

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission
January 19, 2010
10:00 am
Minutes

Members Present: Barbara Gilkey, Janice Dancer, Nickie Hammontree, Jody Edrington, Evelyn Bass, Cindy Hogue (for Dee Cox), Debbie Malone, Suellen Ward, Missy Duke, Jan Cox (for Ann Patterson), Debbie Mays, Martha McAnally, Jeff Maneth, Shirley Pulliam, Chad Rogers, and Bob West.

Members Absent: Amy Denton, Eleanor Coleman, Marilyn Chambers, Gene Gregory, and Kim Qualls.

I. Call to Order/reading of Mission Statement

The January 2010 meeting of the AECC was called to order at 10:00 am by Barbara Gilkey, Chair. A quorum of members was present. All members read the AECC five strategic goals together.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 2009 meeting were reviewed. Dr. Nugent made a motion to accept the minutes. Suellen Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. Old Business

Barbara Gilkey asked that all AECC members and others attending the meeting introduce themselves. Two previous AECC members were recognized for their dedicated service to the Commission on behalf of children in Arkansas. Tonya Russell, Director DCCECE recognized both Bruce Cohen and Dr. Richard Nugent for their years of dedication and work on behalf of early care and education issues during their tenure on the AECC. Art work completed by children in an ABC program was framed and presented to both on their departure from the Commission.

Action Item

Better Beginnings Public Hearing Update/Goal 4

Ratha Turpin reported on the comments received on the proposed Better Beginnings document during the Public Hearing process. A reference to the definitions within TAPP (Traveling Arkansas Professional Pathways) has been included in the Better Beginnings rules. Comments concerning the three year approval procedure were discussed. With the three year certification, there will

be an annual report submitted by the program to ensure continued compliance. This annual program report would include information on staff training, staff turnover and include an improvement plan that is reviewed annually. The system changes, once approved by Legislative Council, would begin a roll out on April 1, 2010. Effective April 1, 2010 those program currently Quality Approved will automatically receive certification as a Three Star Better Beginnings program. These current QA programs would have 12 months to meet the newly revised requirements.

Debbie Malone asked about the standards related to having an approved curriculum. Ratha referred to the Better Beginnings grid and reported that the standard states that curriculum would be linked to learning goals and does not specify use of an approved curriculum.

Shirley Pulliam questioned the staff qualifications being required. The qualifications and continuing education requirements were discussed.

Motion was made by Nikki Hammontree to approve the Better Beginnings Rule Book. Debbie Mays and Missy Duke both seconded the motion which carried with no opposition.

Presentation

Better Beginnings Outreach Campaign/Goal 4

Dan Cowling, President of The Communications Group, presented an update on the Outreach and Education model being developed to support Better Beginnings. The outreach campaign presents a new model and strategy of marketing. The campaign is highly targeted, emphasis on underserved and hard to reach populations, built on science-based evaluation and measurement, with empirical outcome measurements, utilizes social marketing, is grassroots oriented, community based, and interfaces with existing organizations.

A dedicated web site will be operational within the next few months with information specifically for providers, parents and community partners related to Better Beginnings.

IV. New Business

STAR Health Initiative

Dr. Tom Bruce shared information on the STAR Health project. This project will focus on three SE AR counties, Chicot, Desha and Lincoln. STAR is the acronym for Southeast Targeted Area Resource for Health. He shared that a child born today in Phillips County would live 10 years less than a child born in Northwest Arkansas. The STAR Health project focuses on the disparities in education, economic development and health improvements. There will be 9 Community

Health Workers recruited locally and 8 Americorp staff to provide support for families to engage and inform them of services available.

Zero to Three AR Pilot Court Team

Darneisha Bell, Community Coordinator for the project addressed the Commission. This is a project co-sponsored by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the Division of Children and Family Services in partnership with Zero to Three, a national organization dedicated to Infant and Toddler issues. The pilot in AR will focus on Judge Joyce Warren's court and all children/families entering the system. A court team will be established to work with 20 families to support their progress through the court system ensuring the focus is on high quality opportunities for children from these families.

Birth to Pre-K Teaching Credential

Jamie Morrison reported that legislation in 2009 established a process for development of a B-Pre-K Credential as a Professional Development pathway, not a mandatory requirement. The TAPP Higher Ed group had established an articulation working group composed of 2 and 4 year institutions who have worked to establish core competency goals and core course work for early care and education students. This group has been instrumental in assisting as the Division works to design a process for a B-Pre-K Credential. The credential will be issued through the Division using the Teacher Licensure process as a framework, it will be good for 5 years and issued at no cost. As institutions send their plan to implement the core competencies and core courses for the B-Pre-K Credential to the Department of Higher Education, the Division will also review the submissions. The proposal also includes a specific assessment related to Early Childhood Development similar to the Praxis used for teacher licensure. As two and four year institutions submit plans to the Department of Higher Education, information will be shared with the AECC.

Qualls/QELI PK-K data

This item will be discussed at the April meeting.

Race to the Top

The Department of Education has submitted an application for federal funding in the Race to the Top program. The plan concerns four pillars for supporting school improvement in low-performing districts. These four pillars are: 1) data driven approach 2) target high priority districts 3) professional development for teachers and administrators 4) transformation of schools. Early childhood issues are being addressed in the data driven section to link children at an early age into the data system and in the transformation of schools model which includes a focus

on both center based care and home visiting for children in priority areas of the state.

V. Division Reports

A. Staff Introductions

Two new staff were introduced; Ivey Kelly who will be working directly with Tonya providing administrative support and Donna Helms who has been involved in grant writing. Both have taken extra help positions at this time.

B. Child Care Development Fund

Program Support addressed the five strategic goals of the Commission

Goal 1: During the past 6 months there has been an increase of 673 new Infant and Toddler slots through the work of the Infant and Toddler Specialists housed in each of the 6 local CCR&R agencies.

Goal 2: The Reach out and Read project trains doctors and nurse to encourage parents about the importance of reading aloud and gives them books at pediatric visits. During the past year, 20 clinics participated touching 34,975 children and distributing 54, 474 books. The Division funds a portion of the project.

Goal 3: Development and implementation of Key Content Areas and Competencies for early care providers and school-age/youth development staff will support the integration of professional standards across differing early care and youth development sectors.

Goal 4: Better Beginnings has a 1-800 Help Line available for questions during the “getting ready” phase, a web site will be operational in February or March of 2010 prior to full implementation and the Evaluation Team continues to conduct research to eliminate duplication.

Goal 5: The Arkansas Out of School Network continues to expand and strengthen partnerships with organizations to support professional development opportunities for school-age/youth development staff. Through these partnerships additional specialized training is being made available.

- New Futures for Youth is conducting training on the 40 Developmental Assets;
- Welcome the Children/UAMS Partners for Inclusive Communities is presenting Creating Culturally Competence Afterschool Programs and Adventures in Peacemaking;
- Arkansas 4H has a series of sessions addressing Science Technology Engineering and Math, Experiential Learning, Day Camps and ExCel Leadership; and
- Save the Children is conducting Literacy sessions for school age programs.

Family Support/Stimulus Update

Mark Story reported that the stimulus funds of \$19 Million are being committed. As families are found eligible, the Division is converting those in most need (those with the lowest earned income) to regular CCDF to ensure full expenditure of all stimulus funds.

Finance

Mark Story shared that based on state funding cut-backs, there will be no ABC funded summer programs, but felt sure that voucher funds would be available to support continued care for eligible children during the summer months.

VI. Information and Other Business

There were no public comments.

The next AECC meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2010 at the Head Start Collaboration Office beginning at 10:00 am.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned.