



Board of Early Education and Care

May 14, 2013

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art

125 West Bay Road
Amherst, MA 01002

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

J.D. Chesloff, Chairperson

Matthew Malone, Ph.D., Secretary of Education and designee Abby Weiss

Kathleen Betts, designee of John Polanowicz, Secretary of EOHHS

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.

Elizabeth Childs, M.D.

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

Cheryl A. Stanley, Ed.D

Mary Wallachy

Joni Block

Thomas L. Weber, Acting Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Early Education Absent

Chi-Cheng Huang, M.D., Vice Chairperson

The meeting was called to order at 1:09 p.m.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chairperson J.D. Chesloff began by thanking the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art for hosting today's board meeting and for providing a tour of the museum. He reported that some Board members toured the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Children's Action Corps -South Hadley Girls Treatment Program, a residential program for at-risk girls receiving services through the Department of Youth Services. He stated that it was inspiring to see how this program positively impacts the lives of these girls and stressed that this program is an important part of EEC's work that is not often seen by the Board.

Comments from the Commissioner

Acting Commissioner Tom Weber also thanked the museum for hosting today's meeting and for providing a tour of its facility. He reiterated that the visit to the residential program was remarkable, as it provided the Board with an opportunity to see the real value that residential programs licensed by EEC offer to DYS children. Acting Commissioner Weber noted the interesting contrast between the real challenges facing families and children, like those at RFK, juxtaposed to the artistic beauty observed at the Eric Carle Museum. He also expressed pleasure that today's Board Meeting was being held in Western Massachusetts because true democracy requires engagement of the entire Commonwealth.

Acting Commissioner Weber acknowledged the EEC Staff Appreciation Event hosted by the Board, which took place on April 26th at EEC's central office. He thanked the Board members for planning and participating in the event and stated that this event provided an excellent opportunity to bring both the Board members and EEC staff closer together.

Acting Commissioner Weber also reported that EEC is looking closely at its operations to improve processes and procedures per the recommendations from the State Auditor. To this end, EEC is in the process of revising its Internal Control Plan for completion by July 1, 2013.

He recognized EEC's ambitious policy agenda, offering that this is an ideal time to conduct a reassessment of EEC's work. EEC currently licenses over 10,000 programs in Massachusetts; the Department is developing a new health and safety risk assessment instrument to improve policies and practices in this vital area. Acting Commissioner Weber briefly discussed the Department's recent efforts to improve transparency of its work through the Performance Measurement Data Dashboard. He stated that the dashboard currently includes data on child care access and QRIS metrics, but will evolve to include other areas, such as professional development and licensing, by late summer/early fall. He also reported that EEC has made strides to improve its operations to provide greater protections for children, including monthly cross-checks between EEC's licensed child care programs and the sex offender registry database. Since this process has been put in place, there have been over 16,000 addresses checked, which yielded only four potential matches. In each of the four matches, an investigation determined that there was no immediate threat and extra precautions were put in place.

Acting Commissioner Weber provided a brief update related to the FY14 budget and stated that the Senate's proposed budget will be released tomorrow. After its release, EEC will have a better understanding of the parameters for FY14.

Lastly, Acting Commissioner Weber reported that Department has been meeting with representatives from SEIU/Local 509 to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement on behalf of the family child care providers in the Commonwealth.

At the conclusion of the Comments from the Commissioner, Chairperson Chesloff thanked Acting Commissioner Weber for stabilizing the Department and providing energy to move the Department forward.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Malone thanked the Board and the EEC staff for their efforts and their support of Acting Commissioner. He stated that his best decision in the first 102 days of his employment was to appoint Tom Weber as the Acting Commissioner. Secretary Malone expressed hope that the Senate's budget proposal will move closer to Governor Patrick's ambitious agenda for early education in the Commonwealth. He also thanked the education advocates in the room for their efforts to engage the legislature and confirmed that early education remains a top priority for the Patrick Administration.

