



MEETING NOTES

Region 1-B-C Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: May 16, 2023, 5:00-7:00 PM

Council Members present: Michelle Zurita-Sharpe, Leatha Asbury, Adelia Brienzo, Kelly Burke, Felicia McBride

Council Members absent: Rochelle Golliday, Janice Martin, Janis Jones, Gretchen Bailey

5:00 PM: Welcomes/Icebreaker (10 mins)

What is needed in our Region for a more accessible, equitable, and sustainable ECEC system?

Notes:

- Ashonti Jackson, Regional Council Manager, speaks with Council Members on the icebreaker question and allows them to share their thoughts.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: Review of Community Agreements & Best Practices

5:10 PM: Review of Community Agreements & Best Practices (5 mins)

Notes:

- Action Council Members had about 5 minutes to review community agreements and best practices.

Decisions made: Action Council Members decided to keep the community agreements and best practices the same and not make any changes.

Next Steps: Regional Recommendations Introduction

5:15 PM: Regional Recommendations Introduction (15 mins)

Equity, Access, Affordability, Quality, Compensation?

Notes:

- Ashonti Jackson discusses Equity, Access, Affordability, Quality, and Compensation with Action Council Members and asks them to reflect on these topics regarding our region.
- Asked the Action Council if they wanted to add any additional categories.

Decisions made: Action Council wants to remove compensation and substitute it for workforce development. They decided to add diversity and inclusion to fall under the



equity category.

Next Steps: Breakout Session

5:30 PM: Breakout Session (30 mins)

Provide an ECEC definition for Equity, Access, Affordability, Quality, and Compensation:

Provide 5 Regional Recommendations for the areas:

Give a brief reason why this is needed:

Notes:

Action Council Members discussed equity, access, affordability, quality, and compensation as well as the Regional Recommendations and their responses are below:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

- Diverse workforce on all levels (e.g., teaching and leadership staff) to reflect community population, area: (diversity) why: Students and families must see themselves reflected in ECEC programs, and staff and leadership must understand the communities' cultures, languages, and needs. The Cook County South area reflects diverse communities, yet data shows that the ECEC workforce does not reflect this.
- English language learners and bi/multilingual families need additional services, support, and resources, area: inclusion because Many ECEC programs and CBOs do not provide services to English learners and do not have bi/multilingual staff to support maintaining native language(s).
- Students with disabilities and their families need additional services, support, and resources, area: inclusion because Many ECEC programs and CBOs do not provide services and support for children with disabilities and their families, and suspension/expulsion, is still a concern for students with significant social-emotional needs.
- Students experiencing homelessness need additional services, support, and resources.
- Invest in services that support the whole student and target more of the non-academic barriers to achievement (e.g., poverty, trauma, and other systemic issues).

Access:

- Need for additional programs/slots in the southwest side of our region, why: there is a lack of programs/slots currently on the southwest side, yet there are children in the area.



- Increased outreach efforts and support, targeting marginalized and under-resourced communities and families. Why: Many programs are under-enrolled because families lack knowledge of community programs and resources. Families living below the FPL, those without social network support and facing barriers such as language, do not have access to this information.
- Establish community navigators and collaboratives that help families navigate the system and establish a hub, phone number, or one-stop shop. Why: Navigators can assist with identifying community needs, connecting with hard-to-reach communities, and developing relationships with families. Navigators and collaboratives can streamline enrollment and connect families to resources/programs. Streamline the ability to access services.
- Optimize community partnerships and collaborations to connect families to resources, ECEC programs, and services. Why: ECEC programs and CBOs are currently not fully partnering with community businesses, church/faith-based organizations, WIC offices, food pantries, park districts, libraries, and other community assets to spread awareness of services to all families.

Affordability:

- All families can enroll their children in ECEC programs and services, regardless of income levels why: currently, families are required to submit income verification forms to qualify for PFA programs, which can pose another barrier. Many in-between families do not qualify for CCAP.
- Ensure educators can afford child care for their children.

Quality:

- Create methods for filling in gaps in data and ensuring up-to-date and accurate data; why: Arab Americans are currently categorized under white/Caucasian on the US census, marginalized populations are not reflected accurately in the US census, and limited information on languages spoken at home.
- Opportunities for amplifying the voices of families that reflect the diversity and needs of the community.
- Improved data-driven decision-making protocols for funding, staffing, supports/resources, etc. Why: It would be nice to know what percentage of households with limited English proficiency are not English spoken languages. Because areas with a more significant median household income are also areas with fewer childcare providers, it would be nice to know if this is because families can afford in-house care or can afford for one parent to stay home or what? It would be nice to know, in addition to center capacity, how many educator slots are available/filled and the demographics of those educators. It



would be nice to know what education-related institutions are in the region (e.g., autism development center, helping hands center, etc.)

Workforce Development:

- Ongoing staff professional development. Why: staff needs ongoing and relevant training to help gain knowledge and support children's education.
- Hire additional specialized staff (e.g., mental health consultants, speech pathologists, psychologists, special education teachers, etc.)
- Increase educator salaries and benefits (e.g., free child care for child care workers, affordable health care options, paid time off, etc.)
- Support distributed leadership models within schools (e.g., transparency for educators on how money is received and spent, including all voices in how decisions are made, anonymous reporting/auditing system)

Decisions made:

Next Steps: Next Steps

6:00 PM: Next Steps (30 mins)

Notes:

- Ashonti J. discusses the next steps with the Birth to Five Councils, inviting more people to join, survey, and if they are still interested in staying on the council.

Decisions made: Emails will be sent to Action Council Members for them to survey their experience of being on the council.

Next Steps: Regional Needs Assessment

6:30 PM: Regional Needs Assessment (15 mins)

Notes:

- Ashonti J speaks with council members on demographics, slot gaps, community collaborations, and ECEC Programs being completed. Made them aware of the workforce, the family caregiver is in a draft, and Regional strengths and needs, and recommendations are in the works.

Decisions made: We will keep them updated on the process of the RNA and where we are.

Next Steps: Send over the finalized draft.

Follow-up/Next Steps:

TBD