



“Ready by Five”

Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet

Meeting Minutes¹
March 10, 2008



“Fine by Nine”

Members in Attendance

Co-Chairs

Dr. Janice M. Gruendel, Governor's Office

Deputy Commissioner George Coleman (for Dr. Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner - State Department of Education)

State Agencies

Department of Higher Education (DHE), Commissioner Mike Meotti

Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Linda Goodman (for Commissioner Peter O'Meara)

Department of Public Health (DPH), Deputy Commissioner Norma Gyle (for Commissioner Robert Galvin)

Department of Social Services (DSS), Peter Palermino (for Commissioner Michael Starkowski)

Department of Children and Families (DCF), Deputy Commissioner Floyd Blair (for Commissioner Susan Hamilton)

Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Kathy Guay (for Secretary Robert Genuario)

Commission on Children Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman

School Readiness Council Network

Lynda Fosco

Legislators

Betsy Morgan, Middletown (for Sen. Thomas Gaffey, Co-Chair-Education)

Dr. Judith Meyers, Child Health and Development Institute (for Rep. Peter Villano, Co-Chair Human Services)

Members Unable to Attend

Susan Sponheimer, CT Head Start Association

Senator Jonathan Harris, Co-Chair-Human Services

Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Co-Chair-Education

Summary of Action Items from March 10, 2008 Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet voted on the following actions at the March 10th Cabinet Meeting:

1. Formation Standing Committee on Family and Community Engagement and Standing Committee on Accountability

Cabinet members voted to utilize two ad hoc working groups, one for each Committee, to discuss and propose language on functions. During this time, the Committees can also begin their work. During the interim, cabinet members, who are interested in being the Co-Chair, or in working on the Standing Committees, should immediately contact either of the Cabinet Co-Chairs to convey their interest. Next set of “Operating Guidelines/ By Laws” including recommendations on the two Standing Committees is to be presented at the May Cabinet meeting.

2. Creation of Data Matters Working Group

Office of the Cabinet will contact Cabinet members to determine interest in assigning a staff member to the working group. This working group will be supported by PCG and will develop, with PCG, a work agenda for the period March through June 2008.

3. Fiscal Actions

¹ Thanks to Jessica Andrews, Office of the Cabinet, for compiling these notes.

Two proposals requesting funding for this year (FY 08) were presented at the Cabinet meeting: (a) TA for NAEYC Accreditation (\$159,500) to provide consultation to programs in jeopardy of losing state funding and scholarships for administrators who do not meet the NAEYC criteria for Program Administrators; (b) Funds to develop an implementation plan for the Preschool Consultation Network. A final vote will be taken at the next meeting.

4. Preschool Expansion Addendum

With correction of 3 minor items, the Cabinet commended this work and adopted the Addendum for transmittal to the Appropriations Committee ASAP. Also, the Cabinet requested that two questions that could not be answered in the addendum, be researched and answered. Office of the Cabinet staff will work with the Bureau of Early Childhood at SDE to do this.

5. Goal I and Goal II: Prioritization Process

The Cabinet accepted the process of prioritization presented by RBA Consultants, Barry Goff and Bennett Pudlin, and requested that a first-level prioritization process be completed and brought back to the Cabinet by the May meeting.

6. Rescheduling the Local Community Presentation Meeting

The Cabinet agreed to reschedule the Cabinet session dedicated to hearing from communities with whom the Cabinet has engaged, from the April meeting until June. The ad hoc working group on Family/Community Engagement will come up with a plan and format for this meeting.

Meeting Notes in Detail

A. Welcome and Introductions

The Cabinet Co-Chairs welcomed Cabinet members and citizens attending the meeting. Co-Chair Gruendel thanked the Graustein Memorial Fund for hosting the Cabinet.

B. Minutes

Minutes from the February 11, 2007 meeting were approved.²

C. Cabinet/Council Chairpersons' Reports

Creation of Two Standing Committees³: As the next stage in the Cabinet's continued discussion of operating guidelines, Co-Chair Dr. Janice Gruendel presented the co-chairs' recommendation that the Early Childhood Education Cabinet implement these two Standing Committees – Family and Community Engagement (formerly called "Building Local Capacity" and Accountability).

