

Meeting Summary
Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council Meeting
April 12, 2018
8:30am - noon

8:45 Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Bill Potapchuk, our facilitator, opens the meeting and walks through today's agenda. He makes clear that today will not be the last chance the council has to consider the infant and toddler recommendations. There will be a future opportunity to refine them. Today, we will discuss Pre-K and the transition to school and will begin a discussion about how we will pay for the recommendations that will emerge from the group.

9:00 Reviewing Draft Recommendations for Infants and Toddlers

Mindy Binderman addresses the group and presents the draft infant and toddler recommendations. These recommendations should be thought of as a 5-year plan as it will take that long in order to measure outcomes and to see the results of these investments. These recommendations are not perfect and are not set in stone. They are in draft form and are being presented for the purpose of discussion. Mindy's slides are posted on the GEEARS website.

Mindy presents the draft vision statement:

Families in the City of Atlanta have what they need to ensure that all children starting at birth are healthy, learning, and developing so that they enter school ready for success, thrive once in school and are prepared to reach their full potential as citizens of our city.

Mindy presents the imperatives needed in order to achieve the vision:

- Families have the information and resources needed to create safe, nurturing and enriching experiences that support children's early learning and healthy development.
- Children have access to affordable, high-quality care and education environments either in or out of home, that support learning and development.
- Data across programs and agencies is shared and used to inform policies and practices that create opportunity for all children as well as measure and communicate progress to the community.
- Public and private systems are interconnected and aligned to provide effective support for families, children and programs that serve them.
- Resources and funding are allocated in a manner to reach the needs of young children and families.

- There is a prolonged, sustained commitment from all sectors of leadership in the City of Atlanta who understand and champion the importance of the first eight years of a child's life.

Bill Bolling asks that we add an imperative regarding health and nutrition.

Stephanie says that the word wellbeing should be included.

Paul Alberto says that the imperatives should include something about the quality of those working with young children – the early ed workforce.

Jason Carter states that we need to make clear that this is about who we are and what we do as a community; it is broader than any programs.

Comer Yates suggests the vision statement can be centered around what is our promise to the children in Atlanta.

DRAFT Infant and Toddler Recommendations:

1. Grants to high quality centers: We propose that grants be made available for programs willing to serve between 10 and 20 infants and toddlers from families up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
 - a. Grants will only be available to 2 or 3 star rated programs in the City of Atlanta.
 - b. Reimbursement rate would mirror the state reimbursement rate, which is \$238/week per child.
 - c. Family Child Care Homes are encouraged to collaborate with centers or other anchor entities and will eligible for grants.
 - d. Proposal is to provide grant slots for up to 250 infants and toddlers at a cost of approximately \$3M annually.
2. Targeted scholarship funds
 - a. There are not enough high-quality programs to meet the needs of families in school communities which are in high need. We suggest targeting these communities which a child care affordability gap scholarship program to be used at a Quality Rated Center of the parent's choice.
 - i. Cover the gap between 10% of a family's income and the average cost of child care.
 - ii. Prioritize families of birth to 4-year olds in the Douglass and Carver cluster making 200% of the FPL AND public employees, including firefighters, police, APS employees and early education teachers would be eligible for a similar affordability gap scholarship.
 - iii. Proposal is to serve 1000 children/year for an approximate cost of \$6M annually.

3. Expand programs like the United Ways Learning Spaces or the Y's Emerging Communities Program to each of the 9 high school clusters in the City of Atlanta.
 - a. These could be mobile as the Y's effort is.
4. Provide Language and Literacy coaches in infant and toddler classrooms in centers participating in Quality Rated. Models may include Language and Literacy Grants or Read Right from the Start coaching to improve quality in infant and toddler classrooms.
 - a. Proposal is to fund up to 25 classrooms, at \$20,000/each. Total annual cost would be \$500,000.

Comments and questions about the recommendations:

- Ed Munster makes the point this advances the idea of this being part of Atlanta's culture.
- Paul Alberto asks that we make clear the differentiated cost of children with special needs. For the focus on Carver and Douglass, make clear that this is the initial designation and that this is time limited and outcomes will be reviewed.
- Jason Carter makes clear that part of this plan has to be a communications plan. How will we reach the children? There must be an aggressive public awareness campaign. Mindy and Stephanie make clear that we understand the need for a large public awareness campaign.
- What is the overall impact? This would increase access to quality for low income families by about 25%.
- Frank Fernandez asks about the focus on centers throughout the city while targeting the scholarships to families in only two clusters (portable scholarship). Mindy explains the rationale which includes a lack of high quality centers in the clusters in the highest need and also the need to track data and the impact on children.
- Liz Blake suggested that targeting 250 infants and toddlers and then 1000 with the scholarship seems like a small investment on the front end. Is this because of execution risks? Would there be a plan to ramp up the number of children served in future years? She expresses the value of being able to serve more children and to be able to cast that vision. We must tell the economic impact story. These investments will save funding in the justice system, unemployment, etc.
- Lizzy Smith makes clear that \$50M over 5 years is a very significant recommendation.
- The 5-year increment would be children from birth to Pre-K and from Pre-K to 3rd grade.
- There are 20,000 children in the birth to age 5 space. We need to clearly articulate the impact on all children birth to 5.
- Blythe expresses the need to be clear about who is already being served and the new children that would be served as a result of these investments.
- Frank says at this point these are recommendations to the ether. We need to be clear who we would anticipate funding this.
- Stephanie specifically asks about the idea of targeted scholarships for city employees.
 - Lizzy expresses her support for this. It builds community and a culture.

- Who would be served? Is it all public employees making less than a certain amount? Is it closing the gap between 10% of their income and the full cost of child care for public employees, too? These are details that must be worked out.
- Bill expresses that this shows alignment between public and private entities in the city.
- John Grant thinks we should consider those working in the hospitality industry, which is so critical to our city. Many of these people have difficulty living in the city. This would also bring the private industry into this. The hospitality industry could create a pool of funds to be used for employees within their sector.
- Donna expresses her concern about children in the city who have a number of significant risk factors. Head Start has a criteria ranking system to ensure that they serve the children with the most risk factors. We need to ensure that those children are being served.
- Blythe concurs with Donna's point regarding the need to consider the family's income as well as risk factors in prioritizing.
- John Grant: All of this comes down to funding. If we don't have the finances to support this, this is all just talk.
- Liz Blake recommends that we should create a toolkit that allows replication of the Learning Spaces model so that any organization like a Boys and Girls Club could create this model. By doing this, we could massively exceed 9 of these around the city. Ellyn Cochran speaks up to say that United Way is currently creating such a toolkit to help other entities create these Learning Spaces.
- Lizzy Smith says that with regards to the Language and Literacy Grants, we need to make clear that this is additive and that there are already investments in this area. The Whitehead Foundation is currently supporting this work around the city.
- Comer Yates explains that the Atlanta Speech School is currently partnering with DECAL to do this work across the state. The coaches get training on the 4 elements of their infant and toddler training. Grady Hospital is focused on changing the standard of care for birth and delivery of babies to include equipping families with how to do serve and return and help build their children's reading brains. This will be free to all hospitals by the end of the year.
- Ed Munster explains that the operational reality is that you have to constantly re-administer this professional development because of high turnover rates in the early education workforce.
- Billie Walker expresses how difficult Talk with Me Baby is for families that are trying to make ends make, often paying 30% of what they are making for childcare. Many of these families are living on the the edge and this is difficult for them to do. The training will be helpful for teachers and much of that will come home to parents and will become how people interact with children.

Dr. Nicole Patten Terry, Director of the Urban Child Study Center at Georgia State University discuss P3 Systems and the promise they hold for creating a high quality continuum of learning for all children. Nicole's slides are posted on the GEEARS website.

P3 Systems – comprehensive preschool to 3rd grade systems to include early care and education programs and services for children from birth to 8 years old.

- Coordinates and aligns within and between early childhood (birth to 5) and early elementary grades (K-3)
- Includes comprehensive programs and services that support child health, school readiness, and early achievement
- Recognizes that school readiness is a multidimensional construct
- Promotes smooth transition by linking systems horizontally (e.g., teacher to parent) and vertically (e.g., Pre-K teacher to kindergarten teacher)
- Promotes a holistic response to the needs of vulnerable young learners (who often require support from multiple agencies to ensure healthy beginnings)
- Ensures equitable opportunity for school readiness and achievement

Our collective challenge: All children enter school ready to learn and ready to succeed.

We also have a collective problem. Persistent achievement gaps exist.

- 1 in 5 African American children are not performing at grade level by 4th grade.
- 1 in 4 children growing up in poverty are not performing at grade level by 4th grade.

Atlanta Public School is 75% African American and 75% low income.

Strong, seamless P3 systems are critical for solving this problem. How do we build successful P3 systems?

