

**Approved Minutes: Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council  
August 18, 2017, SCC – Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Building, Lincoln, Nebraska**

**Council Members Present:** Susan Adams, Laura Arp, Teresa Berube, Amy Bunnell, Julie Docter, Gwen Easter, J.D. Flynn, Melody Hobson, Emily Kluver, Joan Luebbers, Cathy Mohnike, Dawn Mollenkopf, Dawn Murphy, Christy Pelton, Julie Rother, Susan Strahm, Nicole Vint

**Council Members Absent:** Carol Bowen, Stephanie Knust, Sen. Kolowski, Salene Ulrich

**Also in attendance:** Council Facilitator: Eleanor Shirley; Council Staff: Karen Hoffman; Technical Assistants: Jennifer Auman, Amy Bornemeier, Lynne Brehm, Lauri Cimino, Stacy Frank, Pat Frost, Cole Johnson, Connie Shockley, Becky Veak, Staci Zuerlein; Presenters: Brandee Lengel, and Susan Sarver

**Council Meeting Convened**

ECICC Facilitator, Eleanor Shirley, convened the meeting at 9:08 a.m. and announced that Julie Rother, Vice Chair, will serve as Interim Chair for meetings until a Chair is named. Introductions were made around the room as well as how their work supports the Council. New appointed member, J.D. Flynn, was recognized as a parent representative.

**Approval of Minutes of May 5, 2017 Meeting**

Motion was made by Arp and seconded by Mollenkopf to accept the minutes of the May 5, 2017 meeting as presented. The motion passed by roll-call vote: yes-12, no-0, abstain-3

Voting yes: Arp, Berube, Bunnell, Docter, Easter, Hobson, Luebbers, Mollenkopf, Murphy, Pelton, Strahm, Vint  
Abstain: Adams, Flynn, Rother

**Approval of today's agenda**

Motion was made by Hobson and seconded by Strahm to approve the agenda for today's meeting. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

**Update on Council Appointments/Re-appointments**

Eleanor led a discussion about vacancies on the Council and how it impacts the ability of the Council to do its work. A number of members' terms were to have ended 9/30/16; the Governor's office receives and maintains a list of applicants, so the Council is awaiting for appointments to occur.

Motion made by Pelton and seconded by Flynn to draft and send a formal letter to the Governor to express concern about Council vacancies and honoring those members whose terms have ended, and encourage that the Governor move forward with appointments. This will occur before the November meetings.

Further discussion was had and a friendly amendment was added (Hobson/Murphy) stating that the letter will be drafted by and from the Steering Committee and have its approval, will be signed by Julie Rother, acting chair, and be sent as soon as possible. Joan Luebbers asked that it go within the next two weeks, but it was not part of the friendly amendment.

The motion passed by roll-call vote: yes-15, no-0, abstain-1

Voting yes: Arp, Berube, Bunnell, Docter, Easter, Flynn, Hobson, Kluver, Luebbers, Mollenkopf, Murphy, Pelton, Rother, Strahm, Vint  
Abstain: Adams

**Open Meetings Act**

Acting Chair, Julie Rother, reported that the Open Meetings Act has been posted in the room.

## Report Out: Meeting with the Governor

Christy Pelton and Joan Luebbers met with Governor Ricketts on July 28<sup>th</sup> to present the 2016 ECICC Biennial Report entitled "Raising the Next Nebraskans." Governor's office staff member, Cheryl Wolf, was also in attendance. Joan and Christy shared their thanks to Becky Veak for creating talking points for the meeting. It was reported that very good discussion was had. The Governor shared some questions and information, asking about measureable results and if was there an assessment tool to measure growth of children birth to age eight. He would like to see a tool in the next three to five years that measures outcomes progress for Nebraska children at various ages. A response included information about the GOLD assessment currently being used in Nebraska. Training for those in the workforce including educators and all who support young children was also discussed. Sixpence was mentioned with interest. He requested further information about some additional tools. In the way of a response, Becky Veak and First Five Nebraska have created a draft document (handout) entitled "How do we know when Nebraska's children are ready?" The group was asked to review and provide feedback. While the shared document is not an exact response, Becky said it does include basic information that would address the Governor's questions. A message would include that schools do assessment now, and locally, and resulting data is meant to provide basic information to school principals. It was emphasized that this data is more than about children knowing their letters and numbers - it is about social-emotional skills. The document gives some examples of what things look like and includes a parallel to what types of skills and abilities employers look for.

Meeting guest and presenter Susan Sarver commented that Dr. Sam Miesel put together an educational round table last year as a P-16 initiative and served as an early childhood representative. The Governor was present and met Dr. Miesel.

