



Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting Summary: August 6, 2020

Attendees: Tonia McMillan, Virginia Eigen, Amelia Soto, Miren Algorri, Patricia Alexander, Debra Ward, Zoila Toma

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Mary Ignatius)

- In her opening remarks, Chair Tonia McMillan welcomed members to the first official Workforce Advisory Committee meeting. Chair McMillan described the essential role the committee plays in representing the voices of the early childhood workforce across the state. She thanked committee members for their commitment to serving on the Workforce Advisory Committee and supporting California's children.
- Chair McMillan gave an overview of the meeting agenda, including an adjustment to postpone appointing two members of the committee to the full Early Childhood Policy Council to allow more time for the committee to provide input on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. She encouraged the committee to draw on their expertise and experience to provide constructive feedback to the Master Plan team to ensure it's a good plan for California's children and for the early childhood workforce.
- California Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Kris Perry presented an overview of the Workforce Advisory Committee Charter. The overarching purpose of the committee is to provide recommendations to the Early Childhood Policy Council and other entities on all aspects of early childhood education on an ongoing basis and to represent the diverse needs and priorities of the workforce.

2. Master Plan for Early Learning and Care

- Master Plan for Early Learning and Care team members Lupita Alcala and Judy Ennis presented an overview of the plan's progress and facilitated an engaging discussion with committee members to gather input to inform the plan's development. The purpose of the presentation was to develop a shared understanding of current early learning and care (ELC) issues from the perspective of the workforce and gather input on key actions that need to be addressed within the plan. In their overview of the plan, the team emphasized the importance of equity as a driver of the plan's recommendations and the critical role the Master Plan plays in addressing systemic inequities.
- Building on prior reports and recommendations, the Master Plan team presented a draft vision for a system anchored in advancing equity, attending to the needs of our most vulnerable families, respecting and supporting child care and early learning professionals, and using a whole child approach. The team facilitated a rich discussion with committee members to gather feedback on minimum expectations of providers, structuring support for providers, provider compensation, and improving operations for home-based providers and child care centers.
- The full Master Plan for Early Learning and Care Presentation can be found on the official Early Childhood Policy Council Website (https://chhs-data-prod.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/08/06103737/California-ECPC-Workforce-FINAL-2--8.4-v2_ADA.pdf)

A high-level, thematic summary of Committee discussion and public comments received during the meeting can be found in the following pages.



Summary of Comments from the Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting

This Summary provides themes from participants in the Workforce Advisory Committee Meeting on August 6, 2020.

The Early Childhood Policy Council – Workforce Advisory Committee is an advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, and Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning, care, and child development. It will provide recommendations on all aspects of the state’s early childhood system, including support for the demographic, geographic, and economic diversity of the state’s children and families and ways the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Early Childhood Education’s (ECE) final report can be updated and improved.

Summary of Comments by Workforce Advisory Committee Members and the Public

Key themes included:

- Revisit the Expected Role of Early Childhood Educators
 - Networking with Community Resources and Support for this Role
 - Display and Employ Educational and Relational Competencies
 - Establish Consistent/Universal Requirements and Supports
- Improve the Structure of Supports Available to Providers
 - Support Aligned with the Needs and Experiences of Providers
 - Increase and Support Mentorship Opportunities (CA Early Childhood Mentor Program)
 - Support Providers to Manage Diverse Responsibilities
- Rethink Compensation to Ensure Equity
 - Pay for Educational Advancement, Training, Skill/Knowledge Building
 - Broad and Equitable Basis for Income Adjustments
 - Alternative Forms of Compensation
- Improve Administrative Structures/Program Operations
 - Improve Clarity and Reduce Punitive Consequences for Errors
- Dismantle Systemic Racist Policies Maintaining the Inequitable Status Quo

Themes

Expected Role of Early Childhood Educators

Networking with Community Resources and Support for this Role

A few members of the committee reported that a key role of early childhood educators in all settings is to connect families with community resources, especially home-based providers. This includes everything from social safety net programs to health practitioners. Several members also pointed out that the ability of providers to serve in this role depends on their own access to and knowledge of local resources. Establishing a network of local support to connect providers themselves with community resources is a key



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part of fulfilling this role for families. One aspect of this role discussed was the power of partnerships with local organizations, nonprofits, school districts, community colleges, or other practitioners.

Display and Employ Educational and Relational Competencies

As part of the discussion of minimum expectations for ECEs, several specific qualities were raised by committee members and those participating through chat. In general, committee members emphasized that providers must be prepared to employ early childhood education pedagogy, understand developmental milestones, and the emotional development of students. This was echoed in the chat comments which described relationship building skills (with adults and children) and an ability to serve well a diverse student population (esp. DLLs, and students with special needs).