- 8 buckets that require alignment from birth to 5 and K-12: cross-sector work, administrator effectiveness, teacher effectiveness, instructional tools, learning environment, data-driven improvement, family engagement, continuity and pathways
- Framework for planning, implementing and evaluating P3 approaches: 1) planning, 2) implementing and 3) evaluating
- Examples to look at: Boston, West Valley, WA, San Francisco, DC

There is synergy for robust P3 data in Atlanta:

1. DECAL Cross Agency Data System
2. GEEARS Readiness Radar
3. United Way of Greater Atlanta THRIVE Initiative and Child Well Being Index
4. Zeist Foundation Early Learning Playbook

5. Atlanta 323 – focused on gathering and aligning data for children from age 3 to grade 3. Through relevant research and robust partnerships, we will ensure that all of Atlanta’s children have seamless high-quality pathway from birth to college and career.

9:50 Break

10:00 The Pre-K Landscape

Commissioner Amy Jacobs presents on Georgia’s Pre-K program, one of the best in the nation, as well as other programs administered by DECAL serving 3 and 4 year olds. Amy’s slides are posted on the GEEARS website.

DECAL Programs

1. Georgia Pre-K
 - a. Serves 4-year olds born on or before September 1
 - b. Funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education
 - c. Established in 1992. Since that time, over \$6.2B of funding and over 1.6M children served.
 - d. 84,000 slots statewide
 - i. approximately 60% of eligible 4-year-olds
 - ii. available in all 159 counties
 - e. Pre-K longitudinal study – students make significant gains across all learning domains; students make greater progress than to be expected for typical development; those gains are sustained through 1st grade. The study results for 2nd grade will be available in Summer 2018.
 - f. Children who attended Georgia’s Pre-K perform better on EOGs in 3rd grade than those who did not attend.
 - g. In the City of Atlanta
 - i. By the numbers
 1. 103 sites
 2. 172 classes
 3. 3784 slots
 - ii. By the dollars
 1. \$87,928 average per class
 2. \$3997 average per slot
2. Head Start
 - a. 32 local grantees
 - b. serve 19,000 3 and 4-year olds
3. Summer Transition Programs
 - a. Rising Kindergarten Program – for students who need additional support prior to Kindergarten or who were unable
 - i. 15 classes in the city

- b. Rising Pre-K program for English Language Learners
- 4. GKIDS Readiness Check
 - a. Administered during the first 6 weeks of kindergarten
 - b. 20 tasks measuring the five essential early learning domains
 - i. Direct and indirect activities assessed in a naturalistic setting
 - c. Assesses the Pre-K Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)
 - d. Highlights knowledge and skills critical for student success in learning, solely to guide instruction.

Commissioner Jacob's Recommendations

1. Establish an Early Childhood Leader Institute. Provide a substantive professional learning program for cohorts of elementary school principals and child care center directors. This is recommendation because high quality Pre-K programs must have strong site leadership who understand child development and appropriate instruction at the Pre-K level.
2. Explore barriers to Pre-K attendance and develop strategies to address these barriers.
 - a. Expand transportation services
 - b. Provide Pre-K Transition Coaches
3. Focus additional resources on children with multiple risk factors and low-performing schools. We know that young children at highest risk for educational failure – those with multiple risk factors – benefit the most from high-quality Pre-K.
 - a. Expand Summer Transition Program to serve rising Pre-K and Rising K
 - b. Fund Pre-K Transition Coaches to support families

Comments and questions:

- John Grant asks about the performance data regarding children who attended Georgia Pre-K perform better on EOGs in 3rd grade than those who did not attend. Are these significant gains? Is there a better way to present this data? Amy emphasizes that this data is 4 years after the child was in Pre-K. Dr. Hill makes the point for that individual children these gains are significant.
- Stephanie asks if we could gather data on children who had no access to early learning environments for comparison. We do not have these data.
- Donna Davidson states that parent engagement will have a huge impact on student performance.
- Nicole states that they are working with APS to better understand the data on children coming into the district. She also emphasizes the complexities of this data. Early learning is one piece of the puzzle in helping kids enter school ready; it is not a panacea.

10:20 Transitions from Pre-K to Kindergarten: Presentation and Discussion

Sydney Ahearn, Director of Early Learning in Atlanta Public Schools presents on their Early Learning Partnerships and Transitions. Sydney's slides are posted on the GEEARS website.

The visions APS is seeking to build for Atlanta's children is a seamless high-quality pathway from birth to college and career for every child born into the city of Atlanta. Path-changing, consistent, and strategic wraparound supports for families and children, starting from birth.

How do students arrive in APS?

There is a lot we don't know (data is complex)

We do know that both in Pre-K and Kindergarten, children come in with a broad range of experiences and preparedness:

- Students have experience a diverse range of preschool care and learning
- Average Pre-K STAR scores vary by up to 150 points by school
- Significant unidentified developmental and emotional needs found in Pre-K and K

APS's Approach to Early Learning Partnerships:

- Multiple pathways to partnership
- Outcomes-focused and research-informed
- Flexible and adaptive approach
- Difference-making for children and families

How do we think of school transition?

