

Meeting Summary
Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council Meeting
Wednesday, March 28, 2018
8:30am-noon

8:45 Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Stephanie Blank opened the meeting. Updates included:

- All materials from meeting are posted on the GEEARS' website.
- DECAL developed an asset map detailing the programs and services administered by the state. This is posted on the GEEARS' website and members are encouraged to review the information that it contains.
- Congress passed the Omnibus budget with a significant increase in funding for early learning.
- Stephanie recently presented to the Metro Chamber about early education issues. Her message was well received and there is alignment with the work of this council.
- Think Babies video clip was shown-
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2141-think-babies-campaign>

Stephanie states that birth-3 is a national policy issue, not just something within the family domain. We need to shift the way we think about the first three years.

9:00 Financing High Quality Early Childhood

Louise Stoney of the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance presented. Slides are posted on the GEEARS' website). Key points included:

- This industry is complex. This is a market driven system and is largely based on family choice and finances.
- Most ECE funding is paid by families; they pay 52% of the cost. Government financing covers 46%. Only 2% of the funding comes from the private sector but this funding can be used strategically to drive needed change.

She provided ideas for bold strategies:

- Link any new \$ to quality standards
- Target dollars to high-quality providers that serve children from families with limited resources. Piggy-back on GA QR Subsidy Grants.
- Focus on babies and toddlers (a significant percent of 4 year olds are already served)

- Most people want to build more childcare centers, but if you build it, the families may not come. We need a much more nuanced understanding of effective demand. There is a direct link between enough money and good supply of students. You must also think a lot about the age of children served. We need to think about supply by age and funding by age.

She offered the famous Einstein quote and suggested it applies to our work in early childhood:

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” Albert Einstein

Other observations included:

- We assume that general population data is sufficient to estimate supply and demand and to inform policy. It is not.
- We assume that opening a small, independent child care center is a viable business. It often is not. In reality, ECE is an underdeveloped market. There is a lack of effective demand from consumers for high quality services. Elastic markets result in many providers competing for the same children, keeping prices lower to maintain full enrollment. High labor expenses. No economies of scale.
- We assume that market forces are the way to keep fees affordable and base finance on the average price of care, even though the actual cost of infant care is almost double that of the care for 4 year olds.
- Effective demand – the level of demand that represents the real intention to purchase by people with the means to pay
- ECE is an economically fragile industry. Staying full is critical. Must collect all fees on time. Revenue must cover the per child cost. These three things are very difficult to do.
- Full enrollment is a BIG deal. Example: at 95%, the cost per child for all ages (0-4) is \$8688 v. 80% enrollment, the cost per child is \$10,315.
- Improving access to childcare does not necessarily mean more providers. It means ensuring that quality providers are full.
- In Atlanta, we have a fair amount of data on supply, Pre-K enrollment, etc. We need to think about what we currently have and create more place-based data. Averages tell us general information but they do not tell us where the troughs are.

She moved on to discuss child care centers more specifically:

- Market rate surveys simply measure the PRICE of care, not the cost. Prices are typically based on what families can afford or are willing to pay. Cost varies a lot by age of child and quality of care, but market prices can't vary much or consumers might flee. Infants and toddlers are very expensive to serve. Most families cannot afford to pay the full cost, so programs must price at a loss.

- Largest ECE expense is personnel. Stephanie says that a living wage in GA is \$12/hour. Childcare workers typically fall below this.
- ECE consumers are very price-sensitive.
- Size of the program is important. Centers need at least 100 children to meet NAEYC standards and make ends meet financially.
- Strong fiscal and program leadership are essential to quality. Nationally, multi-site centers are more likely to attain a higher star rating. They have an infrastructure in place to build and maintain quality. There needs to be industry consolidation and staff-sharing alliances.
- It is very important to understand the cost and cost drivers. High quality costs more. We should to encourage industry consolidation. Think strategically about the levers. There is no distinction in quality between non-profit and for profit programs.
- Budgets for childcare centers do not work if there is not a significant number of 3 and 4 year olds in the center.

Q & A

Bill Bolling: Why do we have so many empty slots? LS: There is a mismatch between supply and effective demand. We need to maximize funding by only paying for families to attend high quality programs. If the issue is money, it is easier to develop a strategy. If we are trying to change people's behavior, that is much more difficult.