Secretary Malone then addressed the search process for the next Commissioner of EEC. He confirmed that a job description has been posted and expressed his hope that the search process will ensure that the best candidate will accept the job.

In conclusion, Secretary Malone encouraged everyone to take advantage of "free fun Fridays" starting in June, a program offering free admission at many museums, historic sites, theaters, art centers, and

many attractions throughout the Commonwealth, including the Eric Carle Museum that so graciously agreed to host today's meeting.

Statements from the Public*

The Board of Early Education and Care makes up to 30 minutes available for persons in the audience to address the Board on specific agenda items. In order to hear as many speakers as possible, the Board limits individuals to three minutes, although written material of any length can be submitted to Chairperson Chesloff or Acting Commissioner Weber.

- **Christiana Llanderpuije, Parent**, testified on the value of early education programs, such as the Parent Child Home Program (PCHP) and the Early Childhood Mental Health program that her children attended.
- **Barbara Black, Early Childhood Coordinator and Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Coordinator, Northampton Public Schools**, expressed concern about the parental consent associated with the CFCE Grant, remarking that the consent form is too complex and difficult to explain to families. She also expressed concern that English language learners, many of whom have children under the age of three, are participating in English language programs supported by Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) grant funds but cannot qualify for subsidies because of insufficient service need. She encouraged EEC to discuss ways in which to support these individuals, especially when the RTTT-ELC money goes away.
- **Tim Merritt, Principal, Sunderland Elementary School**, testified that the Sunderland CFCE grantee's outreach efforts have positively impacted isolated parents by offering bi-weekly play groups, parent cafes, family dinners, etc. He encouraged the Board to continue support for these outreach efforts.
- **Barbara Finlayson, Early Childhood Director for Collaborative for Educational Services and CFCE Coordinator**, submitted written testimony from three parents that discussed the benefits derived from PCHP participation.
- **Mark Leonas, Director, Valley Opportunity Council**, testified that compensation is the major challenge to retaining early education and care educators in programs. He reported that his program cannot compete with the public school districts in hiring and retaining quality educators. By way of example, he stated that the starting salary for an educator in his program is \$28-30K, while the Holyoke Public School salaries start at \$38K.
- **Kim S. Audette, M.Ed., Out of School Time (OST) Coordinator/Western Massachusetts Educator and Provider Support (EPS)**, testified that EEC's efforts to coordinate with After School and Out of School Time (ASOST) programs is currently lacking and offered to engage the Board in a process to improve the coordination with ASOST programs. She also requested that the Board consider developing credentials through the Department of Higher Education (DHE) for ASOST programs that are similar to those set by EEC, to establish a clear career ladder staff.

Several board members agreed that ASOST needs further attention by the Department. Acting Commissioner Weber acknowledged that EEC needs to pay more attention and that the Department would do its best to engage the ASOST field going forward, such as designating an

EEC staff member as the ASOST point person. Chairperson Chesloff asked that ASOST be considered in the Strategic Plan.

- **Doug McNally, Coordinator for MCLA Berkshire Readiness Center**, testified about the value of the Readiness Centers. He stated that the Readiness Centers work with all three education departments to understand the needs of programs in their regions and to engage DHE to better understand the needs of the workforce. The Readiness Centers support various initiatives rolled out by the education departments, including the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA). Mr. McNally urged the Board to continue to support the Readiness Centers' work after the RTTT-ELC funds sunset.
- **Susan Hamlett, New England Farm Workers Council**, expressed gratitude to Child Care Aware of America (CCAA) which EEC has retained to provide training, operational supports and standardization of procedures to the MA Child Care Resource and Referral Network. She urged the Board to continue to support the CCAA contract in FY14.

End of Public Comment period.

Routine Business:

- **Approval of April 9, 2013 Board Minutes – Vote – motion to approve:** Board Member Joan Wasser Gish requested that the minutes be amended to reflect the following: correction of the date and attending board members and amending the Policy and Research Committee report to reflect that the committee requested information, rather than was currently looking at data, from other states.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the April 9, 2013 Board Minutes, as amended. The motion passed. Chairperson Chesloff abstained.