Standing Committee on Family and Community Engagement: After reviewing the Cabinet's core values in *Ready by Five, Fine by Nine*, the Cabinet Co-chairs proposed that the Cabinet broaden this standing committee's purview to include parent leadership, guidance and support as well as leadership and support related to the Cabinet's public-private partnership related to community capacity development. Proposed responsibilities of this standing committee would include but are not limited to:

1. Serving as the Cabinet's reporting structure for our "Building Local Capacity" public-private investment funding and for Collaborative Management Team (already established and operational)
2. Serving as the reporting structure for the Cabinet's parent leadership investment, with matching philanthropic dollars
3. Reviewing Cabinet reports, documents and positions in relation to the Cabinet core values of family and community engagement, leadership and support; Propose a process for a joint-review of capacity and operations of Connecticut's School Readiness Council
4. Recommending ways to support and strengthen the role of families and communities in the positive and age-appropriate development of their young children

² Online at - http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Minutes_Feb.pdf

³ Online at - http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Formation_of_New_Standing_Committees.pdf

5. Bringing forth to the Cabinet best practices in parent and community leadership development, community decision-making and operational structures. This would include learning from other states with public-private partnerships designed to improve and support community-based early childhood systems development
6. Identifying co-investment opportunities to expand the Cabinet's public-private, state-local partnerships.⁴

The Standing Committee on Family and Community would be chaired or co-chaired by at least one Cabinet member. Membership on this Standing Committee would include Cabinet members and other individuals and organizations that could bring resources to bear on behalf of the charge of the Committee and goals and mission of the Cabinet as a whole.

Standing Committee on Accountability: Responsibilities of this standing committee would include but are not limited to:

1. Guiding development of the Cabinet's legislatively-mandated *Accountability Plan*⁵, due to the CT General Assembly no later than December 2008. Support for this work would be provided by the Charter Oak Group and staff of the Office of the Cabinet. By statute, this work is to be embedded in an RBA framework and thus would begin with the Cabinet's 2006-2008 RBA framework as well as in the Cabinet's existing systems frameworks (Ready by Five, Fine by Nine; First Words-First Steps; K-3 Systems Framework).
2. Guiding development of improved data gathering, analysis, sharing and reporting capabilities⁶ of an early childhood system through an Interagency Data Matters Working Group. This working group would be chaired by the Office of the Cabinet with support provided by the Charter Oak Group and the Public Consulting Group.
3. Serving as the reporting structure for implementation of the Cabinet's quality improvement mandates, including the allocation of quality improvement resources allocated to the Cabinet. The Cabinet Co-chairs suggested the development of a Quality Improvement Working group be established, building on the Collaborative Management Team that already exists with regard to the Cabinet's partnership quality improvement initiative with Charter Oak State University. When the legislatively mandated Quality Rating & Improvement System Plan is adopted by the Cabinet and reviewed by the CT General Assembly, its implementation would be guided by the Quality Improvement Working Group.

The Standing Committee on Accountability would be chaired or co-chaired by at least one Cabinet member and staffed by the Office of the Cabinet and/or entities on contract to the Cabinet. Membership on this Standing Committee would include Cabinet members and other individuals and organizations that could bring resources to bear on behalf of the charge of the Committee and goals and mission of the Cabinet as a whole.

Cabinet Action

Following lengthy discussion, Cabinet members voted to utilize two ad hoc working groups, one for each Committee, to discuss and propose language on functions, to be returned to the Co-Chairs in time for the May meeting. During this time, the Committees can also begin their work. Cabinet members who are interested in serving on or leading the Standing Committees should immediately contact either Cabinet Co-Chair to convey their interest. Co-Chair Gruendel expressed an interest in the Committee on Accountability; Betsy Morgan in the Committee on Family/Community.

Harvard Opportunity for Co-Chair Gruendel: Co-chair Gruendel received a joint letter from the National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, inviting her to be one of 15 people around the country to act as a policy advisory to the Harvard Center beginning in April.

Rescheduling the Local Community Presentation Meeting: The Cabinet agreed to reschedule the Cabinet session dedicated to hearing from communities with whom the Cabinet has engaged, from the April meeting until June. The ad hoc working group on Family/Community Engagement will come up with a plan and format for this meeting.

⁴ To date, \$200,000 in state funds have been matched by \$200,000 in private funds for parent leadership development over SFY 08 and 09. In addition \$1.05 million in state funds for building local capacity have been matched by more than \$850,000 in private funds over SFY 08 and 09.

⁵ The Accountability Plan, authorized in Section 10-16s (d) (1) of the Connecticut General Statutes, is due to the General Assembly no later than December 2008.