Stephanie Blank: How prevalent is family childcare in other urban areas? LS: Use of informal childcare is directly correlated to the policies you have in place. In NYC, they have created a limited purchase of service voucher. They open the flow of these funds by neighborhood. The vouchers are only good for those neighborhoods. Providers need to be tracking vacancies on a regular basis. It is difficult to respond and change policies without good data.

Donna Davidson: Are most vacancies in the 3 and 4 year olds? LS: Yes.

Meria Castarphen: How do we start narrowing the work that the council needs to do specifically for Atlanta? Needs-based support for families that don't have access, for example. How do we make this happen? Meria wants to be realistic about how the budget season works. APS is entering into that season and will need to know requests for the district.

Bill Bolling: Is there a strong talent pool in the ECE space? Stephanie makes the point that the compensation is such that it is difficult to attract high quality educators. Louise responds and states that in larger centers, there are economies of scale and a much smaller percentage is going to administrative costs. Therefore, more money is available to go to the workforce to create better salaries and benefits. We cannot just throw

money at compensation. We have to think about the structure. We need to drive as many dollars as possible into the classroom.

Meria makes a strong argument for increasing the funding for early childhood educators to prepare kids in Atlanta living in poverty. We need to try to break that ceiling to bring them into a more professional environment. The city will never have an educated workforce if we do not do something differently.

Ed Munster states that we are in the messy part and need to answer the questions Louise has posed in order to lead to the solutions we need.

Comer Yates urges against requiring teachers for birth to 3 to have Bachelor's degrees. This is not necessary and will have the effect of gentrifying the early childhood profession and will exclude many who have the skills necessary to develop a reading brain.

John Grant: if you shift your investment to the front side, do you lower your needs on the backside? If so, there is a net balance.

Meria: APS is spending more than \$9M annually to support the kids who were victims of the cheating scandal. We spend \$millions on summer school and remediation, for instance, because students are behind. Funds could be reallocated to provide more enrichment for students. We need to determine an appropriate scale of pay and must invest in a different kind of way.

9:40 The Infant and Toddler Landscape –

Commissioner Amy Jacobs from the Department of Early Care and Learning presented. Key points included:

- Brain development is influenced by a child's environment. Early experience impact how
- a child handles stress and have a long-lasting impact on their well-being and ability to learn.
- Challenges: affordability, access, workforce (low wages -\$9/hour in GA, high turnover), quality (low ratio, rich language and literary, responsive caregiving, developmentally appropriate resources).
- 60% of the cost is paid for by families. Low income families often cannot afford quality.
- 2/3 of infant and toddler classes are low quality. DECAL responded to this data with the Quality Rated initiative. Began rating programs in 2013. Quality has increased but centers serving infants and toddlers are lower quality, significantly more likely to receive 0- or 1-star.

- 285 eligible quality rated programs; 221 of these programs serve infants and toddlers; 28% have gone through QR but only 16% have received 2-3 star
- Fewer infants are in Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Georgia’s subsidy program –

She then offered four specific ideas for the Council’s consideration, noting DECAL’s Strategic Investments are aimed at improving quality, increasing access, professionalizing the workforce, supporting community partnerships. For each of these, additional funds would need to be raised. These funds would be provided to DECAL to make targeted investments in Atlanta.

Improving quality” Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants –

- These are classroom grants to 50 infant and toddler classrooms with common risk factors (state has provided the funding for these 50 classrooms)
- Recipients must be a 2-3 star QR program
- Participants receive intensive, high level professional development – weekly coaching, monthly and quarterly training
- The PD uses the Read Right from the Start curriculum from the Rollins Center
- They are measuring the results by using LENA devices and the CLASS evaluation (measures the quality of teacher and child interaction). Engagement is increasing as DECAL is helping teachers use the data to inform and improve their instruction.

Improving access: Child Care Center Subsidy Grants

- These are Grants to childcare centers for low income families
- Funding rate is higher and allows DECAL to require specific things in exchange (professional development for educators, certain wages for educators, etc.)
- Increases access for low income families
- The families accessing these slots do not have any cost

Professionalizing the workforce: DECAL Scholars Program

- Provides funds for scholarships and incentives to support credential attainment
- These funds can cover the cost of furthering their education as well as encouraging them to stay in the job once that have receiving the advanced education.

