

Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet

Meeting Minutes¹
June 9, 2008

Members in Attendance

Co-Chairs

Dr. Janice M. Gruendel, Governor's Office

Dr. Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner - State Department of Education

State Agencies

Department of Developmental Services (DDS), 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), Rudy Brooks (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

Head Start Association

Susan Sponheimer

Legislators

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

Members Unable to Attend

Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Co-Chair-Education

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

Rep. Beth Bye (for Senator Jonathan Harris, Co-Chair-Human Services)

Commissioner Mike Meotti, Department of Higher Education

A. Welcome and Introductions

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

B. Minutes

Minutes from the May 12, 2008 meeting were approved with the following corrections: On page 5, under Cabinet discussion, 2nd paragraph, it should read as follows: "Susan" Sponheimer requested that because the Cabinet is now serving as the "State" Advisory Council and because the charge to this Council is to conduct local capacity building, that the Standing Committee on State and Local Partnerships includes membership from the Head Start "Association".²

C. Cabinet/Council Chairpersons' Reports

Co-Chair Gruendel presented an update that the Cabinet will participate with the Department of Public Health in making the June 12, 2008 application for a five-year, approximately \$5 million, SAMSA federal grant award under the Project LAUNCH guidelines. The grant will build in partnership with one jurisdiction a Birth-8 child wellness system that focuses on children's health and mental health. The community that has been designated is New Haven. It was proposed in the MOA that a Cabinet's Standing Committee on Birth-9 Services serve as the State's oversight council for this grant if received.

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

² Online at - http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-06-09/Minutes_May_Cabinet_Meeting.pdf

Co-Chair McQuillan presented an update on the Operating Guidelines that the Co-Chairs are working to revise Cabinet's Operating Guidelines, incorporating all comments by Cabinet members at the May Cabinet meeting. Once revisions are completed, the Office of the Cabinet would be conducting a survey on survey monkey for final comments before the final vote on the Operating Guidelines at the July meeting.

Cabinet Discussion

Peter Palermino asked if the SAMSA application had to be endorsed by the Cabinet? Co-Chair Gruendel mentioned that two things could be done: 1) Co-Chairs could sign on the Cabinet behalf or 2) the Cabinet could vote to endorse the SAMSA grant.

Cabinet Action

The Cabinet approved the endorsement of the Project LAUNCH application.

D. "Building Local Capacity" Community Presentations

Co-Chairs Gruendel and McQuillan and David Nee, Executive Director of the Graustein Memorial Fund (GMF), welcomed and thanked the communities for being involved in the efforts to build a comprehensive Birth-9 System plan funded by the Cabinet in partnership with Graustein Memorial Fund.

Leadership in Action – Bridgeport Team: Co-Chair Gruendel mentioned that the LAP initiative was funded by the Cabinet, Graustein Memorial Fund, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Children’s Fund of CT, Fairfield County Foundation, and United Way of Eastern Fairfield County. The purpose of this initiative was to “turn the curve” on children’s entry to K readiness between September 2007 and September 2008.

Barbara Bellinger, MaryBeth Stickley, Carmen Rodriguez, and James Pisciotta presented on the work of the Bridgeport Leadership in Action Program and what it has been doing this past year and the next steps for moving forward. That presentation can be found at -- www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php -- under the June 9th Meeting Materials, labeled Bridgeport Leadership in Action Program (LAP) Presentation.

Local Capacity Grant Community Dialogues: Laura Downs, Project Manager, presented an overview and the background for the local capacity grants: In September 2008, the Cabinet and GMF agreed on a co-investment strategy with communities to build local capacity. In October a RFP went out, on November 16th received 27 proposals, and on December 21st announcement went out to all communities awarded grants. This investment provided support for local communities in planning and monitoring early childhood services. In addition to its matching grant funds, the GMF is providing for technical assistance to communities. Additional funding has also been added to integrate health planning into their early investment work.

The following is a listing of participants in the first community dialogue:

Community	Name	Title
Colchester	Shelly Flynn	School Readiness Coordinator
East Hartford	Donna Kehoe	Executive Director East Hartford ChildPlan
Shelton	Cara Mocarski	School Readiness Coordinator
Stratford	Patricia Naylor	Stratford Public Schools
Torrington	Cheryl Kloczko	Administrator for Special Programs Torrington Public Schools
Windsor	Jan Kiehne	Thriving Children/Thriving Community (TC2) Coordinator

The following is a listing of participants in the second community dialogue:

Community	Name	Title
Bristol	Donna Osuch	Community Impact Coordinator United Way of West Central CT
Hartford	Jose Colon-Rivas	Executive Director Mayor's Office for Young Children
Meriden	Geri Kogut	Parent Leader
New Haven	Denise Duclos	School Readiness Project Director
Norwalk	Mary Peniston	Executive Assistant to the Superintendent for Research, Planning & Development Norwalk Public Schools
Waterbury	Linda Janowitz	Discovery Coordinator

Important learning from the Community Dialogues:

- Although the planning process was challenging and time-consuming, it is essential for broad ownership and accountability of the product
- Without broad ownership, the community plan will have no “legs”
- Outreach to disenfranchised parents is difficult but a priority since they are the ultimate consumers
- We are working across domains (health, education, early care, family support) and across public and private institutions
- RBA has been a tremendous organizing tool – results are what matter – programs are simply a vehicle to achieve the results
- Local leadership engagement varies – not all Superintendents and Chief elected officials are fully engaged
- Implementation will require new forms of governance at the local and state level
- Focused on a comprehensive birth -9 plan – infant/toddlers are an overlooked group
- Acquiring data from state agencies is a difficult process and should be examined for improvements
- Once the plans are completed, we will be able to develop a common policy agenda that is data-driven
- We need to build a partnership bridge between the state and local communities – neither of us can achieve the results alone
- Things that would help include: flexible funding, increased awareness of the importance of early care, particularly in the current economic climate, and focused priorities by the Cabinet.

Public Comment

Cyd Oppenheimer, CT Voices for Children, asked for an update on the Cabinet and Agencies budget planning. Co-Chair Gruendel updated that the Cabinet will lapse \$1 million this fiscal year of the \$4.5 million allocated. Part of the lapse is related to ~\$500,000 that was unallocated by the Cabinet due to necessary prerequisites not being completed yet (e.g. the QRIS plan). Positively, we have allocated ¾ of the Cabinet’s FY08 funding in a very accountable and public way. At the July Cabinet meeting, the Cabinet will engage in more specific budget conversations for FY09 and beyond.

Patricia Passmore, CT Head Start Association, reported that due to the Cabinet being appointed as the State Advisory Council, the CT Head Start Association is looking forward to working with the Cabinet going forward.

E. Adjourned

Next Meeting: July 7th: Cabinet Retreat at GMF from 9:30AM-4:30PM
There will be NO August Cabinet meeting

