



EVERY CHILD READY CHICAGO WORKING GROUP MEETING AGENDA

April 27, 2021 12:30-1 pm CT

ATTENDEES

Mayor Lori Lightfoot, *City of Chicago*
Anne Farrell, *Chapin Hall*
April Janney, *Illinois Action for Children*
Bela Mote, *Carole Robinson Center for Learning*
Bryan Stokes, *Chicago Public Schools*
Christa Hamilton, *Centers for New Horizons*
Cindy La, *Asian Human Services*
Cornelia Grumman, *McCormick Foundation*
Dana Garner, *IFF*
Denise Dell Isola, *Irving Harris Foundation*
Diana Rauner, *Start Early*

Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, *Child Care Advocates United*
Felipa Mena, *Family Representative*
Jaclyn Vasquez, *Erikson Institute*
Jamilah Jordan, *Governor's Office of ECE*
Jennifer Alexander, *Mayor's Office*
Jesse Rojo, *Early Learning Committee Organizer*
Kristin Bernhard, *Start Early*
Leslie McKinley, *Chicago Public Schools*
Maricela Garcia, *Gads Hill*
Oriana Wilson, *Chicago Public Schools*
Ruth Kimble, *Austin Childcare Providers Network*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

Welcome from the Mayor's Office: Remarks from Mayor Lori Lightfoot

- The work of Every Child Ready Chicago is essential, especially in this challenging year during which children and families have gone through so much.
- As we think about resources and federal investments, we want to focus on the early learning space and starting at the earliest possible time so that children are ready to learn in kindergarten and are confident and literate learners in 3rd grade.
- By focusing more on the front end, we can spend less on interventions later. If we do more work and foster more innovation in the early years, children will have a strong foundation and love of learning, and we will see our young people blossom. We all need to embrace this work going forward.
- Although we are coming out of this challenging year in which we have seen a drop off in preschool enrollment and learning loss exacerbating existing gaps, this is a real opportunity and inflection point where we can try and make the right decisions.
- We know that families look at schools when they make decisions about staying in the city. Families also look at neighborhood assets and resources. We are building within city government an interdisciplinary team -- Chicago Public Schools, the Department of Family and Support Services, public health, libraries, parks -- to break out of our silos, identify shared values, and then target resources to make the most impact.
- The city is on a good path, including early learning. Thanks to all of you for being a part of this vital work.

Introduction to Today's Meeting: Jennifer Alexander

- The Mayor's Office reviewed the ECRC vision and values and the community agreements (*see meeting deck*).
- School Readiness Consulting (SRC) was brought on to start the strategic planning process. This meeting represents the official hand-off between SRC and the Mayor's Office.

Shared Learning Journeys: Emily Powers

- In December 2020, the Working Group identified a need to slow down this process and dive deeper into specific issues. Through a vote, the group identified the following as the topics they were most interested in learning more about:

- Prenatal to Three Initiative (PN3)
- Early Intervention/Special education
- Workforce Development
- Data
- Shared Learning Journeys are intended to respond to this identified need and explore how the ECRC strategic plan should align with other efforts and initiatives to build on existing priorities and objectives and avoid duplicate efforts. They aim to:
 - Utilize the expertise of Working Group members regarding state and local initiatives
 - Ensure Working Group members have a shared understanding of key initiatives and efforts
 - Begin to explore how state and local initiatives can inform the ECRC strategic planning process
- PN3 was the first Shared Learning Journey. The impact goal of PN3 is that 100,000 more expecting families and infants and toddlers across Illinois receive the services and supports they need by 2025.
- During the Shared Learning Journey, participants discussed how PN3 aligns with initiatives underway in the state and Chicago and identified the following areas of alignment:
 - State initiatives:
 - Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission
 - Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development Preschool Development Grant B-5 Strategic Plan
 - Early Learning Council
 - Chicago initiatives:
 - Family Connects
 - Home Visiting - Early Head Start
 - Health Chicago 2025
 - Chicago's Racial Equity Rapid Response Team (RERRT)
- It was noted that Working Group members would lead upcoming Shared Learning Journeys and that teachers and providers will be attending to share their experiences. The Mayor's Office sent an invitation and a survey to see what topics were of most interest for the Workforce and EI/Special education sessions. Working Group members were also invited to let the Mayor's Office know if they knew of any parents or caregivers who would be willing to share. Compensation for parents and caregivers is available.
 - **Workforce:** Wednesday, May 12, 9 am-10:15 am
 - **Early Intervention/Special Education:** Week of May 24th
 - **Data Repository & Research Consortium:** Week of June 7th