- **Board Committee and Advisory Reports:**

Fiscal Committee

Board Member Beth Childs reported that the Fiscal Committee met on May 6th, during which the Committee members discussed the FY13 Budget, current caseload and waitlist data, the FY14 budget projects, negotiations with the family child care union, and the status of EEC's internal control plans. She confirmed that there is a projected surplus of \$10.6 million for all three caseload accounts, up from the \$7.6 million surplus reported in April. Board Member Childs noted that the total surplus includes the projected \$6.1 million deficit in the DTA caseload account; however, transfer language will allow EEC to cover this deficit. Meanwhile, the waitlist has increased to over 55,000 children. Board Member Childs then proceeded to discuss the Governor's FY14 budget proposal of \$619.4 million and the House Ways and Means Committee's proposal of \$512.5 million. She opined that the biggest issue for the Department is caseload maintenance. Board Member Childs confirmed that EEC is negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with SEIU-Local 509 for family child care providers that provide subsidized child care in the Commonwealth. Lastly, she noted that the Department continues its work to update and improve its Internal Control Plan.

Policy and Research Committee

Board Member Wasser Gish reported that the Policy and Research Committee also met on May 6th and discussed the Commissioner Search process, the Department's Performance Measurement Data Dashboard, updates on RTTT-ELC projects and the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). She confirmed that the Board and the Executive Office of Education are committed to getting the right leadership for EEC in place. The board began the search process by vetting Acting Commissioner Weber; however, the Board received a request to conduct an open search. She reinforced that the open search process is not a reflection on Acting Commissioner Weber, as he continues to be a candidate. Board Member Wasser Gish stated that Tanuja Gopal, EEC's CIO presented the Performance Measurement Data Dashboard, a tool which will improve transparency and improve the Department's efforts to track progress towards its goals. The Committee reviewed the RTTT-ELC performance measures; Board Member Wasser Gish reported that the Department is reviewing and revising its goals. Lastly, the Committee received an update on QRIS, including its successes to date and remaining challenges. Board Member Wasser Gish remarked that the Committee meeting reflected a new era of collaboration between the staff and board members and specifically thanked Pam Kuechler and Maryann Anthony for attending the May meeting.

Planning and Evaluation Committee

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers reported that the Planning and Evaluation Committee has not met since the last Board meeting, but will meet next Thursday, May 23rd.

Advisory Council

Board Member Joni Block reported that the State Associations and Legislators Subgroup of the Advisory Council met at the State House on May 9th during which they discussed the Commissioner Search process and received updates on the RTTT-ELC projects, including the MKEA Initiative.

- **Disclosures:**

Board Member Villegas-Reimers submitted a written disclosure that she works for Wheelock College, a recipient of EEC funding. Board Member Sharon Scott-Chandler submitted a written disclosure that she is employed by ABCD, a recipient of EEC funding. Board Member Joni Block disclosed that her position, as the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Coordinator with Brockton Public Schools, is funded by EEC.

New Business:

No new business was raised.

Items for Discussion and Action:

1. **Child Care Development Fund State Plan: Public Comment Period – Vote**

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *Child Care Development Fund - Massachusetts State Plan, Federal Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015, PowerPoint, dated May 14, 2013*

Thomas Weierman, EEC Assistant General Counsel, presented the Board with an overview of the requirements for the Commonwealth's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan. He began by confirming that federal law requires all states to submit a State Plan every two years, as a condition for receipt of CCDF. He reported that over \$450 million in federal and state funds will be available to EEC to support child care services in FY14. Although the CCDF regulations promote flexibility in the

administration of the block grant, Mr. Weierman highlighted a few of the spending requirements and limitations associated with the grant, such as quality expenditure requirements and spending limits on administrative expenses.

