
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, August 20, 2015, 9:00 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
Susan Harper, Board Vice Chair
Kay Ford, Board Secretary
Phil Davis
Kathy Howell

Jerri Kropp
Sherron Murphy
Judy Neal
Luanne Purcell
Carlene Talton

Public Guests

Jonathan Harris
Melissa Johnson
Michelle Lank
Lynn Manfredi/Petitt
Barbara Miller
Lauralyn Mustaki
Elizabeth Newcomb

Joe Perreault
Ann Rosenthal
Carolyn Salvador
Elisa Shepherd
Luke Story
Kerri Wilson, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and
Instructional Supports
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System
Reform
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Cassa Andrews, Pre-K Inclusion Coordinator
Christie Bearden, Legal Services Supervisor
Jennie Couture, Director of Practice and Support
Services
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Janice Haker, Head Start State Collaboration Director
Tamara Hall, CAPS Program Director

Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Elisabetta Kasfir, CCS Enforcement Operations Director
Brandy Locchetta, Inclusion Supervisor
Meghan McNail, Summer Transition Program and
Outreach Coordinator
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Evaluation Specialist
Bentley Ponder, Research Director and Senior Policy
Advisor
Lisa Rambhajan, Information Technology Assistant
Rian Ringsrud, Audits and Compliance Director
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
Bridgett Walker, Early Head Start – Child Care
Partnership Coordinator
Liz Young, Government Relations and Special Projects
Director

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 announced that Tammy Lenkeit, representing the 9th Congressional District has resigned from the board because of family reasons.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Judy Neal seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Kathy Howell moved to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2015, meeting of the board. Kay Ford seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

For inspiration, Dr. Luann Purcell shared the story of a girl named Sally as she started school, a story she always read to her staff in Houston County at the start of a school year. She reminded the board, "It must always be about the children."

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Susan Harper reported visiting Lee County Pre-K and witnessing their use of Pre-K special allotment dollars for classroom materials. She also reported visiting a Head Start program in Dalton.
- Judy Neal reported visiting a Summer Transition Program site in Rex.
- Victor Morgan reported visiting a Summer Transition Program site in Bartow County.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

- a. Commissioner's Update:** Commissioner Amy Jacobs presented updates on her activities. (See slides.) She presented an overview of the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which supports CAPS as well as some funding to support licensing and quality improvement. CCDF was reauthorized by Congress in 2014 through fiscal year 2020. Significant advancements include making child care safer, providing more stability for families, improving the quality of child care, and providing better information to families about child care providers. Kristie Lewis and Ira Sudman are the CCDF co-administrators for Georgia. The department is planning now for the state's three-year plan due in March 2016. Public hearings will take place in January.

The Commissioner also presented results of the 2015 employee survey and the 2015 customer service survey, both conducted by Georgia State University. Employee results were generally positive, with 71% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with their job. The lowest scoring item was whether all work units work together as one department. The customer service survey this year focused particularly on the experience of child care providers with the child care licensing division. CCS is highly rated on most aspects of customers' experiences, but there are areas for improvement. Phil Davis inquired whether division directors will receive specific results from the survey. The Commissioner confirmed those have been sent to directors for review. Mr. Davis also inquired whether there could be a response bias from Quality Rated providers. Bentley Ponder stated response differences are included in the report and stated he would look that up.

The Commissioner reported on the Economic Impact Study, with the final report being released in the fall, and announced four public policy forums in September and October where results will be presented. The time, location, and registration instructions for the forums will be sent to board members. She also recognized the Human Resources unit for receiving an award from the Department of Administrative Services.

- b. Finance and Legislative Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances and potential legislation affecting the department. (See slides.) He reported expenditures finished well for the 2015 fiscal year.

