



**Policy and Research Committee and Fiscal Committee
Board of Early Education and Care**

June 3, 2013
10:00 AM – 11:30 PM

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

MINUTES- DRAFT

Members of the Committee/Board Present:

Joni Block, Board Member
Sharon Scott Chandler, Board Member (arrived at 12:15)
JD Chesloff, Board Chairperson
Beth Childs, Board Member/Fiscal Committee Chair
Joan Wasser Gish, Board Member/Policy and Research Committee Chair
Tom Weber, EEC Acting Commissioner Ex- Officio Member
Eleanora Villegas-Reimers, Board Member /Planning and Evaluation Committee Chair

EEC Staff Present:

Gwen Alexander, Program Quality Specialist
Jennifer Amaya-Thompson, Head Start-State Collaboration Assistant Director
Gail DeRiggi, Senior Policy Analyst Family / Community Engagement
Jessica Fix, Program Funding Specialist
Chau Ly, Program Manager for State Wide and Community Supports
Carol Nolan, Director of Policy
Carmel Sullivan, General Counsel

Members of the Public Present:

Mary Ann Anthony, Director Child Care Division, Catholic Charities
Pam Kuechler, Executive Director of Massachusetts Head Start Association
Emily Levine, Strategies for Children/Early Education for All
Kate Roper, Department of Public Health

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m.

Disclosures:

Joni Block disclosed that she works for the Brockton Public School System and they receive EEC funding.

Review of Policy Committee Minutes:

The Policy and Research Committee members approved the minutes from the April 1, 2013 meeting.
The Policy and Research Committee members approved the minutes from the May 6, 2013 meeting.

Agenda Items for Discussion:

1.) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Standards Removal- Presentation

Gwen Alexander, EEC program Quality Specialist and QRIS Lead staff, addressed the Board vote on February 12, 2013 to remove some of the standards from QRIS. Ms. Alexander explained that EEC would now be asking the Board to reinsert those standards into the QRIS. She clarified that EEC staff wants to undertake a comprehensive review of the QRIS system that will rely on input from multiple stakeholders as well as the UMass Donahue Institute validation study. Some confusion was based on UMass Donahue Institute's recommendations for EEC to remove some of the standards from the QRIS validation study, not the entire system, [slide 10]. Ms. Alexander also shared that the on-line application system does not yet support the standards removal vote, so the field has not been widely impacted by the changes voted on in February.

Ms. Alexander requested that the Board reinsert the standards at the June 11, 2013 meeting. One member of the Board asked if this means that we will need to remove some of the standards, but just not yet. Carol Nolan, EEC Director of Policy, replied that EEC would like to take more time to evaluate QRIS before we make changes.

One Committee member expressed concern about reversing the standards removal vote, along with the recent reversal of the self-assessed Level 2 requirements for 391 Programs, the recently opened access for contracted/voucher slots and the Family Child Care provider deadline of December 31, 2013. Ms. Alexander replied that "self-assessed" is not a measure of quality and in the interest of aligning payment and quality, the system needs additional resources and time to mature.

Acting Commissioner Weber stated that UMass Donahue is willing to support EEC with evaluation of the on-line application system. Ms. Alexander added that our RTT technical assistance support team has also been providing EEC with national research and data related to QRIS. One Committee member said that she feels optimistic that EEC has a solid team in place. Acting Commissioner Weber said that EEC is undertaking a review of QRIS and will take responsibility for addressing any needed changes.

The Board asked that EEC provide an action plan and time frame for making improvements to QRIS, stating they want to make sure we do not take a step back. The subcommittee, with a comprehensive reassessment of QRIS standards and progress, agreed to support EEC's recommendation to rescind the February 12 vote to remove standards.

2.) AARA SAC FY2013 Community Support Grant Activities- Presentation

Jessica Fix, EEC Program Funding Specialist presented an update on the State Advisory Council Grant. She explained to the Committee that funding for SAC is ending on June 30, 2013 and we will have to decide if we want SAC to continue their work, or if the work will be absorbed in other committees.

One Committee member noted that in previous meetings, discussion focused on the concern around losing the opportunity to hear from families. Ms. Nolan responded that EEC had been working on a family engagement policy. The Committee added that if the SAC does end, EEC will have to have some other mechanism to bring people together. Jennifer Amaya-Thompson, Head Start-State Collaboration Assistant Director, said that EEC is starting to look at best practices and what other states are doing with their SAC, as well as how we can identify and link activities that are already happening in the community to EEC's work.

Ms. Nolan recommended that EEC get feedback from all of the SAC members. Acting Commissioner Weber suggested that the Board can discuss this topic at the retreat.

3.) Monthly QRIS and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT) Updates

Chau Ly, EEC Program Manager for State Wide and Community Supports, presented an update on the Race to the Top Projects. She reported that EEC is continuing to work on revising the RTT performance measures with support from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the US Department of Education.

One of the Committee members asked why EEC has chosen to remove Public Schools from the benchmarks. She expressed concern about not tracking this data. Ms. Alexander explained that EEC does not have the ability to distinguish non-licensed programs from licensed programs in the QRIS system and this makes it difficult to track participation. The Committee reiterated that it is important to track the data for all programs. Acting Commissioner Weber replied that EEC will continue to report on Public School participation unless we find a reason to remove it from the benchmarks.

Ms. Ly also told the Committee that EEC will be hosting a RTT Leadership retreat in September. EEC wants to share with the public some of the great progress we have made. This event will be hosted in the Boston area, however there may be follow-up events in other regions. The Committee agreed that this will be a good opportunity to showcase the benefits of RTT projects.

Commissioner Search

The Committee members and attendees worked on developing interview questions for candidates. They reviewed a list of topics that was generated with the input of Board members, the Advisory Council, EEC Staff Liaisons, and EEC senior and general staff. Using this list, attendees worked in small groups to generate possible interview questions.

The Committee then entered Executive Session to review candidate resumes and identify semi-finalists to be interviewed. It later returned to Open Session to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Next Meeting:

September 9, 2013
10:00am - 11:30am
Conference Room #1