
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, February 19, 2015, 9 a.m.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department
of Early Care and Learning
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – East Tower, Oak Room
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Amy Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair
Kay Ford
Dawn Henderson
Kathy Howell

Jerri Kropp
Sherron Murphy
Carlene Talton

Public Guests

William Willoughby, Governor's Office of Planning and
Budget

Lynn Manfredi/Petitt
Joe Perreault

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and
Instructional Support
Keith Bostick, Deputy Commissioner for Programs
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care
Services
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Sarah Beck, System Reform Coordinator
Micca Burris, Early Education Empowerment Zone
Business Operations Specialist
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator

Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Janice Haker, Head Start State Collaboration Director
Tamara Hall, Childcare and Parent Services Director
Carol Hartman, Director of Policy and System Reform
Sharon McPherson, Accounting Manager
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Evaluation Specialist
Bentley Ponder, Research and Policy Analysis Director
Lisa Rambhajan, Information Technology Assistant
Rian Ringsrud, Audits and Compliance Director
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Director
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Laura Wagner, Early Education Empowerment Zone
Director
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner

1. Call to Order

Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and guests. He congratulated Amy Jacobs on her appointment from Interim Commissioner to Commissioner of the Department of Early Care and Learning.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Dawn Henderson moved to accept the day's agenda. Kathy Howell seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Sherron Murphy moved to approve the minutes of the November 11, 2014, meeting of the board. Kathy Howell seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Kay Ford shared an inspirational message stating that what will matter in a hundred years is whether we impacted the life of a child.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Kay Ford reported visiting two Quality Rated centers in Savannah, the Lady Bamford Center and the Sanctuary. She also participated in an early childhood symposium sponsored by the Ladies Rotary Club.
- Jerri Kropp reported Georgia Southern University's preschool was awarded three stars in Quality Rated.
- Victor Morgan reported attending the department's conference for three-star Quality Rated programs.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of the executive staff provided updates on their program areas.

- Commissioner's Update:** Commissioner Amy Jacobs presented updates on her activities. (See slides.) She reported on House Bill 100 to change the birth cut-off date for entering Kindergarten. The date for the change has been postponed from what was originally proposed. The bill will be voted on within the House today. She reported the Read Across Georgia campaign, sponsored by the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, will kick off on March 2. Through this campaign, every child in Georgia's Pre-K will be given a literacy-focused book. Board members were invited to participate in events. She reported the Governor has formed an Education Reform Commission that includes an Early Education Subcommittee that she will chair. The commission will present recommendations to the Governor by August 1. To her knowledge, this is the first time early education has been included in a Georgia Governor's education commission. She recognized board member Sherron Murphy for earning the instructor of the year award at Gwinnett Technical College. She introduced new staff member Laura Wagner as Early Education Empowerment Zone Director.
- Finance and Legislative Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances and potential legislation affecting the department. (See slides.) He reported expenditures are on track for the fiscal year. He also reported on progress of the amended budget and fiscal year 2016 budgets in the legislature. The proposed fiscal year 2016 budget includes a 1% increase in Pre-K teacher and assistant teacher salaries, restores ten full planning days to the Pre-K calendar, and provides funding for 60 additional Summer Transition Program classrooms. He reported on pending legislation. House Bill 7 would create emergency and disaster plans in child care settings. Many of these provisions will be covered by requirements of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization. The bill is not moving forward from committee at this time, but the bill's sponsors will be in further discussion with the department. Another bill concerning suspension policy in Pre-K to 3rd grade is in line with existing Pre-K policy. Senate Bill 34 would make some changes to current law governing the need to damage property to rescue a child in danger. He also reported on ideas the agency has for the coming year's legislative agenda, including addressing how private donations in support of the agency's work are to be handled and minor changes to the criminal records check law. The department would also like to see legislation pass to streamline code sections, moving family child care under the child care learning center section.
- Programs Update:** Keith Bostick presented on the federal reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant in November 2014. (See slides.) This act reauthorizes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which funds the department's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) child care subsidy program and programs for improving child care quality. The intent of CCDF is to make child care available to children from low-income families. Changes in the reauthorization include increasing health and safety, increased focus on infant and toddler care, fair payment practices, underserved populations, and eligibility policies. Georgia's CCDF plan is due July 1.
- Child Care Services Update:** Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She reported the department submitted a public comment to the Administration for Children and Families on proposed voluntary standards for states to review. Current licensing rules meet 52% of these standards. The standards

would prohibit 15-passenger vans, which would adversely impact many child care programs, and in response the department requested that states have flexibility in implementing. She reported on CCS's participation in peer-to-peer state calls discussing monitoring and compliance. She also reported the department has pulled out rules applicable to school-age programs to present them in a user-friendly manner. She demonstrated the provider self-service function in the licensing data system. She stated the department is reviewing closures in the child care field since the state began collecting an annual license fee. She reported the state has lost over 1,000 family child care providers and over 200 child care learning centers since November 2011.

Bentley Ponder presented the department's plans for analyzing child care closures. First, the impact of the recession will be measured through the Economic Impact Study. Second, researchers at Georgia State University are creating a policy brief on closures, including an analysis of geographic factors.

