

SECAC Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

AUGUST 27, 2015, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Jackson, Mississippi

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Vickey Berryman, Ricky Boggan, Louise Davis, April May, Jennifer McNeal, Nita Norphlet-Thompson, Tina Routh, Marcie Skelton, Laurie Smith, Holly Spivey, Sandra Parks, Jennie Sturgis, Rhea Williams-Bishop, Carolyn Willis, Carey Wright

OTHERS PRESENT

Eileen Beazley, Latasha Brown, Kelly Butler, Debbie Ellis, Nathan Oakley, Delores Suel, Lydia Bethay

MEETING OBJECTIVES

1. Approval of Minutes
 2. Committee Updates
 3. Public/Additional Comments
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MINUTES

Approval of Minutes

Tina Routh motioned to approve the minutes. April May seconded the motion. The council unanimously approved the motion.

Committee Progress Update

Quality Rating Standards: Dr. Kristin Javorsky of the technical team presented the findings for the QRS report. She explained that the preliminary findings presented at the July 2015 SECAC meeting have been expanded in the current draft. According to the report, the biggest benefit mentioned at the listening sessions was technical assistance. Dr. Javorsky said access to services was identified as the biggest barrier to getting a higher QRS rating. She said providers agreed on factors that QRS should hold centers accountable for quality. She said providers desired positive working relationships with QRS evaluators. Providers also emphasized alternative training formats and assistance with formal education and indicated that they would like to be directly represented in efforts to revise the QRS program. Dr. Javorsky shared the report's recommendations, which included (1) building on what providers identified as important in the listening sessions; (2) addressing QRS aspects that deter or discourage providers from continuous improvement; and (3) examining QRS programs in other states to guide further development of the Mississippi's program. Dr. Javorsky said to keep in mind that these findings are based on perceptions and that perhaps some improvements should be about improving perceptions.

Rhea Williams-Bishop said the findings about formal education reflect the present

difficulty to fund efforts that provide education. Dr. Smith said she was surprised that finances wasn't a more cited barrier to getting a higher rating in QRS. Dr. Javorsky said barriers that were cited across all sessions were coded as more significant, but she said the study doesn't address whether finances is the biggest concern in a particular region of the state. Dr. Wright asked where do providers get technical assistance? Dr. Smith said the Early Years Network and Building Blocks offer technical assistance on-site, but it's limited based on funding, so she said there is not a systematic way of getting technical assistance to everyone. She said there's also some confusion about who should be contacted for technical assistance because more than one program offers it. Dr. Louise Davis confirmed that it was just Early Years doing technical assistance. Dr. Wright said a communication plan might help providers take advantage of the opportunity. Carolyn Willis said some centers need to identify what they need and that identifying exact needs is an essential part of the access question.

Marcie Skelton asked how we apply this information. Skelton asked when will this report will be available? Dr. Smith said next month on the website. Dr. Wright said once we get the date for the fall 2015 QRS summit, it will be important to get that on everyone's calendar.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment: Dr. Wright said the assessment window for kindergarten and pre-K is open from August 11 to September 15 and that the window for Early Learning Collaboratives is Sept. 1-25. She said she doesn't know when the preliminary results will come in, but she will inform SECAC as soon as she knows more. She said MDE is offering free pre-K administrator training. She also said MDE is offering regional literacy trainings for pre-K-2nd grade and SPED teachers. She said this training will be a regular activity and that it's very important for SPED teachers to be on the same page with everyone else. She said MDE is trying to expand advanced placement classes as well. She said MDE also wants children to focus on writing about literary texts rather than everyday things.

Dr. Wright said the law needs to be changed to say "proficient." Norphlet-Thompson said we need to stop accepting the lowest level as acceptable. She said we need to start early with parents and say low expectations are not OK and that we expect excellence. Dr. Wright said the assessment will be geared toward making sure students at all grade levels are proficient. Willis asked how do we know children coming from centers, Head Start, etc. are all on the same line? Dr. Wright said the assessment asks a question to identify whether a child was educated by a center, Head Start, home, etc. Willis said she thinks there are a lot of early childcare providers who would love to assess their children and work with teachers to get them where they need to be. Dr. Wright said this is something MDE wants to work on; she said outreach will be essential to making this work. Dr. Wright said MDE has been trying to push out as much information on training as possible, so if someone hasn't gotten the information, she said to let her know. Norphlet-Thompson said training sessions during a work day can be a problem for Head Start and providers. She said webinars or other methods can help alleviate this issue.