⁶ The Cabinet, working with the Office of Policy and Management and the State Department of Education, is required under Section 10-16s (d) (2) of the Connecticut General Statutes to make recommendations about data sharing across agencies in the service of children's readiness for school. These recommendations are to be included in the Cabinet's *Accountability Plan*.

Governor's Research and Policy Council Update: The Council will reconvene on March 24, 2008 to receive updates on the status of the Early Childhood Investment Plan (Part I), welcome new members, and set a work agenda for the balance of SFY 08 and SFY 09.

D. Interagency Data Matters Report

Co-Chair Gruendel presented an overview on the data development work already in progress across the state.⁷ This presentation, online at the Cabinet's website, included the following items:

- The Department for Social Services' development of Connecticut's EMS (Eligibility Management System), which is among the nation's most comprehensive on-line, interactive welfare eligibility systems, providing fully integrated data processing support. DSS EMS includes 68 databases, 1,529 programs and 336 screens, and millions of client records.
- The State Department of Education's assignment of unique student identifiers to preschoolers in centers with any state funding; designed the PK (pre-kindergarten) Information System (PKIS). In addition, SDE has received money to build a data warehouse.
- The Department of Public Health's continued work on the HIP Kids Data Warehouse, designed to include data on newborns and children, including data from the Newborn Screening System's Child Health Profile (CHP), and other health data maintained by DPH such as death, immunization; childhood lead screening, WIC utilization information. The Child Health Profile consists of demographic information on the screened newborns, results of metabolic and infectious disease tests, congenital abnormalities, hearing screening results which is linked nightly with the birth data. DPH also continues work to link infant birth and death records electronically and, in partnership with DSS, to link birth, Medicaid, and WIC records.
- Also, Effective July 1, 2007, DPH and UCONN Health Center were together awarded \$500,000 for each of SFY 08 and 09, to develop a Connecticut Health Information Network (CHIN) plan to securely integrate state health and social services data, consistent with state and federal privacy laws. Data from other state agencies may be integrated into the network as funding permits and as permissible under federal law.

Gruendel noted that the following plans, due to the legislature from the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, all require data development work: (a) A longitudinal PreK-3 student study; (b) Accountability Plan including data sharing recommendations; (c) Quality Rating & Improvement System Plan; (d) ECE workforce Plan; and (e) Preschool Facilities Plan. She also commented on additional data work that continues or is about to start in CT:

- Early Childhood Workforce Registry – to capture (for analysis and strategic planning) information on (a) the credentials and experience of professionals working in Connecticut's "early care and education industry" and (b) center-based ECE programs through a unique program identifier
- Preschool Unique Student Identifiers – to capture, for the first time, information on young children enrolled in preschool programs receiving state dollars of any kind
- Review of all Cabinet and Council documents and reports to summarize data development, infrastructure and reporting items
- Cross-agency study of (a) data and (b) case management MOUs/MOAs related to vulnerable young children/families served across agencies
- Report to the Governor on the Cabinet's birth cohort (6.08)

The bottom line: It's time to get organized about data and information being developed and used among Cabinet members and other agencies serving young children, and their families. We can work together at several levels, beginning with the Cabinet's new Data Matters Working Group lodged within the Standing Committee on Accountability.

⁷ Online at -- www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Cabinet_Data_Update_3.10.08.ppt

Gruendel introduced Public Consulting Group (PCG), with which the Cabinet has engaged to help work on Cabinet data development problems and organization. Rebecca Kanin, from PCG, provided information about Public Consulting Group⁸, a management consulting firm of over 400 staff founded in 1986 and headquartered in Boston, MA specializing in consulting services to governmental agencies on federal, state, and local and county-based levels.

Their Strategy and Finance Division has worked with many human services and early education and care clients to implement practical solutions to meet their agency needs. PCG's Center for Resource Management, including their Education Services division, has played a leadership role in education reform initiatives and has provided research, evaluation, professional development, and data warehousing products and services to education agencies at national, state, and local levels.

PCG's Education Services Division has worked with 1500 school districts in about 15 states, including with New Hampshire statewide and Tennessee statewide for special education, and offers full-service consulting in innovative, scalable technology on:

- Special Education Management (web-based system)
- Response to Intervention Technology and Consulting
- School Improvement planning
- Data analysis and effective data use (data audit to help move better use of data)
- Data warehousing and data integrity
- Adolescent literacy (professional development)
- Program Evaluation (similar to RBA)

Kanin reviewed PCG initiatives in Connecticut, to date. Through the *Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)-2006*, PCG developed a process map detailing service provision for individuals with disabilities in four Connecticut agencies. The team determined that a significant barrier for coordination of employment services for this population is the lack of system wide data. Through the *NGA Resource Mapping project- 2006, DSS/BR*, PCG conducted a review of 11 Connecticut agencies to identify resources and data systems related to young adults with disabilities, ages 14-30. This project found that Connecticut agencies have disparate data systems and limited integration, and that inter-agency sharing of data is very limited.

