Policy and Research Committee
Board of Early Education and Care
March 3, 2014
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Department of Early Education and Care
51 Sleeper Street
Boston, MA 02210

MINUTES- Draft

Members of the Committee/Board Present:
Sharon Scott-Chandler, Board Member (via phone)
Joan Wasser Gish, Board Member/Policy and Research Committee Chair

EEC Staff Present:
Gwen Alexander, Manager of Program Quality and Improvement
Katie DeVita, Educator and Provider Support Specialist
Whitney Henderson, Home Visiting & Community Engagement Analyst
Carol Nolan, Director of Policy
Chris Pond, Educator and Provider Support Specialist
Felicia Sullivan, Assistant General Counsel
Tom Weierman, Assistant General Counsel

Members of the Public Present:
Mary Ann Anthony, Catholic Charities
Steven Ellis, Director Research and Evaluation Group, UMass Donahue Institute (via phone)
Pam Kuechler, Massachusetts Head Start Association
Joanne Roberts, Senior Research Scientist Wellesley Centers for Women
Wayne Ysaguirre, Associated Early Care and Education

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

Disclosures:
There were no disclosures.

Minutes:
Minutes from the February 3, 2014 meeting were approved.

1. QRIS Validation Study Redesign - Discussion

Steven Ellis, Director Research and Evaluation Group at the UMass Donahue Institute shared that EEC and UMDI has undergone activities to evaluate and redesign the QRIS validation study. He said that UMDI has partnered with Wellesley Centers for Women and will be working with researcher Joanne Roberts through the remainder of the study. Mr. Ellis stated that UMDI and EEC have been discussing the study with members of the QRIS Validation Study Advisory as well as federal technical supports, and the new design has been endorsed by these individuals. Mr. Ellis added that the redesigned study is more aligned with the RTT-ELC and EEC initiatives.

Mr. Ellis highlighted three significant changes to the design. The study will now compare Level 1 v Level 2 v Level 3 and 4, instead of comparing Levels 1 and 2 v Levels 3 and 4. The second change he shared is the study will include a statewide sample, instead of focusing only on the 17 gateway communities. The third change he noted is the study will focus only on Center Based and School based programs, and will not include Family Child Care as originally planned, as the Center Based and School Based programs are more prepared to be studied.

The study will include a child assessment battery that is aligned with best practices across the country. This assessment battery includes the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – IV, the Woodcock Johnson III Form A Test of Achievement, Letter-Word Identification, the Woodcock Johnson III Form A: Test of Achievement, Applied Mathematics, the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Preschool Program, Second Edition (DECA), the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS), and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Toddlers. Children included in the study will have a basic understanding of English, as most of the tools are only normed n English, and no gross developmental delays.

There will be a pre and post assessment of the children included in the study, and the growth of the child, not developmental norms, will be considered. Joanne Roberts, Senior Research Scientist Wellesley Centers for Women stated that the child assessment battery is more thorough than the original design, and the UMDI will consider individual aspects of school readiness.

Chair Wasser Gish commended the UMDI researchers for being open minded and rethinking the study design. She added that the study is important both to inform policymaking and to administer the QRIS. She asked if there are any concerns about the current design and the Committee discussed the need to have an adequate sample for level 3. Gwen Alexander, EEC Manager of Program Quality and Improvement, stated that despite the recent transition of three Program Quality Specialists to licensor positions, staff from the remaining Program Quality Unit has divided the case load across the state to ensure we have enough Level 3 programs granted for the validation study sample. Ms. Roberts added that UMDI will include some Level 4 programs as a case study if there are not enough programs granted for a full sample. She said that UMDI may be able to combine level 4 with 3 if sufficient data is available.

Maryann Anthony from Catholic Charities asked how UMDI will deal with transience of children who may be in the sample. Ms. Roberts replied that UMDI will oversample the children with a target of five children per classroom in both the pre and post assessment. Ms. Alexander shared that the parent consent will be designed so that EEC can later do a longitudinal study if we have

the funding and decide that we would like to assess the same children later to see their progress.

