



Meeting Minutes

Region 1-B-D Cook North Action Council Meeting

Location: Virtual or in person

Date & Time: April 17th, 2023, 3:00 pm-5:00 pm

Action Council members present: Agnieszka Moroni, Bettye Cohns, Clare Giuffrida, Susan Cerza, Lisa Merdinger, Carrie Rafalski, Tina Vanderwarker, Casche Knox, Cori Mohr, Chris Tokarski, Kristen Ford

Action Council members absent: Natalie Wood, Olga Khamichonak, Peter J. Smith, Kate Warach, Amy Cocorikis, John Ranieri, Vikki Podlipni, Edward Russell, Michele Ramsey

3:00 pm: Welcome/ Review of Community Agreements/ Regional Updates (22 minutes)

Notes: Ilinca shared about the change of Regional Scan to Regional Needs Assessment, and reviewed the agenda for today.

Discussion about the celebration for the Family and Action Council.

Icebreaker: "What do you feel are the strengths of the Cook North region?"

- Diversity of cultures and Diversity
- Proximity to resources
- Excellent resources throughout!
- Doctors, excellent schools...
- There seem to be a lot of community collaborations and networks
- Willingness to collaborate
- A very knowledgeable group of people supporting Cook North!
- Lots of specialized professionals, and therapists. There are deserts in our state.

Decision made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

Facilitator(s): Ilinca Wallace

3:22 Workforce (42 minutes)

Notes: Ilinca shared about the ECACE (Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity) Scholarship Program, who the Northside Navigators are (Ashanti, Candyce and



Sandra), the requirements for getting the scholarship, and the support that is provided to you with getting this scholarship.

The group was divided into 2 small groups for a discussion about the workforce.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the early childhood education and care workforce landscape in the region?
 - There is a shortage of staff in the region that is culturally representative of the children and families served
 - There is a shortage of teachers that have the Special Education and Bilingual Endorsement
 - Majority of the workforce is women in the region
 - There are other professionals in Early Childhood
 - Therapists – the training for them is very expensive
 - How can we all work effectively together/the team is really important → worried about the lack of therapists in EI and school-based
2. What initiatives exist within the region to support/recruit providers?
 - ECACE Scholarship, recruitment videos
3. What higher education, high school, or training programs are available for early childhood educators?
 - Programs in High Schools exist to expose students to Early Childhood Education
 - ECACE scholarship
4. What do your findings regarding the placement of early childhood education and care sites, along with the slot gap, contribute to the conversation about the early childhood workforce?
 - Not getting a lot of younger people in the workforce
 - Counselors telling High schoolers no you'll be in the poor house forever
 - Need a living wage Teachers are living in poverty/below the poverty
 - a. Now the workforce is depleting
 - b. Private centers can't afford the same pay as the school district or offer the same benefits



- Need to value them as educators → Need to learn the practicality of the work (through an education)
 - “It takes a team of people to support that child and family”
 - It’s income, health insurance for my family, it’s steady → Talking about leaving the EI field going into the school system
 - i. Inequities in both systems (EI and school systems)
 - ii. The proposed budget is hopeful
5. How diverse is the ECEC workforce and is the workforce representative of the communities they serve?
- a. Trying to find diversity for a long time
 - b. HS – try to create a diverse classroom environment that represents the children in the classrooms ... depends on what community you work in/ community of the school
 - c. Not a lot of diversity in admin positions – particularly are white and female .. in the classroom more diverse
6. What would a truly representative ECEC workforce look like for Cook North?
- a. To represent the classroom within the workforce
 - b. Engage incoming workforce to encourage
 - c. High school and who’s helping me with these decisions
 - d. More teachers with all abilities and valued in their skills
 - e. Does the parent, or child see themselves in the classroom/building
 - f. Cultural diversity → can speak Spanish but don’t look like the children in the classroom...don’t come from that culture (family, etc) ... Muslim families (uniqueness of what goes on during the holidays) ... more than just the language
7. What does the data tell us about what Cook North might need in the future?
- a. Need more money/resources
 - b. Need more Common standards for EC educators ... all program requirements
 - c. More creative ways to continue their education.
 - d. “More pipelines to end goal of being the qualified lead teacher”
 - e. Offer a livable wage
 - f. “Ultimately, it means we need Federal funds to support ECE. But parents can't be the ones to pay for those higher wages”

Decision made: N/A



Next Steps: N/A

Facilitator: Ilinca Wallace

4:04 Break (10 minutes)

4:14 pm: Updates from the Family Council (24 minutes)

Notes: Irene asked the Action Council a question:

If new to the community/new to the school district how does one find out about programs/events in their community? Irene shared community events happening in the next coming weeks.

Discussion around referrals and collaboration with pediatrician offices:

As therapists need a physician or psychologist to make a diagnosis

- Tried to get services within the medical center to expand- Need more medical diagnostic teams
- Financial restrictions -insurance won't pay for the cost
- Coordinator's responsibility to send reporting to the doctor
- Pediatricians should not refer just to EI but to the school district @ 2 ½ so we could start them right away on their 3yr birthday

Opportunities with medical partnerships:

- Child Find – we need to publicize and have screening appointments in the area and find out where they fall.

Decision made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

Facilitator: Irene Di Minervino

4:36 pm: Parents, Caregivers, and Families (20 minutes)

Notes: Review past Family Council and other caregivers' quotes/takeaways for demographics, early childhood programs, priority populations, slot gap, and workforce and reflect as a group:

1. What are parents' experiences with access to early childhood care and education in the region?
2. Whose voices are still missing? How can those be captured in the future?
3. Do current services/supports seem sufficient for how the community is growing/changing?



Discussion:

- Need to have a lot of money, pray for a daycare or be rich
 - One center had 17month waitlist for an infant
 - If easier to license a center we would have more centers (DCFS support would have an impact)
 - Had a family that enrolled in a corporate-based program on the side of a hospital – the child was going to need some therapies, and she wanted to know if having a therapist to come to the site --- another program had to consult their lawyer (the child had concerns) ... parent was put off
 - My child was dx with Type 1 diabetes – the program was so supportive, her teacher made sure she got what she needed, the outside cook was very good in making medication to her meal (not too much/get enough of something) → Meet families and support them

- In Niles township
 - Families can't find what they're looking for and that meets them culturally ... trying to find care so mom can take ESL ... don't qualify for CCAP because mom is not full time in school, dad makes too much as a truck driver.

- In Evanston
 - Families that are connected with each other ... trying to meet these families where they are already meeting (churches, etc)
 - City of Evanston website
 - Primarily word of mouth

- Cultural piece – just learning the educational landscape

- Families have a very hard time finding quality subsidized childcare. It is very expensive. Many times it is not worth mom working because all of her salary would go to pay for childcare.

Decision made: Ilinca will send out a Google form with these 3 questions for some individual reflection

Next Steps: N/A

Facilitator: Ilinca Wallace



4:57 pm: Questions/Comments/Reflections (3 minutes)

Notes: Next Action Council meeting on May 1st will be developing intentional recommendations and strengths. Invited everyone to attend if they could make the time. Google Form will be sent with individual reflections.

Decision made: N/A

Next Steps: Ilinca will email the Action Council members for recommendations and create one large document to bring consensus around final recommendations.

Facilitator: Ilinca Wallace

Next Meeting: Monday, May 1st, 3:00 pm- 5:00 pm