PCG is currently staffing the *Commissioners' Data Interoperability Project--2007*, co-chaired by Commissioner Starkowski (DSS) and Commissioner Kirk (DMHAS). This 12-month effort has examined the feasibility of implementing a data interoperability system among Connecticut agencies. PCG also reviewed federal and state regulations to determine barriers to the system and suggested solutions. In January 2008, Commissioners from a broad group of Connecticut agencies (across the Executive and Judicial Branches) met together, including Cabinet Co-Chair Mark McQuillan, to review findings and recommendations to solve data problems and inter-agency sharing. While this effort has been focused on youth, similar data problems exist related to young children.

Kathy Fallon, PCG, presented three state early childhood initiatives Connecticut may wish to explore further:

South Carolina: First Steps 501c(3)	Georgia: Smart Start (New state department)	North Carolina: Smart Start 501c(3)
Focus: School Readiness Outcomes for all children Utilized research to identify 5 strategies: Early Education, Family Strengthening, Child Care Quality, Healthy Start, School Transition. Identifies sources of funding from multiple areas, including state dollars, federal	Fosters quality early learning experiences for Georgia's pre-school generation and promotes lifetime learning to ensure greater achievement throughout the child's education and life. Adopted NGA Ready Families + Ready Communities + Ready Services + Ready Schools = Children Ready for School.	Aims to prepare children for school by improving the quality of child care, making child care more affordable and accessible, providing access to health services and offering family support. Developed concrete, measurable goals for Child Health and Success in areas such as Operations, Public Awareness

⁸ Online at <http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/3-10-2008intro.ppt>

<p>grants, private donations, and volunteer contributions.</p> <p>Started with a funded needs assessment for each county to ensure local buy in and allow for community tailoring.</p> <p>Required that all funded programs be "evidence based."</p> <p>Measurement system collects program and fiscal data on all programs, but did not tackle data interoperability issues.</p>	<p>Established 5 Metro-Atlanta and 3 Statewide Programs that provide guidance for improving quality at early childhood care and education centers and financial and educational assistance for employees.</p> <p>Includes initiatives for Smart Playgrounds, Early Learning Property Management (for facilities improvement), and the United Way Success by 6 Program.</p>	<p>and State Level Systems.</p> <p>Public-private partnership; distributes funds through Local Partnerships and receives oversight from the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.</p> <p>Runs the National Technical Assistance Center; provides states and municipalities with early childhood care and education reform information</p>
---	--	---

Fallon also summarized the *Safe Passages Program* adopted by the District of Columbia, a data collaboration initiative among the District's human services agencies. *Safe Passages* is an intranet-based application that enables participating agency caseworkers to view real time, cross-agency client information. *Safe Passages* provides reporting capabilities including identification of key performance measures and trend analysis.

She also described the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FET PIP) is a data-warehousing tool that stores data from Florida state agencies. The system holds student records and matches data sources from other state agencies to determine what agency services a student is involved with and to study student outcomes.

Fallon reviewed CT's "resolvable" limitations in data development and structural and policy challenges, including:

- Many client records not yet in electronic form
- Limited use of web-based entry and query systems
- Data development personnel do not systematically connect with client and program personnel
- Limited communication across agencies detailing what data are collected
- Databases do not "talk to each other"
- Agencies operate with disparate hardware and software within internal units and across each other
- Federal and state law/policy can constrain data development and information sharing, but agency policy may overstate these constraints
- Current data systems will not support real time data sharing for children/families

Then, Fallon presented PCG's Scope of Work for the Cabinet, including:

- Support Cabinet interagency Data Matters Working Group
- Analyze desired RBA data indicators, data development and research agendas and "turn the curve" proposals
- Conduct Young Parents/Young Children Data Study with Cabinet and Youth Vision Team
- Assemble the SFY07 Birth Cohort Study with Cabinet
- Tackle some of the data interoperability challenges through an MOU study.

