



Board of Early Education and Care

June 14, 2011
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Department of Early Education and Care
51 Sleeper Street
Boston, MA 02210

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

J.D. Chesloff, Chairperson
JudyAnn Bigby, M.D., Secretary of EOHHS
Paul Reville, Secretary of EOE
Elizabeth Childs, M.D.
Carol Craig O'Brien
Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.
Chi-Cheng Huang, M.D.
Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.
Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.
Cheryl Stanley, Ed.D.

Sherrill Killins, Ed.D, Commissioner of the Department and Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Absent

Mary Pat Messmer

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 p.m.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair

Chairperson J.D. Chesloff welcomed new Board Member Cheryl Stanley, Interim Dean of Education at Westfield State University. He reminded Board Members to complete the Board retreat survey due June 15th. In addition, Chairperson Chesloff welcomed Shannon Rudisill, Director of the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Shireen Riley, Regional Program Manager for the Office of Child Care to the Board meeting.

Comments from the Secretary

Tom Weber spoke on behalf of Secretary Paul Reville, who was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict. Mr. Weber began by expressing the Administration's excitement about the upcoming Early Learning Challenge Grant and emphasized the importance of this opportunity for the Commonwealth. EOE will be working with Commissioner Killins and ESE on the grant application. He went on to explain that the state budget is currently in conference to resolve the House and Senate differences and noted that there are benefits to each of the proposed budgets. Lastly, Mr. Weber relayed Secretary Reville's prior welcome to Dr. Stanley, adding that the confirmation process had been a long one and that the

Secretary is happy that Dr. Stanley has joined the EEC Board.

Comments from the Commissioner

Relevant document included in Board materials:

- Commissioner's Report, dated June 14, 2011

Commissioner Killins began by welcoming Shannon Rudisill, Director of the Office of Child Care and Shireen Riley, Regional Manager for the Office of Child Care to the Board meeting. Additionally, she welcomed Cheryl Stanley to the Board, noting that Dr. Stanley is a wealth of information and an authoritative voice in higher education. She acknowledged Chairperson Chesloff's new professional role as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable.

Commissioner Killins submitted her monthly report to the Board and highlighted the following topics, which are detailed in the Commissioner's Report dated June 14, 2011:

EEC Staffing: Three students were hired as summer interns to work in different capacities throughout the Department. Donna Cooper has been hired for the Unified System Project. She will work on the Professional Qualification Registry and Quality Rating and Improvement System applications as a Quality Assurance Analyst. Once the Unified System Project is underway, Ms. Cooper will then transition to work on the Financial Assistance component. Commissioner Killins reported that the hire of the Chief Informational Officer/ Director of Applications and Software Engineering candidate is still pending. This candidate will replace Joan Clark and provide leadership to the IT unit. She also noted that if budgetary constraints are not resolved with the new FY 2012 budget, it may require the layoff of ten EEC staff.

Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant: Commissioner Killins expressed the Department's excitement about the Early Learning Challenge Grant. She explained that full guidance for the grant application will be published in late summer. In the interim, the Department will conduct community meetings to gather stakeholder input and to determine what is important to them. Commissioner Killins noted that the Early Learning Challenge Grant would have a particular emphasis on Birth through 5. EEC is considering three primary components that will be supported if Massachusetts is awarded RTT-ELC grant funds: development of statewide Centers for Excellence; building upon EEC's Early Childhood Information System (ECIS); and Supporting and tracking educator quality and children's growth and development through the Department's data systems and engaging with families through existing initiatives.

Early Childhood Resource Centers: The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Early Childhood Resource Centers will be released on or around June 14, 2011. Once awarded, the Early Childhood Resource Centers, located in public libraries, will provide access to materials and resources for early education and care programs and families statewide; provide EEC educators/providers with professional development opportunities; and offer programming that supports parents in their role as their child's first teacher.

