

Meeting Minutes for the Governor's Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

9:30 am – 3:00 pm

James B. Hunt Jr. Library, NC State University

In attendance: Dr. Fouad Abd-El-Khalick, Hon. Charles Becton, Mr. Jim Deal, Hon. Rick Glazier, Mr. Mark Jewell, Ms. Leigh Kokenes, Dr. Helen “Sunny” Ladd, Dr. Patrick Miller, Mr. James Moore, Mr. Mark Richardson, Mr. Nick Sojka, Mr. Fernando Solano Valverde, Mr. Michael Williams, Dr. Stelfanie Williams, Mr. Brad Wilson (Chair), Hon. Leslie Winner, Ms. Henrietta Zalkind

Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and welcomed members. The Chair read the Conflict of Interest statement. The Chair presented the minutes from the April 10, 2018 meeting of the Commission and asked if members had any edits. Hearing none, the Chair approved the minutes as presented.

Commission Updates

The Chair shared that the Executive Committee met by conference call on May 17 to discuss the agenda for this meeting and the structure and scope of work for the Commission's work groups. The Chair thanked everyone who responded with their work group interest areas. Based on feedback and Commission members' expertise, the Chair presented a draft of the work group assignments for Commission members' consideration and discussion (draft was included in the Commission members' materials). The Chair announced that the following Commission members agreed to serve as leads for the work groups:

- Jim Deal – Finance and Resources
- Leslie Winner – Teachers
- Patrick Miller – Principals
- Henrietta Zalkind – Early Childhood / “Whole Child”
- Melody Chalmers - Assessments

As for the scope of work for the work groups, the Chair shared that

- Each work group will have a leader and participation on a work group will be voluntary.
- Each work group will begin its work following the Commission meeting on that work group's core area of focus. Each work group will be tasked with summarizing the Commission's preliminary findings for that core area and crafting possible strategies for improvement for the Commission to consider. Work groups may be called upon prior to the Commission meeting on that work group's core area of focus to provide input into the agenda for that meeting.
- In terms of deliverables, each work group will craft a brief document (format to be determined by the Executive Committee) that will detail the Commission's preliminary findings and possible strategies. The leader for each work group will coordinate with Mr. Geoff Coltrane with the Governor's Office on developing the deliverable.
- Once a work group is established, Mr. Coltrane will engage with WestEd on identifying a team member who can assist in the work group's work. The members of the work group

may, if needed, also identify additional experts outside of the Commission's membership who may be invited to participate in the work group.

Mr. Deal asked about the application of open meetings law to work group meetings. The Chair recognized Ms. Sondra Panico, the staff attorney with the Department of Justice, to respond. Ms. Panico indicated that meetings of the work groups are public meetings and are subject to the open meetings laws. The Chair responded that Mr. Coltrane will work with each work group leader to help ensure the proper procedures are followed.

The Chair requested that the work groups plan to meet during lunch to discuss their scope of work and to begin planning next steps. Mr. Coltrane will follow up with the leads after the meeting.

The Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Chair recognized Dr. Katie Rosanbalm from the Duke University Center for Child and Family Policy for a presentation. Dr. Rosanbalm discussed the types of adversity many children often face including abuse, neglect, problems with caregivers, poverty, natural disasters, peer aggression, and more. The findings of a recent study from the Centers for Disease Control emphasized the large numbers of children affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Dr. Rosanbalm explained that toxic stress is the result of prolonged or pronounced stress and it can have adverse effects on the human brain, including effects on decision making and problem solving. Relating to early childhood, Dr. Rosanbalm stressed the rapid rate of brain growth during early childhood, as well as the findings of a recent study showing that 25% of children experience or witness a traumatic event before the age of four. ACEs impact includes negative effects that translate into behavioral and attendance problems as well as problems with language, memory, perspective, and understanding cause and effect. Building trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive environments and implementing a shift in the way caregivers think about and interact with children can help curb the negative effects of ACEs. Dr. Rosanbalm outlined the shift in perspectives necessary to build those environments and informed members of some of the ongoing examples of programs curbing ACEs effects in NC. The Hon. Rick Glazier asked Dr. Rosanbalm about the cost of those programs. Another member asked Dr. Rosanbalm to speak to disciplinary procedures for children affected by ACEs. A member asked about the implementation of these programs in curriculum for student teachers and other education professionals. That aspect will be examined this year. The Chair thanked Dr. Rosanbalm.

Importance of Robust Early Childhood Systems

The Chair recognized Dr. Kelly Maxwell, the Co-Director for Early Childhood Research at Child Trends. Dr. Maxwell, using data from a national study, outlined who cares for pre-school children prior to beginning their K-12 schooling, showing that children are often cared for by individuals with and without prior relationships and in centers (daycare, community organizations, preschools, etc). She mentioned that there is an opportunity to collect data specific to North Carolina when the federal government conducts the same study again. Dr. Maxwell highlighted some aspects of early childhood development. She reminded members of the state's definition for school readiness, including the developmental aspects of that definition. Dr. Maxwell recommended a birth to 3rd grade framework to focus on children rather than the systematic approach of a K-12 system. A sample of beneficial health policy choices include

consistent access to pediatric health care (through insurance) and community-based programs to curtail violence, crime, substance abuse, and mental illness. Family support policy options include voluntary home visiting and child care assistance for eligible families. Learning policy options include access to high-quality child care programs, transition planning between schooling stages, and effective professional development for teachers/caregivers. Dr. Maxwell informed members that approximately 22% of all four year olds in NC are enrolled in an NC Pre-K program and that NC Pre-K meets nine out of ten quality standards from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Funding for Early Childhood Care and Education in NC

The Chair recognized Susan Perry-Manning, Deputy Secretary at the NC Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS), for a presentation. Ms. Perry-Manning shared an overview of the connections between early childhood and the *Leandro* case. She outlined the agencies in charge of administering early childhood learning programs (DHHS and the Department of Public Instruction / State Board of Education) and shared data that shows just a fraction of the number of eligible children are served through one of the state's publicly funded early learning programs (child care subsidy, Early Head Start, Head Start, or NC Pre-K). Ms. Perry-Manning also shared that only around 1% of the state's annual budget is directed to early childhood education. Ms. Perry-Manning discussed several challenges facing early childhood in NC, including inequitable and inadequate salaries for lead teachers across the different programs. Ms. Perry-Manning also shared that the NC DHHS is in the process of developing a statewide Early Childhood Action Plan and outlined the goals on which the action plan will be based.

Discussion before lunch

The Chair asked for any comments or questions before lunch and recessed the meeting. The Commission work groups met during lunch.

Early Childhood System Building at the Local Level

The Chair called the meeting back to order and recognized Cindy Watkins, President of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, for a presentation. She presented an overview of the Smart Start program and how Smart Start, through its local partnerships, takes a whole child approach to early care and education. She also highlighted how some local partnerships have designed programs to meet the needs of children and families in their communities. Ms. Watkins discussed the Early Childhood Profile, which is a series of measures of child well-being for which local Smart Start programs are held responsible. Ms. Watkins also reported statewide outcomes from a Duke University study which showed improved reading and math scores as well as saved time and money for third graders who had been in the Smart Start program. She also discussed how Smart Start is funded in NC, which raised a number of questions among Commission members about the complicated nature of the funding structure. Ms. Watkins shared that there have been steady funding cuts to the program since 2008.

Aligning Early Childhood System Building to K-12 Education Systems

The Chair recognized John Pruette, the Executive Director of the Office of Early Learning at DPI, for a presentation. Mr. Pruette discussed the importance of an aligned birth through 3rd grade education system to ensure that the learning gains made by students in early childhood are sustained through 3rd grade. Mr. Pruette shared that research evidence that the quality of

instruction and student-teacher interactions need to be improved in early elementary classrooms. He also discussed the components of a strong birth through 3rd grade system, including effective teachers and school leaders, high-quality instruction, and meaningful assessment.

The Chair then recognized Tracy Zimmerman, Executive Director at the NC Early Childhood Foundation for a presentation. Ms. Zimmerman discussed the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative which deals with the challenge of a majority 3rd graders not achieving reading proficiency. Pathways is working with all of NC's child-serving public systems. She outlined the goals and outcomes of the Pathways program to create and endorse shared measures of success and to create a policy framework. The program's shared measures of success include literacy milestones with the grand milestone of reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

Discussion and next steps

The Chair asked members if they had any questions or comments for the conclusion of the meeting.

The Chair reminded members of the September 13th meeting in Raleigh and adjourned the meeting at 2:45 PM.