- Is the student ready to thrive in Kindergarten?
- Is the Kindergarten teacher prepared to support students with a range of backgrounds and abilities?
- Does the school understand and support the developmental growth of ECE students?
- Does the parent know how to support their Kindergartner? Do they feel welcome?
- Does the ECE teacher get to share and receive feedback about students' strengths and gaps?
- Is the community-equipped with wraparound resources to support families and students?

Spotlight on effective school transition partnerships: At M.A. Jones Elementary school:

- School readiness fair to reach parents
- Basic needs of families met

- Collaborative learning and teaching
- Building relationships and trust between partners

Why isn't this happening everywhere? What are the barriers?

1. Parents have inconsistent access to information about school readiness (enrollment dates, developmental milestones, etc.)
2. Data on incoming students can be inconsistent; teacher capacity to use data effectively also varies
3. We have limited formal feedback loops to share information with ECE providers on student successes and opportunities.
4. Principals and Center Directors, as well as teachers, have many competing demands and full schedules
5. This work is driven by relationships, and can be undermined by personnel instability.

How is APS seeking to encourage effective transition?

1. Adding capacity
 - a. Hired a School Transition Specialist
 - b. Distributing transition mini-grants to schools and centers
2. Building relationships
 - a. Created cluster maps including ECE providers
 - b. Connecting in cluster transition meetings, working groups and more
3. Creating New Opportunities
 - a. Supporting KinderCamps in more schools
 - b. Rising Pre-k and K transition event
 - c. Explore parent-focused apps and/or messaging
4. Tracking Progress
 - a. Evaluating matriculation rates and readiness metrics
 - b. Partnering with GSU on Atlanta 323 project to track progress across agencies

Recommendations:

1. Countdown to Kindergarten city-wide messaging campaign
 - a. Boston is a good example of a city that has done this well.
 - b. Campaign multiple messages into one platform that is parent friendly
2. Create formal structures for ECE engagement at APS, including encouraging an ECE representative on Cluster Advisory Teams, including ECE providers on cluster maps, and encouraging "transition teams" at schools
3. Support a P-3 Literacy Institute including vertical team learning across providers and grade levels to support enhanced understanding of developmentally-appropriate and rigorous instruction, as well as facilitating enhanced collaboration.

10:40 Discussion of Pre-K and School Transition Ideas

- Discussion about transition coaches: Stephanie asks Amy and Sydney about the transition coach and whether they could be co-funded? Amy expresses that this would be difficult as DECAL is a statewide agency. Sydney says that this could potentially be done by existing employees. Amy's vision is that the transition coach would work with all public and private providers in the cluster. Head Start programs have a transition coach. They have two staff people serving 80 children. Dr. Hill states that this should be more focused on a set of skills that are needed for whomever is serving as the coach. Could the training be provided online by DECAL?
- Jovita Moore perked up with the conversation about a messaging campaign. She expresses support for this and thinks old fashioned PSAs would be effective along with common messaging from broadcasters.
- Stephanie throws out the idea of a common enrollment system or a common information system for parents. She acknowledges that there has been push back on the idea of a common enrollment system from private providers. Stephanie wants to ensure that if we have a messaging campaign, we also have someone to direct families.
- Transportation: APS currently provides transportation for Pre-K children attending their zoned elementary schools. The transportation is not set aside just for Pre-K students.
- Summer Transition Programs: Blythe and Meria expresses support for this. Sydney says that they have struggled to fill all the slots for this. Additional messaging needed.
- Stephanie asks Meria if coordination with early learning could be included in principal's professional development plan. Meria says yes, but the initial changes have been focused on more immediate needs.
- Leadership Institute: Mindy says that this is something GEEARS will develop with existing resources. Mindy asks Meria if this was created if this something that their principals and assistant principals would attend? Meria says this could be integrated in the district at a very low cost.
- Hollis Innovation Academy has piggybacked on the GO TEAM structure to create an innovation advisory team that is thinking about everything from Pre-K through high school. This structure has been critical in supporting the schools. Meria says these structures can be game changers for schools and communities. Purpose Built has put in a similar structure in the Carver cluster.
- There are lessons from existing successes in the city. These things can be replicated but also individualized for specific schools and neighborhoods.
- Meria states that the Learn for Life structure allows us to serve the region and all kids in the metro area. That mindset is where we need to be going to ensure that all kids are getting the same high quality learning experience.
- Westminster has a Center for Teaching that is currently focused on K-12. Liz suggests asking them to expand to early learning. Maybe the institute could be housed here. There is already funding to support this.

