

**School Readiness Committee: State Priorities Subcommittee**

*Meeting Minutes*

VCEF Office, Suite 110

1703 North Parham Road, Richmond VA 23229

Thursday June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 – 2pm

**Attendees**

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**Subcommittee members present:** Kathy Glazer, Rob Krupicka, Walter Stosch, and Holly Coy

**Subcommittee Members present via phone:** Rick Clemons and Barry Weinstein

**Agenda**

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- Welcome and Intros
- Reflections on May 17<sup>th</sup> Full Committee Meeting
- Discussion of Barriers and Solutions Document – finalize for the July meeting
- Next Steps and Adjournment

**Welcome**

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Deputy Secretary Holly Coy began the Subcommittee meeting by reviewing the agenda and goals for the afternoon.

**Reflections on the May 17<sup>th</sup> Full Committee Meeting**

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The Subcommittee members discussed reactions to the full committee meeting wherein the full membership discussed the preliminary draft recommendations. In general, they felt the committee was supportive of the recommendations, concerned about anything with a fiscal impact, and not yet ready to commit to a statewide goal for the workforce.

## Revision of Barriers and Solutions Document

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Deputy Secretary Holly Coy facilitated a process whereby attendees reviewed the barriers and solutions one by one and revised them based on feedback from the full committee meeting and survey data collected from an online survey of SRC members.

- The proposed barriers discussed at the beginning of this Subcommittee meeting are as follows:
  - 1) There is an urgent need to increase the number of highly competent early childhood practitioners as quickly and efficiently as possible.
  - 2) The issue of low compensation remains a stubborn challenge when attempting to increase the number of practitioners with competencies and skills that research demonstrates support brain development of young children.
  - 3) Programs, policies, funding, and regulations governing early childhood care and learning at the state level are fragmented across multiple agencies and secretariats.
  
- The proposed solutions discussed at the beginning of this Subcommittee meeting are as follows:
  - A) Virginia needs both short and long term stackable, affordable pathways into the profession to recruit new individuals and enhance skills of all practitioners. A singular, strategic communications campaign is needed to communicate pathways and financial supports (across agencies and organizations) to potential students at all levels (high school and post-secondary)
  - B) Virginia should set as an initial goal a 20% increase each biennium, beginning with the 2018-to-2020 biennium, in the number of early childhood practitioners who have attained a credential/degree, from any point on the continuum, benchmarked against the 2017 Virginia Early Childhood Workforce Survey. Priority credentials/degrees are the Career Studies Certificate in Early Childhood Education or Infant & Toddler Care; the Early Childhood Development Certificate; the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education; and any other critical early childhood credentials and degrees that are developed in the future with the Commonwealth's support.
  - C) Virginia should advance policies that incentivize parents, providers, and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood practitioners and settings.
    - i) Specifically, Virginia should expand the definition of eligible programs for the Education Improvement Scholarship Program to students attending high quality early childhood education settings (VCPE accreditation or at least level 3 in VA quality).

- ii) Virginia should consider implementing a program standard for any setting receiving public monies, measured either by VA Quality or an alternative high – quality accrediting organization (i.e. NAEYC, VCPE).
  - iii) Following ii, Virginia should consider developing financial incentives based on tiers of quality across all systems and settings.
- D) Conduct a communications campaign to engage and sustain public support for a high quality early childhood workforce. This campaign should have multiple messages and audiences, including: the general public re: importance/respect for profession; parents re: selecting high quality settings for their young children; students, parents, veterans, and school counselors re: recruitment into profession and career pathways; existing practitioners re: upskilling human resources offices/paraprofessionals in local divisions re: teaching opportunities and pathways, etc.
- E) The Chamber of Commerce should include Early Childhood Education priorities in their *Blueprint 2020* document, specifically:
  - 1. Invest in and protect the early educator workforce:
    - a. by ensuring access to affordable competency-building credentials in Virginia’s community colleges;
    - b. by pursuing improved conditions including compensation and retention
  - 2. Explore employer policies and strategies that support families’ access to high quality early learning for young children
- F) Virginia should provide waivers so that VPI funds can be spent in private settings on teacher salaries, even if the individual does not have baccalaureate degree, as is presently required. Waiver should be provided if the individual has a relevant 3early childhood credential AA/AAS; is actively engaged in coursework towards early childhood related baccalaureate degree – with anticipated attainment of that degree within 5 years; and if one lead teacher on site has the appropriate baccalaureate credential.
- G) The School Readiness Committee should create a workgroup to address the lack of compensation parity between early childhood teachers working in birth to age 5 and K – 3 sectors. It should consider regional differences inside Virginia as well as promising strategies underway in other states and communities. The preliminary recommendations from national NAM team, the 2017 Workforce Survey, and census, retirement, and workforce projections should help inform this discussion. Recommendations should be delivered in the summer of 2018, and should include strategies around recruitment, retention, and advancement opportunities. The group should include expert resources outside the Committee’s membership.