Standards Committee: Holly Spivey shared statistics on participation in the standards survey. She said the committee will provide a full report on this survey to SECAC. Dr. Candice Pittman said one thing that helped the response rate was all the letters that were sent out before the phone survey. Dr. Pittman said there was a good sampling of providers across the state for the survey. She said 82 percent of the surveyed providers reported using the standards. She said the overwhelming majority of those who use the standards find the standards helpful. She said the majority of the 18 percent who don't use the standards reported that they didn't use the standards because they weren't required to do so. She said that more than three-fourths of directors felt their staff was prepared for family support, early learning and development, and health, mental health, and nutrition. She shared the responses to strategies that should be used to address professional

development. She said the most important cited factor was that training should be consistent, equal, and affordable. She said 49 percent of the surveyed directors have a bachelor's degree or higher. Dr. Pittman said these are some of the more important findings so far, but she said there is a lot of work left to be done for the full report.

Willis asked will this information be broken down by region? She said if we're looking at strategies to help those who are most in need, it would be helpful to have the results broken down by region. Dr. Pittman showed the regional breakdown for the survey respondents. She said Southwest was the region with the smallest representation at 28 respondents. Dr. Pittman said the technical team will work on getting regional breakdowns done, if not for the report in September, then afterward. Williams-Bishop said the regional factor will help with identifying where resources need to be concentrated. Skelton said the first committee deliverable was to determine the current understanding and use of the standards. Williams-Bishop said the slides discuss that. Skelton said does asking how many use the standards cover whether they understand them? Williams-Bishop said perhaps a test or a focus group could help with this question. May said the committee has discussed how to better determine providers' understanding of standards. She said looking at why people don't use the standards sort of gets to the point about understanding. In other words, if respondents say they don't use them because they don't need them, then understanding isn't the issue. Jennie Sturgis said she doesn't think a test is the answer; she said she thinks technical assistance will help providers understand and apply the standards. Williams-Bishop said she agrees. She said she thinks this survey is a good start. Norphlet-Thompson said some centers may not use all the standards but that some of the standards might be applied and fit centers' approaches and the needs of their specific children.

Professional Development and Workforce Community College Subcommittee: Dr. Davis said the committee had a good meeting with community college faculty earlier in the month about discussing articulation with four-year institutions. She said the community college early childhood faculty would be posting updates on their Facebook page. They are checking to see which faculty has their master's in ECE. She said a session is planned for the MSECA conference in October. She said she is on the agenda for the next School of Human Sciences faculty meeting to discuss plans for an articulation pilot.

Data System: Dr. Pittman said the technical team has begun the development of an early childhood data portal. She said some initial steps have been taken. She said the team has taken an inventory of all the data in the state data clearinghouse to identify gaps in the data. She said the team is developing a work plan about the inventory, validation, and file transfer process. This plan will be presented before the Data Committee. She said the rainbow sheet represents every program that they are trying to integrate into the data system. She said Dr. Parisi said the RFP for the longitudinal data grant for early childhood has been submitted. If the state wins the grant, it can move this process ahead faster.

Public/Additional Comments

Skelton announced that Eileen Beazley is the next executive director of the Excel by 5 board.

Debbie Ellis said that providers do not know which agency is over the early learning guidelines. She stated that the guideline for square footage is 600 square feet for 20 children. She said the early collaborative standard is 1,000 square feet for 20 children. She said is she correct in understanding that current classrooms can continue operating under 600 square feet? Nathan Oakley of MDE said those guidelines are for public pre-K. Ellis said licensed providers need more notice of such hearings.

Kelly Butler commented on the idea of understanding the standards. She said getting people to share how to apply standards vs. citing them could help with this issue.

Latasha Brown asked if any other universities were notified or contacted about the pilot study for articulation agreements. She asked if Louise Davis' committee had reached out at all or only considered MSU? She said it kind of gets personal when everything is done at one place. She said Jackson State and other universities are willing to participate and serve the community. She said her university can help service with technical assistance. Dr. Davis said the purpose of the October 8 meeting in Natchez is to see how other universities can fit into the overall plan. Brown asked do you know who is invited. Dr. Davis said all 2 yr and 4 yr early childhood faculty would be invited to attend. Please send me any names that you would like added. Delores Suel said we have to be honest about the racial makeup of the state. She said she spoke to the Jackson State president, who is emphatic about this.

Skelton motioned to adjourn. Williams-Bishop seconded the motion. Chair Boggan adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.
