

Practices and Principles Meeting Minutes 2 15 13

Attendees: Maria Whelan, Granada Williams, Donna Emmons, Gail Nelson, Theresa Hawley, Tom Layman, Natalie Tucker, Keosha Gamble, Tracy Occomy Crowder, Teryonda Towns, Gloria Harris, Adrienne Stewart, Barb Quinn, Michele Carmichael

Practices and Principles Subcommittee in the context of the Family and Community Engagement Committee/Illinois Early Learning Council

The Subcommittee reviewed the organization chart located in the agenda packet, although it was noted that this table is slightly outdated. Following this organization chart, there is the Early Learning Council that consists of 72 members appointed by the Governor that represent a wide spectrum of stakeholders including both governmental and nongovernmental agencies. Within the Council there is the executive committee which consists of the co-chairs, the committee co-chairs, governmental liaisons, and other at-large members—about 20 members total. The Council includes five standing committees:

- Home Visiting Task Force which works with all of the MIECHV pieces
- Program Standards and Quality
- System Integration and Alignment
- Data, Research, and Evaluation
- Family & community engagement

The Practices and Principles Subcommittee is part of the Family and Community Engagement along with the Hard to Reach and Capital/Infrastructure Subcommittees. We originally called the subcommittee the Parent Engagement Subcommittee, but thought that this was confusing with the committee name. Also, it was noted that the subcommittee would be looking at best practices and the embedded principles for working with and engaging families—not just structures for engaging families—and therefore, we changed the name to the Practices and Principles Subcommittee with the goal of moving parents to take powerful steps to be leaders in their families and community.

Review the work plan

The Subcommittee reviewed the work plan available in the agenda packet, specifically Goal 4. At this time we have established the subcommittee—Practices and Principles—and we are now looking on where to go now. Our charge from the Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) is to develop the Level 5 Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) description.

What work has been done: QRIS Levels 1-4

Prior to the subcommittee, a QRIS work group did a lot of work for developing the Family and Community Engagement descriptors. In the agenda packet there is a table with the Level 1 to 4 Family and Community Engagement descriptors which is measured in two subgroups: 1) Family and Community Engagement, and 2) Transitions. In general, the QRIS levels for all measures are:

- Level 1—meets the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensure standards

- Level 2—Level 1 + professional development and training
- Level 3—Level 2 + self-assessment to determine that the professional development and training are translated into policy and staff practice. A percentage of these programs will be assessed by a quality specialist, which is meant to be a friendlier assessor that works with the programs for enhancing their practice.
- Level 4—Level 3 + Quality specialist observations with a more thorough review of quality improvement using external tools, such as the Head Start Monitoring Tool or ITERS or ECERS.

The Level 1 through Level 4 descriptors have been approved by the Council and do not need any further work. The work group also made a recommendation of what a Level 5 would look like. The agenda packet includes a statement of definition and vision, and the initial recommendation can be found in the attached document QRIS-Level 5 doc. The idea of the initial Level 5 recommendation was to develop a measure that is all inclusive of family and community engagement—how do programs work and engage with parents at a program level to move them to engagement at the community level? The overall advisory group felt that level 5 as presented was not enough, but a good start that needs more and validation.

One note on the Level 5—Unlike the other levels, the Level 5 is an individual subset quality rating or a program endorsement. For example, to receive a Level 4 a program needs to meet all elements in all of the measured subgroups. For the Level 5 a program can receive one or more endorsements for a given subgroup. Currently, Level 5 descriptors are being developed for the following: 1) Family and Community Engagement, 2) Special Needs, 3) Infant/Toddler, 4) Preschool Instructional Environment, 5) Cultural/Linguistic Diversity, and 6) Program Administration and Leadership. After a program meets Level 4 criteria they will be able to apply for these endorsements incrementally.

Last time the Subcommittee met we talked about going beyond Level 4 to where we can develop standards where we can demonstrate that parents are taking action as opposed to here is my program's binder and minutes from meetings. We are looking for criteria for strategies or approaches that research says is excellent and effective for when children enter kindergarten. How do these programs treat and include the families as active participants in the program? What does the research say for the programs helping the families help their children? How are these programs building the parents ability to advocate for their child as their child moves through the school system (i.e., long lasting impacts)? We want to make sure we are including all of these pieces.

Level 5 Award of Excellence for Parent Engagement

The subcommittee reviewed the Markers of Progress document developed by the National Head start Training Center. On page 29, a section Family Engagement and Child Outcomes begins. This was a good document to review for starting this work because it shows the transition from starting to work on family engagement to progressing practices to innovating practices. This framework is fact driven and leader driven and the underlying message is that at the end of the day children who have parents who are engaged in their lives and their communities do better because of less emotional and material want, especially when we are talking about the most at-risk children. It presents this as what do we want to

see parents doing from this work, but not because they are forced to do so—encouraged and nurtured. How can the center/program help, either by providing services or building relationships with others in the community, to help bring parents to the resources? To get to a Level 4 these practices need to be embedded in the planning.

The subcommittee discussed multiple components of inclusion including considering and providing services and materials for families who may not read and/or speak English; the importance of relationships between parents and staff, staff and the community, and the parent and community. Here are five major themes that emerged:

- Welcoming environment for parents (the physical and emotional environment)
- Structural/shared power/decision making—parent driven-parent engaged programming; parents participating in planning
- Parent behavior/confidence
- Social capital—linkages, referrals
- Parent as leaders—building parent knowledge of child development and advocacy

What gets measured is what matters. We need to get some more information on what to include from both sides. We need to get parent feedback on how they see each of these buckets.

Next Steps

We will look at the areas and try to identify some of the key topics and see what measures are out there. For the next meeting we will invite Educare to help with some of the skeletal pieces and help with the measurement. The next piece would be synthesizing and creating a couple focus groups with parents. The other piece is the subcommittee representation is very Chicago and we may need to do a focus group of rural groups and other populations.

Also, keep in mind the Strengthening Families tool. This has a lot of overlap with the Head Start document and may be worth bringing into the conversation.

We also need to get out timelines for completing this work. The OECD is looking at rolling out the levels 1-4 over the next 6 months and have the Level 5 Infant/Toddler and Preschool Curriculum descriptions ready. They do not want to roll these out all at once so there is time for us to work on this.

Next meeting

March 28th at 9:00 AM at Illinois Action for Children

*Note that this is an hour before the Family and Community Committee other subcommittee meetings