Fallon presented what PCG empathized from reviewing the 17 documents, including all RBA documents from past three years, *Ready by Five*, *Fine by Nine*, *Early Childhood Investment Plan – Part 1*, *First Words*, *First Steps*, *K-3 Framework*, and other important Cabinet documents, to identify data-related issues, challenges, and opportunities. Initial findings include:

- The initial set of core documents referenced over 300 data elements – both collected and desired
- Data elements are not clearly tied to a cohesive data development plan, for example, 110 items are referenced only 1 singly time in documents, and
- Data development items are not clearly tied to the Cabinet's research agenda.

Cabinet Discussion

Lynda Fosco mentioned that it was not unusual that we had so many disconnected data elements because we did the RBA reports in isolation to one another. She also thanked PCG for their data analysis and is really looking forward to the

next analysis. Peter Palermino recommended that PCG include a review of the Early Childhood Data Connections work. Judith Meyers wanted to make sure as the Cabinet proceeds that it does not duplicate work of other initiatives. Kanin assured that work is not being duplicated and mentioned the benefit of having PCG working in other areas of data analysis in the state.

Kathy Guay stated that she is concerned with the cost associated with such a huge task of creating architecture to allow agency data warehouses to talk to each other. Gruendel noted that this was not about architectural development, but using existing dollars to look at what and how we can improve data collection and development without huge expensive architectural changes.

Michael Meotti stated the importance of explaining the need for this type of work by employing real data stories to help people understand that “you knew this, then you could do this.” George Coleman notes that children in non-public programs or services are not being tracked, and we don’t know if they are ready for kindergarten.

Public Comment

Public comment was largely supportive about the importance of this work. Mary Burnham, The Children’s Center of New Milford, noted that we can save money in the future if we had one collaborative system. She also reiterated the need to focus on parenting by teaching positive discipline and teaching parents about toxic stress. Mary Penniston, Norwalk, commented on the need for linking building local capacity and data. Darcy Lowell, Bridgeport, stated that this is very exciting and could answer very important questions. George Hensinger requested clarification on what PCG was proposing. Gruendel clarified that the work is just beginning; at this time we are only exploring data development models used in other states.

Cabinet Action

Office of the Cabinet will contact Cabinet members to determine interest in assigning a staff member to the working group. This working group will be supported by PCG and will develop, with PCG, a work agenda for the period March through June 2008. PCG will analyze the potential data elements by importance versus accessibility and bring that analysis back to the Cabinet for review. This includes a review of the Early Childhood Data Connections Inventory.

E. Legislative Update

Elaine Zimmerman, Commission on Children, gave a legislative update on the following bills:

Bill No.	Title / Statement of Purpose	Public Hearing Date	Committee Actions
Raised SB-303	AA CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE. To create a master contract between the Departments of Social Services, Education, Public Health, Children and Families and the Children’s Trust Fund to improve child outcomes by integrating services for children and families from birth to age five.	02-28	03-06 KID - Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference HS
Raised SB-340	AA ESTABLISHING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF CARE. To establish an Early Childhood Integrated System of Care for children and families based on the Child FIRST model currently in place in Bridgeport.	02-28	03-06 KID - Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference HS
Raised SB-344	AAC FAMILY PROSPERITY AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILD POVERTY AND PREVENTION COUNCIL. To establish and administer a grant program to reduce child poverty in the state.	02-28	03-06 KID - Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference APP

E. Fiscal Update

Expenditures/Un-Obligated Funds to Date: Co-Chair Gruendel reviewed the fiscal update⁹ for FY08 based on current expected utilization and also presented a first cut of a budget for FY09. She noted that at the end of FY08 the Cabinet would have about \$871,000 to roll forward to FY09, but this would require roll forward language in legislation. Roll forward authority has been requested of the Appropriations Committee and in preliminary discussion with OPM.

Requests for Funding: Two proposals requesting funding for this year (FY 08) were presented at the Cabinet meeting. The two proposals are as follows:

- \$159,500 for Technical Assistance support for NAEYC Accreditation to provide consultation to programs in jeopardy of losing state funding and scholarships for administrators who do not meet the NAEYC criteria for Program Administrators.¹⁰
- \$39,500 to begin to develop an implementation plan for the Preschool Consultation Network, a Cabinet top 10 priority already costed out in the Investment Plan but not funded.¹¹

Cabinet Discussion

Cabinet members discussed earlier steps agreed to in order to consider such requests: (a) it had to be brought forward by a Cabinet member; (b) it had to be related to priority items of the Cabinet; (c) adoption would require two readings. There was strong support for the NAEYC TA funding proposal.