Melody thanked First Five Nebraska for doing this work, and emphasized that while school districts do assessments, it is not the only place children are being assessed and information is being gathered. Recommended adding "as a part of a full range of assessments for children birth to grade three..." to the information. Create a wider framework for how children are successful, such as being good citizens, holding down jobs, etc. Is an excellent start, so will consider adding one or two sentences.

Amy Bornemeier commented that the Council voted two years ago in support of a School Readiness Project, for which she was brought on board to NDE, and referenced the School Readiness Report/Recommendations (NGA – National Governor's Association - 2005 report), and how it re-emphasizes everything that is believed in Nebraska. School-ready children from school-ready families help create schools that are ready. (The report can be found here: <https://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-edu-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/building-the-foundation-for-brig.html>)

Jennifer Auman referenced a more recent article that supports what has been shared, and includes predictors for two-year olds and factors that affect their school readiness. It was commented that the letter could be very direct about the way young children develop, grow, and thrive.

A motion was made by Hobson and seconded by Docter to respond to the Governor's request for more information by utilizing the document created by First Five Nebraska with some tweaks. It will be run by the Steering Committee and any changes sent back through FFN, before sending it to the Governor.

In further discussion, it was noted that the Governor would also like to see a goal regarding developing a workforce with consistent results for positive child outcomes - more than kindergarten readiness. Becky pointed out the back of the information sheet references workforce, and Melody reminded the Council that the next biennial report can include points about outcomes. A roll-call vote was taken and the motion passed: yes-14, no-0, abstain-3

Voting yes: Adams, Arp, Berube, Bunnell, Docter, Hobson, Kluver, Luebbers, Mohnike, Mollenkopf, Murphy, Rother, Strahm, Vint

Abstain: Easter, Flynn, Pelton

### **Ad Hoc Committee report – Family Story Recommendations**

Joan introduced the other group members who helped craft these documents and this process: Jennifer A., Christy P., Connie S., and Tammy S. Joan and Connie shared some handouts that included the scope and guidelines that will be provided to families, as well as information and a framework for the Council contact to use when reaching out to a potential family. Eleanor affirmed this is a new ad hoc committee for the family story, which follows By-Laws and re-establishes this element of ECICC meetings in a meaningful and objective way. There are no longer standing committees, however, this is a newly formed ad hoc committee. Per the new By-Laws Laura Arp clarified that ad hoc can exist in perpetuity and asked that this new group be an ad hoc committee with no end date.

Motion was made by Arp and seconded by Hobson to accept the documents as presented and establish an ad hoc committee for the family story with no termination date and to be as defined in the handouts received today. Discussion included a mention that Christy Pelton's name was inadvertently left off of the May minutes listing who volunteered to meet and develop the scope and guidelines. A roll-call vote was taken and the motion passed: yes-15, no-1, abstain-1

Voting yes: Adams, Arp, Berube, Bunnell, Docter, Easter, Hobson, Kluver, Luebbers, Mohnike, Mollenkopf, Murphy, Rother, Strahm, Vint

No: Flynn

Abstain: Pelton

### **Buffett Early Childhood Workforce Updated**

Dr. Susan Sarver, Director of Workforce Planning and Development at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, presented a power point and some handouts that included salary amounts of what childcare workers make in Nebraska. Results from a recent workforce survey of professionals who work with children birth to grade three will be released soon. A September 6<sup>th</sup> event at the Sheldon Museum here in Lincoln will focus on providers and teachers, and include a panel for four professionals and facilitated dialogue about what it is like in "real life." The event will be live-streamed. A Workforce Commission has also been assembled that is exploring what should be happening across the state, with the goal to have a skilled and informed workforce that includes involvement and assistance from competent adults, and builds on the strengths that Nebraska has. A list is being compiled and referenced to pull together stakeholders. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) team is making recommendations around core competencies in Nebraska. The NAM team is in support and gives information to the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission. Susan mentioned use of the Rubik's Cube analogy – must take all sides into consideration. Looking at workforce big picture and making steps and affirming efforts on the local level.

### **Workforce Compensation Grant Update**

Brandee Lengel is the Co-Executive Director of the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Director of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Nebraska. Brandee shared there is an effort to "move the needle" on early childhood teacher compensation, and that a common message she hears from teachers once they complete school is that they need a job that pays more and offers time off. This helps keep skilled, educated early childhood teachers in early childhood classrooms. An objective from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National office has been to choose eight states to work with. A power point "Moving the Needle on EC Compensation" and handouts were shared. NE was selected and a small team has been assembled with different perspectives, voices, and its own vision: "The Nebraska early childhood workforce will be compensated a living wage." Four goals and supporting strategies were shared, and Brandee issued an invitation to join this team. Amy Bornemeier shared that she attended an April national gathering in North Carolina, where it was very apparent Nebraska is doing great things; this should be celebrated and built upon. Susan Sarver thanked Amy for her comments, saying it is worthy and needed work.

