



Board of Early Education and Care

September 10, 2013

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Department of Early Education and Care

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA, 02210

MINUTES

Members of the Board of Early Education and Care Present

J.D. Chesloff, Chairperson

Matthew Malone, Ph.D., Secretary of Education*

Kathleen Betts, designee of John Polanowicz, Secretary of EOHHS

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

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.

Elizabeth Childs, M.D.

Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Ph.D.

Joan Wasser Gish, Esq.

Cheryl A. Stanley, Ed.D

Mary Walachy

Joni Block

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

*Secretary Malone arrived at approximately 3:00pm.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05p.m.

Welcome and Comments from the Chair:

Chairperson J.D. Chesloff began by welcoming everyone to the first meeting of the Board of Early Education and Care (EEC) for fiscal year 2014. In reviewing the agenda for the day, Chairperson Chesloff stated that he intends to recuse himself from the vote for Commissioner due to his long standing friendship with Acting Commissioner Thomas Weber, the recommended candidate.

Comments from the Acting Commissioner:

Acting Commissioner Weber provided the Board with updates on the Department's activities during the summer months:

- **Board Annual Retreat:** The annual EEC Board retreat was held on July 31st and focused on EEC's Five Year Strategic Plan. Revisions to the existing Strategic Plan, which will sunset in 2014, are ongoing.
- **FY14 Special Commission on Early Education and Care:** Acting Commissioner Weber reported that the Legislature established a new Special Commission on Early Education and Care through

the FY2014 Budget, to assist EEC with identifying operational issues. The Special Commission will begin its work on September 18th.

- **EEC Caseload Study**: The Legislature also funded a caseload study through the FY2014 Budget, which will encompass a two year research project with the goal of improving and streamlining access to early education and care funding opportunities.
- **After School and Out of School Time (ASOST)**: Acting Commissioner Weber announced that EEC will launch an ASOST Working Group this month, which will be managed by Jay Swanson, Policy Analyst.
- **Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) Grant**: Acting Commissioner Weber reported that as the Department approaches the halfway mark for RTTT-ELC, it is assessing all of the projects and determining which are successful. For those projects that are not working, EEC, in conjunction with its federal oversight partners, will consider revisions to ensure investments are meaningful and sustainable.
- **Differentiated Licensing**: EEC is developing a risk assessment tool for use by EEC's licensors, in an effort to concentrate the Department's limited resources on those programs needing the most support and technical assistance. In addition, EEC will hire five new licensors in FY2014 to reduce the large caseloads that currently exist.
- **Background Record Checks -- Emergency Regulations for Fingerprints**: Acting Commissioner Weber noted that Governor Patrick has signed amendments to the Department's enabling act, which require fingerprinting and sex offender registry checks of the early education and care field. This law imposes an enormous oversight responsibility on EEC. To manage this important work, EEC has requested funds to hire ten additional staff members.
- **Family Child Care Union Negotiations**: Acting Commissioner Weber reported that some progress has been made on the collective bargaining negotiations with the family child care union and is hopeful that a resolution is in sight.
- **Audits**: EEC is currently in the midst of two audits: (1) the single state audit conducted by KPMG; and (2) a performance audit conducted by the State Auditor's Office.
- **Budget Activities**: Acting Commissioner Weber stated that budget activities for FY13 have concluded. EEC has now shifted its focus to the FY2014 spending plan and has begun planning for FY2015.
- **Information Technology**: To improve data system quality, EEC archived approximately 20,000 inactive waitlist records. At this time, there are approximately 40,000 children remaining on the waitlist, including 20,000 infants and toddlers. EEC continues to make major advancements on its Early Childhood Information System (ECIS), which provides the Department with robust data. Lastly, EEC is developing a new Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) system, which will represent a monumental upgrade of its existing subsidy infrastructure.

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.

Amy O'Leary, Campaign Director, Strategies for Children/Early Education for All, encouraged continued investment in high quality early education. She stated that the FY2014 state budget preserved EEC core functions, while providing \$15 million to reduce the waitlist for early education and care subsidies, \$11.5 million for a rate reserve to support early educator salaries and benefits, along with funding for a special commission to study the cost of administering early education and care services and a two-year independent study of the state's provision of childcare supports. Although these measures are a step in the right direction, Ms. O'Leary expressed the importance of leveraging support for the FY2015 budget to close the achievement gap. She submitted written testimony to the Board.

