



EVERY CHILD READY CHICAGO WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

March 23, 2021 12:30-1 pm CT

ATTENDEES

Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, *Child Care Advocates United*
Anne Farrell, *Chapin Hall*
Bela Mote, *Carole Robinson Center for Learning*
Brandie Knazze, *Department of Family and Support Services*
Bryan Stokes, *Chicago Public Schools*
Cindy La, *Asian Human Services*
Denise Dell Isola, *Irving Harris Foundation*
Dara Munsen, *Chicago Childcare Society*
Diane Schanzenbach, *Northwestern University*
Edgar Ramirez, *Chicago Commons*
Felipa Mena, *Family Representative*
Jaclyn Vasquez, *Erikson Institute*
Jamilah Jordan, *Governor's Office of ECE*
Jennifer Alexander, *Mayor's Office*
Jennifer Seo, *Chicago Department of Public Health*

Jesse Rojo, *Early Learning Committee Organizer*
Katie Conner, *City Colleges*
Kristin Bernhard, *Start Early*
Leslie McKinley, *Chicago Public Schools*
Bethany Patten, *Illinois Department of Human Services*
Luisiana Melendez, *Chicago Public Schools*
Maricela Garcia, *Gads Hill*
Mary Ellen Messner, *Chicago Public Library*
Nataly Barrera, *Mayor's Office*
Oriana Wilson, *Chicago Public Schools*
Pfeffer Eisin, *Department of Family Support Services*
Ricardo Estrada, *Metropolitan Family Services*
Sara Slaughter, *Stone Foundation*
Sybil Madison, *Mayor's Office*
Tiffany Junkins, *Department of Family Support Services*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

Welcome from the Mayor's Office

Purpose: : To welcome participants to the space and summarize the outcomes of meeting #3

- The purpose of the Every Child Ready Chicago (ECRC) initiative is to build a coherent Prenatal-5 system for the city. We are currently developing initial strategic priorities, with the ultimate goal of developing a strategic plan and building a formal body that can shepherd this work forward.
- The Working Group finalized a vision at the last meeting to guide this effort: ***Every child in Chicago can thrive within well-supported families, effective programs, and well-resourced communities so they grow strong, live joyful lives, and realize their greatest potential.***
- It is also important to center the values we have identified so that we see them reflected in the work of ECRC going forward.
 - ***Equity:*** *Prioritizing resources for families who have been most impacted by systemic inequities to create the conditions in which child outcomes are no longer predicted by race, zip code, or other social factors*
 - ***Diversity & Inclusiveness:*** *Ensuring that stakeholders across all roles, identities, and interests have a voice in decision-making*
 - ***Transformation:*** *Partnering with families and communities to re-imagine a stronger, more equitable early childhood system that brings lasting change*
 - ***Transparency:*** *Building trust through communication and a clear decision-making process that prioritizes children and families*
 - ***Accountability:*** *Establishing clear roles, timebound actions, and measurable benchmarks as evidence of progress to be shared with the community*
- The community agreements were reviewed (*see meeting deck*)

Open Discussion: What is Top of Mind?

- Working Group members were invited to share their perspective on what is happening in the current context that should be brought to awareness or would feel helpful to connect on at the current moment. Working Group members shared the following topics and perspectives:
 - Vaccine rollout and impacts on enrollment: Many priority communities are showing higher rates of vaccination, so some programs are beginning to plan for bringing children back in-person.
 - Recent events in the AAPI community: Many members of the AAPI community are fearful of leaving their homes. How can we ensure that people feel safe; how can we as a community help the AAPI community feel safe and supported?
 - Reflecting on the events from the last year and how racism impacts every generation: This is the time to get this right and navigate everything that has challenged communities of color in a transformative way that goes beyond traditional diversity efforts.
 - The need to rebuild a sense of trust and safety: We need to develop strategies to restore a sense of safety in communities so that families feel safe enrolling their children in programs. There is also a need to address the trauma that communities have experienced related to losing loved ones, jobs, and our way of life.
 - Addressing trauma and changes experienced by children during the pandemic and how that relates to bringing children back to in-person learning and administering assessments: There are many things that families are dealing with as a result of the pandemic and recent events, such as older siblings taking care of younger siblings or working, the fear that you may not make it home after a trip to the grocery store. Supporting children through these events and ensuring they feel safe needs to be a priority.
 - Recognizing that this group sits a moment of opportunity: The pandemic made apparent the many cracks that exist in our systems and how we are perpetuating inequities. We have an opportunity and a responsibility to work through this together -- which is exciting and scary at the same time.
 - Centering the experiences of children, families, and providers: There is a need to build trust for families and address the anxiety and trauma experienced by providers as children return to in-person learning. And as we begin developing the strategic plan, ensuring that we include families and providers in co-creating the plan and achieving the vision.
 - Renewed awareness of disparities that exist in our society: It is painful for those who experience disparities as well for those who are becoming more aware of disparities. There is a mix of hope and fear about the opportunity to rise to the occasion and build a more equitable early care and education system that provides quality services to every family.
 - Data: There are developments related to data at the national level as well as the state and local levels. At the state level we are looking at data within a social justice framework as well as new version of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (LDS 2.0). At the city level, there is the Chicago data warehouse. It's also important to note the passage of HB2170, which was championed by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and includes an education pillar.