Lottery dollars returned to the state at the end of the fiscal year are restricted and can help add to future budget items. He presented fiscal year 2016 amended budget and fiscal year 2017 budget requests. He reported the agency does not plan on an individual legislative package in the coming year but expects to be engaged with the Education Reform Commission recommendations, particularly those of the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee. He presented on the Department of Audits and Accounts follow-up report to its 2013 findings for the CAPS program; three findings have been fully addressed and six partially addressed. Phil Davis inquired about the potential impact on the budget if the Federal Reserve raises interest rates in the fall. Mr. Higgins responded there should be no immediate effect. Mr. Davis also inquired whether the 25 fraud indictments initiated by the agency were an indication of a bigger problem in the child care industry. Mr. Higgins responded the agency needs to continue to monitor but has been more aggressive in monitoring and preventing fraud.

- c. **Child Care Services Update:** Elisabetta Kasfir presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She presented on the implementation of provider self-service, which allows child care programs to update information and pay fees and fines online. The next phase to be implemented will allow for online criminal record check applications. She reported on the status of proposed rules drafted in response to House Bill 401, which becomes effective January 1, 2016. Changes include merging Group Day Care Home rules with Child Care Learning Centers' rules and renaming Family Day Care Homes as Family Child Care Learning Homes. Draft rules also reflect the agency's widened authority to conduct criminal record checks beyond child care program staff to also include contractors. In addition, programs undergoing a change of ownership will be allowed a brief period to become compliant with the criminal record check requirement. Ms. Kasfir reported fiscal year 2016 annual compliance designations were released in July 2015. The agency has seen a reduced number of noncompliant programs. She stated this is the last year the agency will use an annual designation; beginning July 2016 CCS will transition to a rolling compliance determination. Phil Davis sought clarification whether compliance status carries over or is determined annually. Ms. Kasfir replied that visits conducted at any time in the previous fiscal year determine compliance status for the coming fiscal year, but this process will change in July 2016.
- d. **Nutrition Services Update:** Falita Flowers presented updates on Nutrition Services. (See slides.) She reported on outreach and expansion activities for the 2015 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). A kickoff event in Athens was attended by First Lady Sandra Deal, and another kickoff event in Clayton County was attended by State School Superintendent Richard Woods. She reported 4.9 million SFSP meals were served in 100 counties, including five new counties targeted for expansion. The agency entered into collaborative partnerships through mini-grants to expand meal service, including mobile meal delivery systems. Ms. Flowers reported that child nutrition programs funded by the USDA are expected to receive congressional reauthorization in the fall. Proposed changes in the legislation include expanding meal benefits for participating children to provide three complete meals per day. Ms. Flowers also presented an overview of activities for the coming year that include combining the program applications for SFSP and the Child and Adult Care Food Program into a single application.
- e. **Head Start Update:** Janice Haker presented updates on Head Start. (See slides.) Collaboration Office activities include strategies to boost child attendance in Head Start programs, a pilot project to measure toxic stress in children, and referring to Head Start younger siblings of children entering public schools who are identified as homeless. She reported on the difficulty of serving priority groups (e.g., homeless children, foster children, children with disabilities) when no Head Start slots are available. In response, the state is exploring the possibility of reserving slots for these groups. She presented an overview of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant awards received in the state, including the grant awarded to DECAL. She reported Head Start programs in Georgia are seeking 100% enrollment of their staff in the Professional Development Registry. She also reported a high percent of Head Start programs are participating in Quality Rated, mostly at the 2- and 3-star levels.
- f. **Georgia's Pre-K Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia's Pre-K Program. (See slides.) She reported on the 2015 Summer Transition Program, a targeted six-week school readiness program that served over 1,200 children transitioning to Kindergarten as well as approximately 420 Spanish-speaking children who will be entering Pre-K in the fall. Georgia's Pre-K currently funds 3,842 classrooms for the 2015-2016 school year, and we will continue to fund some classes in areas of need. The current year Pre-K budget provides for 180 days of instruction for students, 190 work days for teachers (representing an addition of two days from the previous year), and a one-percent increase in lead and assistant teacher salaries. The agency is making new lesson planning guide available to Pre-K programs and distributing the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)

and teacher toolboxes to help teachers plan instruction. The GELDS include an interactive online version. She also reported on plans for the upcoming Georgia's Pre-K Week and welcomed board members to participate in visits to Pre-K programs with their state legislators.