What's Next for the Working Group: Jennifer Alexander

- The Working Group will transition to an Advisory Council. This council will:
 - Support the implementation, coordination, accountability, and communication for the strategic plan
 - Ensure ongoing engagement and collaboration with diverse early childhood stakeholders
 - Provide a direct line of communication for stakeholders to the Mayor's Office and city agencies
 - Inform and elevate systems improvements
 - Act as a sounding board to consider new initiatives and promote innovation
- The desired outcomes of the Advisory Council are:
 - Effective representation
 - Increase transparency and collaboration, including with other city agencies such as parks and libraries
 - Alignment and not duplication
 - Responsiveness to short term and long term needs
- The draft structure for the Advisory Council includes a project management team that will play a supporting role between the early childhood team at the Mayor's Office and the Advisory Council
- The process over the next few months was reviewed:
 - **May:** Shared Learning Journeys on Workforce and Early Intervention/Special Education; one-on-one conversations with working group members to inform the direction and next steps; update ECRC Strategy Map as needed; and identify project management resources. It was noted that the Mayor's Office and Start Early would be working on identifying these resources.
 - **June and July:** Shared Learning Journey on Data and Research; convene ECRC meeting (one per month); present recommendations for governance structure; develop meeting "playbook;" secure project resources; and implement a recruitment strategy

- **August:** Onboard Advisory Council members; hold first Advisory Council meeting; schedule Advisory and Sub-committee meetings
- Key questions regarding the Advisory Council include:
 - Structure:
 - What are the strategic priorities that will make up the subcommittee?
 - What are the roles/responsibilities of serving on a subcommittee?
 - How do we support the work of the subcommittee?
 - Membership
 - Who should serve on the council?
 - How do we ensure family voice?
 - How do we build inclusive spaces to support engagement?
 - Resources:
 - What is needed for effective implementation and ongoing support?

Landscape Reflections and Initial Planning: SRC

- SRC presented themes related to six initial strategic areas that emerged from the previous meeting's small group activity and follow-up survey regarding the landscape:
 - **Access:** Improving families' experiences with early learning, including getting connected to programs and resources and learning about what's available, outreach, language support, and using different platforms; expanding programs
 - **Quality:** Developing a shared and collaborative understanding of what quality means; enhancing supports to meet the needs of all children across race, language, ability, culture, and experience
 - **Workforce:** Increasing support for entry into the workforce, including developing alternative credentials/pathways; supporting the existing workforce, including well-being and a focus on equitable compensation and benefits; including diversity in the workforce and elevating BIPOC leaders
 - **Leadership:** Reflecting a range of stakeholders in the city and ensuring families are centered in the decision making process -- not only in formal bodies but also in the day-to-day implementation of decisions throughout the system; improving systems of accountability
 - **Funding:** Recognizing the numerous upcoming funding changes at the local, state, and federal levels; leveraging opportunities to maximize funds and secure new and sustainable funding; strengthening relationships with business and philanthropic communities
 - **Data and Research:** Increasing clarity and transparency of what information exists and how it is shared; using data to drive equity and decision-making
- This information is incorporated into the **Initial Landscape and Strategy Map Overview** document to be provided at the end of the month. This deliverable incorporates resources identified by the Mayor's Office and Start Early, publicly available reports and data sources, Working Group meeting feedback, and select interviews. The deliverable provides:
 - Vision & Values
 - Initial Landscape
 - Potential Strategic Directions
 - Strategy Map
- Working Group members had the opportunity to review the Strategy Map included in the meeting materials and then self-select into one of six breakout rooms focused on each of the strategic areas, depending on their area of interest.
- Following the small group discussion, Working Group members shared the following reflections with the whole group:
 - **Access:** It is essential to include facility expansion/enhancement as a strategic priority
 - **Workforce:** Themes from the discussion included growing BIPOC leadership and defining the workforce more broadly -- for example, including mental health providers
 - **Leadership:** Developing clear roles and responsibilities and conceiving the Advisory Council as a public-private partnership that outlasts any one administration are essential considerations
 - **Data:** The data warehouse that has been built is a significant opportunity; supporting data literacy is also a key strategy.
- Working Group members also noted an overall reflection regarding the need to meet the urgency of now and suggested a public meeting or forum might be helpful as things are changing rapidly and new funding is entering the system

Closing

- SRC thanked the Working Group for the opportunity to work on Every Child Ready Chicago
- The Mayor's Office closed out the meeting with a few reminders...

- Communications: Mayor's Office main point of contact moving forward!
 - Jennifer Alexander- Jennifer.alexander@cityofchicago.org
 - Nataly Barrera- nataly.barrera@cityofchicago.org
- RSVP for Workforce Shared Learning Journey
 - 9am-10:15 on May 12th
 - Please complete the [survey](#) by COB 4/27
- Working group reconvening in June and July - Calendar invites to come!