Overview of Initial Landscape Findings

Purpose: To provide the context for the landscaping effort, as well as a summary of the key documents reviewed during the process.

- School Readiness Consulting (SRC) presented an overview of the purpose of a landscape:
 - Highlights important parts of the system and existing strengths and gaps
 - Show how the current effort aligns to or fits with previous landscapes, strategic plans, etc.
 - Helps to ensure past and current efforts are considered and leveraged effectively
 - Centers the voices of those who are directly impacted (families and communities)
 - Provides an opportunity to learn from other cities and states
- SRC also addressed how the landscape fits into the strategic planning process:
 - Creates a snapshot of the current context and helps identify strengths and needs
 - Lifts up opportunities and helps with the selection of strategic priorities
 - Informs the planning structure for the Advisory Council -- the identified strategic priorities will lead to the formation of subcommittees to carry out the work of strategic planning

- Can serve as a living document that can shift or evolve over time (as needed)
- SRC then reviewed the ECRC strategic planning process so far and the proposed Advisory Council structure:
 - The first step was defining the vision and values and we are now moving into the landscaping space:
 - SRC is developing a high-level summary that the Advisory Council can use as they drive the landscaping process forward
 - Shared Learning Journeys will provide the opportunity to dig a little deeper into some of the areas that have been identified so far
 - The Advisory Council will be established this summer.
 - This is the formal body that will continue landscaping, develop the strategic plan for ECRC, and move forward with implementation of the work
 - The landscape summary can inform the initial strategic priorities, which in turn will shape the subcommittees that will make up the Advisory Council
- SRC next shared an overview of the landscaping effort to date:
 - Reviewed key documents shared by the Mayor's Office, Start Early, along with publicly available data and resources
 - Conducted 9 stakeholder interviews
 - Synthesized and lifted up feedback gathered during Working Group meetings
- The initial landscape scan is intended to be a jumping off point for the Working Group. It does not contain everything that is currently taking place but is meant to help start the conversation about what additional landscaping may be needed and the selection of strategic priorities.
- SRC presented an overview of initial landscape findings that are included in the ECRC Landscape Summary provided in the pre-work materials. These findings focused on six initial strategic areas:
 - **Access:** Refers to whether early childhood programs and services are accessible, available at a reasonable cost, and using reasonable effort
 - **Quality:** Refers to the extent to which an early learning environment promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of families
 - **Workforce:** Refers to the broad range of individuals engaged in the care and education of young children-- including the supports that ensure preparation, training, compensation, and well-being
 - **Leadership and Decision-making:** Refers to the organizational structure and the coordination of authority and accountability for making program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions
 - **Funding:** Refers to funding mechanisms and approaches that support early childhood services
 - **Data and Research:** Refers to the collection, use, and sharing of information (data) among key stakeholders in the system and/or the in-depth analysis of an issue, event, entity, or process related to the early childhood system

Reflecting on the Landscape

Purpose: To engage working group members in identifying key resources needed to complete the landscape

- Working Group members had the opportunity to self-select into one of six breakout rooms focused on each of the initial strategic areas, depending on their area of interest. The small group discussion in the breakout rooms focused on the following questions:
 - *What other information is needed to get a fuller picture of the landscape?*
 - What might be missing or must be added to inform future actions for ECRC?
 - How has the current context potentially shifted what is known (e.g., COVID-19, changes in citywide funding and leadership, etc.)?
 - Who is currently convening/working on this area that will be important to align with?
 - *What next steps should be considered?*
 - What are the key strengths of the current system that can be built upon?
 - What strategic opportunities exist to advance equity?
 - What are the threats that could hinder our ability to reach our vision?
- Following the small group discussion, Working Group members shared the following reflections with the whole group:

- For Workforce, the close connection with higher education and interconnection between workforce and funding were discussed. The need for advocacy on behalf of the city at the state and federal level was also discussed. A resource from the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) on promising practices to develop the ECE workforce in California was shared and it was noted that Working Group members could connect with LPI to learn more.
- For Funding, the group discussed several areas, including:
 - The fact that in most cases, city funds are braided, not blended, due to requirements from funders
 - Opportunities to streamline/ expand eligibility requirements or waive co-pays for families that are enrolled in early learning programs in the city
 - Avoiding unfunded mandates and the need to match funding to plans
 - The potential role of philanthropy and shovel-ready projects in the near future
 - Ensuring that the full prenatal-age five system is considered when making decisions on how to allocate new federal funds
- A survey will also be sent to Working Group members so they have the opportunity to weigh in on all of the initial strategic areas and add to the landscape.

Closing and Next Steps

Purpose: To share appreciations and clarify future action

- A survey will be sent to Working Group members as another opportunity to share feedback on the landscape
- Working Group members will have the opportunity to participate in Shared Learning Journeys
 - Prenatal-Three Shared Learning Journey: April 13, 10am-11am
- Upcoming meetings:
 - Planning Meeting: April 14, 2pm-3pm (OPTIONAL)
 - Working Group Meeting: April 27, 12:00pm-1:30pm