



Early Childhood Policy Council Meeting Summary: December 10, 2020

Attendees: Alicia Lieberman, Amelia Soto, AnnLouise Bonnitto, Carola Oliva-Olson, Cheryl Polk, Cheryl Schroeder, Dean Tagawa, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Debra Ward, Donna Sneeringer, Janet Zamudio, Kim Patillo Brownson, Kimberley Johnson, Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, Lisette Frausto, Lupe Jaime, Mary Ignatius, Mayra E. Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Naima Facih, Natali Gaxiola, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Sarah Neville-Morgan, Scott Moore, Sonia Jaramillo, Stephanie Myers, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen, Yenni Rivera, Zoila Carolina Toma

Number of virtual participants: 461

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Burke Harris)

- The California Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary, Kris Perry, delivered the opening remarks. Due to a scheduling conflict, the Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) Chair, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, was not able to attend the meeting and asked Perry to chair in her absence. In her opening remarks, Deputy Secretary Perry thanked the Council and public for attending the meeting.
- Deputy Secretary Perry shared that input from the Council over the past year has been instrumental in informing the plan's development and shaping key recommendations that uplift the needs of families and providers in the state. The purpose of the December 10 special session is to delve deeper into the plan's recommendations, focusing on critical strategies that will advance equity through restructured funding mechanisms, enhanced workforce and career pathways, program coordination and alignment, and infrastructure enhancements.
- To maximize the amount of time spent on the Master Plan, Deputy Secretary Perry informed the Council that she would forgo reading the roster aloud and that the ECPC support team would check attendance by referring to the names in the Zoom participant panel.

2. Update on Master Plan for Early Learning and Care

- Giannina Perez, the Governor's senior advisor for early childhood, introduced the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care segment by sharing reflections from the last year. Perez extended gratitude from the Governor's office to the Master Plan team and Kris Perry for developing the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. She explained that the Master Plan is a bold 10-year vision that will help the State better serve our youngest Californians. This year has shed a light on the state's longstanding racial and economic disparities that cannot be ignored. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance and fragility of our early learning and care system and the recent round of stay-at-home orders creates new challenges for families and child care providers.



Early Childhood Policy Council

- Perez stated that she looks forward to hearing reactions to the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care as well as input from the Council and the public to better understand the immediate needs of families and providers.
- Master Plan team leaders, Jannelle Kubinec and Lupita Alcala, delivered a detailed presentation of the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. Kubinec and Alcala were supported by the following Master Plan team members: Susan Muenchow, Lynn Karoly, and Aressa Coley; California Department of Education Deputy Superintendent Sarah Neville-Morgan; and California Department of Social Services Director Kim Johnson. The plan's presenters delivered a detailed description of core recommendations within the plan that advance equity for families and child care providers throughout the state through restructured funding mechanisms, enhanced workforce and career pathways, program coordination and alignment, and infrastructure enhancements. Opportunities for Council input and discussion were woven throughout the presentation.
- Following the detailed review of the Master Plan's recommendations, the planning team engaged the Council in a discussion around how federal stimulus funding should be prioritized to address the immediate needs of California's parents and providers while advancing the State's long-term goals.
- [The Master Plan for Early Learning and Care presentation can be found on the official Early Childhood Policy Council website.](#)

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

Summary of Comments and Questions by ECPC Council Members and the Public

The following sections provide a high-level overview of themes from the December 10, 2020 Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) special session.

The ECPC 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 (1) all aspects of the state's early childhood system, including equity, with consideration for demographic, geographic, and economic diversity, focusing on family-centered, two-generation approaches; (2) opportunities to incorporate a support model of accountability—as opposed to a compliance model of accountability—into the state's early childhood education system; and (3) ways that the State's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education's (ECE) Final Report can be updated and improved.

The following is a list of the ten major themes from the meeting:

- Need for consideration of hours and the need for child care
- Upholding equity and the concern with how universal preschool will be implemented
- California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and parental choice
- Workforce competency



Early Childhood Policy Council

- Defining quality
- Family fee schedule
- Concern about tiered rates
- Concerns regarding the reimbursement rate
- Engaging institutions of higher education
- Sense of urgency

The following sections provide a high-level overview of these ten major themes.

Need for consideration of hours and the need for child care

ECPC members expressed excitement that universal preschool is part of the Master Plan. Members liked that the plan had inclusion in learning and expressed that two years of preschool is beneficial to children. ECPC members also provided several areas for consideration. ECPC members asked about how it will be funded and called attention to the need to differentiate between transitional kindergarten (TK) and universal preschool and who would teach TK. This includes the need to consider the hours needed by families, many of whom need child care beyond those provided by TK and preschool. Extended hours were also noted as providing the consistency in care that young children need to feel secure and grow healthfully. They also asked to ensure that implementation take a whole-family and whole-child approach, keeping in mind that families experience various issues and need to access services that are currently siloed. Even though there was recognition of the current work to destigmatize the access of programs for low income families, ECPC members expressed the necessity to continue advocating for the needs of families who are low income, particularly for their need to access child care. Access to child care was viewed as a necessary addition to the Master Plan by several ECPC members.

