

KLAMATH PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

May 27, 2020 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 AM

Attendance

Kay Ortega	Filicia Poteet	Rhonda Janecke
Alexis Millett	Gillian Wesenberg	Rhonda Nyseth
Amy Quayle	Heidi McGowan	Sue Scheiss
Athena Wikstrom	Jill O'Donnell	Vanessa Pingleton
Charlene Shaw	Julie Hurley	Holly Stork
Cory Ortega	Kathleen Walker-Henderson	Maurita Johnson
Cynthia Hurkes	Melinda Collier	Danielle Walker
Dena Haudenschild	Melinda Gomez	

Please note: the Klamath Professional Advisory Committee was held virtually due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) concerns and guidance on public meetings from the Governor.

Minutes

Motion to approve minutes as submitted by Kathleen Walker-Henderson, seconded by Jill O'Donnell. There was no further discussion.

Early learning hub collective action during COVID-19

Heidi McGowan facilitated a conversation around collective action during COVID-19. Our goals for the next few meetings would be to: 1) plan to coordinate partners supporting children/families; 2) conduct planning around a potential second wave of COVID-19; 3) center equity in our planning.

If any partners are collecting data in relation to COVID-19, we would like to share it amongst the group.

What are you hearing and seeing are the needs of children and families?

- Care Connections and Education is hearing from providers that parents are tired, and having a hard time taking care of themselves and their children, and are stressed. For a time, there was a difficulty finding supplies such as diapers and formula. Mentally, parents are tired, not feeling well, and are drained.
- Take Root is noticing the same theme; parents are registering for and not showing up to classes. Classes are typically hosted in the evening, and parents are drained by the end of the day. Facebook Live videos are reaching around 400 views when parents are able to view them on their own time.
- Families are echoing across Southern Oregon that they are overwhelmed by the number of surveys they are asked to participate in.
- SMART has been distributing books to all students in Klamath County through a grant from The Ford Family Foundation. They have included with the distributions some information about the summer reading slide (a potential decline in reading ability and other academic skills that can occur over the summer months when school isn't in session). SMART is receiving feedback from parents that the parents are not teachers and are frightened that they are not equipped to teach their children.
- KPI has heard at educator meetups that many parents started disengaging about a month ago and have withdrawn further since then. Some parents have asked schools to not send home work as they are not completing it. This is an indication that parents are stressed and tired.
- Play 2 Learns have been cancelled but will hopefully be hosted again in the fall.
- Klamath County School District is starting a virtual preschool for Migrant families, but the process is proving to be difficult.
- Klamath County School District is ending the school year early so that teachers can receive training on distance learning since school in the fall could potentially be a mix of face-to-face and virtual teaching.
- Cascade Health Alliance (CHA) indicated that increased stress could lead to potential abuses, and that we need to increase resources for parents. It is also hard for children to learn when they are in a stressful environment. CHA has

been advising an increased number of people to seek counselling services when needed, and have been referring more families to wrap-around services.

- Schools are having a hard time locating some families; Klamath Falls City Schools have partnered with DHS Self-Sufficiency to reach out to families and ensure the families know how to contact schools and make sure families have the resources they need.
- Child care providers are feeling stressed with the increased need to help school-aged children with more advanced homework than the child care providers are prepared to assist with.
- During the next phase of opening, there is a possibility to send SMART volunteers into playgrounds or large fields to read in small groups and provide books to children per SMART's licensing representative.

Focusing on the next 3-6 months, are there priority needs that this group could leverage from each other?

Suggestions included

- Community projects where we ask providers and parents what they would like to do and try to help people adjust to the "new normal," whatever that might be.
- Things keep changing daily which makes things hard on parents, children, and providers. These changes add to the stress that everyone is feeling.
- On-site field trips; inviting a master gardener, for example – challenges include the length of time the presenter would have to spend there, as they would have to go into each classroom with COVID-19 restrictions.

The power of the Early Learning Hub is that we come together and take collective action. The group was asked to continue bringing ideas and strategies that we can hone in on and take steps toward, together.

Supporting children and families with an equity lens during COVID-19

Alexis Millett with Capacity Building Partnerships guided a conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion, including how the work of the PAC can be supported. The goal of equity is not to treat everyone the same, but to provide support so that everyone can get to the same outcome. Alexis posted the question, "what would happen if you treated all of your families the same?" Some responses included:

- Each family's outcome would be different because they all have different needs, different starting points, different abilities, different knowledge, and different skills.
- We might underserve some families and overserve others.

Alexis described the use of an equity lens as a tool to help make decisions or in planning. An Equity lens is often used as a way to say "putting equity glasses on so we are viewing it equitably." This tool should be used every time we plan or make decisions to ensure equitable outcomes. For our purpose, it is best to have a shorter equity lens, as it is more sustainable and easier to implement. A sample equity lens was provided and reviewed with the group. Another question that could be added to our equity lens is, "What assumptions are we making?" These assumptions may be correct, but we need to have supporting data around them. An equity lens slows us down to allow us to use our skills to provide a more equitable outcome.

The PAC was split into four groups to discuss the Equity Lens handout and questions provided.

1. How might an equity lens be useful to you and your organization?
 - Allows us work as a region, and respect that each county has its own priorities. Each county has its own identity and culture; we need to look at what the local culture is.
 - Having an equity lens would give us additional time to look at unintended consequences. There is a value in slowing down, which is important both in our personal and professional lives.
 - Different providers have different needs – an equity lens would help us look at the whole picture and break it down so that each provider would be at the same level.
 - We often get stuck in the robotic responses and providing the same thing over and over again instead of catering to the actual needs of families. An equity lens might help us cater to those needs.
 - The lens allows us to look at people as individuals and to check our intrinsic bias. Sometimes the things we think are helping are not as helpful as we think they are.
 - The lens would help us to identify the barriers, preconceived ideas we may have or the program may hold, as their foundation. The equity lens will challenge us to see the barriers from the families' perspective instead of perceived barriers. How do we find out the actual barriers? What do parents think their barriers are?
 - The lens will also help decision making in programs so that the needs of children and families are met.