Lynn Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Network: Early Childhood Literacy Initiative:

Through funding provided by EEC, Lynn Public Schools formed a partnership with the Lynn Public Library, to plan and execute a family literacy initiative known as PACT (Parent and Child Together Time) for targeted early childhood children, and their parent(s). This program has reached full enrollment and there is a waitlist of families who wish to participate.

Sixth Annual Community Dialogue on Early Education and Care: Developing New Leadership and Alliances Working for Solutions: Commissioner Killins reported that she had participated in the Sixth Annual Community Dialogue on Early Education and Care: Developing New Leadership and Alliances Working for Solutions on May 26, 2011. She commented that the dialogue was well received by the legislature and the filed and that Speaker Haddad and Chairwoman Peisch were both participants. This dialogue resulted in several recommendations to EEC.

Communities of Practice: During the month of May, five regional Communities of Practice meetings were held across the state with a focus on “Understanding Services & Benefits for Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs.” Commissioner Killins mentioned that she had also visited the SPARK Center, a model childcare program offering comprehensive, integrated, state-of-the-art services for children and families whose lives are affected by medical, emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

QRIS update: Commissioner Killins reported that 1385 programs have completed QRIS applications, with 890 in draft form. These numbers reflect an approximate increase of 9% from last month, as programs continue to access the on-line application to complete their self-assessments. She reiterated that this is a voluntary system but with new additional funding in FY 2012, she expects more programs to participate.

Head Start Supplemental Grant: Commissioner Killins reported that twenty nine applications have been received and reviewed. She expects that funding notices will be made this month. She noted that the bulk of these grant funds are used for staff salaries.

Head Start and Public Schools Regional Meetings: EEC and the Department of Elementary and Secondary (ESE) in collaboration with HSSCO have conducted four of five regional community meetings during the months of May and June. The purpose of these meetings is to bring Head Start and the public schools together to fully realize the benefits possible through implementation of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU.)

Assessment Grant: Commissioner Killins reported that EEC has selected Associated Early Care and Education as the sole recipient of the FY11 Assessment Grant to provide training, technical assistance, coaching/mentoring, and assessment and screening tools and materials to programs to support the implementation of assessment and screening in settings serving preschool children across the Commonwealth. Educators participating in the introductory and intermediate sessions will receive CEU’s and educators taking part in the advanced training track through Wheelock College will receive college credit for their participation.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Model Design and Pilot Project: EEC hired New York University (NYU) Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) as the vendor for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Model Design and Pilot. Eighteen Springfield educators across the mixed delivery system participated in two days of training in April through this initiative. In her comments, Commissioner Killins acknowledged the impact of the recent tornadoes in Western Massachusetts and recognized the hard work of the EEC staff to relocate that program, stabilizing care for those families.

CCR&R Business Model (ARRA): EEC is working with the CAYL Institute to review the CCR&R network and conduct leadership development of these agencies to lead to better service delivery for children and families. CAYL will issue a final report to Commissioner Killins, summarizing its findings.

Affordable Care Act Initial Funding for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Grants: In the first round of funding, applications from four eligible communities were selected to receive home visiting grants. Commissioner Killins reported that a second round of funding would be available shortly, noting that 18 communities were eligible but that four were initially funded.

Help Me Grow: EEC Staff introduced the Help Me Grow model to CFCE grantees. EEC plans to pilot access to the Ages and Stages on-line questionnaire for families at 10 CFCE sites. Commissioner Killins remarked that there was significant interest in participation in this pilot project, despite the fact that participation does not provide any additional funds to the CFCE grantee. Each pilot site will receive training on ASQ, a kit of materials and access to the on-line screening tool. An application for participation in the pilot has been developed and is being distributed to CFCE grantees; selection of pilot sites will take place by the end of the month.

Birth to 8 Language and Literacy On-line Course: Commissioner Killins reported that EEC has contracted with UMass/Boston to develop an on-line 3-credit course on language and literacy development in children. The course is designed to provide early childhood education professionals with the knowledge of the importance of language and literacy development.

Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship Program: Commissioner Killins reported that 795 people have been approved for scholarships and that 573 of the approved educators received their funding prior to September enrollment.