Upholding equity and the concern with how universal preschool will be implemented

There was appreciation for and a call to keep equity at the center and to ensure it includes full access and participation in universal preschool programs and that its implementation and design is driven by data. ECPC members also asked that effort should be put into ensuring specific populations are included in the planning and implementation process. They asked that it be considered how dual language learners (DLLs) are identified and to include guidance from the California Department of Education and best practices on how to work with DLLs. Additionally, it should be considered how tribal communities and families with children with special needs are and will be engaged.

California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and Parental Choice

ECPC members had questions about expanding TK in a mixed-delivery system with comparable standards. It was brought up that Title 5 center-based programs have higher standards and lower ratios than TK. ECPC members questioned why CSPP was not



Early Childhood Policy Council

being expanded. ECPC members also asked that parental choice should be upheld in all planning and implementation. Additionally, a couple of members asked for consideration of bargaining agreements, which includes the need to account for staffing and class size. An ECPC member also lifted comments about paid family leave and expressed that it should be extended, with full salaries accessible for reimbursement to parents and information about paid leave that is accessible by the public.

Workforce competency

There were some areas for which ECPC members called for clarification. These included clarification on how “competencies” and “standards” were defined and whether workforce development was tied to universal preschool. Some members found the discussion on workforce competency helpful in bringing the focus to the knowledge providers need to do their work, while recognizing that many have the experiential knowledge that is also important. ECPC members agreed that provider wages should be considerate of these.

Defining quality

ECPC members questioned how and who will define quality for providers. Members asked that the diversity of families and ECE options be considered, as well as the quality in care that providers build through their experiential knowledge and the connections they build with families through their work.

Family fee schedule

ECPC members questioned whether the proposed family fee schedule plan considers the challenges families face in paying for child care.

Concern about tiered rates

ECPC members expressed concern when tiered rates were presented. They questioned the data which some ECPC members expressed were not accurate in describing the cost of living and did not consider the costs in rural and impoverished areas. Some ECPC members also questioned the inclusion of Friends, Family and Neighbor (FFN) providers.

Concerns regarding the reimbursement rate

There were several comments regarding the reimbursement rates for providers. An ECPC member asked to avoid “reinventing the wheel,” bringing up the work of the rate reform committee from two years ago and said a stronger connection needs to be made between the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) and current rate. Concern was expressed about paying providers a comparable wage for the work they do and recognizing the existing Title 5 system. Another member asked for dollar examples of the Regional Market Rate (RMR) and SRR. Additionally, there was a question about how it will be ensured that funds go directly to providers and wages rather than programs.



Early Childhood Policy Council

Engaging institutions of higher education

ECPC members commented on the need to engage higher education in responding to the needs of the workforce, particularly in meeting and supporting competency expectations.

Sense of urgency

Comments that expressed a sense of urgency in implementing the plan were made by a couple of ECPC members. Members bought up the current crisis affecting the field due to the pandemic.

Select Quotes Supporting the Themes Identified Above

Need for consideration of hours and the need for child care

- “My point, and this aligns with the incoming federal administration, really is around where we started this conversation and where we hope it will go. Which is a whole-child approach to early childhood development and ensuring that we are breaking down silos, knowing that families aren't living single issue lives.”
- “The CalWORKs [California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids] and AP [alternative payment] system serve children 0-12 and a large percent use care during non-traditional hours. Both Preschool and TK have limited hours and many families would still need their child care beyond those hours.”
- “I just feel like as we drive this in, how are we really going to identify those most in need and get them there first to the door and then make it so the family actually can afford it? Especially if that universal preschool program is three hours and we know they need 10 hours because they're working two jobs.”
- “If this is a whole-child/whole-family approach, how do you envision a family with more than one child being served at the same time if only one age group is ‘universal’?”
- “Why does the 10-year Master Plan call for universal preschool/TK but not a comprehensive universal child care/ECE from birth to 5 (and really 13 years old)?”
- “Will TK continue to be taught by credentialed teachers or will it change to early childhood educators that have a permit from the Permit Matrix?”
- “I know you mentioned about extended care for 3- and 4-year-olds. As you all may know, 3- and 4-year-olds may have a hard time adjusting to transitions, so having children for a couple hours in preschool and going to another child care or home care for the rest of the day may affect their behaviors as well as their well-being because [they] need consistency and stability to feel safe and grow healthy.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

