

CT ECE Finance Project Meeting Notes)
November 29, 2004 1-3 p.m. CT Economic Resource Center

UPCOMING MEETINGS

December 20 Graustein Memorial Fund, Hamden 1-3

Introductions, Announcements

- ECE Finance Project Web pages active at – www.readysetgrow.ckids. Left Nav Bar.
- David Nee (GMF) updated on briefing by ECE Finance Project leadership for OPM and Governor’s staff (11/15) completed. Draft package of materials submitted. Commissioners Betty Sternberg (SDE) and Patricia Wilson-Coker (DSS) also attended. This briefing allows us to have met the Governor’s request for a report by November 15th. David reported on emerging concerns about how we were depicting “capital costs.”
- Janice Gruendel (Governor’s Office) reported that the National Governors Association’s School Readiness Task Force Report is expected to be issued in January. Their useful framework is based on 5 constructs: Ready Child, Ready Families, Ready Schools, Ready Community, Ready State. Anna Lovejoy of NGA is the contact. When issued, it will be online. Draft materials were shared with approval of NGA.
- Gruendel reported on an extensive conversation with Yale ECE researcher and national expert, Walter Gilliam, based on his extensive national study of 12,000 PreK classrooms. Gilliam believes that his data now has the capacity to evaluate the differential return, in fiscal terms, of a full day BA teacher versus a half day licensed BA teacher. He is not sure that the benefit to students warrants the differential expense. The group agreed to invite Walter to come share his results as soon as possible.

Work Updates

Capital Development:

David Nee requested that we develop a series of capital scenarios that are capable of showing the dramatic time and cost differences between utilization of CHEFA nonprofit process and a school district-based approach. It is about 2 years from idea to open door through the nonprofit CHEFA process. It can be 5 years or more when the process is based on school system expansion when local municipal approvals are required.

Bob Murphy (CEA) recommended that the Governor, or someone, call together a group of ECE capital development experts including CHEFA, CIP and architects, to propose a new approach to ECE center design. The goal would be reduce development costs and streamline the early phases of capital expansion. There was group support for this proposal.

Elizabeth Brown (Commission on Children) cautioned that if we lodge all capital development in a single town context, Connecticut will never break into the state's trends toward consolidation by race and income in certain communities. She urged inter-district, regional incentives in future capital expansion as an important contributor to a more racially integrated system.

Jeff Asher (CHEFA) reported that he was seeking testing information from a number of superintendents with regard to capital costs, including New Haven, Middletown, and Norwich. If spaces were needed to 1500 children at an average school cost of \$194 per square foot, the average capital cost per child would be about \$11,890 under the model. Superintendents confirmed that they were budgeting about \$11,000 per child.

Elizabeth Brown asked that the group be willing to look at other entities already being bonded for development as potential sites to include child care facilities. This scenario assumes that bonding could be build into other sources of funding.

Infrastructure Committee:

Jim Horan (CAHS) reported that this committee was looking at aligning our work with the CT Early Childhood Partners effort as well as working on developing information that would allow us to capture the cost of state personnel assigned to ECE work. Janice asked that this work eventually be able to provide cost data on necessary infrastructure costs as we expand the system, and Judy Goldfarb raised the strategic issues of attaching these costs to the per child cost framework.

Within the context of the Early Childhood Partners work, it was reported that there is no central governance entity that guides early childhood work; agencies plan and implement separately. Martha Okafor (DPH) reported that this work would emphasize the need for common definitions, a common data process, and a common set of outcome measures.

Cost-Modeling Template:

Jeff Asher reported that he and Judy Goldfarb (HACCC) are developing data tables that will reside under the templates and will be creating a way to include (or get to) the estimated costs of improvements to systems and the workforce. At the next meeting, Jeff and Judy will present a series of scenarios.

While we have tried hard not to make specific program recommendations, it was noted that, in the context of infrastructure, it would be hard NOT to recommend essential levels of service.

There was considerable discussion about risks inherent in making the model available "without some context setting information." Merrill Gay (New Britain Discovery) suggested we consider implications of web posting in terms of creating a "shopping cart" of conditions that could be varied. Elizabeth Brown suggested that we also create a scenario that allows legislators to answer the question of "what does it cost to get x" in reverse, i.e., this is what you can get for 'x'.

The group also discussed but did not come to agreement on the questions of whether the template should be constrained so that users cannot go "below legal requirements" of licensure.

Paul Flinter (SDE) reported that the SDE report to the legislature on “unmet preschool needs” in priority school districts would not be released until January.

Finally, there was substantive discussion and agreement that we need to pay particular attention to the manner in which we “roll” out the template, within the context of continued private and public briefings, instructions, and press attention. Harry Orlick (Ready, Set, Grow) and Jim Battaglio (RSG) suggested that we shortly develop and adopt a strategic, formal plan for marketing and release.

Jim Battaglio, Bob Murphy, David Nee and Harry Orlick agreed to have a conversation outlining a set of proposals for managing the release of the ECE Finance Project report and cost modeling templates. The group identified an interest in briefings for the following audiences:

- Legislators
- Legislative Committees: Human Services; Education; Appropriations; Health, Select Committee on Children
- Media
- Commissioners/CT Jobs Cabinet
- CT Conference of Municipalities

Susan Wilson (CHDI) asked the group to consider if there was a benefit in bringing representatives from the National Governors Association or the National Conference of State Legislators here to CT as a part of the release strategy.

Bob Murphy reported that the Coalition for Justice in Education Finance might be interested in making a link back to PreK financing in the NJ Abbot context.

Scribe,

JM Gruendel, Ph.D.