

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

June 3, 2020 | 11:30 AM – 3:00 PM

Attendance

Rhonda Janecke
Steve Schenewerk
Heather Freilinger
Maurita Johnson
Vicky Taylor

Jack Thompson
Cliff Jones
Heidi McGowan
Gillian Wesenberg
Athena Wikstrom

Cory Ortega
Analicia Nicholson
Danielle Walker

Welcome and Meeting Goals

Steve Schenewerk, Chair of the Regional Governance Council for the South-Central Early Learning Hub opened the meeting with a welcome and overview of meeting goals.

Director Update

Gillian gave a director's update to the Regional Governance Council.

Correspondence was received this morning from Miriam Calderon, Director of the Early Learning Division a special session (ELD) that the ELD is delaying the Early Learning Grant decisions and will send out updates to their original timeline as they become available. Funding cuts are expected to be 10-18% depending on the source, and Governor Brown will create cuts across the board for each state department or the legislature can make the budget cuts this in a special session. The Student Success Act (SSA) was supposed to fund early learning expansions, but may be subject to change. The ELD has stated early learning is still a priority, and wants Preschool Promise expansion to roll out as planned.

The Preschool Promise application review for the South-Central Early Learning Hub (Hub) region was on Friday, May 29, 2020. Applications were received for one center, five family providers, and eight schools. The Early Care and Education (ECE) sector plan was heavily used for ranking these applications – those who were familiar with the Hub's ECE plan ranked higher than those who were not. The YMCA of Klamath Falls, was ranked number one for centers, and Klamath Falls City School District was ranked number one for schools in our region. Klamath Family Head Start applied for 20 Preschool Promise slots in Lake County.

The Hub's role in the Preschool Promise expansion is the responsibility of Coordinated Enrollment. This role includes targeted outreach, letters of interest (from families), record keeping and recording, eligibility, and placement. We are excited as we have a database for the application process. Guidelines for Coordinated Enrollment were supposed to be released in May, however the new target date is mid-June.

The delay in putting out the intent to fund, is causing parents to go to the schools to try and enroll. Unfortunately, we do not know who will receive slots or how many spots will be received.

Maurita Johnson, with DHS - Advised that the funding cuts are still unknown. Oregon has savings in a rainy-day fund, but the legislature will have to hold a special session to "ok" the spending, however there is not an agreement on a special session as of yet. There are a lot of moving parts between current taxes received, federal relief funds, etc. Departments did an exercise of determining proposed items to cut based on potential budget cuts.

Heather Freilinger, Care Connections and Education - The Secretary of State did an audit on background checks for child care providers. There was a meeting yesterday where they discussed it briefly, and we were told there would be more information to follow but have not seen much information so far.

There have not been any large changes with emergency child care rules, just some clarification. Sites who had taken additional ages, extended hours, and accepted new children who were not previously enrolled are going back to their licensed ages and reducing hours. The Office of Childcare does need to have an

application turned in for all currently operating sites. There are additional disinfecting regulations and cohort requirements.

The Child Care Resource and Referrals (CCRRs) role for Preschool Promise sites will be to lead a regional network, coach and mentor providers, and provide additional technical assistance. CCRRs have not received additional information on how much personnel time (FTE) or the guidelines for this new role yet. A Quality Improvement Specialist (QIS) was hired in Douglas County to fill a position that was vacated by another individual and they are hoping to hire a QIS in Klamath County as well.

Many sites applied for 18 children for Preschool Promise, however right now, they can only have ten students in each classroom. There may be additional decisions that have to be made around the current cohort and COVID requirements.

School districts are also making difficult decisions around how they can open in the fall.

Regional Collective Action

Heidi discussed regional collective action as a lot of Hubs are grappling with how to respond to COVID-19 right now. There are a number of questions around what we can do, especially since the function of the Hub is to convene. The group can leverage each other's resources across the region and within communities as this pandemic will not be over tomorrow; we are in this for the long term. Heidi posed the following questions and observations to the group:

1. What changes are you seeing for children and families and what are their needs?
2. What commonalities are we experiencing as a region?
3. What ideas do you have that we can do together?

What can we do collectively as a Hub?

- How do we leverage each other's resources across the region?
- This is not over tomorrow. We may not have groups until Spring or until a vaccine is available.
- Children and Families/ economies opening in a step-by-step process.
- Economically, there is a tremendous burden on child care providers.

Observations the group shared included:

Technology has been an issue across the region, there have been long waits for appointments to set up free internet services provided by local internet service providers. Additional issues for families include parents being unfamiliar with technology platforms being utilized, poor internet or phone connections due to rural locations (some North Lake County families have to drive to the library to get internet on their phones), and families utilizing only one device to complete work regardless of the number of people in the household.

Parents are also concerned that they do not know have the know-how to help their children with distance learning and they are uncomfortable teaching their children, including preschoolers. The group has also heard that only about one-third of children are completing their work and turning it back in to schools with families assuming that it will be business as usual for schools in the fall.

Home visitors are not able to visit with families as much as normal, and are completing the visits either on the phone or over video rather than in-person. Families that are new to home visiting are not as engaged as families who have been with a home visitor prior to the shutdown. Families are spending more time alone together without outside connections and home visiting programs; this is raising concerns of spousal and child abuse.

