



Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

August 6, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions

ELAC Executive Committee member Enrica Hampton welcomed attendees and walked through virtual meeting protocols. Introductions were completed via chat.

Review of Meeting Materials

ELAC Executive Committee member Lois Martin led the group in the review of meeting materials.

- [April 6, 2024, Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Feedback Loop](#)
- [State Agency/Partner Updates](#)
- [Regional Coalition Updates](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierce County Early Childhood Network Partnership Meeting: Wednesday, August 14th, 2024, from 12:00 PM–2:00 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The August Partnership Meeting will be an in-person event at Wright Park - a picnic lunch will be served. ○ Click the link to register! Registration Form ○ More details are available here: Monthly PCECN Partnership Meeting. • Southeast Early Learning Coalition Early Learning Summits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For details or questions, please reach out to Brittney Hartikainen brittany@bh-consulting.org
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Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ)

DCYF Racial Equity and Social Justice Administrator Ray Soriano provided an update on the work of ORESJ and engaged members in group discussion.

- [ORESJ Presentation](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray shared an overview of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Strategic Planning Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/strategic-plan • I would to suggest an addition. To honor and credit the origins of this concept “intersectionality”, I recommend including a link to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work in your materials. This not only acknowledges the contributions of Black women to this important field but also provides a resource for those who wish to delve deeper into the subject. Including this link would add depth to our content and recognize the foundational work of Black women in developing the concept of intersectionality. • Thank you so much for this. Can you give a concrete example of racial equity progress within the early learning work for DCYF? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), there have been real efforts to eliminate expulsions from the program, where there are significant disparities. The ECEAP team has built up support and resources and have made measurable progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having the supports in place is critical in order for providers to successfully provide services for children. Currently, the required non-expulsion and providing ECEAP services regardless of Individual Education Plans (IEP) needs can be very problematic....
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there plans to expand the team? Five for the division seems inadequate; also concerned about retention which has been problematic.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are planning to build our team and hoping to continue to grow to support the full scope of the Agency. <p>Outstanding questions for follow-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you measuring outcomes? • What is DCYF doing to support systems or programs that would be most beneficial for Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) child care providers in our community? Including immigrant providers who may face language barriers, in our community? • I believe DCYF should offer additional financial support to help struggling providers. Centering impacted people! And intersectionality but also working class providers • How are we ensuring that child care providers whose second language English have access to understandable information about laws and policies, restrictions etc. (which are way too many) and what steps are being taken to make these resources more accessible for them?
<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please reach out to Ray Soriano (ray.soriano@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions. • Responses for all outstanding questions will be included in the feedback loop, and we hope to bring Ray back for a longer timeslot in the October meeting.

Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE) Presentation with Provider Panel

DCYF Birth-5 ECEAP Administrator Jennifer Cassarino provided an update on CRE and facilitated a provider panel discussion.

<p>Discussion</p>	<p>PANELISTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Worrall, <i>Childcare Provider, Clark County</i>, • Ethna Flanagan, <i>Early Learning Manager & ECEAP Coordinator, San Juan County</i> • Susan Brown, <i>CEO of Kids Co, Seattle</i> • Jennifer Avina, <i>Preschool Programs Enrollment Coordinator, Walla Walla School District</i> <p>Could you start by telling us about the early learning landscape in your school district?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ethna:</i> In San Juan County we serve three different islands with three different districts, and each island has its own landscape. Second year of ECEAP slots in development preschool in the San Juan district • <i>Susan:</i> Kids Co is a nonprofit childcare organization, all programs are co-located in Seattle Public Schools. As far as the early learning landscape in King County, there is a supply and demand issue for infant and toddler, not as much for preschool. Needs vary based on zip code and economic mobility. King County is doing the King County Child Care Wage Boost Pilot which is exploring if increased compensation improves retention in the child care sector. Onset of programs such as Transition to Kindergarten (TK) may make some services unsustainable in the area. • <i>Julie:</i> Licensed childcare availability is very limited in Clark County, particularly with infant and toddler care. ECEAP slots, head start through contracting partners, School district has TK classes that are growing every year, and the program is expanding. This is significantly impacting licensed child care; it's challenging to compete with a free program. Community childcare providers are treated as the backup in Early Learning and aren't always included in the conversations or decision-making. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is nearly identical to what has occurred in Spokane as well • <i>Jennifer:</i> Our center serves as an early learning and family resource center; we work closely with Early Head Start and local providers. We frequently refer children to private
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and in-home childcare providers, and providers refer back to us as well for kids who need more social emotional and behavioral support. We don't want to impact enrollment for providers, so collaboration is important.

How have you navigated partnerships within your early learning community, and what have you learned?

- *Ethna:* Respect is key. Having respect for community programs and valuing what they're already offering children in the community and offering support. As an ECEAP contractor, we can offer support based on need, including strong efforts to support mental health. Communication is huge – regular and transparent communication with providers.
- *Susan:* During the pandemic, Greater Seattle Childcare Business Coalition was created to empower providers to create real change in the system. The Coalition secured retention bonuses and got child care to be officially recognized as essential service.
- *Julie:* Capacity to partner is limited due to being a full-time provider. Availability to engage can be difficult. I've learned to take advantage of every opportunity to connect and collaborate with providers.
- *Jennifer:* Connection with Early Learning Coalition, Early Head Start and Birth-3 to make sure transition to the system is seamless and services are provided. Working together and partnering to make sure the family needs are met.

How do you bring different early learning systems together?

- *Ethna:* Monthly meetings are included in the contract to ensure ongoing collaboration. We came up with a virtual system during COVID to continue consistent meetings, working with the Early Learning Regional Coalitions.
- *Susan:* The Greater Seattle Childcare Business Coalition currently meets twice a month. We try to connect with different layers of leadership including federal, state and municipal staff to educate them on the value of child care and serve as collaborators to influence and inform decision-making.
- *Julie:* As a provider, capacity for systems-level work is limited, being aware of opportunities and contributing whenever possible.
- *Jennifer:* Within Walla Walla Center for Children and Families, we have four different early learning programs, but only one intake system to ensure a smooth process and determine best fit and provide assistance. With outer agencies, we utilize frequent check-ins and referrals.

***Could you talk about how you navigate different eligibility needs for children and families?
How do you ensure parent choice is part of the process?***

- *Ethna:* We are working with programs to get them licensed in San Juan, we have work to do there. Regarding parent choice, because we have subcontractors with multiple sites, when a parent enrolls in ECEAP, they get to choose between the programs available in their area.
- *Susan:* Families who qualify for benefits have support in place, and there are families who are fortunate enough to not need financial assistance, but there isn't support for families in between. To remove this barrier, we offer our own tuition assistance program. This creates challenges with compensating staff. Family choice feels like an oxymoron since it boils down to what's available and what you can afford. The financing of child care is the biggest challenge next to over-regulation in licensing.
- *Julie:* My role in this is limited as a provider, but I provide info packets with information and resources on how to apply for subsidies. If families come in with concerns regarding their child's development, being open and transparent about the level of service that can



	<p>be provided and what potential limitations may exist to help them make the best decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jennifer</i>: Through the intake review, we analyze each family individually to accommodate unique needs and requests. <p>How have you navigated partnerships within your early learning community, and what have you learned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ethna</i>: when early learning programs are supported and brought together in community, they can become a powerhouse. Licensing is such a burden that many don't want to go through that process, so trying to convince a program to become licensed is a challenge. The lack of communication with local programs with the implementation of TK resulted in programs shutting down, having early learning providers involved as a coalition leads to better outcomes. We would love to see a requirement for service area agreements to protect providers • <i>Susan</i>: Due to local control, the agreements have no weight or enforcement. DCYF cannot stand with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) while also holding early learning providers, who are predominantly BIPOC women, to a different standard than the predominantly White female workforce in the school system. • <i>Julie</i>: Being open to opportunities for collaboration and prioritizing participation when possible. • <i>Jennifer</i>: We have learned that we are all eager to build strong partnerships with each other, and there is a strong need for infant and toddler care. A lot of families have expressed the need for more financial support. Each center has their own experiences and perspectives – some have lengthy waitlists, and some have slots. • We can't expect providers to just shift to providing care for infants and toddlers only as TK expands, that undermines so much of our business practices. • I would like to hear from the panel - how can DCYF advocate for more accountability and whole early learning systems partnership from school districts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eliminate licensing regulations for 4-year-olds in private programs since they are being eliminated for 4-year-olds in the school district system. ○ DCYF can't regulate another state agency as in OSPI. That might help understand some of the why. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other states mandate TK being delivered in private settings over school districts ○ <i>Ethna</i>: There are some truly excellent teachers and administrators in the early learning space. Making sure those providers are connected to the work and have meaningful opportunities to impact decision-making. We were able to thwart TK in Orcas Island through coordinated effort of early learning providers. ○ <i>Susan</i>: Districts have local control and building control. It can be difficult to secure quality space in the building without support and prioritization from the school.
<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please reach out to Jennifer Cassarino (jennifer.cassarino@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

Early Learning Decision Package Concepts

DCYF Senior Policy Advisor Melissa Cheesman provided an overview and engaged in discussion on the Early Learning Decision Packages.

<p>Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the old governor's budget be mostly used with a new governor and their budget? I know this is insider info, but still curious.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We don't know who the next governor will be so we don't know what their approach to the budget will be. ● Will there be funding asks for facilities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Early Learning Facilities (ELF) program is run through the Department of Commerce. DCYF is included in Commerce's capital funding, so we don't have a separate ask for facility funding on our end. <p>Outstanding questions for follow-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will most of the funds be used to convert part time to full time slots? What is the breakdown between the various funding areas? ● Is DCYF tracking how many families qualify for Working Connections vs how many are receiving service? ● Isn't the updated CCDF requirement 100% market rate reimbursement? Did the state request an exemption to this mandate? ● Regarding outreach to increasing WCCC eligibility - will funding be available to community for community-based/provider outreach? ● Will capital gains be used for early childhood education, like they use in K-12?
<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Please reach out to Melissa Cheesman (melissa.cheesman@dcyf.wa.gov) or Ruben Reeves (ruben.reeves@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow up questions.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ELAC Report Review Session will be on August 13, 2024 ● The next ELAC Public Meeting will be on October 1, 2024
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Members in Attendance:

Ami Magisos, April Messenger, Astrid Newell, Brittany Hartikainen, Bryana Kowalski, Carlina Brown-Banks, Colleen Condon, Debbie Carlsen, Debbie Ham, Enrica Hampton, Heidi Scott, Jen Sandvig, Kathy Carman, Lois Martin, Michelle Perez, Nancy Spurgeon, Olivia Burley, Representative Mari Leavitt, Representative Travis Couture, Ruba Ayub, Samantha Bowen, Shereese Rhodes, Valerie Arnold, Valisa Smith, Waylon Ballew

Members Absent:

Aida Rodriguez, Alexandra Martin-Truesdell, Cheryl Smith, Claudette Lindquist, Danielle Rasmussen, Deeann Puffert, Grace Yoo, Isis Lara Fernandez, Julie Rolling, Kimberly Hoover, Lola Moses, Luz Gomez, Mary Rulewicz, Million Shiferaw, Ryan Guzman, Samantha Masters, Senator Claire Wilson, Susan Yang