William Eddy, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Early Education and Care, expressed his support of the Board's recommendation of Tom Weber as Commissioner, as Mr. Weber's leadership style is inclusive and makes people feel like they are part of the process. Mr. Eddy then commented that he has concerns about EEC's ability to get "access dollars" out in an efficient and effective way to programs that desperately need it. While Mr. Eddy applauded EEC's plans to establish a QRIS Working Group, he expressed frustration about EEC's failure to recognize National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation as a means of quality.

End of Public Comment period.

Routine Business:

- **Approval of June 11, 2013 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 June 11, 2013 Board Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Committee and Advisory Reports:

- **Board Committee Reports:**

Fiscal Committee:

Board Member Beth Childs reported that the Fiscal Committee met on September 9, 2013 to review the CCDF budget, the FY2013 budget and caseload, and the FY2014 spending plan. She highlighted some additional topics discussed by the Committee, including the two audits being conducted by KPMG and the State Auditor's Office, the collective bargaining negotiations with SEIU, and the FY2013 reversion rate of 1.43%.

Policy and Research Committee:

Board Member Joan Wasser Gish stated that the Policy and Research Committee also met on September 9, 2013 to review the proposed Pre-Kindergarten Science, Technology and Engineering Standards, QRIS updates, and the RTTT-ELC Grant progress. She also highlighted a few additional QRIS topics discussed

by the Committee, including the Working Group, the Program Manager, the QRIS and NAEYC Study, and how EEC currently utilizes the Environment Rating Scales.

Planning and Evaluation Committee:

Board Member Eleonora Villegas-Reimers reported that the Planning and Evaluation Committee had met that morning and reviewed the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards for Early English Language Development. The Committee will conduct a teleconference with WIDA representatives during its next meeting and WIDA representatives are expected to present at the November Board meeting. Board Member Villegas-Reimers reported that the Committee also had revisited the Strategic Plan.

Advisory Council:

Board Member Joni Block reported changes to the Advisory Council meeting schedule for FY14, which will include quarterly meetings of the full advisory at EEC and three meetings at the State House.

- 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 submitted a written disclosure 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:

I. Recommendation of Candidate for EEC Commissioner – Discussion and Vote

Chairperson Chesloff formally recused himself from the Board discussion and vote on the recommendation for EEC Commissioner. In his absence, Vice Chairperson Chi-Cheng Huang facilitated the discussion and asked Board Member Wasser Gish to provide an overview of the process leading up to today's recommendation. She summarized the Board's process for identifying a candidate, noting that comments and input from EEC staff were received along with input from various stakeholders. Board Member Wasser Gish reported that there were seventeen applications for the position, with six applicants determined to meet the qualifications. From this subset, three potential candidates were identified and interviewed. On June 19th, Board members selected one finalist whom they felt was fit to lead the agency. This candidate was Acting Commissioner Weber who was then interviewed by representatives from the Advisory Council on July 8, 2013. Board Member Villegas-Reimers provided feedback from the Advisory Council, who offered overwhelming support for Mr. Weber's candidacy for the position. In turn, each Board Member then offered their personal comments and their unwavering support for Mr. Weber as the new Commissioner of EEC. Additionally, several praised the integrity of the Commissioner Search process and the dedication of their fellow Board members in undertaking this important responsibility.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the Board of Early Education and Care hereby approves Thomas L. Weber as the recommended candidate for Commission of Early Education and Care, and authorizes the Chairperson to submit Mr. Weber to the Secretary of Education for approval and appointment as Commissioner. The motion passed by a majority vote. Abby Weiss, designee of the Secretary of Education abstained.

On a motion duly made and second, it was:

VOTED that, pending final approval and appointment, the Board of Early Education and Care, in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws c. 15D, § 4, sets the salary for Thomas L. Weber as Commissioner of Early Education and Care at an annual rate of \$174,000, retroactive to August 1, 2013, and endorses the terms and conditions as set forth in the Chairperson's draft letter to Mr. Weber. The motion passed unanimously.

