



EVERY CHILD READY CHICAGO WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

November 6, 2020

12 pm -3 pm

MEETING OUTCOMES

- To co-create a vision statement for the 0-5 early childhood system in Chicago
- To identify a set of initial priorities to realize the vision and act as a framework for the *Every Child Ready Chicago* Strategic Plan

ATTENDEES

Cindy La, *Asian Human Services*

Ruth Kimble, *Austin United*

Bela Mote, *Carole Robinson Center for Learning*

Anne Farrell, *Chapin Hall*

Dara Munson, *Chicago Childcare Society*

Edgar Ramirez, *Chicago Commons*

Jennifer Seo, *Chicago Department of Public Health*

Mary Ellen Messner, *Chicago Public Library*

Bryan Stokes, *Chicago Public Schools*

Oriana Wilson, *Chicago Public Schools*

Luisiana Melendez, *Chicago Public Schools*

Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, *Child Care Advocates United*

Katie Conner, *City Colleges*

Christa Hamilton, *Coalition of Site-Based Administrators*

Christina Herzog, *Crown Family Foundation*

Tiffany Junkins, *Department of Family Support Services*

Jesse Rojo, *Early Learning Committee Organizer*

Maricela Garcia, *Gads Hill*

Mary Ottinot, *Head Start Parent Policy Council*

Dana Garner, *IFF*

April Janney, *Illinois Action for Children*

Denise Dell Isola, *Irving Harris Foundation*

Sylvia Puente, *Latino Policy Forum*

Jennifer Alexander, *Mayor's Office*

Sybil Madison, *Mayor's Office*

Cornelia Grumman, *McCormick Foundation*

Ricardo Estrada, *Metropolitan Family Services*

Diane Schanzenbach, *Northwestern University*

Kristin Berhard, *Start Early*

Sara Slaughter, *Stone Foundation*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

Welcome from Sybil Madison, Deputy Mayor for Human Services & Education

- The Mayor's Office heard from the community many times "What is the vision for early childhood?" It was clear that the development of a vision and strategic plan needed to be a collective and unifying effort and began a plan for a collaborative effort – *Every Child Ready Chicago*.
- COVID has laid bare the inequities that have been in our system for years. If Chicago ever need an early childhood system that made sure that every child can thrive, it is now.
- This effort will be centered around the values established for the City:
 - Diversity and inclusion: *We have worked hard to have diverse and inclusive representation on the Working Group.*
 - Transparency: *We are committed to transparency. Although we looked into the Open Meetings Act and it doesn't apply for this initiative, we are committed to sharing progress via posting materials on a dedicated [ECRC webpage](#) for the wider community.*
 - Accountability: *We want to center the work on children and families. We are accountable to them.*
 - Equity: *We are committed to equity. However we define readiness, we want to make sure that the system has what is required so that readiness is achieved for every child. The vision is universal, but the strategic plan has to account for the reality of the structural inequities that black and brown families, and those living in poverty experience.*
 - Transformation: *We are committed to transformation and know that to do this, we have to partner. We want to create a space where all children have the same outcomes -- the outcomes we want for all of our children.*
- The Mayor's Office recognizes there are many changes right now due to COVID, the Head Start re-competition, the state's Early Childhood Funding Commission, etc. Alongside these efforts, it is the right time to begin this work as our children and families need a system that is organized around them...that is high-quality...that is aligned.
- It will take more than the Mayor or one organization. The Mayor's Office is thankful to Start Early and to the funders that are supporting our ability to do this work. It will take all members of the Working Group to provide

insights, input and feedback that will drive the strategic planning process to end with a vision and actionable plan that will best support Chicago's young children and families.

Overview of Early Child Ready Chicago Strategic Planning Process

- Community Agreements were shared to support facilitation and help in creating a space where all ideas are welcome and every voice is heard. The group clarified that while the community agreement notes that "information that is shared is confidential," what is meant is that individual stories are confidential, but the wisdom that is gained is shared.
- The timeline of the initiative was shared, highlighting key milestones throughout the process. The Working Group was particularly interested in supporting the interview process. The Project Team clarified the role of the Working Group during this step of the process is to inform the selection of interviewees. The information from interviews will then be shared with the Working Group to help inform decisions around priority areas and strategic directions.
 - The group also noted the ambitious timelines. Further, there are some potential significant changes to the landscape that are coming up, along with other initiatives that are underway, including the state's Early Childhood Funding Commission, the Early Learning Council's Strategic Plan, the state Prenatal-Three agenda, the upcoming Head Start re-competition and the Chicago Early Childhood Workforce Partnership. The work taking place with the Early Childhood Workforce Partnership in particular was highlighted as a place of intersection with this work.
 - The current plan is for a framework to be finalized by February (Phase 2) with a full plan and implementation occurring in the spring/summer (Phase 3). In this initial visioning phase, there is an opportunity to put children and families in the center, with implementation focusing on how organizations will collectively partner to serve them.
- The cycles of engagement highlighted the ways in which information will be shared between the Executive Steering Committee and the Working Group. Both Executive Steering Committee and Working Group have key roles in developing priority areas, strategic directions and measures of success in an iterative process to design the framework.
- Members of the Working Group were interested in how other people could be potentially brought to the table or engaged in the strategic planning process.

Envisioning the Future

- The large portion of the meeting was spent in small groups working to draft a vision statement for the initiative. The group spent time reviewing key components of strong vision statements, existing language used to guide efforts in the state and Chicago, as well as examples from other cities.
- Once in break out rooms, participants worked individually to respond to prompts and then used their responses to draft potential visions for Every Child Ready Chicago.
 - *Notes and responses from this activity can be found in the meeting materials*
- The group then spent time in a large group elevating key themes from their breakout rooms including...
 - There is a need to infuse equity across every part of the work and system and have a collective commitment to addressing systemic inequities.
 - Key to consider the influence of communities and what is in the scope of what this initiative can impact. The environment can have a huge impact children and the need to think about how to best strengthen available services and supports.
 - Important to keep the vision simple to understand and avoid jargon. Also, terminology and language choices matter - for example, "Emerging bilingual learners" rather than "English-language learners."
 - Elevating the importance of the workforce might set us apart from other cities, and builds on important work currently happening in the City.
 - Important to include families whenever we talk about children as this relationship is closely tied to well-being and outcomes.

Looking Ahead

- November 20, 2020 – Executive Steering Committee Meeting
- December 11, 2020 - Working Group Meeting