Cabinet Action

Cabinet members will review the two funding request proposals further for the second reading and vote at a next meeting.

F. Preschool Expansion Report Addendum and Update

SDE Early Childhood Bureau Chief Harriet Feldlaufer presented the Addendum to the *Preschool Expansion Report*¹². Cabinet members and community members who attended the January 2008 Cabinet meeting had the opportunity to discuss the January 2008 Preschool Expansion report prior to considering the Cabinet motion to accept the report. Cabinet members requested the production of additional data analyses, including information on child poverty by town, multi-year slot and fiscal trends within the School Readiness Grant Program, and analyses of preschool services delivered by Department of Social Services child care center programs. The results of these analyses are organized according to the following six (6) questions.

Question 1. What is the distribution of poor children (defined by the Cabinet as living in families at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level)?

Findings: There are four main findings from this analysis:

1. Preschoolers living in "poor" families reside in every town in Connecticut.
2. Of all poor children statewide, the 19 Priority School Districts account for 73%. The 44 Competitive Municipalities account for 18%, and the rest of all Connecticut towns account for 9%.
3. The percent of children living in families at or below 185% varies dramatically by town across the 63 towns now receiving funding from the School Readiness Grant Program. Data on the proportion of young children living at or below 185% is provided in Appendix A of the Addendum, for *each* Connecticut town. NOTE: A chart at the end of this set of Cabinet minutes, provides the distribution of towns by levels of poverty.

⁹ Online at http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/March_Cabinet_Report.xls

¹⁰ Online at http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Fiscal_Request_TA_Support_for_NAEYC_Accreditation.pdf

¹¹ Online at http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Consultation_Network_Fiscal.pdf

¹² Online at http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/PRESCHOOL_Addendum.pdf

4. There are currently 15 additional Connecticut towns *with higher levels of child poverty* than some of the towns already in the School Readiness Grant Program. These towns are: Bozrah, Sterling (eligible, but has not yet applied), Windsor Locks, Plainville, Montville (eligible, but has not yet applied), North Stonington, Sharon, Newington, Colebrook, Watertown, Deep River, Willington, Canaan and Kent.

Question 2. Is School Readiness Grant Program funding roughly proportional to the distribution of children living in poverty for the 19 Priority School Districts and the 44 Competitive Municipalities?

Findings: The data revealed that a disproportionate amount of funds (\$61.8 million in SFY 08) is allocated to the Priority School District School Readiness Program when the overall distribution of School Readiness children is taken into account.

SFY 08	Priority School Districts (n=19)	Competitive Municipalities (n=44)
Percent of poor children	84%	16%
Percent of funding	92%	8%

These analyses -- while answering the question raised at the Cabinet meeting -- do not answer two other key questions:

1. What is the total amount of state and federal preschool funding and how are funds allocated across major funding programs (i.e., School Readiness Program, DSS preschool centers, DSS Care-4-Kids subsidies, and Head Start) *in relation to the distribution of poor children in the State of Connecticut?*
2. How many of these preschool children living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level are being served in any of Connecticut's preschool services: the School Readiness Grant Program; DSS child care centers; Head Start or through the DSS Care-4-Kids program?

Question 3: Within the Priority Districts, what patterns of under-expenditure have occurred over time?

Background: The allocation to Priority School Districts and to the 44 Competitive Municipalities is not determined by the amount of poverty within each school district or municipality or by the district's ability to provide preschool space for those in need.¹³

Finding: Over the past five years (2003 through 2007), the Priority School Readiness Districts have expended between 94% and 99% of funds allocated to them. While there has been under-expenditure in each year, there is no particular pattern across years.

	SFY03	SFY04	SFY05	SFY06	SFY07
Dollars Allocated	\$37.4 Million	\$37.3 Million	\$44.6 Million	\$48.1 Million	\$56.3 Million
% Under-expended	5.4%	0.6%	0.2%	1.9%	3.6%

¹³ Based on CGS Section 10-16p, allocation determinations for the Priority District School Readiness Grant Program are based on: (a) The *average kindergarten enrollment* in the Priority District for the last 3 years multiplied by the ratio of the average percentage of free and reduced price meals to the minimum percentage requirement for severe need eligibility; (b) The allocation allows for an *administrative set-aside* to operate the program that is based on a percentage of the district's allocation, not to exceed the predetermined cap; (c) A *special set-aside* of approximately \$3.5 million shared by Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham; (d) A *hold-harmless provision* that no Priority District receives a grant allocation that is less than the prior fiscal year; and (e) For school readiness grant purposes, once a district is determined as a Priority School District under Section 10-266p of the Connecticut General Statutes, it remains eligible for school readiness funds as a Priority School District even when it no longer meets that eligibility under Section 10-266p of the Connecticut General Statutes.

