EVERY CHILD READY CHICAGO WORKING GROUP
MEETING SUMMARY
December 11, 2020
12 pm -3 pm

ATTENDEES

Cindy La, *Asian Human Services*
Ruth Kimble, *Austin United*
Bela Mote, *Carole Robinson Center for Learning*
Anne Farrell, *Chapin Hall*
Edgar Ramirez, *Chicago Commons*
Jennifer Seo, *Chicago Department of Public Health*
Mary Ellen Messner, *Chicago Public Library*
Bryan Stokes, *Chicago Public Schools*
Oriana Wilson, *Chicago Public Schools*
Luisiana Melendez, *Chicago Public Schools*
Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, *Child Care Advocates United*
Katie Conner, *City Colleges*
Christa Hamilton, *Coalition of Site-Based Administrators*
Christina Herzog, *Crown Family Foundation*
Linda Satterfield, *IDHS*
Kalid Oluewu, *Chicago Public Schools*
Leslie McKinley, *Chicago Public Schools*
Felipa Mena, *Family Representative*
Pfeffer Eisin, *Department of Family Support Services*
Talibah Moore, *Early Learning Committee Organizer*

Maria Elena Arvizu, *Family Representative*
Jamilah Jordan, *Governor's Office of ECE*
Cristina Pacione-Zayas, *IL State Senator*
Tiffany Junkins, *Department of Family Support Services*
Jesse Rojo, *Early Learning Committee Organizer*
Maricela Garcia, *Gads Hill*
Mary Ottinot, *Head Start Parent Policy Council*
Dana Garner, *IFF*
April Janney, *Illinois Action for Children*
Denise Dell Isola, *Irving Harris Foundation*
Sylvia Puente, *Latino Policy Forum*
Jennifer Alexander, *Mayor's Office*
Sybil Madison, *Mayor's Office*
Cornelia Grumman, *McCormick Foundation*
Ricardo Estrada, *Metropolitan Family Services*
Kristin Berhard, *Start Early*
Sara Slaughter, *Stone Foundation*
Mandy Yanan Wang, *Family Representative*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

Welcome from the Mayor's Office and Framing for Meeting: Jennifer Alexander and Sybil Madison

- Based on conversations following the first meeting, and the fact that several new participants have joined, the Mayor's Office decided to take some time during this meeting to pause, to take time and space to hear from everyone, and realign around where we are going.
- It's important to acknowledge that this is a challenging time to be doing this work. COVID-19 and civil unrest has impacted all of us.
- This work is not just about one group, or one agency. It is collective and it's about the whole 0-5 ecosystem. The goal is to build a system so that every child can meet their potential and that families are supported.
- Before the floor was opened for discussion, the community agreements found in the meeting deck were reviewed.

Open Discussion

Working group members were given the floor. The following themes, issues, questions, and concerns were identified:

- Future public tables/governance: As of now, the Working Group is currently scheduled to meet one more time. Members inquired where work is headed after this phase. There was interest in establishing an ongoing public table beyond the three meetings.
- Composition of Steering Committee: There is currently no provider and Latinx voice on the Steering Committee, which are key perspectives to include as part of process and raises equity concerns.
- Balancing the urgency and impact of current challenges and upcoming structural changes with developing longer-term ECRC vision and strategies: There are currently significant stressors and challenges on the system, as well as upcoming structural changes – such as COVID-19, Governor's Funding Commission, and the Head Start re-competition. There is real urgency to these issues that we should be addressed alongside with developing this longer-term vision and strategic plan for the city. How can this group accomplish its charge while also responding to current conditions?

- Alignment with state-level efforts: There are major state-level initiatives underway that should be considered alongside what is happening in Chicago (examples include the Preschool Development Grant, Prenatal -3 Initiative, and a new statewide family advisory committee).
- Timeline: We should consider extending the timeline so there is more opportunity to create an inclusive vision, to better align around city and state efforts, and to incorporate data into the directions we want to go in.
- Centering equity and building trust: Equity issues run deep in Chicago. There is urgency in re-building trust with those being served by the early childhood system.
- Workforce: Workforce is a key area that should be addressed. There may be an opportunity to explore reciprocal supports between higher ed and providers.
- Special education: COVID-19 has presented challenges for providing special education services to preschoolers, and even prior to the pandemic, children and families struggled navigating the system and receiving services.

The Mayor's Office noted the need to attend to the present with urgency, while engaging in long-term planning and that they would be thinking through the guidance offered by the Working Group to inform next steps.

