

We envision Illinois as a place where every young child – regardless of race, ethnicity, income, language, geography, ability, immigration status, or other circumstance – receives the strongest possible start to life so that they grow up safe, healthy, happy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn.

Illinois Early Learning Council

February 22, 2021, 11:00 AM-1:00 PM

Join via [Webex](#) | Meeting Number: 177 429 6513 | Meeting Password: 3VfKWGtPU29

If joining by phone, dial: 1-312-535-8110

Minutes

In attendance:

Jennifer Alexander, Lori Baas, Cindy Bardeleben, Karen Berman, Carie Bires, John Borrero, Barbara Bowman, Marcus Brown, Cerathel Burgess-Burnett, Kristy Doan, Carl Eggleston, Shauna Ejeh, Donna Emmons, Gaylord Gieseke, Phyllis Glink, Cornelia Grumman, Chelsea Guillen, Dan Harris, Carisa Hurley, Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Cathy Mannen, Janice Moenster, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Bela Mote, Tracy Ocomy-Crowder, Bethany Patten, Laura Phelan, Sylvia Puente, Diana Rauner, Elliot Regenstein, Jesse Ruiz, Sara Slaughter, Luz Maria Solis, Teri Talan, Marquinta Thomas, Yolanda Williams, Josie Yanguas

11:00 Welcome and Overview of the Agenda (10 min)

Phyllis Glink welcomed everyone to the meeting and went over a few housekeeping items. Phyllis Glink acknowledged the Family Advisory Committee members who were on the call and welcomed Carl Eggleston, Child Care Program Specialist at the US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care; Mr. Eggleston is the new Region V representative on the Council. Jesse Ruiz made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2020 ELC meeting. The minutes were approved as written.

11:10 Follow-up from November Full Early Learning Council Meeting (10 min)

Jesse Ruiz transitioned into a follow-up discussion of the ideas that were generated during the breakout sessions during the November meeting. He reminded members that we broke into four groups to discuss the following topics:

1. Family Engagement, including Home Visiting
2. Children's Learning & Education Disruptions that Have Occurred Due to COVID-19
3. Financing of Illinois' Early Childhood Care and Education Systems, especially Child Care
4. Workforce Preparation & Professional Development

Jesse Ruiz asked the following questions:

- What are your reflections on the key themes and ideas that were elevated from those conversations?
- Any thoughts anyone would like to share?

Jesse Ruiz and Phyllis Glink facilitated a conversation. Comments focused on: adjusting meeting cadence to accommodate more families; offering flexible solutions to support families following the pandemic – everyone has been impacted differently; and the importance of free or reduced-price internet and utilities for Illinois families.

Racial Equity Definition: A racially equitable society values and embraces all racial/ethnic identities. In such a society, one's racial/ethnic identity (particularly Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Asian) is not a factor in an individual's ability to prosper. An early learning system that is racially equitable is driven by data and ensures that:

- Every young child and family regardless of race, ethnicity, and social circumstance has everything s/he/they need to develop optimally;
- Resources, opportunities, rewards, and burdens are fairly distributed across groups and communities so that those with the greatest challenges are adequately supported and not further disadvantaged; and
- Systems and policies are designed, reframed, or eliminated to promote greater justice for children and families.

Racial Equity Priorities:

- 1) Align and standardize race/ethnicity data collection and reporting;
- 2) Evaluate and identify whether processes for distributing resources exacerbate racial disparities, including agency contracting;
- 3) Address race/ethnicity disparities in terms of workforce compensation and advancement;
- 4) Eliminate racial/ethnic disparities for children participating in all programs that contribute to school readiness and life success by addressing racial disparities in enrollment in preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds and in prenatal to age 3 services.

11:20 Urgent Call for Family Engagement (25 min)

Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Executive Director of GOECD, introduced Theresa Hawley, First Assistant Deputy Director for Education in the Governor's Office, who presented groundwork for the breakout sessions. Theresa Hawley shared data on the significant drops in enrollment across early childhood education and care programs (center-based and home-based child care, child care subsidy, preschool, MIECHV, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Early Intervention), noting the importance of reaching and reengaging children and families, connecting them to the early childhood system, and rebuilding their trust.

Jamilah R. Jor'dan thanked Theresa Hawley for her presentation and reviewed the community agreements and logistics for the breakout sessions.

Breakout questions included:

- What can we do to reach more families while maintaining the COVID-19 safety guidelines?
- To reach more families:
 - What needs to happen at the state level?
 - What needs to happen at the community level?
- What can the ELC do now to mobilize around this issue?

11:45 Share and Discuss (15 min)

Jesse Ruiz welcomed everyone back from the breakout sessions and facilitated the share-out of one major idea for each question discussed by each group. Key themes included: continuing to use technology to reach families; supporting parent ambassadorships ("trusted messengers") to reach families; adjusting eligibility requirements for child care; rolling out a statewide messaging campaign targeting families; providing additional supports to children with special needs; connecting with pediatricians and health care providers working directly with families; translating materials to ensure messages are equitably delivered across the State; and coordinating information at the community level. Phyllis Glink thanked everyone for their thoughtful contributions.

12:00 Targeting Federal Funds to Maximize Benefits (25 min)

Phyllis Glink then introduced Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Executive Director of GOECD, and Bethany Patten, new Associate Director of the Office of Early Childhood at DHS, who gave a brief presentation on anticipated federal funds coming to Illinois. Phyllis Glink thanked Jamilah R. Jor'dan and Bethany Patten for their presentation and asked all to honor the same community agreements in the upcoming breakout session.

Breakout questions included:

- What strategies are needed that focus on overcoming pandemic-related issues?
- In what areas of the field have things stabilized enough that we can shift our funding strategy away from emergency relief and towards policy changes to achieve Illinois' long-term vision?

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- What are the lessons learned from COVID-19 that can be leveraged to promote sustainability as we move forward?

12:25 Share and Discuss (15 min)

Jesse Ruiz welcomed everyone back from the breakout sessions and facilitated the share-out of one major idea for each question discussed by each group. Key themes included: mental health supports for children, families, and providers; ensuring families are asked about what they need; prioritizing Disproportionally Impacted Areas (DIAs); utilizing parent ambassadorships to allocate local resources and supports; addressing some pre-pandemic issues, such as the statewide early childhood staffing crisis; and providing additional technology supports for families. Phyllis Glink thanked all for their engagement and thoughtful ideas for best supporting Illinois' children, families, and providers with additional funds as we move, day by day, further to the other side of this pandemic.

12:40 Funding Commission Report Status Update (10 min)

Jesse Ruiz re-introduced Theresa Hawley to provide a status update on the Funding Commission Report, including a summary of the key recommendations. Comments from meeting attendees included: requesting Illinois focus on prioritizing children with special needs and kindergarten transition.

12:50 Public Comments & Announcements

Two parents commented on the need for Early Intervention services for children with developmental delays, noting the issue with virtual vs. in-person services. Can Illinois offer more effective EI services in a remote environment?

1:00 Closing Comments and Adjourn

Jesse Ruiz reminded meeting participants that a refresh of the ELC membership has been underway. He noted the recommended list for new members is currently being vetted by the Governor's Office and to expect official appointments to the Early Learning Council for the next term to be made soon. Jesse Ruiz extended his thanks to all who have continued to serve these past few years without official appointments. He asked all to please stay tuned for additional communications from GOECD and/or from the Governor's Appointments Team. The aim is to establish the new membership prior to the June meeting. Jesse Ruiz adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting:

Monday, June 22, 2021

11:00am – 1:00pm (subject to change)

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