- g. Instructional Supports Update:** Susan Adams introduced the recently created Instructional Supports unit and its director Jennie Couture. Ms. Couture presented on supporting social emotional development. (See slides.) She spoke of the importance of early learning environments for developing social emotional skills and the urgency of providing greater support. She stated behavior management is an area where teachers feel least prepared and about which they contact the department continually, while preschool children are more likely to be expelled than children in public schools. Social emotional development is also becoming a focus of federal policy including in CCDF reauthorization. In response, the agency and the Georgia Department of Education are working together on implementing the Pyramid Model of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The agency has identified the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children as its intervention framework, and it has reallocated staff and resources to focus on supporting social emotional development, including hiring a PBIS manager and incorporating PBIS in the work of inclusion specialists. The Georgia Pyramid Model State Leadership Team began meeting in January 2015 with participation from several state agencies to coordinate an aligned implementation of the model in ages birth to eight settings. Guiding principles include supporting all children and using research-based practices focused on prevention. She presented an overview of the tiers that make up the Pyramid Model, from an effective workforce to intensive intervention. She also reported on the demonstration sites that have been identified. Dr. Luann Purcell noted the implications of this work for the drop-out rate by instilling good behavior in school and echoed the Clarke County school superintendent's philosophy that school systems should hire behavior specialists rather than send children home. Phil Davis inquired whether the disproportionality of children being expelled can be targeted to the school and classroom level. Ms. Couture replied that expulsion data are not available at that level in early learning, but the Georgia Department of Education looks at this for each school and has required measures.
- h. System Reform Update:** Kristin Bernhard presented updates on System Reform. (See slides.) She presented an overview of the projects under System Reform, including Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge projects, Quality Rated, the Child Care Resource and Referral System, and the agency's Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant. She reported on program participation in Quality Rated, highlighting the increase in the last year to 38% of programs participating and 12% who have achieved a star rating. She reported on the Quality Rated subsidy grants that will allow programs to determine CAPS eligibility at the site level and provide a guaranteed number of CAPS slots at a much higher reimbursement rate. The first round of funding was recently awarded, with the next round coming in the fall. She presented on a project in the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) to impact the demand side of quality child care by offering family savings on their CAPS co-pay that increase with their chosen provider's star level. In partnership with the Department of Community Affairs, a grant program will offer up to \$100,000 per child care program to expand capacity for infant and toddler care in E3Zs. A proposed Quality Rated Advisory Committee attracted 95 applicants, with members to be announced in the coming weeks. Phil Davis inquired whether there is a deadline for programs to achieve a star rating. Ms. Bernhard responded the agency would like to see the process completed within nine months, but ultimately the timeline is provider driven, and the provider decides how long they need. Mr. Davis asked if providers ever take advantage of merely participating in Quality Rated as a marketing opportunity, with no intention of becoming rated. Ms. Bernhard answered that providers are only able to represent themselves to the public as Quality Rated if they have achieved a star rating.

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. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

- a. Budget & Finance:** Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee reviewed the amended fiscal year 2016 and the fiscal year 2017 budgets.

- i. The committee recommended that the board approve the amended budget for fiscal year 2016 and the budget for fiscal year 2017 as presented. The board voted, and the budgets were unanimously approved.
- b. **Programs & Rules:** Sherron Murphy reported for the Programs Committee. The committee discussed plans for a Summer Food Service Program summit to be held in January 2016.
- c. **System Reform:** Susan Harper reported for the System Reform Committee. The committee discussed the E3Zs and the recommendation of the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee that the state contribute some matching funds to those made available by the Cox Foundation for Quality Rated consumer awareness.

8. Public Comments

A time for public comment to the board was made available. No public comments were made.

9. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place November 12, 2015. Proposed 2016 board meeting dates of February 18, May 12, August 18, and November 10 were presented to the board. Phil Davis motioned to approve the proposed meeting dates. Kay Ford seconded. The board voted, and 2016 meeting dates were unanimously approved.

Phil Davis motioned to adjourn. Sherron Murphy seconded. The board unanimously agreed to adjourn. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

Signature (Board Chair)

Date

Signature (Board Secretary)

Date