### **Part C Updates**

Amy Bunnell shared a power point with an Early Development Network overview and some strategies over the year. The Annual Part C Federal Application was made in April, and Nebraska has received approval and full funding. The annual OSEP Determination is based on the state APR (Annual Performance report), contains several data components that are submitted, and produces a quality rating. Amy explained the four designated levels and their definitions.

Nebraska is a birth mandate state, so it provides FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) and services at birth. Nebraska has very strict eligibility criteria before services are provided, which is a factor in why Nebraska children may not meet milestones at age 3 because Nebraska is serving the most medically fragile children. Because it is a birth mandate state, Nebraska does not receive points for Comparison to Other States. Therefore, Nebraska is in “Needs Assistance.” What does that really mean? The Federal office should be providing technical assistance to help Nebraska improve the scores. Out of 50 states 27 are in “Needs Assistance” this year, so Nebraska is doing well compared to other states. Nebraska sets its own goals and will soon be setting next targets based upon data from the last four years and use of a new assessment tool. The goals will be brought to the Council in November to vote on.

Cole Johnson shared an update about the federal work Nebraska is doing around RDA (Results Driven Accountability), a federally required state improvement plan all states must use, and of which Nebraska is currently in year three of the five-year initiative. Discussed initial state-identified result and supporting strategies. For Quality Home Visiting, have partnered with “Getting Ready” Project Director, Lisa Knoche, from the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools at UNL. Nebraska is using their checklists and evidence-based practices and applying them to home visiting (HV) and early intervention (EI), focusing on things that really matter and build upon parent/child interaction and a quality home visits. Strategies were shared that strengthen relationships and build competencies. EDN has begun training in eight PRTs across the state.

A question was asked about the choice of the model; Cole responded that EDN is not medically-based. There are some medical components, but the premise of EI is to work with parents to embed EI services and use their daily routines in the home environment. Rather than, for example, giving just five minutes each night, it is comprehensive and consistent. Early intervention is really more a coaching model for educational needs based on working with families in routines.

Teresa Berube addressed the primary service provider (PSP) model, which is a wrap-around model, sharing that teaching parents to implement strategies into ongoing experiences in daily routines is farther-reaching. The hope is to combine medical needs as well as educational needs into children’s daily routines. Those that embed the PSP model and experience practice with strategies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, have much better outcomes than children who receive a finite amount of service in a targeted time such as the medical model.

Amy mentioned national research and how evidence-based practices garner success in working with infants and toddlers and provide maximum benefit for children birth to five.

Julie Docter shared about the implementation of all three strategies which, in Nebraska, occurs at the local planning team level. Nebraska’s structure consists of 29 planning teams, and Julie updated that all 29 teams have chosen at least one of the three strategies for improving their outcomes. PRTs 27, 4, 18, 1, and the metro (OPS, Westside & Millard Public Schools) are all working as pilots, and numbers are showing improvement. The three-year trend for child outcome data related to acquisition and use of knowledge/skills has met or exceeded the target for this particular outcome. There has also been an upward curve in families who believe they can effectively communicate their child’s needs, according to the Annual Part C Family Survey. As an update to the May report about a coming services coordinator provide change, ESU 10 was selected to contract for supporting PRT 10 (Kearney), and Holdrege-based RuralMED Management will support PRT 26 (Grand Island) and 28 (Broken Bow), as well as for PRT 11 (Holdrege). Staff have been hired and are being trained with a scheduled September 1<sup>st</sup> launch for all.

### **Rule 11 Revision**

Rule 11 defined: Regulations for the approval of prekindergarten programs established by school boards or educational service units and for issuance of early childhood education grants. Governs issuance of Early Childhood grants for children ages three to five. Revised November 23, 2015.

Melody shared that the last Rule 11 revision was substantial and that this next one will provide some needed clarification regarding para equivalencies for those who assist classroom teachers as well as paras for home visits. Looking at increasing annual hours of instruction required from 12 to 15. There is wording on the Early Childhood website for review. Is being spearheaded by Linda Meyer with a fall timeline for public review.

