

Commission to Develop a Strategic Priorities Plan for Maine's Young Children

Thursday, September 6, 2007

MEETING SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Sen. Joseph Brannigan (chair), Rep. Sean Faircloth (chair), Sen. Jonathan Courtney, Sen. Joseph Perry, Rep. John Piotti, Rep. Donna Finley, Rep. Kimberly Silsby, William Hager, Philip Trostel, Paul Bolin, Aymie Walshe, [Rep. Charles Priest]

Members absent: Rep. Meredith Strang-Burgess

1. Convening of the Commission

- Welcome and introduction of Commission members
- Review of Commission purpose, duties and requirements (Resolve 2007, c. 136)

2. Presentation by Steven Rowe, Attorney General: "Invest Early in Maine's Future"

→ *Copy of Power Point Presentation available at:*
<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/planforchildmtmats.htm>

3. Overview of Early Care and Education in Maine – Presentations by State Agency Staff

→ *Copies of Power Point Presentations available at:*
<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/planforchildmtmats.htm>

- Lauren Sterling, Maine Children's Cabinet
- Sheryl Peavey, DHHS: Task Force on Early Childhood; Early Childhood Systems Initiative; State Plan for Humane Early Childhood Systems; Home Visiting
- Carolyn Drugge, DHHS: Child Care and Head Start
- Patti Woolley, DHHS: Early Childhood Division & Systems Change
- Barbara VanBurgel, DHHS: Office of Integrated Access and Support / TANF and Transitional Child Care
- Janine Blatt, DOE: Pre-Kindergarten
- Debra Hannigan, DOE: Child Development Services

Presenters were asked for suggestions to improve public policy consistent with the "invest early" approach:

- Spending smarter / comprehensive planning
- Regionalizing services and administration
- Reinvest identified savings into early childhood
- Focus on designing systems to meet employer and community needs
- Rely on the "State Plan" and its recommendations
- Look to West Virginia as a model for public pre-K
- Consider "Collaboration Coach Model" for public pre-K

4. Economic Returns to Early Childhood Investment

- Staff presentation regarding the economic returns to investment and evidence from program evaluations

→ *Copies of handouts available at:*

<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/planforchildmtmats.htm>

Questions/information requests:

- What are the returns to investment in “universal” early childhood interventions in comparison to targeted programs? (e.g. public pre-K vs. Perry Preschool)
- Is there research evidence on outcomes/returns to early care and education investments that is applicable to Maine?
- Is there research evidence on differences in outcomes for children in family day care homes vs. child care centers?
- Request for additional information on Iowa’s Well-Being Visit Program

5. Early Care and Education Policy Review – Recent Legislation and Program Models

- Recent Legislative proposals and laws enacted in Maine
- Sampling of policies and programs from other states and industrialized nations

→ *Copies of handouts available at:*

<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/planforchildmtmats.htm>

6. Preliminary Ideas & Suggestions for the Strategic Investment Plan

General Comments and Suggestions

- **Investment Perspective / Invest Early**
 - Hope that we tackle this issue from the standpoint of it being a worthwhile investment
 - Need to put more dollars at birth (home visits and family support) to get the best return; look at investments in prenatal, infant and early toddler periods
 - Commission could have a major impact in getting across the value of early intervention
 - Need to communicate that early investment has the most impact; need to deliver the message about the concentration of brain development during 0-3 years
 - Knowledge of human brain development has advanced (significant development occurs 0-5 and particularly 0-3) and policy needs to catch up with these changes
 - Many of the returns to this investment come in the form of avoided costs for the state; the costly things that will not happen (crime, delinquency, welfare receipt)
- **Demonstrate Savings**
 - Would be surprised if anyone argued against investment in kids, but we need to be pragmatic and show the value to taxpayers
 - Example: if the corrections system does not need as much money due to crime reduction we need to be able to quantify that

- There are models/studies that show a reduced need for remedial education spending; approximately 16-17% of all kids require special education while 5% of children are born with neurological deficits; just looking at the dollars spent on remedial education is a good place to start
- In the Appropriations Committee day in and day out they hear that a program will generate savings “down the road”; the Commission needs to keep in mind that this is what Appropriations is always hearing
- **Where to Start**
 - The State Plan represents three years of hard work and we should use it
 - Need to be efficient and not reinvent what is already being done
- **Home Visiting Issues**
 - Need to keep in mind that funding of home visits through the Fund for Healthy Maine has been hard to defend in the Legislature
 - Important to look at home visiting as prevention in relation to family violence, abuse and neglect
- **Child Care as an Industry**
 - Need to invest dollars to create quality jobs in ECE; if we valued ECE as a profession, we’d already be doing that; this will require a paradigm shift; as a state we need to view child care as an investment
 - Importance of looking at child care as an industry and child care providers as a workforce and the need to invest in this industry/workforce
- Thinking about tax policy is a creative approach to the problem; important to remember that tax credits really are expenditures
- Noted that historically funding streams for ECE services typically focus on either the parent/family outcomes (e.g. TANF) or the child outcomes (e.g. CDS), but not both
- Need to look at the language we use and be sure we are communicating that child care is an “investment” and it is “education”; as we shift the language towards “education”, we have to remember that during the 0-3 years every interaction is part of the child’s development whether it looks like the activities we usually we think of when we hear the term “education”
- It is not only how we say things but who says it; important to look at building a coalition of support around the issue

Preliminary Ideas for Policy Proposals

- **Long-term Planning Structure:** Create some type of long-term planning structure to ensure this carries beyond the 3 year term of the investment plan; create a council along the lines of the Maine Economic Growth Council
- **Child Advocate:** Create a Child Advocate office along the lines of the Office of the Public Advocate in Maine for ratepayers (SF)
- **Home Visiting:**
 - Expand/increase home visiting to reach more families
 - Explore strategies to increase support children in families dealing with substance abuse and family violence
- **Child Care:**
 - Give some attention to child care for “off hours”; parents working night shifts / concern that young children are being left home with siblings
 - Expenditure of tax dollars on child care subsidies should go to quality child care

- Provide/increase incentives for providers to meet quality standards
- Family, friends and neighbors care (legal unlicensed) is where many children are; we need to think about strategies to reach out to that segment of the child care world to make FFN care the best possible
- Concerns expressed about the state paying for legal-unlicensed child care for many children on TANF when state does not do anything about the quality of care
- In economic development world, we look at business “clusters”; how could we look at child care as a cluster?
- **Pre-K:** Consider models of collaboration between public pre-kindergarten and Head Start
- **Tax Policies:**
 - Consider strategies to increase the use of pre-tax flexible spending accounts for child care expenses; explore how the state could facilitate the expansion of pre-tax deductions for child care for families who currently do not have access to a dependent care FSA
 - Consider tax incentives for employees in the child care field to pursue additional education / professional development

7. Review Work Plan for Meetings 2-4 / Subcommittees

- Subcommittees established (contact person):
 - Child care, Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten (Bill Hager)
 - Home visiting, family support (Joe Brannigan/Donna Finley)
 - Tax incentives and family leave policies (Joe Perry)
 - Strategic Coalition Building (Sean Faircloth)