Establish Consistent/Universal Requirements and Supports

A common theme across multiple topics was the need for consistency of what is required/expected of providers and correspondingly, what is provided to them in terms of support. For example, if there is an expectation that providers know how to meet the needs of students with a disability then there should be supports available to all practitioners to develop this skill. A participant commenting in the chat added to this sentiment the view that systemic racism is at the root of inconsistency of support and inadequacy of expectations. Also, perhaps in contrast to the support for universal expectations, this person expressed that racism has a hand in shaping the meaning of terms like “high-quality” itself, despite whether or not this definition is meaningful to all communities/families/practitioners. This is a sentiment that was affirmed by others in the chat comments.

Structure of Supports Available to Providers

Support Aligned with the Needs and Experiences of Providers

Somewhat related to the theme of consistency of supports provided, was the comment that supports be aligned with the needs and experiences of providers in the community. For example, one committee member expressed that some providers may not be comfortable with networking via a computer, and another suggested that a house meeting may be a more effective venue. Another aspect of this raised was possible language barriers for non-native English speakers and the importance of attending to the culture of providers in the community.

Increase and Support Mentorship Opportunities (CA Early Childhood Mentor Program)

While it was not a common theme in the discussion among committee members, those participating through the chat emphasized strongly the importance of mentorship opportunities. In particular the CA Early Childhood Mentor Program was mentioned positively 17 times by 11 different people through the course of the meeting. This program (and others like it) were described as both an opportunity for support to new providers and an opportunity for advancement for veteran providers. And a venue for networking in general.

Support Providers to Manage Diverse Responsibilities

Another common theme was the many and varied responsibilities that providers, particularly home-based providers, have to take on. Some of these are in entirely different areas of competency than education and child care (e.g. accounting, human resources, etc.) and one committee member expressed that it is not reasonable to expect providers to be able to do it all. As a remedy, providing training to build skills was



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suggested, but many noted the alternative of supporting a shared services model that providers could draw on collectively for these additional services.

Rethink Compensation to Ensure Equity

Pay for Educational Advancement, Training, Skill/Knowledge Building

A very common theme raised often in both the committee discussion and the chat comments was the inadequacy of compensation, and the inequity of pay with respect to (1) comparable (or less skilled) professions, and (2) the level of experience and educational attainment of a given provider. Several committee members endorsed the importance of compensating providers for additional education and training. For example, members expressed that compensation for securing additional degrees or skills is not evident. A comment in the chat built on this by suggesting that inequity of compensation be remedied before additional requirements or expectations be added to early childhood education.

Broad and Equitable Basis for Income Adjustments

Alongside the call for equity in compensation, there was a recognition expressed that systemic racism drives much of what is viewed as worthy of additional pay. For example, a chat commenter challenged the notion that higher education leads to better outcomes, while a couple of others emphasized that degrees might be an important part of the quality equation but not enough on their own. Likewise, a committee member expressed the reality that additional degrees may not make much of a difference to families, despite the cost required to achieve them. In general, there was a tension between this theme and the support expressed for requiring and rewarding higher education as a source of skills and a signal of professionalism. It was also noted in the committee discussion that women of color are often paid the least though most represented in the field, pointing to the way racism is interwoven into the issues of pay equity.

Alternative Forms of Compensation

There was some discussion of alternatives to changes in salary to compensate providers. In particular, this included scholarships for training and higher education and loan forgiveness for previous attainment. This theme tied in with the general sentiment that many providers simply can't afford to pay for additional training/education. Whether this is remedied by increased compensation or paying for this additional attainment was part of the impetus for these alternatives.

Improve Administrative Structures/Program Operations

Improve Clarity and Reduce Punitive Consequences for Errors

A couple of committee members noted that administrative policies are often worded in ways that lead to confusion and make it easier for providers to make errors. In turn, these errors are met with punitive consequences instead of support to help providers better understand what's required of them and meet that expectation. Further exacerbating this issue is the challenge of knowledge sharing and inconsistency of messages. If people do not understand what's required of them, receive mixed messages about the requirement, and are punished when they make a mistake it can be very discouraging.



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Dismantle Systemic Racist Policies Maintaining the Inequitable Status Quo

Though equity was threaded throughout the discussion, and is clearly a priority of the committee, some commenting in the chat suggested that the root cause of systemic racism and the history of racist policy was not sufficiently explored. An example of this was the suggestion that the pervasive assumption (even in the committee) was that home-based providers are inherently lower quality because their context is often distinct and under-valued. Putting an even finer point on it, this person suggested that just because a child care option is less expensive doesn't mean it is bad or low quality.

This sentiment was echoed by others who expressed that the diversity of family needs and provider skills illustrates the diversity of expectations and cautioned that the standards driven by racist policy not continue to define success in correspondingly racist ways.