The NDE Early Childhood Office is also looking at Sen. Linehan's bill (LB651) regarding 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention. Research does not see retention as a good measurement, and is looking at how can student outcomes improve without it. NDE Team Leaders have been charged with examining their own areas. It's known that children learn best through play and having materials to be active, and that teachers are able to adjust their structure for teaching based on children's needs. What is the best adult response to children's growth and development that will be most helpful. It is only in discussion phase with much more to come.

### **Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) Update**

Lauri Cimino shared that childcare center public ratings became available on July 1<sup>st</sup> with basic information being provided about approved programs in a couple of ways. As a way of explanation, Lauri shared that SUTQ is the quality rating and improvement mechanism for the state; is essentially voluntary and there are currently over 470 programs in the state who have initiated profiles in system. Over 250 are rated 1-5, and the Early Childhood Office is currently coaching over 70 programs. A new parent brochure and informational posters are now available. There is currently a privately funded evaluation of the system being conducted through First Five Nebraska that is looking back to the program's inception. All results have been shared with SUTQ with the intent to make improvements. Parents, providers, and coaches are surveyed about their experiences; year one has been shared and year two information will be shared at the next Council meeting. There is a desire to evaluate what it costs providers to provide these levels of care. With 470 providers participating, it was felt this is something to be celebrated.

Nicole Vint shared there is only a handful of states who do not have a quality rating system for care programs. Regarding outreach to encourage program participation, Lauri mentioned that some have opted into coaching to prepare them for a rating. Some are required to participate based upon subsidy dollars received, and some are not necessarily required to move any farther than Step 1. Lauri shared what happens in each step, the subsequent re-rating process, and how issues of compliance are addressed. Lauri encouraged the group to review the SUTQ website found at: [www.education.ne.gov/StepUptoQuality](http://www.education.ne.gov/StepUptoQuality).

### **\*Public Comment**

Julie Rother invited public comment. Joan Luebbers wanted to add a comment regarding the new Family Story and existing Family Leadership ad hoc committees. The May minutes reflected that the Family Leadership ad hoc group would handle the Family Story. This point will be clarified and shared at the next Council meeting.

### **November General Meeting Components**

To aid the Steering Committee with eventual development of the November meeting agenda, Eleanor Shirley invited the group to suggest potential meeting components. November generally has two days of meetings, day one being ECICC Orientation for new members as well as a refresher for all others; day two being a general Council meeting. ECICC meetings always include focus around elements within the current Governor's report recommendations. Today's meeting focused on recommendation #4: Support continued development of Nebraska's Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). With additional reporting to come regarding Step Up To Quality ratings, it was agreed to focus the next meeting on recommendation #3: Inform, Engage and Collaborate with Nebraska's Families, Public and Private Stakeholders. Could also touch back on #4 given the Council will be responding to the Governor's request for more information about the Workforce.

A federal technical assistance provider attends and facilitates the Orientation meeting. Discussion was had about new appointments needing to be made, and whether the November 16 Orientation meeting would be held. Continuous quality improvement for ECICC meetings and activities is important, and Eleanor shared that part of her role is to help new members become engaged as well as to provide ongoing support and information to the Council regarding the landscape of Nebraska Early Childhood. The Steering Committee will consider these points during the next call.

A question was asked about who may take part in Steering Committee meetings, and who currently service on it. (Current Steering Committee members are: Amy Bunnell, Julie Docter, Melody Hobson, Joan Luebbers, Dawn Mollenkopf, Christy Pelton, Julie Rother, Connie Shockley, Salene Ulrich, and Nicole Vint. Meetings are also attended by ECICC Facilitator, Eleanor Shirley, and ECICC Secretary, Karen Hoffman. Upon review of page seven of the By-Laws,

section C. Steering Committee, “1. The Steering Committee shall consist of the Council chairperson, the Council vice-chairperson, and representatives of state agencies that have responsibilities in carrying out the activities as authorized by federal and state regulations. Other leadership of ad hoc committees or task forces may be asked by the Steering Committee to participate in Steering Committee meetings on an as needed basis.” The Steering Committee is comprised of ten voting members, which is less than 50% of voting Council membership and, therefore, does not fall under the Public Open Meetings Act.)

A motion was made by Mohnike and seconded by Flynn to adjourn at 12:25pm.

**Upcoming scheduled ECICC meeting dates for your calendars – all to occur at the Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Building at 68<sup>th</sup> & “O” Street:**

- November 16, 2017 (Orientation)
- November 17, 2017

2018 meetings approved by the ECICC Steering Committee:

- February 23, 2018
- May 11, 2018
- August 17, 2018
- November 15 (Orientation) & November 16, 2018