For Kids Only Super Tools: Behavior Management for Super After School and Summer Programs: EEC sent a notice out through the Commissioner's Office email announcing the availability of this training, which boosted registration from 63 to 208 educators statewide who registered for the full day of learning on June 18th.

Northeast and Islands Regional Advisory Committee (RAC): Commissioner Killins reported that she was appointed by the U.S. Department of Education to participate on the Northeast and Islands Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). This appointment is a demonstration of how much DOE cares about birth to career.

End of Commissioner's report.

Chairperson Chesloff then introduced Shannon Rudisill, Director of the Office of Child Care. Director Rudisill commented that was a great pleasure to attend the EEC board meeting. She stated that Massachusetts is known for its leadership and its dynamic way of bringing programs together. She noted that there is a lot in common between what Massachusetts is doing and what is happening at the federal level. Director Rudisill then discussed the reorganization at the federal level, combining the Offices of Head Start and Child Care and highlighted some of their new initiatives. She then provided a brief overview of the Early Learning Challenge Grant, noting that this was a \$500M commitment from the Department of Education to raise child care quality across the country. She explained that additional information would be forthcoming prior to the official opening date of the grant. Director Rudisill went on to explain that child care is her responsibility and that her department has been taking a systematic look to strengthen quality. Her goal is to have more low-income children in higher quality care. She has consulted with states to find out what is working and what is not working. Director Rudisill shared some of the principles that were further defined for the reauthorization of CCDF:

- Improving quality

- Expanding Access
- Promoting Continuity of Care
- Ensuring program integrity
- Improving coordination of federal early education and care programs

Director Rudisill emphasized that ACF has never been just about childcare; it have always been about the entire system. She shared that her office is working on adding a data element to capture the level of quality of a program to show not just how many children were served, but how well the program served them. She concluded her remarks by noting that many things that Massachusetts is working on align with what is happening at the federal level. Chairperson Chesloff thanked Director Rudisill for her comments.

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 Commissioner Killins.

- **Kitt Cox**, on behalf of the Children’s Music Network International Conference, commented on how a high quality music education supports children’s language and literacy. He invited and encouraged all to attend the conference in August.
- **Deborah Freeman**, Outreach Project Director for WGBH Boston and **Theresa Lynn**, Executive Director of Read Boston, discussed WGBH’s partnership with WGBY in Springfield and ReadBoston to provide books to rising first graders in Boston and Springfield to help mitigate the summer slide. “The Bark About Books! Massachusetts Summer Reading Initiative 2011” will provide kick off activities where children receive their first books, with additional information regarding future events and activities sent through the mail over the course of the summer. They invited Board members to attend the community events on July 7th in Boston and on August 11th in Springfield.
- **Lucy Heimer**, Assistant Professor of Early Education at Wheelock College and Co-Chair of the Sixth Annual Community Dialogue on Early Education and Care, submitted written recommendations from the May 26th Community Dialogue to the Board Members. These recommendations included: achieve high quality by revising QRIS; provide a clear definition of school readiness; provide multiple approaches for early childhood educators whose first language is not English; provide access to coaching and mentoring to educators; and provide family and community engagement strategies to build early learning and literacy.

End of Public Comment period.

Routine Business:

Approval of May 10, 2011 Board Minutes – Vote

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the minutes of the May 10, 2011 Board meeting, as presented by the Commissioner. The motion passed by a majority vote; Board Member Stanley abstained.

Approval of Fiscal Year 2012 Board Meeting Schedule – Discussion and Vote

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care approve the Fiscal Year 2012 Board Meeting Schedule. The motion passed by a majority vote; Board Member Stanley abstained.

