

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Retreat

August 31, 2011 . 9:00 to 4:00 . Lacey Community Center

Minutes

To kick-off the official launch of a two-year process to re-envision the Early Learning Advisory Council's (ELAC) role and to realize the promise of our *Early Learning Plan* and State Advisory Council legislation, the Council held a full-day retreat in Lacey with nearly all of the Council members attending.

ELAC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Nina Auerbach – Chief Executive Officer & President, Thrive by Five Washington
Bianca Bailey – Parent
John Bancroft – Columbia City Consulting
Anne Banks – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Jody Becker-Green – Senior Director, Department of Social & Health Services
Don Bennett – Executive Director, Higher Education Coordinating Board
Kathy Goebel *on behalf of* Charles Earl – Executive Director, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges
Leslie Goldstein – Executive Policy Advisor, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Senator Nick Harper – Washington State Senate
Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH – State Health Officer, Department of Health
Dr. Bette Hyde – Director, Department of Early Learning
Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer – Project Manager, HSSCO, Department of Early Learning
Taфра Jones – Parent & Parent Advisory Group Member, Department of Early Learning
Cynthia Juarez – Early Learning Directory, ESD 105
Lois Martin – Director, Community Day Center for Children, Inc
Sandy Nelson – Assistant Superintendent, Early Learning, ESD 113
Mary Perkins – Early Childhood Consultant
Paula Smith – Head of School, University Child Development School
Sue Winn – Family Child Care Provider

ELAC MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Roger Goodman – Washington State House of Representatives
Representative Larry Haler – Washington State House of Representatives
Marie Zackuse – Tulalip Tribes of Washington
VACANT – Washington State Senate

GETTING ACQUAINTED

The work ahead will require heavy lifting and because strong relationships ease the work of the Council, members shared personal early childhood experiences that changed their lives. The energy and passion of Council members was evident as members shared these motivations for their work.

SETTING THE STAGE

Because important decisions about the Council's role and functions have already been made, selected leaders provided an orientation to the context, relationships and requirements involved. This was done by [*"building" a picture of what is in place*](#) so that we can use this foundation to determine the right next steps to enhance and improve services and supports for children and families across the state and set the stage for beginning development of the state and local leadership and accountability structure.

Dr. Hyde provided an overview of the context of early learning in Washington, reminding us that children and families are at the heart of this work. Dr. Hyde noted that the leadership of the legislature and Governor has been in place for several years and resulted in the creation of the Department of Early Learning in 2006 as part of the Washington Learns plan to build a world-class, learner-focused and seamless education system in Washington.

Early on the Department focused on working with partners (including ELAC), to build a statewide, child-focused early learning system that supports children's healthy development and learning from prenatal through 3rd grade. Department of Early Learning staff members work hard to implement state early learning policy and coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs that can improve children's school readiness and success. The focus of the work is in the policy and program areas such as child care licensing, subsidy policy, Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT), and PreK. Dr. Hyde noted Council members and staff who play roles in leading these efforts in Washington. Dr. Hyde also shared some thoughts about what drives her in her work at the Department. She shared her sense of urgency to address the scope and scale of challenges that children are facing as they learn and grow.

Council member, Nina Auerbach shared some history about the creation of Thrive by Five Washington as an organization that works with a variety of public and private partners to focus attention and remove obstacles so that we can create momentum in Washington's early learning efforts. Partnership with the Department of Early Learning and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is an important element of this work. To build upon each other's work, the three organizations have created a Joint Resolution Partnership (JRP) that has been focusing on 11 of the priorities enumerated in the *Early Learning Plan*.

Dr. Hyde pointed out that these agencies work with the legislature and Governor's office, and the Early Learning Advisory Council to implement the *Early Learning Plan*. The individual agencies in the JRP also work in tandem and individually with other state agencies like the Department of Health and Department of Social and Health Services and local agencies like educational service districts, resource and referral agencies and school districts to make policy and program connections. The Early Learning Advisory Council includes members from boards like the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and Higher Education Coordinating Board to ensure that we are preparing early learning professionals to deliver the world-class education we envision. All partners work through groups like the Department of Early Learning's Parent Advisory Group and in individual interactions to engage and incorporate the wisdom of families in local communities.

Dr. Hyde also framed the history and role of the Early Learning Advisory Council. Created in 2007 by state statute to advise the Department of Early Learning, the statute was updated in 2010 to revise the membership and responsibilities to be consistent with federal legislation in the *Head Start Act of 2007*

that mandated specific activities. Already the ELAC has had success with the 2010 publication of our *Early Learning Plan*, developed with the support of the Joint Resolution Partners and hundreds of stakeholders across the state. The *Early Learning Plan* serves as the strategic plan for early learning and guides our work at state and local levels and focuses our attention on the five “ready and successful” outcomes we desire.

Department of Early Learning Assistant Director for Partnerships and Collaboration, Kelli Bohanon shared details of the federal Head Start Act of 2007 that specifies the State Advisory Council (SAC) membership and directs a number of actions and responsibilities for State SACs. She noted that the ELAC will continue to be named the ELAC, but will carry out the responsibilities of the SAC. She noted that SAC responsibilities are generally enumerated on the *Context Graphic*. She also noted that Washington was very fortunate to receive a federal State Advisory Committee grant which provides \$1.7 million over a three-year period to pursue three Council priorities: (1) Strengthening coordination and effectiveness by establishing a collaborative state and local leadership and accountability structure and guiding implementation of the *Early Learning Plan*; (2) Creating an implementation plan for a statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and school staff working with families from birth through third grade; and (3) Implementing state-wide early learning standards by updating our state’s early learning guidelines and promoting their use. She noted that some of these things (like the Early Learning Guidelines revision) are already underway and others are just now getting started.

ELAC Co-Chairs Maxine Hayes and Sue Winn shared their excitement about the past success and the energy and enthusiasm that new members are bringing as we embark on ELAC’s re-envisioned role.

Bianca Bailey said that she was happy to participate and share parent voice and experience. Since parents know their children best and are primary beneficiaries of our work, she wants parents to know that they matter. She reminded us that family economics and working conditions often dictate which parents have parenting opportunity and which do not.

Don Bennett stated that the Higher Education Coordinating Board is pleased to work with Early Learning and K-12 partners to advance ONE education agenda and support a continuum from birth through higher education. He also expressed a sense of urgency to do this, since we have not come to terms with changing demographics and the different engagement and access strategies we will need to develop.

Kathy Goebel shared her feeling that the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and people through the college system are true believers in early learning and passionate about building early success. We hope that we can pursue opportunities to connect our efforts and that early learning system planners will look to the colleges for research in the area of early learning practice. She also hopes that we will work together to build support for professional development and commensurate compensation.

PLAY EARLY LEARNING JEOPARDY: THE DATA PICTURE

To build a sense of urgency about the status of children in Washington, the Council played a game of Early Learning Jeopardy. Council members split into teams to try to correctly answer questions about the scale and location of different elements of success.

Council members noted several things while attempting to correctly answer the Jeopardy questions:

- Data is like a flashlight. It shows where you are on the path and helps shine a light on where you are going
- The graduation rates are higher than I thought (a result of the fact that the figure only includes students who had not dropped out prior to the beginning of their senior year)

- The figures are sobering and show how much we need to do
- Given that there are urgent needs across ages, we can see how important it is to focus prenatally to adulthood.
- Many babies are born to first-time, low-income mothers where stress is a constant companion. We need more focus on policies that support women of child-bearing age since what happens prior to pregnancy has an enormous impact
- This highlights that we put too much focus on instruction and the role of the teacher in education and not enough on each child's life context
- Besides the focus on these indicators, we also need to focus more on birth to three and the important influences of culture and home language

LEARN ABOUT COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

Local-State Collaboration

To help Council members to leverage the benefits of local-state collaboration, they were provided with an issue brief commissioned from the Build Initiative entitled, *Building Early Childhood Systems: The Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Model*. Garrison Kurtz of Dovetailing then made a presentation outlining the elements of successful *Collaborative Leadership and Accountability* structures to help frame the Council's approach.

Selected Council members and some local partners were asked to share examples when local-state collaboration provided more value than working alone. Presenters were asked to describe two efforts in their community: One in which state interest and goals resonated with local priorities; and, another in which local priorities have been able to successfully influence what statewide partners are doing. What worked well? What could make it work better?

Northwest Washington - Council member Sue Winn and local partner Karma Hugo of Northwest ESD spoke about the revision of the *Early Learning Guidelines* as an example of a state-driven effort of local interest and P-3 alignment efforts (including Washington-KIDS and Full-day Kindergarten) as a locally-driven effort of state interest. They noted that Kindergarten is a tough year for teachers and it can be difficult to engage districts consistently since many school district staff members are not early learning experts. The ESD tries to help players across early learning and K-3 understand the ecosystems in which children are developing and learning and the systems that support or hamper their success. They are using the WaKIDS effort to help everyone understand appropriate expectations for children and have used guiding documents, such as the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks (now the Early Learning Guidelines) and a locally-developed theory of action around literacy instructional quality.

King County - Council members Lois Martin, John Bancroft and local partner Deann Puffert of Child Care Resources described their QRIS Pilot and Infant-Toddler consultation as examples of a state-driven effort of local interest and their Family Friend and Neighbor Caregiver supports as an example of a locally-driven effort of state interest. They expressed a need to balance vision & practicality, identifying some incremental steps to take. They also noted that being culturally sensitive, balancing the needs and differing power of constituents and ensuring that "voices" are weighted appropriately were important. In addition, they found that it was really important to capture language that captures what they do. They encouraged Council members to be creative about funding and bold in what they do. In this regard, Lois shared her equation for high-quality early learning:

Educated, fairly compensated professionals
 + Family support
 + Government support
 = High-Quality Early Learning

RACE TO THE TOP

Department of Early Learning Assistant Director of Outcomes and Accountability Bonnie Beukema made a presentation about the requirements of the federal Early Learning Race to the Top grants and the State of Washington's planned proposal. ELAC members agreed to work with the Race to the Top team.

DEVELOP INITIAL FUNCTIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Council members were asked to work at their tables and, considering the context-setting from the morning and the examples of successful local-state collaboration, to identify Guiding Principles and Initial Functions of the ELAC.

Draft Initial Functions

- Raise issue awareness
- Develop recommendations re: compensation system & professional development systems
- Identify 2-3 priorities
- Focus on core/required functions
- Recommend public funding options
- Align resources
- Facilitate development/enhancement of early learning systems

Draft Guiding Principles

- Anticipate issues and help to inform the Department of Early Learning
- Weave local and state needs and priorities into the agenda
- Use the Council to align and disseminate information for initiatives
- Connect local-state work to reality on the ground
- Consistently consider children with special needs
- Take a long view and support innovation
- Be intentional in our outreach
- Work to spur collaboration at multiple levels
- Align finances with vision (See *Examples of Other State Advisory Councils*, Delaware, last bullet)
- Respect & honor multi-culturalism
- Use data to inform decision-making
- Be transparent in our communications and decisions
- Be intentional about seeking input and engagement from stakeholders

IDENTIFY INITIAL EARLY ACTIONS AND LEARNING AGENDA

Thinking about the information and conversation during the day, Council members were grouped and used an "Around the World" approach to a *Learning Agenda* for follow-up exploration and identify *Early Actions* the Council can take.

Initial Early Actions

Communications

- Identify our approach to communicating the work that ELAC is doing
- Be targeted and action-oriented in our reporting

Logistics

- Meetings
 - Look at how often ELAC meets and for how long (The Council agreed to hold full-day meetings five times per year)
 - Hold ELAC meetings in different cities
 - Hold ELAC meetings in the least expensive location
 - Align meetings to other meetings for those on the road

- Consider adding specific work groups that match our principles & provide opportunities for additional participation (e.g. parents, special needs)
 - What structure would work best?
 - How can work between meetings help to move the ELAC forward?
 - What are the expectations of participants? What is their charge and accountability?
 - What level of authority will they have? How are decisions made in work groups connected to ELAC decision-making?
 - How can we effectively include parents and people from local communities?
- ELAC business and process Issues
 - How will our agendas be set? Can we frame central questions before meetings?
 - Will substitutes be allowed?
 - Can Council members participate by conference call?
 - Provide binders with relevant info for new members
 - Consider Steering or Executive group to give & get quick action input between meetings
 - Define member roles
 - Have a clearly articulated process for developing policy recommendations
 - Structure framework for approaching issues, workgroups
 - Process for ongoing communication to and with the council – “out to” and “in from”
- Form an awareness campaign to promote use of the *Early Learning Guidelines*