The Committee also discussed the need for programs that have been selected for this study to engage in the process. Ms. Alexander stated that the Program Quality Specialists will be able to work with the programs selected and support their participation.

Committee Chair Wasser Gish asked the members of the public who were present at the meeting to share what they would like to learn from the study. Wayne Ysaguirre from Associated Early Care and Education shared that he would like to know what is relevant and needed to support program quality. Ms. Roberts stated that right now we don't really know what quality levels looks like or if the Environment Rating Scales are predicating child outcomes. She added that previous studies have shown that quality is a stronger predictor of outcomes for low income children.

2. QRIS Rating Policy – Discussion

Ms. Alexander presented a draft QRIS rating policy. She stated EEC's legal unit has been supporting the work on this policy and it is modeled after Delaware's QRIS rating policy. She also stated that the policy has been vetted with the QRIS Working Group and the EEC Program Quality Unit. Ms. Alexander highlighted the significant changes to the proposed policy.

- Current policy states that all QRIS applications will need to be renewed after two years. The proposed policy would require:
    - Level 1 – expires after 1 year
    - Level 2 – expires after 2 years
    - Level 3 – expires after 2 years with option to extend an additional year
    - Level 4 – expires after 2 years with option to extend two additional years

- Programs will have the option to request a re-rating after one year, in the event that a program does not meet document verification, professional development or measurement tools requirements.

- Programs will have the option to appeal their rating should they disagree with EEC's determination. (A summary) of the appeal steps include:
    - 1st step, discuss with QRIS manager
    - 2nd step, internal review (members of the Program Quality Unit)
    - 3rd step- QRIS Rating Appeals Committee (QRIS manager, workforce, field operations staff)

The Committee felt that the draft rating policy was well thought out and had no recommendations for revisions.

3. Workforce Development – Update

Katie DeVita, Educator and Provider Support Specialist presented an update on workforce development to the Committee. She stated that much of the data in the presentation was also included in the Special Commission on Early and Education and care report. Ms. DeVita

explained that most of the support for workforce comes is provided by the Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Grantees and the Readiness Centers. Ms. DeVita noted that the attrition rate for early childhood educators is high, almost double the turnover of rate of elementary and secondary education staff.

Committee Chair Wasser Gish asked about validity of the data from the Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR). Ms. DeVita stated that the date is self-reported so it is not reliable. She added that is needs to be cleaned up. Some educators have listed their degrees multiple times, and some educators are not listed in the PQR at all. EEC does not verify data in the PQR, but the Teacher Qualification (TQ) unit does verify the information they receive when certifying teachers.

Ms. Alexander added that EEC uses the PQR when verifying professional development and qualification credentials for programs' and providers' QRIS applications. She stated that linking the PQR to the QRIS on line application, along with linking the TQ and the calendar that the EPS grantees use would be very helpful in data collection, QRIS application submission, and QRIS application verification.

Committee Chair Wasser Gish asked if EEC has made any progress on degree attainment by the field, relative to the baseline studies of rates of educator degree and credential attainment conducted by Wellesley ten years ago. Ms. DeVita replied that it is taking the educators many years to get their degrees, and that some programs have expressed concern because their educators are leaving to work in public schools and elsewhere in the economy. It was also discussed that low wages impact both retention and recruitment, making it difficult to attract people with BA degrees into the field.

Mr. Ysaguirre asked if there are more early childhood educators with BA degrees in the Boston area. Ms. DeVita responded that there are more educators with BA's in the Boston area, and this may be because many of the colleges and universities work well together in supporting the field.

The Committee discussed strategies for keeping educators from moving on. It was suggested that managers play a large role in keeping attrition down, through support and mentoring. Committee Chair Wasser Gish requested that Ms. DeVita return to the Committee in a few months to continue this discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.