Board Committee Reports

- **Policy and Fiscal Update**

Board Member Beth Childs reported that the projected surplus for FY 2011 has decreased and the deficits in the IE and DTA accounts have increased. She shared that the Department intended to transfer ARRA funds and use \$1M from the legislative appropriation to reduce a large portion of the \$8.4M deficit but that the only option to cover the remaining deficit was to ask for a supplemental budget. Board Member Childs reported that the agency had spent more than 67% of the ARRA funds and was on track to spend the remaining funds wisely and well. She commented that the Waitlist has consistently trended upward since December with 22,055 on the list. Board Member Childs acknowledged the efforts of the fiscal team and their responsiveness to requests of committee. She emphasized the importance of considering policy decisions as part of the Department's work to afford access to care. This includes keeping vouchers closed and enforcing the 5% flex cap along with other measures. She stated that ARRA children not entering kindergarten need to be assisted with continuity of care and that the Committee is waiting to hear back from the Department on how to address some of these issues. Commissioner Killins responded that the Department is notifying ARRA funded families that their vouchers will end in September. Board Member Childs replied that we need to manage to a determined number of vouchers. She stated that depending on the budget conference decision, significant numbers of children could be impacted.

Board Member Childs reported that the Department has done a tremendous job of responding to the recent audit findings and coming in to compliance by resolving 2 out of 3 audit findings. EEC General Counsel Constantia Papanikolaou stated that all findings have been corrected by the Department.

Tom Weber commented that the Department's budget is being followed closely by ANF and EOE. Governor Patrick has filed a supplemental budget of \$10M to address the problem. Mr. Weber added that the Department must ensure that brings its ideas to ANF and suggested that there be conversations going forward.

- **Planning and Evaluation Update**

Board Member Carol Craig O'Brien welcomed Dr. Stanley to the Planning and Evaluation Committee. She reported that the committee's recent meeting on May 19th focused on QRIS, ARRA and the state plan. She also mentioned that the committee had added an equity study of the compensation of the Commissioners within the Education Secretariat to the agenda. Other topics under discussion are the Higher Education Mapping project, exploring options for universal access, decoupling families' needs from childcare access, and the SAC needs assessment. Board Member Craig O'Brien

stated that the next meeting of the Committee will be held June 16th from 3-5 pm at EEC's Boston office.

- **Research and Communications Update**

Board Member Joan Wasser Gish reported that at the June 2nd meeting, committee members had combed through EEC's strategic plan to identify areas that had not been addressed. There was discussion on the Birth to School Age task force and the rate reform research project, including the need to align resources to help programs support high quality. Board Member Wasser Gish stated that the committee will look at rates as part of its long term efforts. She thanked all who participated in the meeting.

- **Advisory Council Report**

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers was unable to attend the June 3rd meeting of the Council. Commissioner Killins reported on the full Advisory meeting on June 3, 2011. She highlighted the feedback of Advisory Committee members on a variety of topics including suggestions for QRIS, approaches for Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant, and the development of the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS). Commissioner Killins reported that the Advisory Committee members requested changes to the existing meeting structure such as having the full council meet more often, providing opportunity for more discussion and prioritizing agenda topics.

Disclosures:

Board Member Sharon Scott-Chandler disclosed in writing that her employer receives EEC funding. Board Member Villegas-Reimers verbally disclosed that she is a faculty member at Wheelock College and her employer receives funding from EEC. Board Member Craig O'Brien verbally disclosed that her employer, Westwood Public Schools, currently receives EEC funding and has a potential interest in receiving additional funding.

Items for Discussion and Action:

I. Adoption Regulations: Public Comment Period – Vote

Relevant documents included in Board materials:

- *EEC Placement Regulations Revision Update, PowerPoint, dated June 14, 2011*

A panel of EEC staff, including Deputy Commissioner Dave McGrath, Kelly Buckley, Kathy Perry, Michael Curran, and Tim Keane, provided the Board with an update regarding the pending revisions to the Department's Placement regulations. Deputy Commissioner McGrath began by recognizing the efforts made by the entire project management team, which included the panelists, as well as Carmel Sullivan and Gail Perry. He noted that today's presentation will focus on the Placement regulations, which encompass public and private foster care services and public and private adoption services. Deputy Commissioner McGrath noted that on any given day there are 10,000 Massachusetts' children in foster care and that EEC's residential and placement unit licenses 64 adoption placement agencies. He provided a description of the three types of adoption: domestic, international, and waiting child, which is conducted in coordination with DCF children already in care. Deputy Commissioner McGrath noted that the majority of current adoptions are international, which requires all agencies who work in international adoptions to comply with the Hague Convention Treaty and its requirements. He highlighted this fact as one of leading reasons for revising the placement regulations, as the current regulations were drafted at a time when the majority of adoptions were domestic adoptions facilitated by DCF.

The panelists then described the revision process, which included:

- Provider input
- Utilization of consultants
- Statewide meetings
- Surveys
- Advisory Group meetings

The panelists noted that the proposed regulation changes focus on services to birth parents, payments to birth parents, training, assessment and post-adoption services, including:

- Services to Children
- Services to Parents Considering Adoption Placement
- Parent/Expectant Parent Counseling
- Information Prior to Surrender
- Services to Foster and Adoptive Parents, including efforts to address disruption
- Evaluation of Applicants
- Expectant Parent Flat Fee
- Post –Adoption Services (NEW)

Deputy Commissioner McGrath reviewed the timeline for the promulgation process by noting that the Department was requesting the Board to vote to put the draft regulations out for public comment at today's Board meeting. If approved, EEC anticipated public comment meetings to be held between September and November 2011. After which time, the Department would return to the Board to vote on promulgation of the final regulations in either December 2011 or January 2012.

Board Member Wasser Gish commended the team for reaching out to a broad spectrum of stakeholders to ensure the proposed changes balance the needs of all parties involved.

Board Member Marilyn Chase also commended the work of the team and asked if there is anything in the proposed regulations that DCF would disagree with. She also noted that the proposed regulations call for curriculum, and asked if there is standard curriculum. Deputy Commissioner McGrath responded that EEC had received and incorporated comments from DCF in the proposed revisions before the Board. With respect to curriculum, he noted that there is no standard curriculum in use and that each agency will be required to create an individual curriculum subject to approval by EEC. Board Member Chase questioned the efficiency of this process, opining that individualized curriculum may lead to inconsistent interpretations by agencies. She expressed her preference for a standard. Commissioner Killins replied that EEC can create a standard curriculum, if necessary.

Board Member Chase noted that reintegrating children with their families is easier if children are placed in kinship foster placements. But she also acknowledged that the process for approving kinship placements is more complicated. In light of these facts, she asked if the new regulations address these problems. Given that best practice suggests that placing children with kin achieves better outcomes, Board Member Chase requested that EEC review the regulations to ensure they assist in the process. She applauded the post-adoption services requirement and asked about the penalties or consequences for agencies that do not comply with these requirements.

Board Member Huang commented on the shift towards international adoptions and asked about any barriers to domestic adoptions. Specifically, he asked if domestic adoptions are too regulated by requiring additional hoops and disincentives for families. Deputy Commissioner McGrath responded that there are no barriers in EEC's regulations. EEC Residential and Placement Licensor Kathy Perry added that because domestic adoption is birth parent driven, it is more likely that the adoption process will not be completed whereas international adoption provides a match for families making finalization more likely. She also noted that the costs for each are about the same.

Board Member Childs acknowledged all of the work the team has done to provide supports to families to take these children and to engage a broad spectrum of interests. She referred back to the discussion about a standard curriculum and wondered if there was a middle ground between what agencies have found works and rigid standardization. Deputy Commissioner McGrath noted that EEC is working with a renowned expert on adoption-related issues and policies to review best practices nationwide.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care authorizes the Department of Early Education and Care to solicit public comment, in accordance with the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, on the proposed restructured and revised licensing regulations for child placement and adoption services.

The motion was passed by a majority vote; Board Member Stanley abstained.