Upholding equity and the concern with how universal preschool will be implemented

- “I just wanted to lift up and offer appreciation for what’s embedded in here to actually make equity be at the center.”
- “When we talk about equity it's about full access and effective participation.”
- “Once this is implemented, how will tribes receive this information to determine if they are eligible to be part of the universal model?”
- “I just wanted to make a note that to please be very cognizant of how you're going to roll this out to the tribal communities. “
- “Make sure that they know where this is available so that they can also promote it throughout their tribal lands. Because many of the tribal members do move out of the tribal lands onto the other counties. We want to make sure that they know that universal education will be available for them as well.”
- “I have a concern how the implementation of universal preschool will roll out. Will there be a way to identify our ‘most-at-risk’ children and also make certain they have quality care for the balance of a parent’s workday? Within this question, do we have methods to determine equity and our most-in-need children for early enrichment?”
- “The Arc/UCP CA Collaboration [The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration] represents families that have children with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well and early intervention service providers throughout the state. As the State moves forward to implement the Master Plan, we would welcome the opportunity to learn more about how we can partner to support families that have children with I/DD [intellectual and developmental disabilities] and early intervention service providers.”

California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and Parental Choice

- “(1) Please explain what is meant by expanding TK in a mixed-delivery system with comparable standards. (2) Current Title 5 center-based have higher standards and lower ratios: TK has 1:26, Title 5 has 1:8. Why not expand Title 5/CSPP—why TK?”
- “If there’s no ‘one shot’ way to get to school readiness, then why are we forcing parents to choose TK when they don’t want to? The Master Plan is clear that child care should be a choice. The current CSPP age restriction law is hurting our families, making them choose virtual, and eventual part-day TK programs. They want full-day CSPP. Please advocate and change this legislation so that it fits in with the Master Plan.”
- “Parents should have choice between pre-K and TK for their four-year-olds. Not all LEAs [Local Education Agencies] have space to expand their TK programs, and thus if the children cannot continue in pre-K then they are not attending any program or getting any services.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

- “Early Edge CA is really excited to work with the Governor’s Office and MPELC team to implement their vision for universal TK and expanded CSPP and to improve identification and teacher training and preparation to support DLLs. Also, great to see FFNs included so extensively in the Plan; they are a huge part of the Early Learning system.”
- “LEAs often have collective bargaining agreements that allow for class sizes to be up to 30. And having 30 four-year-olds with one teacher is something I’m really, really leery of. So, any legislation that comes through following this I really think it needs to be emphasized that a collective bargaining agreement cannot call for a larger class size than is appropriate developmentally.”
- “I feel strongly about the paid family leave that there should be a plan to extend the duration of paid family leave. And also to reimburse the full salary so that all parents are able to access it. And I think it’s important to accompany that with public information and outreach to make sure that folks in all parts of the state and every demographic feel comfortable accessing paid family leave.”

Workforce competency

- “It appears that the word competencies and standards are used interchangeably. Please clarify or define them.”
- “I am confused if the development of workforce will benefit the children in universal Pre-K. This plan reads as though the children in universal Pre-K will be absorbed into K-12, continuing to disenfranchise ECE professionals.”
- “I think this is really important and it will help us get out of like the degree discussion and more around like what is it that the providers need to know to do the work.”
- “So, retention of staff I think is very important—and focusing on the workforce that we have now and validating them for the work that’s already being done is extremely important.”
- “A provider may not have the ‘education’ but has been providing quality care for families—does this mean that the provider when be paid less? This is not favored.”

Defining quality

- “I also missed how the quality part was going to be measured. Only a small percentage of all child care programs are able to participate in QRIS [Quality Rating and Improvement System]. I have visited many FCC [Family Child Care] programs that are amazing but may not score high on an ERS [Environmental Rating Scale] review or have the education to take them to a high-tier rating. Those children are still loved, they still have amazing learning opportunities, and I would send my child there.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

- “The diversity of California’s families need a diversity of ECE options. Universal preschool and TK does not provide this to its fullest potential. Our research with home-based providers shows that parents who choose them do so for their values of location, price, ‘happy children,’ and a language and cultural match for their family. These are quality definitions according to many families. Current feedback sessions conducted with parents on access and selection of child care mirrors these. Centers work for some, but not all. If we pay an additional factor based on quality, who defines that ‘quality’?”
- “If you speak to my parents, I’m a tier five. So, who’s going to judge that? Who is it going to be based on? Someone’s going to come out and evaluate me and tell me what I’m doing wrong or right? There’s got to be a better way to do this.”
- “A provider can provide quality care even without a degree. And if my family is happy with the care that I’m providing all of my families are happy with the care that I provide.”

