

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CABINET

TO: Clerk of the Senate
Clerk of the House of Representatives

FROM: David Title, Chairperson
Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet

DATE: March 1, 2012

SUBJECT: Statewide Strategic Report for the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet

On February 4, 2010, Governor Rell designated the Early Childhood Education Cabinet as the State Advisory Council as required by the Head Start Act of 2007. Effective July 1, 2011 Governor Malloy appointed David Title, Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools, Representative of the Local Education Agency as Chairperson. The Cabinet membership was appointed per legislative mandate and is as follows:

Catherine Abercrombie – State Representative
Cathy Battista – President, Family Resource Center Alliance
Claudette Beaulieu – Deputy Commissioner, Department of Social Services
Harriet Feldlaufer – Chief, Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Department of Education
Linda Goodman – Director, Birth to Three System, Department of Developmental Services
Anzelmo Graziosi – Attorney, representative from the business or philanthropic community
Leah Grenier – Director, Policy and Planning Section, Office of Policy and Management
Janice Gruendel – Deputy Commissioner, Department of Children and Families
Michelle Maggio – Parent, Norwalk
David Morgan – Vice President, TEAM Inc., representative from the CT Head Start Association
Joan Parris – Director of Early Childhood Education, Norwalk Community College, Representative from institutions of higher education
Edie Reichard – Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care, representative from a state funded child care center
Andrea Stillman – State Senator
Kevin Sullivan – Health Associate, Dept. of Public Health
Anne Louise Thompson – Chief, Bureau of Special Education, Department of Education
Eileen Ward – Director, Children’s Community Development Center, Westport, representative of local providers of early childhood education
Grace Whitney – Director, Head Start Collaboration Office, State Department of Education
Elaine Zimmerman – Executive Director, Commission on Children

The membership reflects recent legislative changes to include representatives from the Family Resource Centers and State Funded Child Care. It also reflects the change from a representative of the Department of Mental Health and Addition Services to a representative from the Department of Children and Families. The Cabinet is awaiting an appointment by the Speaker of the House of an additional parent representative.

The Early Childhood Education Cabinet met eleven times in 2011.

Through the use of federal America Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) funds, effective April, 2011, a project director was hired to oversee the activities of the Cabinet workgroups.

The Cabinet workgroups intend to advance the development of a coordinated early childhood education and development system that meets the comprehensive needs of Connecticut's children birth through five and their families. As outlined in the Cabinet's strategic plan, the goals of the workgroups are as follows,

- ***Establish linked data systems*** across state agencies, a robust and qualified early care and education workforce, early learning standards aligned to the K-12 Common Core Standards, and well engaged families. Workgroups meet monthly to discuss and implement activities and strategies that further the outlined goals. In the area of data systems, options for assigning a unique identifier have been reviewed to link statewide data systems, and opportunities identified for increased local community access to state level data.
- The Early Learning Standards workgroup has contributed to the development of Guiding Principles as an initial step in the ***development of new statewide Early Learning Standards birth through age 5***.
- The Workforce/Professional Development workgroup has dedicated resources toward the goal of ***creating a statewide framework of core early care and education workforce competencies*** and also to ***strengthen articulation agreements between two and four year institutions of higher education***. The workgroup is responsive to recent legislation that requires that all early care and education teachers in state-funded programs to obtain Bachelors' degrees by 2020.
- The Family Involvement/Home Visitation workgroup continues to identify and ***embed strategies for more effective family engagement practices in early childhood education***, with special attention to engaging fathers. Additionally, through joint efforts of the Family Involvement/Home Visitation workgroup and the Department of Health, Connecticut was awarded a Technical Assistance grant from the national Zero to Three. Teams from seven states, including Connecticut, will convene to share and develop strategies to more effectively integrate home visitation into the overall early childhood education system.

Summaries and resources of the current workgroups can be found on the Cabinet website, <http://ctearlychildhood.org/>. In addition to providing information, the SAC has added a public forum to the website to encourage public interaction. The following public forums are available:

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant
Early Childhood News, Updates and Information
Quality Data Systems Work Group
Early Learning Standards Work Group
Professional Development/Workforce Work Group
Family Engagement/Home Visitation Work group

The Early Childhood Cabinet was an integral partner in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application process. Several Cabinet members were designated by the State Department of Education (lead agency for the application) as members of the leadership team responsible for the submission of the application. The areas of focus for the RTT-ELC application were in direct alignment with the Cabinet's priority areas.

The Cabinet is committed to its role as the catalyst for ongoing coordination and collaboration with stakeholders statewide to ensure that Connecticut's children have increased access to high-quality early learning experiences as a foundation for lifelong success. In that role, the participants on the Cabinet represent all of the state agencies working with young children, public schools, early care and education programs, early care and education affiliated associations and parents who intentionally work to promote increased transparency and partnership in efforts to reach every child, every year, in every setting. This is primarily evidenced through the monthly meeting presentations of agency and community plans that are scheduled well into summer of 2012, including topics of statewide implementation plans for the Child Care Development Block Fund, the Head Start Collaboration Office, IDEA-Parts B and C through the Department of Developmental Services and the State Department of Education respectively, Home Visitation, Connecticut Health and Development Institute, and All Our Kin, a non-profit organization focused on increasing the quality of care by family based and kith and providers. The sharing of plans by Cabinet members and community stakeholders is a vehicle for assessment of state and community level needs.

The Cabinet will continue its focus on the delivery of high-quality early learning experiences in all early childhood settings, and is in the process of expanding workgroups specifically focused on a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, Health Promotions, and Public/Private Partnerships. The intent is to more effectively inform parents and the early care and education community of the criteria for quality early learning experiences, be responsive to the professional development needs of the ECE workforce and to address the cumulative needs of children and families. These additional workgroups will work in alignment with the existing Cabinet work groups focused on Data Systems, Early Learning Standards, Professional Development/Workforce, and Family Involvement/Home Visitation to advance the existing workplan and the Cabinet's overall mission.

The Project Director, with input from the Leadership Team and Cabinet members, completed a state-wide needs assessment, as required by the Head Start Act of 2007. This Assessment outlines the vision of the Cabinet, the current landscape of early childhood education, prominent risk factors being encountered by young children and their families and the collaborative efforts necessary to improve the quality of life for children and families in Connecticut. (See attached Needs Assessment Report)

Meeting dates for 2012 are as follows:

January 26	July 26	August 23	March 22
September 27	April 26	October 25	May 24
November 15	June 28	December 20	

Additionally, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet's Leadership Team which includes the chair, coordinator, cabinet member co-chairs and project director will meet on the following dates in 2012:

January 19 February 7 March 6 April 10 May 8 June through December - TBD

If you have any questions or require additional copies, please contact Andrea Brinnel at 860-713-6771. Thank you.

cc: Education Committee
 Human Services Committee
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