Supporting Community Partnerships: Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs)

- Birth to age 8 teams with key stakeholders for children in the community (the local school system, public health, the business community, etc. – similar to the group we have convened here)
- There are grant opportunities from Sandra Deal Center at Georgia College and The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement

Q & A

John Grant: Can DECAL show us where the 2-3 star rated programs are located in the city? Yes. DECAL will share map.

Stephanie: Do you have to serve infants and toddlers in order to receive the subsidy grants? At the state level, those programs are prioritized. Could this be required or could this grants only go to infants and toddlers? AJ: Yes.

Kevin Greiner: How do you think about access and quality? Where would you target the resources? AJ: They go together. You do not want to provide access to low quality. Must support providers so that they can offer quality. Must support families so that they can afford quality.

Billie Walker: Has a 2-star program at the Atlanta Children's Shelter serving homeless families. She has witnessed many success stories by providing high quality care to these youngest children. They are preparing them to enter kindergarten ready to thrive. Quality rated is very good. There are free resources for the centers going through the process; there is a lot of support. The program helps teachers to be well equipped.

Liz Blake: What is the role of information in the choices that families make? Are dollars expended to help equip parents and to help them choose quality? How do we make this common knowledge? AJ: Families know that quality is important but these issues comes down to access and affordable. Louise: The primary drivers for families' choices are money and location. They want the best for their children but must make decisions based on affordability and location. An example is the Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credit (tied to quality rated). Louise is not convinced that all of our efforts to educate parents have been successful. There is a desperate need for more staff to support families.

Comer: It is not so much a question of parent education but of parent capacity building. Parents must be engaged in the serve and return all day. The last trimester is critical for building early brain architecture. The baby must have language nutrition.

Paul: 285 centers and only 47 serving infants and toddlers are 2-3-star QR. Shouldn't our funding efforts go to make more programs quality rated. Are we putting enough resources into helping make more programs quality rated? In order to receive CAPS funding, programs must be QR by 2020. DECAL is trying to direct resources to improve quality across the board.

Meria: Is there state funding available for these recommendations? No, DECAL is providing these programs statewide using the existing resources. They could be expanded with new money.

10:25 What Works? Exploring Ideas for Atlanta

The Working Committee identified four bright spots in Atlanta that could be scaled or expanded. Each was offered by a different presenter.

Pam Tatum, Quality Care for Children: BOOST Scholarships

- BOOST Scholarships are 2-generation program providing childcare scholarships to low income college students who are parents; focused on quality early learning for child and college completion for parent
- They are currently serving 185 children
- There is a 10% affordability standard (no parent should pay more than 10% of earnings for childcare). Everybody gets some assistance but most assistance goes to those most in need.

Pam developed estimates for serving infants and toddlers in Atlanta:

- The estimated total cost of scholarship for all children not in Head Start 0-2: \$57M.
- To provide scholarships for 3 year olds it would cost an additional \$17M

Many of these children will also receive the CAPS subsidy which would decrease the cost. There was a federal increase in this funding this year which would further reduce the cost.

Other thoughts included:

- Scholarships must be restricted only to quality rated programs.
- Supports parents who need childcare in order to go to school and work.
- Supports the financial stability of quality child care programs
- Could target a neighborhood or school catchment area

Starla Bailey, Sheltering Arms: Improving Infant Toddler Care

- This is based on the Head Start funded Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Project
- The effort serves 48 infants and toddlers (birth-to-3 years) in 6 classrooms. There are 8 children and 3 teachers in every classroom
- It is a Training Lab with observatory windows and training space for ECE community training events. There is an Infant and Toddler Curriculum Specialist that supports educators
- Over 70 hours of specialized infant/toddler professional development is provided to the educators.
- Families assigned a Transition Coach to facilitate transition to the next setting
- A HUB Model provides comprehensive supports

- There is intentional recruitment of infants and toddlers. It is a neighborhood approach where children remain in their neighborhood
- The program conducts development screenings focused on social and emotional delays and facilitated referrals
- There is access to a Family Support Team for all families (focused on health and wellness for children and stability for the family)
- The recommendation is to expand this approach with additional funding

Bill Bolling: Do the costs for your program line up with what Louise presented? SB: Yes, the funding they have been able to layer from the EHS Partnership has allowed them to offer high quality services. This is an example of the benefits of economies of scale.

Yasmin Tyler Hill (who is a Board member of Sheltering Arms): Sheltering Arms uses community-based partners for professional development – CHOA for child health needs; corporations for leadership training, etc. The value added for these programs is great. The continuum health and early learning services is so important – parents understand that this is about their child’s overall wellness.

