

## *Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes*

January 21, 2022 from 11:00am – 1:00pm

Teleconference via Zoom

### **Attendance**

- Katherine Abba, Ph.D. (Faculty and Program Coordinator, Child Development Program for Houston Community College)
- Sarah Abrahams (Deputy Chief Officer of Prevention and Early Intervention for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services)
- 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)
- Rachelle Daniel (Director of Daycare Regional Operations for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)
- Alferma Giles (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)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- 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)
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- Amber Scanlan (Senior Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations for PNC)
- Kierstan Schwab (Executive Director of the Texas Public Broadcasting Association)
- 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 11:00 AM.

### **2. November 2021 Minutes Approval**

Jerletha McDonald moved to approve the November 2021 meeting minutes and Katherine Abba 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 of the Austin/Travis County Success by 6 Coalition spoke about the staffing crisis in the child care sector and shared recommendations: allow child care providers to access child care subsidies for their own children, put out consistent messaging and information for employers about the 10 day isolation requirement for children who are too young to be vaccinated or wear masks, implement child care teacher wage supplements and a statewide recruitment campaign, explore options of innovative benefits initiatives, and offer incentives for educators or administrators who continue their education in child development or early childhood education.

Katie Fisher, an early childhood teacher, spoke about the challenges with current ratio requirements in Minimum Standards. As a teacher of two-year-olds, she can have up to 11 children in her classroom with one adult, or 22 children with two adults (a teacher and an assistant teacher). She recommended ratios in line with the Administration for Children and Families (one adult to six two-year-olds) or the American Academy of Pediatrics (one adult to five two-year-olds). She shared that with a group of children that large “the art of teaching becomes crowd control.”

### **4. Strategic Plan: Early Childhood Data**

Council members provided updates on progress made toward the [Early Learning Strategic Plan](#) (developed by the Texas Early Learning Council, TELC, in 2019 with Preschool Development Grant funding support) Goal 6: “Texas has strong coordination across its early childhood system and the underlying data system to support a high degree of collaboration”.

The discussion included:

- Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) has been updated and released the [State of Early Childhood Education Workforce Report](#), which will be covered in further detail at the April 2022 Texas Early Learning Council meeting.
- Early Learning Alliance conducted a survey of child care providers in Tarrant County to understand the barriers to and motivations behind participation in accreditation programs (e.g., Texas Rising Star, National Accreditation Commission, National Association for the Education of Young Children).
- Texans Care for Children is continuing its development of a school readiness dashboard intended to serve as an easily accessible data resource, help state leaders and communities align priorities and measure progress, inform policy and funding decisions, and focus attention on the needs of children and families in the early childhood years.
- The Early Childhood Inter-Agency Work Group (Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, Health and Human Services Commission, Department of State Health Services, and

Department of Family and Protective Services) requested TELC input on a high-level stakeholder engagement plan for an Early Childhood Integrated Data System roadmap, which will lay out a recommended path forward for integrated data in Texas. TELC Chair Reagan Miller will form a new work group of the TELC to drive stakeholder engagement for early childhood integrated data efforts.

## **5. Federal Stimulus Funding Update**

Allison Wilson from Texas Workforce Commission provided an update on modifications to the distribution plan for the next round of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Child Care Stabilization Grant funding, including: a requirement for providers to commit to staying open through May of 2023, a quarterly payout timeline (instead of two payments), and funding approval for monitoring efforts and a dedicated fraud hotline for child care.

## **6. Updates from TELC Members**

Rachelle Daniel shared milestones and target dates of interest for Minimum Standards Review, including a plan to post drafts of proposed rule changes in March 2022 for informal public comment and in September 2022 for formal public comment. New rules would become effective in February 2023.

Megan Schneider shared an update on behalf of Melissa Hoisington (TELC member and franchise owner of Primrose Schools) regarding the staffing crisis in the child care sector, including ongoing, increased demands and stress placed on staff due to Covid. She requested assistance in recruiting and retaining high quality staff through a statewide campaign to promote the industry.

Jerletha McDonald shared that Texas now has two family child care providers who are state representatives on the National Association for Family Child Care.

## **7. Upcoming Early Childhood Events**

Kim Kofron shared about Children at Risk's State of Black Children in Texas Summit, February 24, 2022.

Audrey Young shared about the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies Virtual Summit, February 17-18, 2022.

Sarah Abrahams shared about the Pediatric Brain Health Summit, March 7-8, 2022.

## **8. Adjourn**

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 1:01 PM.