Suggested Future Agenda Items

- Identify mechanisms to connect with communities around a stated goal (What is the role of coalitions and IT networks?)
- Identify short term priority needs and establish outcomes (being clear on what they are)
- Dual advice exercise – ask DEL what they want advice on & have council give input on what we would like to give advice on
- Define what it means that ELAC is “coordinating”
- Define how ELAC is involved in data coordination
- Define our decision-making process

Learning Agenda

Present/read, discuss and learn

- Early learning funding and rules
 - State Budget situation & streams
 - Federal Budget situation
 - Proposed ESEA authorization Title I
 - More info about IDEA, Parts B & C
 - Regulations that govern early learning programs
- Role of each individual member (Advising role, decision making role or combination of both?)
- Current professional development efforts for early learning providers
- Lessons learned through the WaKIDS pilots (why are some districts choosing not to participate? What barriers are being experienced?)
- What is our relationship to existing groups (e.g. Home Visiting Coalition)
 - What existing groups should ELAC develop formal working relationships with?
 - What is connection between HUBS and Coalitions?
 - What is the structure & membership of regional coalitions?
- Strategic Focus
 - What are other states doing? Other departments?
 - Previews of anticipated issues and initiatives
- In-depth discussion of BUILD article on state/local governance

- Career & Wage Ladder - What part of ladder worked? What can we incentivize?
- Regions/Hubs/Coalitions & local community innovation
- Reports on the status of kids in our state
- Exploration of ways to connect teachers from early learning through high school
- Training for council members on how to be on a “board” or “council”
- Provide orientation for new members
- Identify professional development needs of providers to successfully participate in the implementation of QRIS & WaKIDS (what are the perceived barriers)

Develop

- A visual of early learning funding mechanisms
- Process to include input from locals during our deliberations (gain synergies, avoid unintended consequences)
- A Glossary of acronyms and terms
- Best practice videos hosted on websites

Visit

- Visit Preschool, early intervention and child care in tandem with meetings

GRAPHIC RECORDING

Tim Corey of Advanced Approach was present throughout the day to create a [graphic recording](#) of the retreat that can be used by others to communicate the process the Council went through and its vision for the way forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were encouraged to participate in parallel activities during the day. Flipcharts were also available throughout the day to allow members of the public to make the following comments:

- Use WA State Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) data to help inform EL policies & practices (DOH & Family Policy Council have info)
- Gap – kids with learning, behavior, social/emotional, mental health issues that don’t meet eligibility levels for Special Ed or Medicaid funded mental health services (MH services – issues for parents too)
- Appreciate attention to state-local communication & partnerships
- Tribal representative needed. Maybe someone from the committee who is doing infant mortality, reports and planning
- Coordination of data collection – P-20. How can ELAC help ensure that various data systems can coordinate? Health, EL, etc.
- Need to have ongoing communication. Feedback from local communities about what’s working, what’s not.
- What does “coordination” mean in this context? What does ELAC do to help bridge different systems, cultures, etc.?
- Influence the increased diversity of leadership at the state level – DEL, DSHS, OSPI – so children of color have people that understand their struggles leading change!
- Acronyms got in the way
- It was hard to hear in the room

MATERIALS

All materials are posted on our website with hyperlinks below.

- [*Issue Brief: Building Early Childhood Systems: Collaborative Leadership and Accountability*](#)
- [*Collaborative Leadership and Accountability Presentation*](#)
- [*Senate Bill 5389 – Revisions to the Early Learning Advisory Council membership and purpose*](#)
- [*Excerpt from the Head Start Act of 2007*](#)
- [*Examples of Other State Advisory Councils*](#)
- [*Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Presentation*](#)
- [*Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Executive Summary*](#)
- [*State Advisory Council grant briefing document*](#)
- [*State Advisory Council FAQ's*](#)
- [*League of Education Voters 2011 Citizens Report card on Washington State Education*](#)

OVERALL PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) is for representatives from the state's early learning stakeholder communities to provide input and recommendations to the Department of Early Learning (DEL) so that DEL's strategies and actions are well-informed and are broadly supported by parents, early care providers, health/safety experts and interested parties. The Governor holds final authority for policy decisions and her P-20 Council will be made aware of ELAC's input to DEL.