

Early Learning Council Executive Committee Meeting

January 16, 2013

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Chicago – Department of Human Services, 401 S. Clinton, 7th Floor Videoconference Room
Springfield – Department of Human Services, Harris Building Videoconference Room

Minutes

Participants

Chicago – Karen Berman, Jeanna Capito, George Davis, Gaylord Gieseke, Phyllis Glink, Dan Harris, Theresa Hawley, Teresa Kelly, Jan Maruna, Beth Mascitti-Miller, Harriet Meyer, Sylvia Puente, Diana Rauner, Elliot Regenstein, Vanessa Rich, Linda Saterfield, Julie Smith, Sara Slaughter, Teri Talan, Maria Whelan, Kay Willmoth

Springfield – Reyna Hernandez and Cindy Zumwalt

Phone – Daniel Fitzgerald

I. Welcome and Introductions

Harriet Meyer welcomed the Executive Committee and announced that the Executive Committee will need to meet more frequently as Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC 2) implementation begins. The Executive Committee will be taking over the role of the Policy and Implementation Advisory Group from the Phase 1 application.

Julie Smith provided the following updates:

- Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing was led by ISBE Board, ISBE staff, DHS, DCFS and OECD. Over 30 groups testified, and the testimony is available on the OECD website.
- Governor announced the 14 Early Childhood Construction Grant recipients. Information on winners is available at OECD website. The Governor's Office will be pushing for another round of ECCG grants.
- Illinois was recognized by Zero to Three as one of five states moving forward an infant/toddler agenda. As a result IL will receive technical assistance.
- Received the official award letter from the Department of Education and Health and Human Services for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge. Our request will be fully funded.

a. Minutes

The minutes were approved with edits by Teri Talan.

II. Collaboration

Harriet Meyer led a discussion on collaboration and how the Early Learning Council and greater early learning community can better work together.

- Harriet Meyer: I've always liked the definition of collaboration that someone shared with me: "An unnatural act performed by non-consenting adults." But we need to think seriously about how to improve our collaboration. For example, I lead the Ad Hoc Communications Committee. How do we staff these things? We need to think about this because the Governor's Office can't do everything. How are we thinking more largely about doing a better job of getting the word out without further burdening the Governor's Office? The material very important, but it's also often very complicated and complex. Let's come up with a process.

- Understand the tension with an ambitious set of tasks and limited resources. I think there should be *appropriate* inclusion of “big” groups but not excessive inclusion so as to allow staff to work.
- We’ve been most successful when there’s been a defined problem and the Early Learning Council can lend its vision and support. The worst has been when we have people who don’t run agencies thinking they do run them, & agencies not wanting to deal with those people because of that. Which are the problems that need to come to a larger group? How can we add value to the decisions that need to be made?
- One difficulty when it comes to the grant is that there hasn’t been a final decision on what the grant means, which doesn’t allow us to effectively communicate.
- Some of this must remain fluid, though we can try to frame committee work, too.
 - Worried about committees driving the work rather than the work driving the committees.
- If we’re all working towards the same end and trust that each other are doing so, that could be very helpful.
- What authority does the Early Learning Council have over the Office of Early Childhood Development?
 - Advisory only.
- Experience with MIECHV, which is a model for a supportive role.
- Having the Home Visiting Task Force was a success and I would add that well-structured committees could help keep the broader base in the loop. We don’t want to lose the input from small groups.

III. ELC – The Big Picture

Julie Smith outlined the reorganization process the ELC and the Executive Committee are going through. She highlighted the strategic planning process, committee restructuring and the two Challenge grant applications.

- Theresa Hawley: Gave an overview of “The Big Picture” for the ELC and the OECD moving forward. She highlighted:
 - The alignment of goals of the ELC, the OECD and the State
 - Defining Kindergarten Readiness
 - Deploying New Early Learning Standards
 - Defining High Quality Early Learning
 - Deploying New Support Systems For Early Learning Providers
 - Pushing Programs To New Levels
 - Connecting Children With Services
 - Focusing On All Ages
 - Strengthening Our Workforce
 - Keeping A Comprehensive Focus
 - Becoming Data-Driven
- Members discussed the metrics used in the various definitions of “high risk” and “high need” children.
 - Theresa Hawley: I’d like a series of “what currently is” in Illinois for these metrics and definitions. The Chapin Hall risk correlations could be helpful.

IV. Quality Rating and Improvement System

Julie Smith told members that the Ad Hoc QRIS Committee met multiple times to make recommendations on the level criteria and now have recommendations.

- Theresa Hawley: We tried to build a system that a very wide range of providers could easily engage with (through NAEYC, for example). The QRIS criteria you have today are a little more challenging and a lot more specific than what was in place. We recognize the communication challenges associated with this document – it’s dense. There are going to be a lot of “approved lists” throughout, as well as processes to get on those lists. Again, it’s about making engagement with the QRIS easy for providers.
 - In terms of the timeline, we will continue to accept applications under the current system, with a soft launch date of July 1 for the new system. We will work with programs to communicate FAQs and the fact that annual reports and renewals will take place under the new system.
 - What sort of incentives will there be across the system, and who will provide/administer them?
 - There are non-monetary incentives such as Report Card recognition and Blue Ribbon School designation.
- The big stretch is going to be on Instructional Support. Many Head Start programs will not be able to make Level 4. There is also no recognition of the term “deficiency,” which should be included.
- The Executive Committee noted that some details remain unresolved, and it was confirmed that this would not be the final version of the QRIS.
 - The Executive Committee accepted the QRIS unanimously while also stipulating that some wording would need to be changed.
 - The Committee postponed discussion of Level 5 criteria.

V. Concentrated High Need Communities

Theresa Hawley announced the communities that were selected to receive additional resources to raise the quality of Early Learning and Development services. She noted that these selected communities will engage in a local planning process to determine strategies that will have the greatest impact on increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs in their community that are enrolled in high quality ELD Programs. A flexible pool of resources will support the implementation of these local plans. The seven communities are:

- Aurora
- Cicero
- Greater East St. Louis
- North Lawndale, Chicago
- Pilsen/Little Village, Chicago
- Thornton Township
- Williamson County

The planning process will continue through 2013. Community specific supports are expected to be implemented beginning in January 2014 and lasting through December 2016.

VI. Adjourn

- The next ELC Executive meeting will be on February 11 at ISBE.
- The meeting was adjourned.