- H) The School Readiness Committee should create a workgroup to make recommendations on:
    - i) alternative governance models that better align policies driving early childhood programs, funds, and regulations such that they are all aligned to drive and support quality practitioners and quality settings to support the school readiness of children; and
    - ii) quality standards alignment across agencies.
  - I) Virginia should dedicate a strategically positioned, high level staff person housed at VDOE to coordinate school readiness programs and policies across agencies and secretariats.
  - J) Virginia should dedicate a strategically positioned, high level staff person to help coordinate early educator career pathways and workforce activities across agencies and secretariats.
  - K) Virginia should conduct an analysis of the funding landscape in early childhood education, with an eye towards identifying and better aligning funding streams that are or may be used for professional development activities for early childhood practitioners.
- The subcommittee members worked together to consolidate the proposed recommendations listed at the beginning of this meeting.
  - Additionally, the subcommittee members discussed which proposed solutions were the most important and urgent to them. The subcommittee members came up with the following recommendations:

A) Virginia should focus on building and maintaining a cohesive continuum of stackable, affordable, high quality PD and credentials for the profession to both facilitate recruitment of new professionals and enhance skills of incumbent practitioners. To attract individuals into the field, Virginia should strengthen recruitment and marketing strategies (including through existing resources such as career coaches and high school guidance counselors sharing information about available career pathways and financial supports with potential students at all entry points).

B) Virginia should utilize the results and analysis of the *2017 Early Childhood Workforce Survey* now underway (anticipated completion fall of 2017) to set a measurable, ambitious goal for the number and type of credentialed early childhood practitioners to be phased in over a proposed period of time. (Very similar to Pathways Recommendation A)

C) Virginia should discern and advance policies that incentivize parents, providers and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood practitioners and settings serving children from birth to age 5, particularly children most at risk of not being ready for kindergarten.

i) Specifically, Virginia should expand the definition of eligible students for the Education Improvement Scholarship Program to

students attending high quality early childhood education settings (requires either VCPE accreditation or at least level 3 in VA Quality).

ii) Virginia should consider implementing a program standard (requirement) for any setting receiving public monies (as measured either by VA Quality or recognized high-quality accrediting organization (i.e. NAEYC, VCPE)

iii) Following ii, Virginia should consider developing financial incentives based on tiers of quality across all systems and settings (potential budget impact).

D) The *Virginia Preschool Initiative Joint Subcommittee* should consider a recommendation that VPI funds can be spent in private settings on teacher salaries, even if the individual does not have a baccalaureate degree, as is presently required. Exceptions should be prioritized for individuals who hold a relevant early childhood AA/AAS degree and for programs in which at last one lead teacher or administrative leader on site has an EC-related baccalaureate credential. The allowance could be provided for a defined period of time that would allow for professionals to reach the goal of a baccalaureate degree once EC-related BAs are more accessible. No budget impact expected.

E) The School Readiness Committee should create a subcommittee to examine and make recommendations about parity in compensation as related to the relevant early childhood credentials. These recommendations should consider regional differences inside Virginia as well as promising strategies underway in other states and communities. The preliminary recommendations from National Academy committee on ECE financing, the 2017 Workforce Survey, and census, retirement and workforce projections should help inform this discussion. Recommendations should be delivered by June 30, 2018, and should include strategies around recruitment, retention and advancement opportunities. The group should include expert resources outside the Committee's membership. With VECF providing for the facilitation of the subcommittee, no budget impact expected.

F) The School Readiness Committee should create a subcommittee to examine governance of early childhood programs in the Commonwealth, and make recommendations on:

- i) alternative governance models that better align policies driving early childhood programs, funds and regulations to support high quality practitioners and quality settings to increase the school readiness of children;
- ii) quality standards alignment across agencies; and
- iii) any necessary cross-secretariat or cross-agency staffing changes that would be required to implement such recommendations.

Recommendations should be delivered by December 31, 2017. The group should include expert resources outside the Committee's membership. With VECF providing for the facilitation of the subcommittee, no budget impact expected.

### **Next Steps**

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- These revised recommendations will be shared electronically with the full committee.
- The full committee will meet on July 26 for a final vote on the recommendations.