Small Group Listening Session
Following the large group discussion, Working Group members were randomly divided into small groups to discuss the following two questions in more detail:
(1) Current Context -- What is happening right now that ECRC should be aligning around?
- Learning from and planning for impact of COVID-19:
    - COVID-19 laid bare the fragility of the ecosystem and gaps that were already there. Disproportionate impact on families of color, family, friend and neighbor care. Risk of staying open to access reimbursement; especially in certain communities. Providers have had to manage extra costs to stay open and balance maintaining quality with survival.
    - Systems need to be able to react more quickly than they currently do. We need to be focused on responding, but then also on recovery and resiliency.
    - There has been trauma inflicted on providers, children and families. We need to account for the mental health impacts of this trauma in our planning and forecast the services that will be needed to be responsive to the social/emotional toll COVID-19 has had on children, families, and educators.
- Alignment with state-level efforts
    - Overall, there seems to be a disconnect between what is happening in the state and what is happening in the city.
    - There are several initiatives happening at the state level that the city should be connecting to as it plans and implements its early childhood efforts, including: Governor's Funding Commission, Preschool Development Grant, Prenatal-Three Initiative, MIECHV Expansion, Illinois Bilingual Advisory Committee, INCCRRA Advisory Committee.
- Effective use of data
    - Efforts are underway to create a new comprehensive cloud-based data warehouse with data for every child in the city, across programs, funding streams, etc.
    - Currently, there is a lot of data, but it's not used well. There is a need for disaggregated data, community-level data, and more up-to-date data that can drive strategies and action.
    - There is a need for more data transparency -- for instance, data is collected by state and then what happens?
- Workforce
    - It's important to create additional or alternate pathways for credentials. As expectations around qualifications and credentials have changed, educators that have been in the field a long time and educators of color are being pushed out. How can we broaden the definition of a quality, well-prepared workforce beyond white, middle-class values while also creating pathways that remain evidence-based, do not create unintended consequences, and attend to racial equity?
    - There is a lack of value placed on the field and low wages are a challenge in creating and sustaining a pipeline of teachers.
    - There is a lack of infrastructure for high-quality (ongoing, embedded, intensive) professional development in the city.

- Increasing families' access to programs
  - Inequities make it hard for families to access and navigate the early childhood system, while the complexities in the system also make it difficult to address these inequities.
  - Various Working Group members spoke regarding specific populations or programs that have been or should be prioritized for increased access, including 4-year olds, Latinx children, family, friend, and neighbor care, and Early Head Start.
  - There are promising pilots and examples of local collaborations or models that could be explored, such as public health navigators, early childhood ambassadors, and parent cafes at public libraries. How can we develop better relationships and cross-cutting partnerships so collaboration can occur?
  - Increasing parents' awareness of early intervention and increasing screening is a critical strategy, especially post-COVID.
- Funding
  - Federal investments are becoming increasingly critical.
  - At the state level, the Governor's Funding Commission recommendations include increased, equitable funding for early childhood and the creation of dedicated early childhood state agency.
  - The Head Start re-competition may serve as a disrupter in the city, which is exciting but also uncertain. How can grantees come together to align efforts and add value to each other's work and the system as a whole and ensure all children and families are represented?
- Communication
  - There is a need for more and different information sharing processes between various early childhood channels and stakeholders, including the state, the city, providers and partners, and families.
  - New communication methods that foster dialogue with providers, such as Zoom or Facebook, should be explored.
  - There is a need to be communicating more with families about what their needs are and how the system is addressing them. How will ECRC impact them?

(2) Next Steps: What should the process look like?
- Steering Committee
  - If the Working Group is charged with making decisions, what is the role of the Steering Committee? Can we continue to have a dialogue as a Working Group to get to know each other, to develop ideas, etc. as things fall into place this spring and summer?
  - There should be provider voice and parent/family voice on the Steering Committee. We need to have that balance of voices to change direction and solve for inequities. Power structures must look different if we expect change. Provider voice is important especially when it comes to workforce. Parents need to be a part of the process -- this continues to be a challenge.
- Working Group
  - The "table" that is the Working Group is currently not set broadly enough.
  - It is not clear how the Working Group continues or is going to be involved in ECRC. We need ongoing discussion and a longer-term committee. The Working Group should be a more formalized body, similar to the state's Early Learning Council that makes policy recommendations, supports implementation, etc.
- Meeting Process and Materials
  - Consider framing work around multiple phases -- immediate, mid-term, and future, as well as what we have learned from COVID-19.
  - Important to document what is going on now as well as what is in the planning process. There is need for a gap analysis alongside the landscape analysis - what do we have and what are we missing?
  - Need to identify strategic area and build an actionable plan for each of them -- but not in isolation from each other.
  - Meeting materials could be sent further in advance to support further engagement.

Shared Learning Journeys
- Start Early introduced the opportunity to dive deeper into some of the topics that have been raised during meetings through a Shared Learning Journey process. Initial topics included the following:
  - Early Intervention and Special Education
  - Data

- o Workforce Development
- o Prenatal-3 Initiative
- o English-Language Learners
- o Governance
- The Working Group had the opportunity to vote on the topics of most interest, as well as suggest additional topics. Several additional topics were suggested:
  - o Understanding the aftermath of COVID-19 -- promising strategies and practices from other cities/states to address and support what is to come
  - o Reaching out to low-income families to join our EHS/HS programs
  - o Governor's Funding Commission
  - o Communication channels
  - o Latino Policy Forum analysis that integrated CPS classroom data with DFSS data to indicate need by neighborhood
  - o The EHS/HS recompetition
  - o What does equity look like in ECE?
  - o Define equity in the group

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