School Readiness Committee: State Priorities Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
VECF office, Suite 110
1703 N. Parham Road, Richmond VA 23229
Monday, May 8th, 2017 9am-12noon

Attendees

Rob Krupicka
Walter Stosch
Kathy Glazer
Senator Ebbin
Phillip Hawkins
Christine Harris
Holly Coy

Agenda

• Welcome and Intros
• Review of the Committee’s Charge
• Updates on the Articulation Pilot and Project Pathfinders
• Briefly Introduce Subcommittee Summary Document
• Discussion of Barriers and Solutions Document – Finalize for May 17th meeting
• Next Steps and Adjournment

Welcome

Deputy Secretary Holly Coy began the meeting, thanked the Subcommittee members for their participation, and reviewed the agenda and goal for the day – namely preparing for the full committee meeting on May 17, and finalizing recommendations from the subcommittee for that group.

Updates on the Articulation Pilot and Project Pathfinders

Kathy Glazer provided some updates on the Articulation Pilot and Project Pathfinders.

Briefly Introduce Subcommittee Summary Document

Deputy Secretary Holly Coy introduced the Subcommittee summary document, the highlights of that are below:

Affirmation of Decisions & Recommendations from Subcommittee Deliberation

• Workforce Priority Segment – The Subcommittee recommended that the state’s initial focus be on the segment of the workforce that is “serving at-risk infants, toddlers, and
preschoolers (ages 0-5); employed in center-, faith-, and school-based early education programs; providing services funded in part or in whole with public funds (state and/or federal) including child care subsidy, Head Start, Title I, and VPI; and serving as lead teacher, assistant teacher, and/or administrator in an early childhood program. These criteria shape an initial focus on teachers serving at-risk children who are spending the majority of their time (full days, full weeks, either school year or full calendar year) in early education settings that receive public funds.”

- **Workforce Survey** – the Subcommittee recommended that the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and Virginia Community College System co-lead a workforce survey to establish baseline information about the credentials held, wages/benefits, and professional development needs of professionals working with children aged birth through 5. A report/analysis will be completed by fall 2017.

- **Funding Landscape Analysis** – The Subcommittee recommended the execution of an analysis of all available discretionary funding streams within state government that can be marshaled for the purposes of developing the early childhood workforce; the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is implementing this recommendation through the second iteration of its Children’s Budget project, to be completed by fall 2017.

**Emerging Recommendations**

- **Upskilling Pathway** - The Subcommittee provided feedback on the “Draft Statement on Upskilling Pathway for Virginia’s Early Childhood Practitioners” which lays out policy priorities for the development of a system for continuously improving the skill level of Virginia’s early childhood professionals.

- **SRC Framework for Accomplishing Goals** – The Subcommittee will review and provide feedback on the “SRC Framework for Accomplishing Goals” at an upcoming meeting. This document lays out a 3-year action plan for achieving the goals of the SRC.

- In response to the need to increase the number of highly competent early childhood practitioners as quickly and efficiently as possible (Barrier I above), the subcommittee is considering the following:
  
  A) 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.

  B) Virginia should advance policies that incentivize parents, providers and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood practitioners and settings.
C) Conduct a communications campaign to engage and sustain public support for a high quality early childhood workforce.

D) 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.

- In response to the stubborn compensation challenges, the subcommittee is considering a recommendation (e) that Virginia should invest in an initiative 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.
- Finally, with regard to the fragmented programs, policies, funding and regulations governing early childhood care and learning at the state level, the subcommittee is considering:
  F) Virginia should explore alternative governance models that better align policies driving these programs, funds and regulations such that they are all aligned to drive support high quality practitioners and quality settings.
  G) Virginia should dedicate a strategically positioned, high level staff person to coordinate activities across agencies and secretariats
  H) Virginia should conduct an analysis of the funding landscape in early childhood, with an eye towards identifying and better aligning funding streams that are or may be used for professional development activities for early childhood practitioners

Notable Themes
Throughout the Subcommittee’s deliberations, several themes have emerged which suggest courses for future investigation and action:

- A lack of common language in speaking about professionals who work with children aged birth through 5. Since professionals work in very different settings (family day homes vs. public school-based pre-K) with different requirements for credentialing, the Subcommittee noted that terms like “teacher” or “educator” were potentially problematic, and recommended a more neutral universal term such as “professional” or “practitioner” be used when talking about the workforce as a whole.
• The issue of compensation came up repeatedly. Early childhood professionals are generally paid very low wages, and the Subcommittee noted that this structural issue provides an underlying obstacle to nearly early effort to improve the skill level of the workforce.
• A desire to elevate the respect and prestige of the early childhood profession also came up multiple times. Suggestions were made including public relations campaigns and other actions that would make this field more attractive to prospective employees and ensure parents and other stakeholders understand the vital important of these professions who are not ‘babysitters’ but rather shape young brains and lay the foundation for their futures.
• It was noted that the early childhood sector in Virginia is extremely diffuse. There is no singular governance structure or singular authority charged with implementing early childhood priorities, particularly around the workforce. Instead, early childhood responsibility crosses multiple sectors and state agencies, which is a structural challenge to effective systems building.

Discussion of Barriers and Solutions Document

• Deputy Secretary introduced and discussed the barriers and solutions document
  o The identified barriers 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.
  o The potential solutions to these problems are as follows:
    ▪ A) 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.
    ▪ B) Virginia should advance policies that incentivize parents, providers, and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood practitioners and settings.
C) Conduct a communications campaign to engage and sustain public support for a high quality early childhood workforce.

D) The Chamber of Commerce should include Early Childhood Education priorities in their Blueprint 2020 document, specifically:
   - Invest in and protect the early educator workforce:
     - By ensuring access to affordable competency-building credentials in Virginia’s community colleges;
     - By pursuing improved conditions including compensation and retention
   - Explore employer policies and strategies that support families’ access to high quality early learning for young children

E) Virginia should invest in an initiative 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.

F) Virginia should explore alternative governance models that better align policies driving these programs, funds, and regulations such that they are all aligned to drive and support high quality practitioners and quality settings.

G) Virginia should dedicate a strategically positioned, high level staff person to coordinate activities across agencies and secretariats.

H) 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.

- Deputy Secretary and members of the subcommittee discussed and decided upon the subcommittee’s recommendations.
  - The Subcommittee members discussed how their needs to be more affordable pathways into early childhood education to recruit new individuals and improve the skills of all practitioners within the profession. Therefore, the subcommittee recommended that:
    - 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)
  - Subcommittee members made the following recommendation regarding increasing the number of early childhood practitioners who have attained a credential/degree:
    - 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.

- Subcommittee members discussed how Virginia should specifically advance policies that incentivize parents, providers, and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood education practitioners and settings. The subcommittee subsequently made the following recommendation:
  - 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.

- Subcommittee members explained how the communications campaign to engage and sustain public support for a high quality early childhood workforce should be implemented. The members made the following recommendation:
  - 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.

- Subcommittee members further discussed how the Chamber of Commerce should include Early Childhood Education priorities in their Blueprint 2020 document. Subcommittee members decided upon the following recommendation:
  - 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

Subcommittee members discussed how VPI funds could be spent in private settings on teacher salaries. After the Subcommittee members finished their discussion, they made the following recommendation:

- 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 early 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.

Subcommittee members discussed how there should be a workgroup to address the lack of compensation parity between early childhood teachers working in birth to age 5 and K – 3 sectors. Following this discussion, the subcommittee members made the following recommendation:

- 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.

Subcommittee members thought that there should be a high level staff person housed at VDOE to facilitate the School Readiness Committee’s initiatives. Because of the subcommittee’s comments, the following recommendation was made:
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.

Subcommittee members discussed how Virginia should conduct an analysis of early childhood education funding. Subcommittee members decided to make the following recommendation:

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.

Next Steps

Deputy Secretary Holly Coy explained the Subcommittee’s next steps:

- The Subcommittee will present the barriers and solutions document at the May full committee meeting for discussion.
- The Subcommittee will meet on June 22nd, 2017 – 2pm in order to finalize recommendations in advance of the July full committee meeting.