



EVERY CHILD READY CHICAGO WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

February 25, 2021 12-3 pm CT

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*
Linda Satterfield, *IDHS*
Leslie McKinley, *Chicago Public Schools*
Brandie Knazze, *Department of Family and Support Services*
Diane Schanzenbach, *Northwestern University*
Diana Rauner, *Start Early*

Pfeffer Eisin, *Department of Family Support Services*
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*
Dana Garner, *IFF*
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*
Kristin Bernhard, *Start Early*
Sara Slaughter, *Stone Foundation*
Mandy Yanan Wang, *Family Representative*
Nataly Barrera, *Mayor's Office*
Jaclyn Vasquez, *Erikson Institute*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

Welcome and Opening Remarks from the Mayor's Office: Sybil Madison and Jennifer Alexander

- The original design of this process was to help develop a vision for the city's early childhood system and lift up strategic priorities to achieve that vision, building from the strengths of our rich and diverse ecosystem to create a more coherent prenatal-five system.
- The goal is to lift up priorities and set a strategic foundation through this group and then move into a more formal body.

Updated Working Group Process

- Based on feedback from this group, the Mayor's Office looked at revising the timeline and structure for this work, the need to align this effort with other efforts underway at the state and city, the need to balance short-term needs and long-term goals, and embedding opportunities to strengthen relationships and build trust.
- The new structure removes the Steering Committee and flattens the relationship between the Mayor's Office and the Working Group. There is a Planning Committee comprised of the Mayor's Office, Start Early, and School Readiness Consulting that will meet to plan the Working Group meetings; those meetings are open to anyone who wants to attend.
- This structure makes clear that the Working Group is where the work happens.

Proposed Advisory Council Structure

- The proposed Advisory Council structure is in some ways a reboot of the structure that was in place during the previous administration.
- The Mayor's Office and ECE team will lead the work of this Advisory Council, which will have subcommittees based on strategic priorities identified through the strategic planning process.

Timeline

- The timeline has been adjusted in response to feedback from Working Group members to ensure there is enough time built in to accomplish all that is planned.
- In March, the Working Group meeting will focus on the landscape and how it aligns with the ECRC vision and values.
- In April, the Working Group meeting will focus on identifying key elements of the strategic plan.
- In May, the Working Group will focus on exploring strategic priorities and balancing short-term needs with longer-term goals.

Feedback and Questions from Working Group Members

- Working Group members expressed appreciation for the Mayor's Office willingness to adapt and reset based on their feedback.
- The following questions were raised by Working Group members:
 - Will the subcommittees be set now?
 - Answer: The Working Group will identify priorities for the subcommittees to address and then the subcommittees will be set up.
 - Will people outside the Working Group be invited to join the subcommittees?
 - Answer: Yes. Incorporating parent voice is an exciting and central aspect of this structure.
 - How will we ensure that the strategic plan and work undertaken by the Advisory Council will align with other strategic plans and efforts within the state?
 - Answer: The Working Group will help with this; this is also one of the areas the Shared Learning Journeys will support.
- The following observations were made by Working Group members:
 - There is a need to focus on getting more fathers involved in this work.
 - There is a lot of great work happening across the city. This new structure could provide the opportunity to learn from each other and take action on pockets of innovation that are occurring. The Advisory Council may want to consider holding a larger convening for researchers, providers, and families to learn together.
 - It is important to recognize that we privilege some types of evidence over others, and that we elevate certain data sources and approaches over others. Research is not real time, so including perspective of families and providers is critical. It is also important to incorporate people and practices that have not been included in our formalized research structure.
 - A useful mechanism for providing accountability in moving beyond diversity and inclusion to equity and social justice has been developed by Dr. Dafina-Lazarus Stewart. The state is also implementing work to advance racial equity.

Finalizing the Vision and Values

- During the first Working Group meeting, members brainstormed words and phrases that could capture our hopes for Chicago's children and families; who the vision should serve; and what would set ECRC apart from other cities and initiatives. Several themes emerged from that brainstorm session, including:
 - Centering children and families
 - Diversity and equity
 - Whole child/whole family approach
- The Working Group has also discussed the values that will guide decision-making and are central to working towards the vision with integrity. The values are based on those put forth by the Mayor's Office, but have been adapted to fit within the ECRC context and feedback from the Working Group.
- Working Group members broke into small groups to reflect on the draft vision statements and the values.
 - Regarding the draft vision statement, members shared the following reflections:
 - The phrase "strong families" might create the impression that families are not strong, rather than meaning that the systems that support them are not strong.
 - The use of the term "joyful" should potentially be avoided; others were in favor of its use.
 - One small group developed a new potential vision statement that combined elements of those initially presented.
 - Regarding the values, members shared the following reflections:
 - If this effort is truly going to fuel sector change, we should include that in the values.
 - Accountability should be bi-directional.

- It would be helpful if all of the values included specific actions or ways to determine whether the values were in fact being upheld in the work.
- Working Group members voted via Zoom poll and chat on the vision statements. 74% of participants voted (26 total votes were cast), with the following results:
 - Option A: 23% (6 votes)
 - Option B: 4% (1 vote)
 - Option C: 23% (6 votes)
 - Option D: 50% (13 votes)
- The agreed upon vision is as follows: *Every child in Chicago is supported by well-supported families, effective programs, and well-resourced communities so they can grow strong, live joyful lives, and thrive to realize their greatest potential.*
- The vision and value statements will be modified based on the additional feedback received from Working Group members for continued use to guide the strategic planning process and implementation work of ECRC.

Shared Learning Journeys

- Start Early shared the objectives of the upcoming Shared Learning Journey Series:
 - Leverage expertise of Working Group members regarding state and local initiatives to expand the landscape.
 - Develop shared knowledge and understanding of key initiatives.
 - Explore how these initiatives can inform the ECRC strategic plan.
- Based on feedback gathered at the last Working Group meeting, the following three topics will be the subject of the learning journeys: (1) Illinois Prenatal-Three Initiative (PN3); (2) Early Childhood Workforce Partnership; and (3) Special Education and Early Intervention.

Closing and Next Steps Looking Ahead

- March and April Working Group and Planning Team meetings will be scheduled.
- More information will be shared regarding the Shared Learning Journeys, as well as a poll to schedule the April Learning Journey on PN3.
- All meeting information will be shared with Working Group members via email.