The Addendum also includes an analysis of SFY 07 under-expended funds by 7 communities where the under-expenditure exceeded 5% or more than \$50,000. These communities were: Bridgeport; Bristol; New Britain; New Haven; Stamford; Waterbury; West Haven. It is notable that most of these communities are the same ones for there is a mandatory statutory allocation.

Since 1999, legislation has allowed the State Department of Education to reallocate funds from under-expending districts to other towns with the capacity to serve additional preschool children, or starting in FY 06 for professional development.

- In 2002 and 2003, no funds were reallocated.
- In 2004 and 2005, unexpended funds were reallocated to more than half of the communities.
- In 2006 and 2007, funds were reallocated to just one community – Hartford and the balance was used for professional development on the Preschool Curriculum Frameworks and alignment of the curriculum to the Frameworks for all priority school districts and competitive municipalities that received school readiness funding.

Note: In the 2007 legislative session (Subdivision 3 of subsection e of section 10-16p), authority to reallocate unexpended funds to support local school readiness programs was specifically given to the Commissioner of the State Department of Education.

Question 4: What would it cost to bring all DSS preschool center slots up to \$8,514 (prorated for type of slot)?

Finding: An additional appropriation of \$1.18 million would be required in SFY 09 to continue fiscal parity with SRP rates set at \$8,514 (full day, full year). This additional funding would have to be allocated to the DSS budget.

Question 5. What would it cost to fund the current 836 School Readiness Grant Program slots in the 44 Competitive Municipalities based on a level of fiscal parity with the SRP (at \$8,514)?

Finding: SFY 08 funding for these towns and slots is \$4.9 million. In SFY 09, an additional \$500,000 would be required to fund the current 836 slots at parity with Priority School Districts on a per slot basis rather than through grants of \$107,000 per community.

Question 6: What would it cost to provide School Readiness funding (at parity levels) for about 800 new preschool slots that could be opened in SFY 09 in the 44 Competitive Municipalities if funding were available?

Finding: During the fall of 2007, School Readiness liaisons in the 44 Competitive Municipalities were asked to identify the number of proposed slots that they could open if expansion funding was available. The Competitive School Readiness liaisons indicated that they could provide 231 new slots in 2007-08 and another 565 slots in 2008-09, for a total of about 800 slots. The cost estimate below is based on *all* of the new slots being opened in SFY 09.

About \$5.2 million would be needed to fund these additional 796 slots in Competitive communities (prorated from a full-day, full-year rate of \$8,514). NOTE: The 44 Competitive Municipalities currently receive approximately \$107,000 each in funding for their School Readiness Grant programs. Across all years, these districts have utilized between 98% and 99% of their allocation.

Public Comment

Mary Budrawich, Norwalk, voiced her concern about the \$1.8 million cut to School Readiness funding in the Governor's budget. She asked that Cabinet members publicly support a slot increase to \$8,514. Also, she noted that an increase to Administrative funding is essential to generating quality programs. Barbara Tacchi, Waterbury, mentioned the importance of community based programs and business based centers. Merrill Gay, New Britain SR Council, noted that only one provider would be willing to take on more slots, providers are dealing with increased insurance and fuel costs, and teachers really need increased compensation.

Cabinet Action

With correction of 3 minor items, the Cabinet commended this work and adopted the Addendum for transmittal to the

Appropriations Committee ASAP. Also, the Cabinet requested that the questions that could not be answered in the addendum, be researched and answered:

1. What is the total amount of state and federal preschool funding and how are funds allocated across major funding programs (i.e., School Readiness Program, DSS preschool centers, DSS Care-4-Kids subsidies, and Head Start) *in relation to the distribution of poor children in the State of Connecticut?*
2. How many of these preschool children living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level are being served in any of Connecticut’s preschool services: the School Readiness Grant Program; DSS child care centers; Head Start or through the DSS Care-4-Kids program?

Office of the Cabinet staff will work with the Bureau of Early Childhood at SDE to do this.

