Development Center</i>	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
<b>Lynn Johnson</b> <b>(for Linda Goodman)</b> <i>Director, Birth to Three, Dept. of Developmental Services</i>	Representative of Entity Determined Relevant by the Governor	X	<b>Grace Whitney</b> <i>Director, Head Start Collaboration Office</i>	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	X
<b>Michelle Maggio</b> <i>Parent</i>	Parent		<b>Elaine Zimmerman</b> <i>Exec. Dir., Commission on Children</i>	Executive Director of the Commission on Children	X

#### A. Welcome and Introductions

Leah Grenier called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

#### B. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December 19, 2013 meeting were reviewed and accepted. David Morgan, Marge Chambers and Patricia Bryant-Beausoleil who were not in attendance at that meeting abstained.

**C. Cabinet Updates:**

Majorie Chambers has replaced Deb Johnson and will represent the Department of Public Health.

**D. Legislative / Budget Updates:**

Leah Grenier gave an overview of the Governor's proposed budget which includes an expansion of 1,020 preschool spaces for next year, as well as a 3% increase in reimbursement rates (centers have not seen an increase in reimbursement rates since 2001).

Also included in the Governor's proposed budget is funding for a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), additional licensing inspectors so that inspections can be made annually instead of every 2-3 years, and \$30,000 for the Early Childhood Cabinet.

Two senate bills have been proposed: Senate Bill 25 which establishes the Office of Early Childhood and Senate Bill 26 which implements the Governor's budget. Senate Bill 25 will contain the same language (with minor changes) as agreed upon last year so that the bill in an effort for speedy passage. Senate Bill 26 includes the increased reimbursement rate for School Readiness, a transfer of the Youth Camp Licensing from DPH to OEC, and also for the OEC, and local education agencies, to produce plans for expanding to universal pre-k access.

**E. QRIS:**

The Cabinet's QRIS work group developed recommendations for a QRIS and gave a broad overview of the recommendations to the Cabinet in November 2012. In the interim, the workgroup has worked on finalizing initial recommendations for criteria and indicators. An external consultant was hired to finalize documents about infrastructure and what will be needed to implement the QRIS. The work group expects to have one or two meetings to wrap up their work before it is handed over to the OEC but would like to discuss next steps moving forward. The work group recommendations were never discussed in depth by the Cabinet and were never acted on.

The importance of parent information provided by a QRIS was discussed. Parents should be provided information on how to determine if a program meets established quality standards. Family priorities are affected by cost, location, transportation and the cultural competence and responsiveness of program staff. It is important that families are involved and are well-informed on the subject of quality.

As QRIS is very complex, the topic was recommend to be a regular agenda item for Cabinet meetings.

Mary Farnsworth reported that the OEC has asked for an additional \$3 million for QRIS. These funds will be targeted toward quality initiatives. The funds are not planned for development of the actual rating system. The OEC wants to ensure that strong quality supports are in place and information for parents is supported before moving forward with rating programs. These funds will also be used for ongoing research efforts (focus groups, surveys, etc.).

**F. OEC Updates:**

Mary Farnsworth, Strategic Planner for the OEC, gave a brief overview of the high-priority initiatives the OEC is developing and intending to implement over the next 18 months. They are:

1. Create a universal early screening and referral system to increase regular screening and earlier identification of children with developmental issues. This will allow for earlier intervention and therefore improved outcomes for children.

2. Build a centralized early childhood information system (ECIS) to manage and analyze data to better inform policy and practice. The OEC received bond funds to create the ECIS and staff have been hired to build the system. The ECIS will integrate different data components across many state agencies. ECIS is a three-year project that will be completed in phases.
3. Develop a plan for a coordinated home-visiting system.
4. Develop and implement a plan to coordinate early childhood technical assistance statewide to increase the quality of programs and services offered to young children.
5. Act on recommendations from reports and assessments to improve the children care and youth camp licensing system. The OEC is implementing many of the recommendations made by the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA). Additional staffing for licensing has also been included in the Governor's proposed budget.
6. Create a seamless and coordinated Birth to Five early care and education system that increases access, information and quality.
7. Launch a public information campaign targeted to families, providers, and communities about the importance of early learning, quality programs, and linkages to resources for accessing early childhood services and support.

A copy of this overview was distributed to Cabinet members and can be found on the Cabinet's website at: [www.ctearlychildhood.org](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org) under the meeting materials for February 24, 2014 meeting.

Mary Farnsworth also reported that the OEC is working to develop a 3-5 year strategic plan.

**G. Integrated Home Visitation:**

Elaine Zimmerman stated that home visitation is the starting point of infant/toddler programs and it is important that it be integrated into an overall early childhood system. Public Act 13-178 details the coordination of home visitation programs within the early childhood system. Senator Bartolomeo noted the importance of having home visitation all in one place and that the creation of the OEC was perfect timing for the creation of this bill. Recently, Elaine Zimmerman and Senator Bartolomeo were speakers on a national webinar presented by PEW highlighting this subject.

**H. Achievement Gap Task Force:**

Elaine Zimmerman reported that a task force has been put formed to eliminate the achievement gap. The group has compiled a draft report that will be released in early March. There is an extensive section of the report on in-school and out-of-school policies. Elaine stressed the importance of Cabinet playing a significant role in this work.

**I. Status of Full-Day Kindergarten in Connecticut:**

Michelle Levy, Education Consultant for the OEC, distributed copies of Kindergarten Enrollment by School District 2013-14. The OEC works in collaboration with the State Department of Education to compile this report. The data reflects enrollment data from October 1, 2013, and can be found on the Cabinet's website at: [www.ctearlychildhood.org](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org) under meeting materials from the February 27, 2014 meeting.

**Number of School Districts Offering Full-Day Program to Kindergarteners**

2011-12	73
2012-13	103
2013-14	142

**Percentage of CT Kindergarteners Enrolled in Full-Day Program**

2011-12	63%
2012-13	74%
2013-14	88%

**J. Review of SAC Requirements / Head Start Act of 2007:**

Grace Whitney distributed a chart detailing the federal expectations of the State Advisory Council (SAC) in the Head Start Act. Grace asked that Cabinet members review the grid and make themselves aware of the federal expectations. The Cabinet will need to make decisions on how to meet these expectations now that the ARRA funding has ended.

It was asked if the OEC has had any dialogue about the future role and expectations of the Cabinet. Mary Farnsworth stated that the OEC has not discussed this yet but does plan to clarify the relationship between the OEC and the Cabinet once legislative changes are final.

There was discussion regarding the Cabinet's future. Members stated the importance of having a body like the Cabinet representing different early childhood stakeholders that are not part of the OEC. It was pointed out that the Cabinet should serve as a civic vehicle. Laura Post suggested the Cabinet develop a strategic plan.

**K. Public Comment:**

Jessica Stewart, School Readiness Liaison for Meriden, discussed that there are many high-quality programs in the state that are not NAEYC accredited, as well as issues about the current licensing system. In the past, the process was considered supportive and now has a very "gotcha" approach.

Marilyn Calderon Executive Director of CT Parent Power stressed the importance of parents when building a system of quality. There needs to be ongoing communication with parents around what they really want and need in a system. Parents are concerned mostly about racial disparity, transportation, cost, etc., and are less focused on quality. It is therefore important to involve them authentically as we design a QRIS.

Dr. Julie Keen, a licensed psychologist, stressed the importance of relationship-building and developing social-emotional skills when developing a system.

**L. Adjournment / Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m. The next meeting will be held on April 24, 2014.