Family fee schedule

- “Does the plan sort of continue the existing family fee structure that we have now and then builds on top of that to I guess extend eligibility so you’re continuing to collect family fees and maybe at a higher rate?”
- “Some folks might think paying \$300 to have access to affordable child care is, ‘How lucky you must be!’ But [what] if you’re living paycheck to paycheck and that \$300 means the difference between paying your provider or paying your rent or food or better internet quality because of distance learning? I mean it would help me to understand where you see the existing family fee schedule and what we can do about that.”
- “So, you would still start to pay fees at 40% of SMI [State Median Income] and then continue on as you stay on?”

Concern about tiered rates

- “How has the group included tribes in adjusting the tiered rates, especially as many of them are located in rural, impoverished areas?”
- “These tiers are not realistic for cost of living.”
- “There are no counties in California making \$503–\$603 a week. Where did this data come from?”
- “We need to pay providers for the work they are already doing and then build up from there.”
- “What would FFN providers be paid? They are an integral part of our system and I didn’t see how their compensation would be addressed.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

Concerns regarding the reimbursement rate

- “As rate reimbursements do rise, how will it be ensured that the money gets into the providers'/teachers' wages and not just program money.”
- “We need to pay people for what they're doing now, and we've got to elevate the current rate. And I'm very eager to learn more about the base rate but I'm also very cautious that I want to make sure it's something that's regularly updated. Part of the reason the SRR has been such a problem is it hasn't been regularly updated and as flawed as the RMR is, at least it's done regularly. So, I just wanted to flag that as a serious concern.”
- “I did put it in the comments that we need to look at the existing standard reimbursement rates, the existing workforce. I didn't really see a connection with the existing system. It said that they took into consideration the blueprint and the rate reform committee. But we spent over almost two years on the rate reform committee white paper and came up with what we felt was, and a lot of people on this council were on that committee.”
- “We came up with a reimbursement rate structure that took into consideration existing family child care, workforce, family child care providers, Title Five, everybody took into consideration everyone everywhere. And so, my big question would be why was that not used? Why create something else?”
- “Why are we trying to reinvent the wheel on how rates are calculated? Are you doing this to avoid paying providers what they are really worth?”
- “Where in this plan do we recognize the existing Title 5 workforce? It reads to me that the workforce needs to do more without pay. We need to pay a professional wage to our already existing workforce.”
- “I think it's important to point out that the plan does not recognize the existing Title 5 system. There are already professional staff (with degrees) not receiving a professional wage or benefits. What is the plan for our current crisis: wages, facilities, COVID? Thank you for all your work, I look forward to additional opportunities for Council member and public participation and input. All providers of early child care and education 0-5 are professionals and should be paid professional wages.”
- “The knowledge brief on key elements of high-impact preschool programs calls out the need to a well-prepared, well-compensated teachers. If we do not want to perpetuate an inequitable system, all early childhood programs need well-prepared, well-compensated teachers. California TK program teachers are on the same salary schedule as K–12 teachers. How are you going to ensure wage equity for those who work with young children, such as FCC, infant-toddler teachers, CSPP, and others outside of the TK-12 system?”
- “Do you have examples or dollar comparisons between your proposed base rate and the current RMR or SRR?”



Early Childhood Policy Council

Engaging institutions of higher education

- “Higher education engages in regular outreach to the community through advisory groups and stakeholder meetings and has been responsive to workforce needs by adding courses and supports to meet the needs of the community. What funding supports have been proposed so that higher education can ‘improve higher education opportunities for those members of the workforce who choose to pursue this pathway, including aligning coursework and practicum experiences with the competency performance measures, developing an institutions of higher education accreditation process that undergirds competency expectations, and creating connections with the professional learning system and professional development platform.”
- “Need more inclusion and collaboration with the faculty and leadership at the California community colleges. ECE departments provide the majority of workforce training in this sector. It is essential that the workforce be supported to earn college credentials, as it allows for portability and workforce mobility. Please convene a subcommittee with the CCCCCO [California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office]. Representation was missing or light in the Master Plan.”

Sense of urgency

- “Is there any thought about setting a priority for moving forward with this 10-year plan? For instance, noting that rates are the top priority that MUST be addressed or there will be total industry collapse, how about deeming that a first priority to address before moving forward? Put a dollar amount to the priorities. Being in this pandemic, I was a bit concerned that the Master Plan was not truly sensitive to the crisis that we are in now. I also want to underscore the input from Mary about having a more well-developed birth through five or 13 coordinated plan that values all ages and needs.”
- “The MP [Master Plan] is a great vision, but reality is that the child care sector is in crisis, and the way things are going, by the time a plan is implemented we don't even know what is going to be left of the early care and education world as we have known it.”
- “This is a nice plan and a 10-year vision but what are we going to do now—today?”