11:15 Initial Focus on Financing

Stephanie Blank facilitates an initial conversation regarding financing of the forthcoming recommendations.

Stephanie points to several examples around the country for consideration:

- Congress passed the FY18 Omnibus appropriations bill which included a huge increase for child care and early learning. In addition to other items, there was a \$2.37B increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant. It also contained a \$610 million increase for Head Start (\$115 million of that for Early Head Start that will be used for Early Head Start expansion or Early Head Start/child care partnerships, which Sheltering Arms will highlight at our meeting today). Georgia will receive a large increase. Can this funds be used to support this work in Atlanta? We would need to work with the state to determine if this is a possibility.
- Seattle—city voters approved the Families and Education Levy, which funnels dedicated local tax revenues to early childhood education programs and other services for children and families
- New York - The New York City Child Care and Early Education Fund is a private funders collaborative dedicated to improvement of early childhood education in NYC with a history of working in partnership with the city and state government on infant and toddler reform and other early childhood issues.
- San Francisco passed a sales tax increase
- Dayton, Ohio - Preschool Promise program educates community on the importance of high-quality preschool, increases the number of high-rated preschools and assists families with finding and paying for high -quality preschool. Assistance is based on family income, family size and the star-rating of the program chosen by the family. Dayton voters passed a 0.25% income tax increase to support critical city services and to offer 1 year of affordable, quality preschool to all Dayton families with a 4-year-old. This approval by voters institutionalized Preschool Promise in Dayton and provides sustained funding. The 8-year levy, which will raise an estimated \$11 million annually, passed in November 2016 with 54% of the vote. Today Preschool Promise has \$4.3 million in dedicated annual funding to support Dayton's young learners.
- Pay for Success is an innovative financing model that tests and advances promising and proven interventions, while providing taxpayer or investor dollars only for successful outcomes for students, families, communities, States, and regions.
 - The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education is managing \$3 million in awards to eight government organizations for Preschool Pay for Success feasibility pilots to determine if Pay for Success is a viable and appropriate strategy to implement or expand high-quality preschool and improve educational outcomes for 3-

- and 4- year-olds.
- Social Impact Bonds are one Pay for Success model where private investors put up capital for proven interventions and government pays them back, after an impartial evaluator finds evidence that the interventions are working. It is new and still relatively untested mechanism and many questions remain.
- Examples: South Carolina’s Nurse Family Partnership, Chicago Child-Parent Center Pay for Success, Utah High Quality Preschool Program
- Are we making the best use of federal funds?
- Zoning and development – there are innovative approaches here that could be considered such as a tax credit for housing developers who include high quality child care in their housing units?
- Is there anything that can be done at public housing?
- Sin taxes

Comments and questions:

- Meria puts a number of suggestions on the table. Could we think about embedding early learning funding in the state education funding formula? ESPLOST – 1 penny sales tax that is only for facilities. Should the state constitution be amended to expand the allowable uses of these funds? Millage for the city and the school district could be a funding source. Every mill in Atlanta generates about \$22M. We need to do something that is formulaic or more permanent. Alignment of federal funding streams could result in more money for early learning or to support our youngest children and their families. We could consider a pay for success model for investment in early learning in exchange for reducing the number of incarcerated individuals. We could put in place a city sin tax to tax tobacco or some other vice. Meria speaks against current Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) as they are currently structured but states that the city could rethink the way this is done and it could be designed to create an educational benefit.
- Frank points out that some of these items will take time, must go to the voters. We should be clear about how we fund in the short term while making a plan for long-term funding.
- Liz suggests a public-private partnership. Take the recommendations to the ACP and to determine what the business community is willing to do to support this work. Most of the corporate members have education as a priority in their foundations. There also needs to be foundation enhancement impact strategy to maximize their dollars and the impact that those dollars have.
- Are there any partnerships with Dept. of Defense, Department of Justice or the Department of Agriculture?

11:45 Next Steps and Closing Comments

Noon Adjourn

Council members present:

Paul Alberto

Liz Blake

Stephanie Blank

Bill Bolling

Meria Carstarphen

Donna Davidson

Jason Esteves

Frank Fernandez

John Grant

Jennifer Button Henderson

Michelle Hill

Yasmin Tyler Hill

Amy Jacobs

Jovita Moore

Ed Munster

Blythe Robinson

Lizzy Smith

Billie Walker

Comer Yates

Council members not present:

Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms

Kevin Greiner

Milton Little

Felicia Moore

Raphael Warnock