Following the Board vote, Acting Commissioner Weber offered his heart-felt gratitude to the Board, Governor Patrick, Secretary Malone, former Secretary Paul Reville, to EEC's staff, to his family and to the field for their support. As a life-long resident of the Commonwealth, he stated that it is his great privilege to serve the Commonwealth as Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care.

II. Grant Administration: Innovative Preschool Curriculum – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *STEM Innovative Curriculum in Preschool Programs, Competitive Grant Initiative, PowerPoint, dated September 10, 2013*

EEC Director of Policy Carol Nolan and Educator/Provider Support Specialist Eric Lieberman presented the Board with an overview of the Innovative Preschool Curriculum Grant. As part of the presentation, Mr. Lieberman discussed the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) standards applicable to preschools, eligibility criteria and objectives for the proposed Innovative Preschool Curriculum Grant, and the procurement timeline.

Acting Commissioner Weber added that the Department was afforded little discretion, as the eligibility criteria and requirements were established in the FY14 Budget line items. Overall, the Board expressed support for this initiative as a means to better support educators and parents, and as an opportunity to enhance existing classroom interactions and curricula through new and innovative projects. Board members expressed interest in maximizing impact and suggested utilizing the existing digital hub with WGBH to increase the availability and accessibility to any curriculum developed through this project. Although it was noted that there is no guarantee that this funding would be annualized beyond FY2014, on-going discussions have addressed continuity through the Commonwealth's statewide STEM Initiative.

III. Board of Early Education and Care Planning and Priorities – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *EEC Board Retreat, Presentation, dated July 31, 2013*

Vice Chairperson Huang opened the discussion by thanking the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) with their help preparing and facilitating the Board Retreat. He provided a summary of the topics discussed during the retreat and commented on the participation by EEC Senior Leadership and Regional Directors. This participation provided an opportunity to bounce ideas off of each other and allowed all to share responsibility and commitment to the work. He then asked Board Member Villegas-Reimers to address the retreat outcomes related to the Strategic Plan. She reported that the Planning and Evaluation Committee was charged with drafting a new Strategic Plan within the

framework of the existing Plan. The new Strategic Plan will be cross-walked with the three constituencies that EEC serves (children, families, and workforce) and the five identified strategic directions (accountability, quality, access, communication and advocacy, and infrastructure and finance). The Board agreed that it will be the Department's responsibility to develop an implementation plan once the new Strategic Plan is completed. Board members reiterated the importance of developing a definition of "school readiness" as part of the process. A draft of the new Strategic Plan is expected for discussion and vote in November.

Comments from the Secretary:

Secretary Matthew Malone apologized for his tardy arrival, explaining that he was returning from a celebration at Worcester Technical High School honoring Principal Sheila Harrity, who was recognized as a "National High School Principal of the Year" by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. He added that this is the first time a Massachusetts principal has received this prestigious award. Secretary Malone briefly discussed the EEC Board Retreat in July, commenting that he thought it had been exceptional. He noted that UMDI did an excellent job facilitating the meeting. Secretary Malone expressed his excitement about the Board's recommendation of Tom Weber as EEC Commissioner and enthused that fiscal year 2015 will be a great year for early education. He then stressed the importance of meaningful investments in early education. Secretary Malone concluded by highlighting features of the Executive Office of Education's recently developed strategic plan, which he distributed to Board members.

IV. Fiscal Spending Update – Discussion

Relevant resource included in Board Materials:

- *FY14 Spending Plan, PowerPoint, dated September 10, 2013*

EEC Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance William Concannon presented the Board with EEC's FY2014 Spending Plan request to the Executive Office of Administration and Finance. As part of his presentation, Deputy Commissioner Concannon reviewed the timeline, as well as the budget language and allocations for each line item appropriated by the Legislature to the Department through the FY2014 budget.

Board members expressed their appreciation for the Legislature's commitment to the mission of the Department, especially noting the importance of the \$15M appropriation to address waitlist remediation. Overall, the Board expressed the need to get these increased funds out as quickly as possible to support the children, families and workforce with additional access.

On motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED that the meeting adjourn at 3:53 pm, subject to the call of the Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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