Mr. Weierman also reminded the Board that federal law imposes certain restrictions on CCDF expenditures used to support direct access for child care services, including age restrictions, income limitations, and work, education and training requirements. He noted that there are exceptions to the income and/or service need requirements for families that are either receiving or at risk of receiving protective services. Massachusetts takes a broad approach to the protective service exception by including not only families linked to the child welfare system, but also homeless families, teen parents and families experiencing special needs.

Lastly, Mr. Weierman presented next steps for completion and then submission of the CCDF Plan, detailing that public comment hearings are scheduled for the week of May 20th and the Board will vote in June to approve submission of the Plan to the Administration of Children and Families by July 1, 2013.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care authorize the Acting Commissioner of Early Education and Care to solicit public comment, in accordance with 45 CFR § 98.14(2)(c), on the Commonwealth's proposed CCDF Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2014-2015, subject to approval of the final plan by the Board in June 2013. The motion passed unanimously.

2. FY14 Budget – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *FY14 State Budget Discussion, PowerPoint, dated May 13, 2013*

William Concannon, EEC's Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance, presented an overview of the FY14 Budget proposals from the Governor and the House Ways and Means (HWM) Committee. He noted that the Senate Ways and Means (SWM) budget proposal is expected to be released tomorrow. In reviewing the current budget proposals, Deputy Commissioner Concannon confirmed that the HWM's budget is \$134.82 million less than the Governor's proposal. In particular, the HWM proposal reflects a \$13.9 million reduction from the current maintenance numbers for the three caseload accounts. He also emphasized the conundrum presented by the line item language of the General Appropriations Act, which states that there shall not be a waitlist in the DCF caseload yet the budget proposals are insufficient to fully serve all DCF families. Deputy Commissioner Concannon reported that the HWM budget is worrisome because the proposed caseload amounts will not support maintenance of existing families.

3. Market Rate Study – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *Massachusetts 2012 Market Price Survey, PowerPoint, dated May 14, 2013*
- *Market Rate Survey Consultant Bios, dated May 14, 2013*

Jill Reynolds, Manager and Tina Chen-Xu, Business Analyst, of Public Consulting Group (PCG) presented the Board with the results of its Market Rate Study. Ms. Chen-Xu noted that EEC hired PCG to conduct a survey of market prices in each region of the state and across all program types for the purpose of complying with the equal access requirements of the CCDF regulations. The CCDF regulations establish a benchmark at 75th percentile (75%) of the market rate as a method for states to demonstrate children

receiving CCDF subsidies have equal access to child care. Ms. Chen-Xu reported that the 2012 Market Rate Study was designed to collect information on (1) standard days and hours of operation; (2) prices a program typically charges by hour, day, week or month; and (3) the program's staff and qualifications. Data collection for this project began in December 2012. Ms. Chen-Xu stated that a total of 2,100 programs participated in the survey, representing a response rate of 89% for center-based and out-of-school-time programs and 59% for family child care providers. Ms. Chen-Xu reviewed some of the data collected on the early childhood workforce, including QRIS program participation, educator enrollment in the Professional Qualifications Registry, staff retention, staff qualifications and opportunities for programmatic collaborations.

Several board members sought clarification of the methodology used and questioned how the existing rates impact programs' abilities to participate in the child care subsidy system. In addition, board members requested that the methodology and requirements associated with the Market Rate Study be added to the June Fiscal Committee Meeting agenda, as well as that of the Board Retreat, in order for the Board to have a better understanding of the results.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Abby Weiss, designee for the Secretary of Education, noted that Secretary Malone has requested that each of the three education boards submit a list of all duties and responsibilities that have been delegated to their respective Commissioners for his review. This information must be submitted by July 1, 2013.

Acting Commissioner Weber urged attendees to reach out to their legislators to advocate for increased investments in early education for FY14. He stated that advocacy is much more impactful to legislators if they hear from their constituents.

Chairperson Chesloff then asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 3:26 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas L. Weber
Acting Commissioner of the Department and
Secretary to the Board