

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

July 16, 2021 from 11:00am – 1:00pm

Teleconference via Zoom

Attendance

- Katherine Abba, Ph.D. (Faculty and Program Coordinator, Child Development Program for Houston Community College)
- Weldon Beard (Director of Head Start and Early Head Start for the Greater East Texas Community Action Program)
- Terrie Breeden (Section 619 Lead Coordinator for the Texas Education Agency)
- April Crawford Ph.D. (Co-Director of the Children’s Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Rachelle Daniel (Director of Daycare Regional Operations for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)
- Alferma Giles, Ph.D. (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Children’s Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Becky Huss-Keeler Ph.D. (Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake)
- Jerletha McDonald (Licensed home child care center provider and the owner and director of Kiddie Corner Learning Center)
- Dana McGrath (Director of Early Childhood Intervention Program for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division at the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Teresa Robledo (Early childhood teacher at San Antonio College Early Childhood Center)
- June Yeatman (Lead teacher at the Austin Community College Children's Lab School)
- Audrey Young (Child and Adolescent Health Branch Manager and the Title V Children with Special Health Care Needs Director in the Maternal and Child Unit at the Texas Department of State Health Services)

1. Call to Order

Reagan Miller called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM.

2. May 2021 Minutes Approval

Katherine Abba moved to approve May 2021 meeting minutes and April Crawford seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken and minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

3. Public Comment

Cathy McHorse, United Way of Greater Austin, provided public comment in support of investing federal stimulus funds in Pre-K partnerships to enhance diverse delivery of Pre-K with high quality child care and Head Start programs.

4. TELC Membership

Reagan Miller reviewed the list of Texas Early Learning Council (TELC) members and the constituencies they represent. Council members provided updates to their titles, based on recent position changes.

5. Strategic Plan

Council members provided feedback on progress made toward the [Early Learning Strategic Plan](#), developed by the TELC in 2019 with Preschool Development Grant funding support.

The discussion included:

- Early childhood inter-agency team efforts to establish a family-facing website of state agency resources and supports (Goal 3: Families are equipped with knowledge and tools they need to be their child's primary caregiver).
- Children's Learning Institute's efforts to increase access to and use of child monitoring and screening tools on the CLI Engage platform (Goal 1: Early childhood programs in Texas are aligned to ensure children are ready to learn by kindergarten) and enhancements to Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS), including translation of all resources to Spanish, review of alignment and gaps in early childhood career lattices, and expanded reporting functionality (Goal 4: Early childhood professionals are well-qualified and have access to the supports and training needed to improve kindergarten readiness and the resources to ensure they have a successful career serving children).
- Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office (THSSCO) integrated various goals and strategies of the Early Learning Strategic Plan in its THSSCO [strategic plan](#) and federal grant application, available on the new THSSCO website.
- Starting in the 2021-2022 school year, Texas Education Agency will require all school districts to select one of two Kindergarten readiness assessments, narrowed from a longer Commissioner's List of assessment options (Goal 6: Texas has strong coordination across its early childhood system and the underlying data system to support a high degree of collaboration).
- University of Houston-Clear Lake is offering the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership Certificate for credit, enabling graduate and undergraduate students to build their leadership skills as part of their early childhood coursework (Goal 4).
- New NAEYC standards for higher education incorporate components of equipping families with community resources, which Houston Community College has added to its activities for students (Goal 3).
- Jerletha McDonald's organization is creating a course to build on and enhance family child care providers' leadership skills (Goal 4).

The Council will continue to discuss progress on the Early Learning Strategic Plan in future Council meetings.

6. Federal Stimulus Funding Overview

State agency leaders shared information regarding the planned use of federal stimulus funds. See pages 6 and 7 in the [presentation slides](#) for further details.

Council members shared questions from their organizations / constituencies about federal stimulus funding. The discussion included an inquiry regarding how state agencies will incorporate research and evaluation of innovative strategies to inform how to direct investments in the future. One component of Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) child care business coaching contract includes evaluation.

Another inquiry focused on when child care providers will receive relief checks. TWC aims to issue checks by late July 2021 and shared a reminder for child care providers to keep their receipts. Additionally, all family child care providers who receive relief money will receive a call from the technical assistance support team at TWC to answer any questions.

7. Legislative Updates

Monica Martinez shared information about the implementation of SB 1697, which allows parents and guardians to elect for a student to repeat or retake a course or grade. Texas Education Agency published a [parent-facing website about the potential benefits and downsides of holding a student back](#).

8. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

Alferma Giles shared about [Region VI Head Start Annual Conference](#) on August 2, 3 and 4, 2021.

Rachelle Daniel shared about Child Care Regulation's presentation, [Who is Keeping Our Children Safe? Protecting Children in Child Care Settings](#), offered monthly from July through December 2021.

Jerletha shared about a [Congressional Briefing: Understanding America's Child Care Crisis](#) on July 22, 2021.

April Crawford shared about Children's Learning Institute's [Engage Data Conference](#) in September 2021 and [Infant-Toddler Specialist Network \(ITSN\) Specialist Summit](#) on September 14-15, 2021.

9. Updates from TELC members

April Crawford provided an update on Texas Ready Communities, Ready Schools, and Ready Students ([TXR3](#)).

Terri Breeden provided an update on the [Guide to Early Transitions in Texas](#).

Megan Schneider provided an update on a new PBS News Hour child care series, "[Raising the Future: America's Child Care Dilemma](#)", on behalf of Texas PBS.

April Crawford shared an article "[Doing What I can, but I got no Magic Wand](#)": A Snapshot of Early Childhood Educator Experiences and Efforts to Ensure Quality During the COVID-19 Pandemic, published in Early Childhood Education Journal analyzing open-ended survey responses from TECPDS users.

9. Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 12:52 PM.