- e. **Federal Programs Update:** Keith Bostick presented updates on federal programs. (See slides.) He presented goals for expanding the Summer Food Service Program in 2015. Targeted efforts are taking place in unserved or underserved communities. The department and USDA have been in discussing flexibility in identifying sites. He presented numbers of children, families, and child care programs participating in CAPS thru January 2015, and participation in tiered reimbursement incentives for Quality Rated programs. Due to serving more children than funding is able to support, funding restrictions are being applied in many counties so that new applications for the program will be accepted from priority families only. Through attrition, this action will reduce the number of children served weekly from approximately 55,000 to approximately 50,000.
- f. **Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Support Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia's Pre-K Program. (See slides.) She reported on the Pre-K professional development evaluation funded through the early learning component of the state's K-12 Race to the Top grant. The study examined professional development models for Pre-K teachers to improve teacher-child interactions, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), with a focus on effective models that would be scalable on a statewide level. The study used a rigorous design, with a pure random assignment of teachers to treatment and control groups, to ensure strong results. Results indicated that both models in the study improved teacher-child interactions, but one is more feasible for large-scale adoption. Kay Ford inquired on the difference in cost between the two models tested. Ms. Adams responded the study supports plans in Georgia's Pre-K to develop its own professional development models related to teacher-child interactions; the state is looking to create a hybrid approach combining the best elements of the two models tested in the study.
- g. **Head Start State Collaboration Update:** Janice Haker presented updates on Head Start and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. (See slides.) She presented collaboration projects including the annual needs assessment for Head Start grantees in Georgia, developing a memorandum of understanding with Babies Can't Wait and DECAL on serving children with disabilities, increasing access to children who are homeless, monitoring and promoting student attendance, especially the chronically absent, addressing obesity, and collaboration with Great Start Georgia on home visiting. She stated a celebration of Head Start's 50th anniversary was held at the State Capitol on February 17. She reported on the high participation of Head Start sites in Quality Rated, including 62 programs rated. She presented on the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grants awarded to eight agencies in Georgia, including DECAL, for a total of \$16.2 million in awards. These funds will provide services to additional Early Head Start eligible children.
- h. **System Reform Update:** Carol Hartman presented updates on the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant. (See slides.) Georgia's partnership project will utilize \$3.8 million per year for five years to partner with child care programs to deliver comprehensive services for infants and toddlers in line with the Head Start Performance Standards. Georgia has added to its initial proposal an additional child care program serving homeless families. The project will not only increase quality and access but will also create aligned policies between CAPS and Early Head Start.

Pam Stevens presented updates on Quality Rated. (See slides.) She congratulated Jerri Kropp on Georgia Southern University's child care program attaining a three-star rating. She reported on fall recruitment efforts to meet the targeted number of participating programs for 2014 and on the distribution of star levels among rated programs. She also reported on efforts to include special populations of child care programs, including school-age programs and public school Georgia's Pre-K centers. Bonus and incentive packages meant to encourage programs to be rated are being reviewed. A Quality Rated Inclusion designation is being implemented for 3-star providers offering inclusion services. A peer support network launching in March will invite 3-star programs to provide

assistance to other programs in the rating process. Quality Rated is developing a communication plan with the input of public relations firm Weber Shandwick.

Laura Wagner presented updates on the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E³Zs). (See slides.) She stated the purpose of the E³Zs is to align supports, activities, and services and improve infrastructure for high-quality programs. She reported on department staffing for the project and the launch of Birth-to-Eight Teams within each zone. She reported on the development of partnerships with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to identify investors and to aid in creating 10 new 3-star programs within the zones. She reported on technical assistance received from Anne Mitchell through the BUILD initiative to develop subsidy grants and targeted family co-pay assistance in Quality Rated programs within the zones. She also reported on partnering with Great Start Georgia to expand home visiting in the zones.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Victor Morgan dismissed board committees for their meetings. Committee meetings were held in separate rooms over lunch. All committee meetings are open to the public.

7. Public Hearing

A time for public comment to the board was made available.

Joe Perreault, Legislative Chair, Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia, commented a high percentage of children in family child care are infants and toddlers. He urged the department to use more family child care providers in Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships. He expressed his organization’s desire to be included in planning for CCDF reauthorization. He requested the department seek family child care input to better understand reasons for the high number of family child care closures.

8. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

- a. **Budget & Finance:** Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee reviewed the fiscal year 2015 budget.
- b. **Programs & Rules:** Sherron Murphy reported for the Programs Committee. The committee discussed the nutrition program summit in January, Pre-K professional development, and the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards toolkit.
- c. **System Reform:** Dawnn Henderson reported for the System Reform Committee, formerly the Ethics Committee. The committee discussed the Early Learning Challenge Annual Performance Report to be submitted at the end of February, E³Z activities, and development of the Kindergarten entry assessment.

Victor Morgan read the section of the board bylaws concerning the election of board officers. He announced that, based on the bylaws, a new slate of board officers will be elected at the next board meeting, to assume their roles in August. He encouraged all board members to be present and to be thinking about who should serve as board chair, board vice chair, and board secretary. He stated he has served two terms as board chair and will not seek reelection.

9. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place May 14, 2015. Kay Ford motioned to adjourn. Sherron Murphy seconded. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

Signature (Board Chair)

Date

Signature (Board Secretary)

Date