II. Child Care Development Fund State Plan: Approval and Submission – Vote

EEC's General Counsel Constantia Papanikolaou began by thanking Director Rudisill for her earlier comments and noted that the directions and policies of EEC are very much aligned with the goals of the Office of Child Care, in part due to the terrific partnership between the Department and the Regional OCC Office.

General Counsel Papanikolaou then provided the Board with background on the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan, including its contents, requirements, and overall purpose. She noted that the FY2012-13 Plan must be submitted to the Office of Child Care by August 1, 2011. General Counsel Papanikolaou highlighted one key change to the FY2012-13 Plan process, which requires states to reflect on its early childhood programs by establishing annual goals and performance measures. She also noted that the Office of Child Care continues to emphasize the goal of providing increased access to high quality early education and care programs for low-income children; EEC spends approximately 7-10% of its CCDF funding on program quality improvement initiatives, which exceeds federal requirements.

General Counsel Papanikolaou also shared feedback on the Commonwealth's CCDF Plan, which was gathered, in part, at four dedicated public hearings held in May and June, 2011. Common themes included increase access; increase rates; future funding opportunities for QRIS; general budget questions regarding FY11 and FY12; future funding opportunities for professional development; and higher rates to serve children with special needs.

In terms of finalizing the Plan to address recent changes issued by the Office of Child Care, General Counsel Papanikolaou explained that Tom Weierman, EEC Assistant General Counsel, will amend the current draft to ensure the Commonwealth responds to the new questions and submits the Plan by August 1st. She noted that EEC will then ask Board Members to ratify the revised document at the

September Board meeting. She confirmed that EEC may amend the FY2012-13 Plan in response to any edits requested by the Board.

Board Member Craig O'Brien stated that the Planning and Evaluation Committee provided feedback on the CCDF plan at the May Board meeting. She expressed her appreciation for the hard work by General Counsel Papanikolaou and her team in responding to the CCDF Plan questions and noted that the Plan demonstrates that the Department's visions are aligned with the federal goals.

Board Member Huang asked if the public comments help prioritize what the agency should prioritize. General Counsel Papanikolaou responded that the Advisory Committee is a terrific venue to solicit feedback, in order to prioritize the direction and goals of the Department.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care hereby approves the Department's process to finalize the Commonwealth's Child Care Development Fund Plan for federal fiscal years 2012-2013, and authorizes the Department to submit the Plan to the Administration for Children and Families by August 1, 2011. The final CCDF Plan will be submitted to the Board for review and ratification on September 13, 2011.

The motion was passed by a majority vote; Board Member Stanley abstained.

III. Early Childhood Information Systems (ECIS) Development Update – Discussion

Commissioner Killins provided the Board with a status report on the development of the ECIS, which she noted is a cornerstone to the pending Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant opportunity. Based on input from the interagency working group, she highlighted some key aspects and decisions that have guided the development of ECIS in Massachusetts:

- Although unique identifiers have been discussed, the goal of ECIS is to share and match data from other agencies--not to create one unique identifier for families accessing state services;
- The ECIS Strategic Planning Institute at Harvard University last fall emphasized the importance of cross-agency coordination and respect for families' privacy;
- ECIS needs to be both strength-based as well as warning-based;
- Families need to be connected to resources; and
- The Department will implement the ECIS with parental consent.

Commissioner Killins noted that the Data Advisory Working Group has identified three questions as priorities for the ECIS to answer:

- What state resources are available for early education and care and school readiness and how are they funded?
- Based on established indicators, are Massachusetts children on track for well-being and success?
- Are children meeting developmental milestones (including speech, language, etc.) at Birth, 3, 4, and 5, Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade? What are the gaps?

She briefly summarized the five core elements of the ECIS: family engagement; child development screening and assessment data; interagency data sharing; strength and risk analyses; and communication. Commissioner Killins stated that it is EEC's goal to provide opportunities for families to

complete parental consent forms at a variety of access points, including Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant sites and pediatric offices; EEC will begin a pilot with CFCE grantees this summer. She confirmed that EEC's Director of Operations, Sarah Harding is providing leadership to the longitudinal data system project.