G. Goal 1 and Goal 2: Prioritization Process

RBA Consultants, Barry Goff and Bennett Pudlin presented the proposed prioritization process¹⁴ for the Infants, Toddlers and Twos System Framework and the K-3 Systems Framework. They recommended that final prioritization occur in two steps: (a) Each group develop a set of priorities from among its 40 to 50 recommendations; (b) Each set of priorities would then brought to the Cabinet for final prioritization.

Stage One: Individual Group Process

For the first stage, each group will use a simple set of categories that can be applied to prioritize the recommendations. The table below identifies the common prioritizing criteria.

Category	Explanation
Research	Identify and prioritize any recommendations that involve research as distinct from items that belong on a data development agenda.
No cost/low cost	Identify any recommendations that do not require legislation, but can be accomplished with simple administrative efforts, and little or no cost
Politically viable and big bang for the buck	This is a combined category of policy recommendations that people believe have support from the Legislature, the Governor or state agencies and can have a major impact on the wellbeing of children 0-3 or kindergarten through 3 rd grade
Long-term versus short-term	Essentially this asks whether each policy recommendation could be prepared for the next biennium or whether it has so much ground work and preparations to be made that it should be considered for the longer term.

Stage Two: Cabinet Process

Before the priorities from the groups are presented to the Cabinet, staff will crosswalk the recommendations with the 14 criteria (e.g., receiving funds in FY08 or 09, identified in the local listening forums) suggested by Janice Gruendel and flag any recommendations that match those criteria. This will result in an annotated set of prioritized results from each group with which the Cabinet will work at the May meeting.

A major consideration in this approach was to keep a balance between honoring the process of the two groups and the Cabinet’s policy-making responsibilities. Research needs to be considered in a broader context than can be provided by the groups alone or the whole Cabinet. Therefore, we recommend that the Cabinet place the research recommendations before an appropriate research committee for consideration.

Cabinet Action

The Cabinet accepted the process of prioritization and requested that the prioritization be completed and brought back to the Cabinet by no later than May 2008 Cabinet meeting.

H. Other Matters

¹⁴ Online at -- http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/Setting_Priorities_for_two_groups_handout.pdf

Betsy Morgan noted that in 1999 a full-day SRP slot was \$7,000 versus today's slot rate of \$8,025. This represents only a 14.6% increase compared with a cumulative increase in the cost of living from 1999-2008 of 34%.

I. Adjourned

CT Towns by Level of Poverty (185% FPL)					
0-10%	11-25%	26%-40%	41-60%	61-80%	Over 80%
Priority School Districts (19)					
		WEST HAVEN	MERIDEN	NEW HAVEN	BRIDGEPORT
		STAMFORD	E. HARTFORD	HARTFORD	
		MIDDLETOWN	NORWICH	WATERBURY	
		NORWALK			
		BRISTOL	ANSONIA	NEW LONDON	
		DANBURY	BLOOMFIELD	WINDHAM	
			PUTNAM	NEW BRITAIN	
Competitive Municipalities (44)					
0-10%	11-25%	26%-40%	41-60%	61-80%	Over 80%
SHELTON	SPRAGUE	VOLUNTOWN	DERBY		
PRESTON	THOMPSON	MANCHESTER			
ANDOVER	NORTH CANAAN	KILLINGLY			
WOODSTOCK	ENFIELD	PLAINFIELD			
HAMPTON	STAFFORD	NAUGATUCK			
GREENWICH	CHAPLIN	WINCHESTER			
LEDYARD	GRISWOLD	STRATFORD			
COLCHESTER	BROOKLYN	TORRINGTON			
SCOTLAND	WINDSOR				
	ASHFORD	HAMDEN			
	MANSFIELD	GROTON			
	LISBON	EAST HAVEN			
	WOLCOTT	VERNON			
	W.HARTFORD				
	MILFORD				
	THOMASTON				
	SEYMOUR				
	EASTFORD				
	CANTERBURY				
	PLYMOUTH				
	BRANFORD				
	COVENTRY				
All Other Connecticut Towns					
0-10%	11-25%	26%-40%	41-60%	61-80%	Over 80%
All OTHER CT TOWNS NOT ELSEWHERE	STERLING	BOZRAH			
	WINDSOR LOCKS				
	EAST WINDSOR				
	PLAINVILLE				
	MONTVILLE				
	NORTH STONINGTON				
	SHARON				
	NEWINGTON				
	COLEBROOK				
	WATERTOWN				
	DEEP RIVER				
	WILLINGTON				
	CANAAN				
	KENT				

Note: Within each column, the towns are prioritized from highest percentage to lowest percentage of poverty. For specific town percentages, please refer to Appendix A