Ellyn Cochran – United Way Community-Based Quality Early Learning Experiences

- A large percentage of families are not in formal childcare. Many are served by family, friend and neighbor care (informal, unlicensed care settings). 33%-53% of children are in family, friend and neighbor care; this is not with their parents. How do we support these families and ensure that the children are receiving high quality care?
- United Way provides a number of supports for this community including Community Play Spaces, Mobile Texting, and Smart Phone Applications (such as VROOM, Talk with Me Baby)
- The program proposed for expansion is a place-based Innovation Initiative: UW of Greater Atlanta Learning Spaces. This effort goes where people pray, play and eat
 - Libraries are the key location used for this initiative.
 - Facilitated play and learning sessions by early childhood teachers and trainers
 - Common curriculum and expectations across sites
 - Screening and referrals grounded in relationships
 - Social support networks
 - Healthy snacks
 - Community-based leadership (Parent Ambassadors)
 - Developing mobile outreach unit
- Costs. Preparing each initial Learning Space costs \$20K-\$25K. The ongoing annual costs are about \$15K

Twanna Nelson, Georgia Department of Public Health Home Visiting

- This is a proposal to expand evidenced-based home visiting as a prevention strategy (use the Talk with Me Baby resources)
- Services are offered on a voluntary basis
- Services are offered to pregnant women or families with children birth to K entry
- Target specific participant outcomes that promote family functioning and child well-being
- With home visiting, developmental delays and health problems are detected early
- How do they measure success?
 - They capture data on 19 performance measures including safe sleep, breastfeeding, early language development, etc.
- In Fulton County:
 - 6 Parents as Teachers Home Visitors (caseload: 20-25)
 - They partner with APS, Westside Health Collaborative (Families First), Center for Black Women's Wellness

Stephanie: What is the cost? TN: One example, there is one center with 4 home visitors and the cost is \$300K. This covers salaries, cost of travel, etc.

Mindy Binderman: How do families learn about home visiting? TN: First Steps coordinators go to hospitals, they work with WIC, they have a presence in the community. They also try to serve fathers. They provide the developmental screening to the family so that the parent can take that to the child's appointment with the doctor.

Bill Bolling: Are there restrictions on sharing this data? Stephanie mentions that there was legislation that allowed data to be shared if it was for the benefit of the child. Did this include home visiting reports from DPH?

Developing Initial Ideas for Recommendations

consider each of these ideas that have been shared. Which ideas make the most sense for Atlanta? What is missing?

After discussion, representatives from each group were asked to share their thoughts:

Yasmin: Build financial expertise. We must understand costs. Need someone to work across silos to get economies of scale.

Frank Fernandez: Would APS be willing to rethink how they do Pre-K and to not offer Pre-K in order to support childcare centers? How do we prioritize high quality centers and potentially consolidate centers? What are the political and community implications of doing this?

Mindy: Particularly interested in expanding subsidy grants and language and literacy grants. Use this to target most needy neighborhoods.

Billie: Quality rated is a strength. Expand the subsidy grants to quality centers. Can we address the CAPS funding gap? If the child is unable to go to the childcare center, there are huge ramifications for the child and parent. What about allowing educators to do home visiting?

Lizzy: Use private funding to leverage public funding. For the subsidy – how can we use private funding to leverage public funding.

Donna: The Head Start and Early Head Start model is evidenced-based. The EHS Partnership grants allowed funding to be provided to organizations that were interested in quality but lacked the resources. Family support services (450 families this year had domestic violence and substance abuse issues) is critical. More EHS partnerships is a way to address Louise's point about consolidation without actually consolidating. They can share services. Bigger providers can provide support to smaller centers.

Amy: Family childcare learning homes – a hub model would serve them as well, which is critical.

Frank: As you develop the recommendations separate program, policy and funding recommendations. Identify who would own these things? Who would be responsible for funding? We need a structure for the recommendations.

Stephanie references too recent studies: one on black males and the other on medical students. Our young black men are not thriving as they should. We need to address the issue of implicit biases that are present.

Liz: there is a lot of excitement about what seems to be working. She would like to see this group prioritize our focus on the most at risk areas of our city. Resources are limited and we must rigorously require ourselves to focus on these areas.

Stephanie: Are we losing key members of our city because they cannot afford quality childcare?

The next meeting is April 12th.