Board Member Wasser Gish asked Commissioner Killins to clarify how the child development and screening tools will be used to improve classroom instruction/educator quality and to describe how the Department will share program quality ratings with families. Commissioner Killins responded that the goal of any assessment tool is always to first improve teacher practice. With the Springfield pilot, the EVT, PVT and the Woodcock-Johnson tools are being used. In terms of quality ratings, Commissioner Killins stated that the Department is not sharing scores as EEC needs to validate that we got it right, before releasing the data to the public. However, she acknowledged that the capacity exists to provide parents with that information.

Board Member Chase recognized the work the Department has assumed. She recalled that when the Readiness Cabinet began, ECIS was one of the identified challenges. She expressed kudos to EEC for its leadership on this and underscored the relevance this project has across agencies. Board Member Chase acknowledged that several issues have yet to be resolved, including issues of confidentiality and that agencies collect information differently.

IV. State Advisory Council (SAC) Needs Assessment Study Design Model – Discussion

Board Member Craig O'Brien began the discussion on the SAC Needs Assessment by acknowledging the efforts of EEC Management Analyst Jennifer Louis and Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers. She also noted that the Needs Assessment has been on the Planning and Evaluation Committee agenda six times. In creating the needs assessment, the Planning and Evaluation Committee aimed to focus on the creation of a system that supports all families in the Commonwealth by examining, among other things, what EEC is doing, reviewing the Home Visiting research, and identifying communities that are at high risk. Board Member Craig O'Brien stated that the Committee considered two overarching questions: (1) what resources are available; and (2) what information can the Department learn related to both workforce and families.

Jean Layzer, President of Belmont Research Associates, joined Ms. Louis in the discussion. Board Member Craig O'Brien shared that Ms. Layzer has spent more than 35 years conducting research and evaluation studies in early childhood education, family support, and youth development. Ms. Layzer is currently the principal investigator on a federally funded study of parenting education and its impact on children from early childhood through adolescence.

Ms. Louis provided the Board with additional background on the needs assessment, including an overview of the process for developing the survey questions and a summary of the questionnaire results, which included feedback from the State Advisory Council and from Board Committee discussions.

Board Member Huang stressed the importance of ensuring the survey questions are at the appropriate reading level for the target audience. He also noted that random digit dialing as a way of surveying people is phasing out and may not ensure sufficient responses. Ms. Layzer responded that her surveys are written for a 6th grade reading level. She noted survey participants may be confused by variations in metrics/methods, including the choices requested and/or the cognitive stress imposed by the questions.

With respect to random digit dialing, Ms. Layzer responded that phone companies will soon be required to make public cell phone numbers. She acknowledged that every sampling method has flaws and that some of them can be addressed. Addressing the specific questions presented in the needs assessment survey, Ms. Layzer expressed some concern about the first research question. She stated that the answer would always be “yes” if the Department continues with the current phraseology. To avoid this response, she recommended that the question be amended to state “what are the needs?”

Board Member Craig O’Brien emphasized that the needs assessments must look at early education and care services rather than just child care and should incorporate a larger view including parenting supports, parent education resources, and access to libraries. Board Member Villegas-Reimers concluded the discussion, stating that we need to understand where we are and how we can get the answers we need.

Chairperson Chesloff asked Director Rudisill if she would like to share any final observations. Director Rudisill noted that she heard a real commitment to early education in Massachusetts. She was especially struck by EEC’s commitment to transparency by gathering and sharing information through a variety of hearings, meetings, and advisories. She also heard a commitment to the whole child, reflecting on the discussions that referenced math, STEM, literacy, and children with special health care needs. She commended EEC on its work and added that the Office of Child Care is always open to hearing how it can be a better partner to the Department.

On motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 3:52 pm, subject to the call of the Chairperson. The motion passed by a majority vote with one abstention.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherri Killins, Ed.D.
Commissioner of the Department and
Secretary to the Board