

**Illinois Early Learning Council**  
**June 22, 2020, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

Join via [Webex](#)

Meeting Number: 133 513 3427

Meeting Password: K6SnqMpkD82

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

**Agenda**

**Attendees:** Jennifer Alexander, Lori Baas, Cindy Bardeleben, Karen Berman, Stephanie Bernoteit, John Borrero, Cerathel Burnett, Tim Carpenter, Kristy Doan, Donna Emmons, Gaylord Gieseke, Tasha Green Cruzat, Cornelia Grumman, Chelsea Guillen, Dan Harris, Vicki Hodges, Carisa Hurley, Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Kim Mann, Cathy Mannen, Kenya McRae, Janice Moenster, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Bela Mote, Tracy Occomy Crowder, Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Laura Phelan, Sylvia Puente, Diana Rauner, Elliot Regenstein, Brynn Siebert, Sara Slaughter, Luz Maria Solis, Teri Talan, Marquinta Thomas, Yolanda Williams, Josie Yanguas

**1. Welcome and Introductions – Phyllis Glink and Jesse Ruiz (10 min)**

Phyllis Glink welcomed everyone to the meeting, asked Early Learning Council (ELC) members to type their name into the chat box, and reminded all to stay on mute unless they are speaking during today's meeting. Jesse Ruiz requested a motion to approve the minutes from the February 2020 ELC meeting. The motion was made, seconded, and the minutes were approved as written.

**2. Honoring Maria Whelan (10 min)**

Phyllis Glink acknowledged the devastating news that Maria Whelan, President and CEO of Illinois Action for Children, passed away suddenly on June 10th. Maria was a giant in the field of early childhood, a leading advocate for all children and families, and an active and valued member of the ELC. Illinois Action for Children prepared a video tribute to honor Maria's life and work. The video was played. Phyllis noted that on June 15<sup>th</sup>, Governor Pritzker signed a proclamation honoring Maria's life, "impressive legacy" and countless contributions to the early childhood field. Phyllis read the proclamation. Jesse Ruiz acknowledged the incredible work Maria has done to advocate for the children and families across the state of Illinois. Members of the Council were invited to share their reflections.

**3. Voices from the Field – Katie Day and Brandye Kizer (15 min)**

Jesse Ruiz introduced "Voices from the Field", noting that one parent and one provider will share their story. In sharing these stories, the intent is to create space for those we serve, ground our work and inform discussions and decisions that impact children, families, and providers across the State. Katie Day, a parent leader from SIUC Head Start, discussed how Head Start has gone above and beyond to ensure kids, families, and communities were connected to resources during the pandemic. Brandye Kizer, Lead Early Childhood Coordinator in District 118 in the iGrow Birth to Three program in Danville, IL, shared the numerous ways parent educators have engaged and supported families during COVID-19.

**Illinois Early Learning Council**

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.

**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.

#### 4. **ELC Membership & Governance Update** – Phyllis Glink (5 min)

Phyllis Glink reminded everyone that though the work slowed down due to COVID-19, the ELC Membership/Governance Workgroup will meet again soon to a) develop recommendations for full ELC membership to the Governor for consideration for appointment, and b) develop Governing Principles to formalize and guide the work of the Council and its committees. The workgroup's charge is to build a Council that reflects racial/ethnic, geographic, and other forms of diversity and to develop Governing Principles that reflect commitment to racial equity. Additional updates will be provided soon.

#### 5. **Racial Equity Discussion: COVID-19 State Response** – Facilitated by Cristina Pacione-Zayas (60 min)

- Background
  - Governor's Early Childhood Funding Commission
  - ELC racial equity work and work plans
  - Disparities due to COVID-19
- How do we build it back better?
- How can the ELC and its committees be engaged in ways that will support the State as they develop their policies and procedures?

Phyllis Glink explained the goal is to have a deep conversation about racial equity as it applies to the work of the ELC, disparities that have emerged due to COVID-19, and how the State can hold racial equity in its decision making as we reopen in Phases 3 and 4 of Restore Illinois (specifically, how we can build our early childhood systems back better).

Bethany Patten, Workforce Policy Director at GOECD, presented on some of the racial inequities inherent in our systems. We know our system lacks capacity, especially in Latinx communities. We know our system disproportionately enrolls children of color in lower quality programs and white children in higher quality programs. The Early Childhood Funding Commission will structure recommendations to rectify both these inequities and our limited data capacities. In the Commission's June 16th meeting, it was decided the Commission would adopt the ELC's racial equity definition (though they would like to work with the ELC to hone some of the language) and identify funding to establish a group to conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment for the recommendations.

Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Associate Vice President of Policy at the Erikson Institute and member of both the ELC Executive Committee and the BUILD team, reminded the ELC of their racial equity journey to date: the definition, priority areas, revisions to the work plans, ongoing discussions about data, and a survey to see how ELC Executive Committee members want to engage the BUILD Team in this ongoing work. Themes from the survey included: creating an intentional space for beneficiary voice and updating the IECAM data dashboard with racial equity metrics. Cristina then walked everyone through some of the disparities we are seeing in certain communities due to the impact of COVID-19. The pandemic has exposed what already was at play, the structural legacies of racism and cross-generational trauma. Cristina facilitated a conversation on how to ensure we are holding racial equity as we move forward, specifically as it relates to conditions children, families, and providers are facing due to the pandemic. Discussion topics included: the need to invest in better data systems that disaggregate by race and the benefits of a targeted, need-based map based on race, ethnicity, and income.

#### 6. **Announcements & Public Comments** (10 min)

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Jesse Ruiz asked if there were any questions about the Committee Reports provided in the materials. There were none. Announcements: Tasha Green Cruzat announced that the Illinois Kids Count report on health equity was released today and is on the Voices for Illinois Children website. Public Comment: A parent expressed concerns about the City of Chicago's misuse of funds allocated for 0-3 year-olds, English Language Learners, and children with disabilities. Question: A provider asked how to get more information about the ExceleRate Pilot and how to access the free PPE being distributed to child care providers by IDHS.

## 7. Adjourn

Jesse Ruiz thanked everyone for their time and participation, noting the next meeting date. The meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting:**  
Monday, November 16, 2020  
11:00am - 2:00pm

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