- Any time we can take time to reflect on barriers, it helps us address them. We talk about geographic isolation as a barrier – but is it? Are families content? We can look at where are we creating the barriers. Time, effort, and thought is needed to reach every community we serve.
 - The lens would be useful to help us look more deeply at issues families may be facing. We don't always know the actual issues. Asking specific questions can help to guide us.
 - The lens could help us to view issues such as poverty, abuse, neglect, and how these issues include everyone in the broadest terms.
2. What challenges might you face?
- The barriers that providers experience in delivering services to families.
 - Putting aside our own biases.
 - Regionally, it is hard for every county to see that we want what is best for everyone. We may be seen as pushing our values on other counties/communities. There are different levels of geographic isolation due to the sizes of the counties in our region. Cultural differences include: zip code (cities, counties, farms, logging, frontier, etc.), agencies, families.
 - What works for one provider may not work for the others.
 - Programs might be fearful of asking families what they want or need. They may have a fear that families might want or need too much, our response to their needs might not be instant, and we might not be able to deliver what they need or want. Fearful of disappointing them.
 - Creating a system that is politically correct, and not "pushy."
 - Time. With quick deadlines it is easy to go with the status quo sometimes.
 - Getting the information that we need from parents.
 - We could get pushback when addressing program beliefs and goals. People come with their own set of beliefs, and some colleagues may not be as open to the conversation. How do we ensure they feel heard and understood, but also do some teaching and modeling at the same time?
 - It may be challenging to design a process where everyone's ideas are heard, discussed, and agreed on as a group.
 - Have to follow state policy, federal laws, etc.
 - It is difficult to get parent engagement. Sometimes they don't want to be involved, and sometimes it's overwhelming. The parents that we have had at the table have felt uncomfortable speaking in front of a group of professionals. We don't have enough training to have parents at the table and to help them feel comfortable.
 - We need to talk a "simple talk," and speak a common language by eliminating the use of acronyms; we need the training on how to do that.
3. Are these the right questions? How might you tailor this tool to fit your needs as a PAC?
- Adjust for different communities that have different cultures, and adjust to tailor to the PAC needs.
 - These are a good set of questions to start with - we don't know what we don't know.
 - More questions will come down the road, but these are good questions to get folks thinking.
 - Smaller chunks - narrow it down a bit, start slowly; tackle one or two. Baby-steps.
 - Like the question about what assumptions are being made.
 - These questions feel good for right now to create a framework, but may need to be amended in the future.

Alexis posed the generation of a small equity group. The PAC agreed, and the following members advised they would participate in the group: Maurita Johnson, Cynthia Hurkes, Amy Quayle, Vanessa Pingleton, Rhonda Janecke, Charlene Shaw, and Holly Stork

Hub Updates

Gillian provided an update on the Preschool Promise Request for Application (RFA) process. During a series of public meetings, a review panel reviewed RFAs and prioritized the applications. For the region, Klamath Falls YMCA was ranked #1 for certified centers, and Klamath Falls City Schools were rated #1 for K-12. These ranking recommendations will be provided to Miriam Calderon, the Early Learning System Director of the Early Learning Division (ELD), and intent to contract should be communicated by June 4th. Early Learning Hubs are still the conduit for interest and enrollment for Preschool Promise but do not have contracts as the state ELD will be directly contracting with Preschool Promise sites.

We received information from Miriam Calderon indicating that this is the deepest recession since the 1930's. There are discussions at the state level about cutting state general funds. Student Success Act (SSA) funds will first go to public schools, then early learning, according to recent reports. There is a lot that is unknown right now including which cuts will be made. Early Learning, however, remains a high priority at the state level.

Partner Updates

DHS – Still has the drive-up window available for food, and received a donation of can openers.

Relief Nursery - Working on accreditation.

Care Connections & Education – With Phase I of reopening, family care that had to close as per state requirements, can reopen. Currently, five out of 16 centers are open, the five non-licensed preschools are not open (waiting for schools to open in the fall), and 40 out of 52 family providers are open in Klamath County. Providers still have to accept essential families first, but can start accepting children of non-essential families. The CARES Act is helping with business related expenses for child care and providers are hopeful that they will be able to stay open. Additional grants are supposed to be available in the future. Klamath County is steady with 73 providers.

Klamath Community College (KCC) – Has a contingency fund, but has scaled back and are including furlough days for staff. KCC is still on schedule for fall term and is still open currently with online classes. The Early Learning Development Grant provided by The Ford Family Foundation is still being utilized for two more terms. There are a lot of unknowns but they are still hopeful that they will be able to continue helping prepare people to enter into the child care workforce.

SMART – Started a social media campaign focusing on local leaders. The campaign slogan is, “Stay home, stay SMART, share what you’re reading.” Books are being distributed in school district packets; one to two books were distributed to each student over the past two months. SMART is also providing books in food boxes with Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC). When schools come back, SMART is coming back and hopes to have volunteers in schools as soon as schools open.

Cascade Health Alliance – Office is still closed to the public, employees are working from home, authorizations are still being processed, and they are seeing an increase in authorizations. More dental offices and the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) Dental Program will begin opening and seeing patients in the middle of June.

Next Meeting:

June 24, 2020 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm – hosted virtually in compliance with the Governor’s directive.