Child cares already operate on a tight budget, and during this time, a reduction of children could potentially harm providers. Some care providers have left the field because of closures. Douglas County

has lost more providers than Klamath County at this point. There is one provider trying to open a center in Douglas County, and Klamath County has had someone apply for an open QIS position for the first time in six months.

How can we leverage what is happening and address what the concerns are?

Family Coaches at DHS in Klamath County are reaching out to families once a week, and Child Protective Services (CPS) cases are starting to come in at a greater speed than they have had since before the shutdown. DHS is hoping to do more preventative work and are working with schools in Klamath County to reach out to families that have not been in contact with schools to ensure families are having their needs met. In terms of early learning, DHS is not sure where we can partner, but is open to our thoughts and ideas. There is a new building being built for DHS in Klamath County and would like to open child care in the building, but would need a provider to offer these services. DHS might be willing to pay for a few spots in the facility. Heather Freilinger offered ideas on facilities in Klamath County that they could look into.

Every Child in Douglas County is training support “buddies” for children at DHS. Is there an opportunity to create a support group for families needing extra support? Transportation to current support groups is a challenge; it was asked if these groups could be hosted in smaller communities across the region?

Take Root Parenting Connection has support groups, and a wide range of activities online right now, such as Ready! For Kindergarten (starting June 8th) which includes 35-minute sessions twice a week for three weeks, and supplies which are being mailed out to families. KPI is funding this project and if it is successful, it may be provided again, but mailing the supplies are costly.

Medical offices are starting to open back up and Cascade Health Alliance (CHA) has seen an increase in approval requests which are being processed by individuals working from home. More people are being added to the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) due to COVID job losses and unemployment during COVID-19. CHA’s offices are still closed and only the same four people are allowed into the building at a time.

Mental health supports are a need and CHA staff is recommending virtual therapy to those who may need it. Klamath Basin Behavioral Health (KBBH) is receiving an increase in evening calls.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dialogue

Cliff Jones led the group in a discussion around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). He and Alexis Millett have been leading conversations around the region with a focus on how to serve geographically isolated families, especially during this time. Douglas and Klamath Counties began working on using an equity lens for current work and in supporting long-term work. It could be beneficial for the Regional Governance Council to utilize the equity lens tool when it is created.

This work is a marathon, and there is an intense focus nationally and internationally around systemic oppression. How do we focus on this moment and utilize it to aid us on our journey?

Cliff asked the group how they are currently being impacted by current events, such as the BLM movement and what they are noticing. The Regional Governance Council had a powerful conversation and many of the members shared personal experiences with racism and inequities.

A resource was shared with the group called “The Kids Book About Racism.”

Strategic Plan Final

A goal of today's meeting was to finalize the Strategic Plan that the group has been working on, but with the DEI conversation and equity on the hearts and minds of the members. The group was asked to take a look at the plan, following this meeting, through an equity lens so that we can include a larger focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Please send in suggestions/changes that can strengthen work in changing the culture and context of what is happening in our region to Hub staff.

Regional Early Learning Hub Update

Cynthia Hurkes shared an update on Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation (KPI). KPI had planned to have Kaleidoscope beginning in an elementary school, but unfortunately, it was cancelled due to COVID-19 regulations. In-person GEM Institute cohorts were also unable to move forward, but have been transformed into three virtual GEM cohorts. The cohorts were combined in light of COVID. There was so much emotion, fear, anxiety, laughter, etc. shared during the virtual cohort meetings. It was determined GEM would not move forward right now, but changed the focus of the cohort to Mindfulness. The cohort watched a movie together virtually, discussed mindfulness and breathing, and this week's meeting will discuss mindfulness and walking. This will be the end of the cohort for now, but may be picked back up in September. Cynthia has considered a resource guide for educators for years. Now, with the time available because of COVID, KPI is putting together a huge list of resources including child care guidelines, kindergarten resources, books, etc.

Cynthia advised that she and Amy Quayle are working with the Douglas ESD Communications department to create a two-year KPI report for the time period of July 2018 to June 2020. She is excited that the report will be well organized and nice looking.

Vanessa shared an update about Community UPLiFT – Since September 2017, there have been a total of 419 Community UPLiFT referrals across the region, with 269 in Douglas County, 137 in Klamath County, 11 in Lake County, and two from other counties (Coos, and Siskiyou Counties). Out of these referrals, families were connected to 649 different services; 444 in Douglas County, 197 in Klamath County, and 8 in Lake County.

Community UPLiFT has partnered with the Hope Pregnancy Centers in both Douglas and Klamath Counties.

There was a professional development Lunch and Learn planned (with 56 participants registered), however, it had to be cancelled due to COVID. There are a lot of different funding avenues for professional development (PD) right now, and Community UPLiFT is looking for ways to provide PD to our partners. Many providers are, however, overwhelmed with the amount of virtual professional development available at this time.

For external communication, outreach is happening through social media postings, and they are working to place Community UPLiFT on many different web sites.

Closing Reflection

Steve Schenewerk closed the meeting, and thanked Cliff Jones for leading the group in the DEI conversation and thanked everyone for sharing their thoughts and participating in such a profound meeting. It was echoed how lucky we are to work with a group of people willing to be on a team and share long-term goals.

Next Meeting Dates

September 9, 2020 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

December 9, 2020 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

March 3, 2021 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

June 2, 2021 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm