



**Advisory Committee**  
March 18, 2022  
**Meeting Minutes**

**WELCOME**

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Ms. Ginger Ostro with the Illinois Board of Higher Education reviews housekeeping information and provides member of the public guidance around participating in public comment welcomes participants to the first Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) advisory committee meeting. She provides a high-level overview of the consortium and describes the role of the advisory committee members as providing guidance to Consortium operations.

Ms. Ostro introduces the four other co-chairs: **Dr. Brian Durham**, Illinois Community College Board; **Dr. Jamilah R. Jor'dan**, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development; **Dr. Carmen Ayala**, Illinois State Board of Education; and **Ms. Karen Yarbrough**, Illinois Department of Health Services. Each co-chair provides a brief introduction and relates how their agency is connected to this work.

Dr. Durham introduces Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas, a key driver in passing this legislation, who addresses and welcomes the group and provides a brief background and high-level overview on the legislation. She invites the group to be innovative as they support, engage, and collaborate in the future endeavors of the work.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

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Advisory Committee members introduce themselves and their organization.

Members Present

1. Maurice West, II
2. Michael Marron
3. Jill Andrews
4. Melissa Batchelor
5. Jennifer Buchter
6. Kate Connor
7. Lisa Downey
8. Laurie Elish-Piper
9. Alicia Geddis
10. Francis Godwyll
11. Rochelle Golliday
12. Ashley Harms
13. Michael Kim
14. Lauri Morrison-Frichtl
15. Stephanie Neuman
16. Susan Orozco
17. Evelyn Osorio

18. Meredith Palmer
19. Joi Patterson
20. Avis Proctor
21. Jim Reed
22. Martina Rocha
23. Stephanie Schmitz-Bechtler
24. Joni Scritchlow
25. Mike Shackelford
26. Bryan Stokes, II
27. Carolyn Theard-Griggs
28. Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro

Members Absent

1. Dale Fowler
2. Kimberly Mann
3. Ken Trzaska

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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Dr. Ayala shares the rest of the afternoon's agenda with committee members and introduces them to the following ground rules:

- *Keep the early childhood workforce and young children and families at the center.*
- *Listen fully and thoughtfully.*
- *Commit to candid discussions of diverse ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect.*
- *Suspend predetermined positions to allow the collective intelligence to emerge.*
- *Monitor your personal technology.*
- *Share your voice yet monitor your airtime.*
- *Be solutions oriented.*
- *Make effort to reach consensus.*
- *Respect requests for confidentiality – both implicitly and explicitly stated.*
- *Practice reflection; personally, investigate the assumptions or bias underlying your positions.*
- *Commit to preparation; read meeting minutes and review materials associated with prior or upcoming meetings, as necessary.*

Dr. Durham informs the committee they will meet quarterly and reviews the statutory basis of the ECACE Act, reminding members the purpose of the committee is to provide guidance on the operation of the Consortium. As the collective institutions and agencies work together to create smooth seamless pathways, the Advisory provides an opportunity to hear from key stakeholders and get feedback on how this might happen. Dr. Durham reviews the charge and structure of the ECACE with the committee members:

- *Act as champions for the Consortium and purposes of PA 102-0174.*
- *As outlined in Section 30 of the legislation, review reports submitted to the General Assembly, to the Senate and House Committees with oversight over higher education, and to the Governor on the progress made by the Consortium.*
- *Provide advice and recommendations to the lead agencies and higher education institutions as they meet their responsibilities as detailed in the Act.*
- *Provide a forum to bring together employers in the early childhood care and education industry, higher education, and other stakeholders to share perspective to best support the work of the Consortium.*
- *Provide consultation and feedback to the state agencies charged with setting new metrics and goals for the Consortium after the close of the 2024-2025 academic year.*

Dr. Jor'dan informs committee members the guiding principals were established to make sure all members agree on the focus of the work and understand the reasons we are engaged in this work. Dr. Jor'dan summarizes guiding principles of the advisory committee as follows:

- *Our workforce must reflect the diversity of the children and families they serve.*
- *Early childhood education is fundamental to children's development.*
- *Our workforce requires specialized knowledge and skills to effectively carry out their work.*
- *Illinois' economy depends on working parents having access to quality early childcare and education options.*

Ms. Ostro allows for questions and discussion. There are no questions or open discussion following the advisory committee roles and guiding principles.

## EDUCATION PATHWAYS AND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INCUMBENT WORKFORCE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Ms. Yarbrough facilitates a JamBoard activity, in which members are to share what they know and want to know about challenges and opportunities to accessing and completing higher education.

Challenges and opportunity discussions are summarized below. The link to the JamBoard is: [https://jamboard.google.com/d/178sWfbYgVkmkio3HsZyG\\_u8s80VHX6cM2uPLqx1X4ok/viewer?f=1](https://jamboard.google.com/d/178sWfbYgVkmkio3HsZyG_u8s80VHX6cM2uPLqx1X4ok/viewer?f=1)

### Challenges:

- Sustainability of paying educators who earn additional credentials or higher education degrees.
- Compensating educators adequately enough to be able to go to college and continue to work.
- Misalignment with translating credentials from gateways to credit hours.
- Timeline issues with reviewing transcripts and getting into correct courses.
- Teacher shortage and re-engaging those who have left the field.
- Working out the logistics of the Consortium and long-term funding.
- Perception of the early childhood profession.
- Duplication of required coursework when students transfer.
- Addressing barriers to licensure, including student teaching and the early childhood education content test.
- Life challenges for students/educators, including family responsibilities, time, finances, and geographic inaccessibility.
- Addressing the needs of children and families across the state.
- The process and timeline to credential attainment, including transcript review.

### Opportunities:

- Recognizing educators' experiences and prior learning, and ensuring the credentials follow the candidate if they are in a birth to age 2 room or in a k-2 classroom setting.
- Creating a credential that includes special education and English as a Second Language coursework without separate and additional coursework.
- Allowing student to student teach and gain field experience in their place of work.
- Scholarships as a great opportunity to reengage folks who left the field.
- Communication and collaboration between institutions to help streamline student experiences.
- Offering wraparound services in addition to financial aid.
- Aligning and awarding credit for the CDA and AAS.
- Alternative and flexible degree programs.
- Collecting statewide data and information to better serve the workforce.
- Partnerships between higher education, community-based organizations, and other partners.

Dr. R. Jor'dan introduces Ms. Rochelle Golliday and Ms. Emnet Gebrehiwet Ward. Ms. Golliday is the Executive Director of Cuddle Care, which has locations in Riverdale and Chicago. She has worked in the field for over 26 years and has also served in roles such as an adjunct faculty at Chicago State University, a member of the Early Learning Council, and a member of the Governor's Early Childhood Funding Commission. Ms. Ward is the Human Services Director from Eyes on the Future. She is from the Chicago area and is very familiar with the challenges and opportunities related to helping staff access programs and get degrees.

Dr. Jor'dan interviews Ms. Golliday and Ms. Ward about the unique challenges and promising practices they have seen with helping their staff pursue additional credentials or higher degrees. Talking points are described below.

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Ms. Golliday discusses the need for higher education to be innovative, collaborative, and responsive to individual students, especially those with family and work responsibilities and those who may have come in and out of higher education and have not completed their degree due to particular degree requirements. She suggests cohort models, hands-on technology help for online students, and having mentorship outside the classroom.

Ms. Ward discusses the barriers to professional development. She notes that being the primary caregiver in their family network is a strength of the workforce that competes with the ability to access professional development. She notes that institutional and systematic barriers, especially outstanding debt, can be prohibitive, and that payment plans and paying down debts are a way to access transcripts. Ms. Ward emphasizes the value of the mixed-delivery early childhood system and the need to support and pay educators working in both preschool and infant/toddler settings equally. She discusses whether institutions can track students after earning their degree to understand what options the workforce has and how to re-engage those who have left the field. Ms. Ward also discusses supporting teachers in higher education holistically and creating excitement among center directors, educators, and potential educators by elevating quality and meaningful practices in the field to emphasize the value of working in early childhood.

Dr. Jor'dan recaps and thanks panelists for their insight. She then opens the floor up to discussion.

Andrews discussed leveling the playing field between districts and childcare classrooms, allowing those who can teach in the school system can teach in a childcare setting. Buchter noted the importance of having a mentor and the importance of the flexible use of funds, allowing for spending not just on tuition but on things like books, materials, licensure fees, childcare, and gas.

Proctor addressed that the advisory committee might review math requirements and how certain math courses relate to early childhood education. Golliday mentioned alternative degree programs that allow educators to achieve their goals. Discussion emphasized the need to support and streamline pathways for students who have been pursuing an associate's degree for many years without earning the degree. Scritchlow noted that for the purposes of attaining Gateways credentials, institutions are allowed to accept any math course to count towards requirement, including math courses related to teaching math to children. Senator Pacione-Zayas noted that the basic skills test is no longer required. Godwyll discussed that WIU's program is trying to address these challenging, including math requirements, childcare, and providing flexible course offerings including nights and weekends.

## ECACE OVERVIEW AND UPDATES

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Christi Chadwick from IBHE provides a consortium overview.

- The vision of the work group is to: *create a consortium of higher education institutions to streamline, coordinate, and improve accessibility and completion of degree pathways for the incumbent early childhood work force.*
- Consortium Members include Gateways Entitled colleges and universities with early childhood programs; public institutions are required to participate and private institutions are encouraged to participate.
- The Consortium set the goal to have 5,000 students who enroll, persist, and complete the program by 2024/2025 school year.
- Students with an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree can transfer into an institution with junior level status.
  - Institutions must acknowledge prior learning.
- The Consortium is charged with determining how to assign college credit for the CDA.
  - CDA is an assessment of student competencies (test, observation, and portfolio).
- Supports for immediate upskill of the workforce.
  - Scholarships are available through [www.isac.org/ecacescholarship](http://www.isac.org/ecacescholarship).

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- Can be used for: tuition and fees, funding for full cost of attendance (room and board, books, additional costs).
- Applications for fall 2022 open in May.
- As of March: 660 applicants for scholarship.

### Questions:

1. Can you share any specifics about the funding?
  - a. ECACE is working with DHS to send out federal dollars. The agencies are in the final stages of agreements with DHS to complete process, money should hopefully start flowing in the next few weeks.
2. Have there been any conversations with higher education in determining where students are in their conversations around credentialing?
  - a. Staff will connect Dr. Jill Andrews of Kiddie Kollege and Joni Scritchlow of the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies after the meeting to discuss.
3. What is the intent of the Navigator?
  - a. Navigators and institutions need to work together to help students identify potential pathways for finishing credential or determining other credentials they are close to completing.
4. Are we close to being connected to Navigators and are we close to a marketing campaign?
  - a. We have 13 of the 36 navigators and will be doing a two-day training with them to introduce them and map out additional trainings they will need. As more navigators come, they will receive appropriate trainings.
  - b. Communications campaign is still a part of the plan, just has not been prioritized. Working on an RFP to help with this.
5. Will there be access to funds for students obtaining a master's degree?
  - a. ECACE scholarship is only for undergraduate coursework. Anything post-bachelor's is not eligible for scholarships at this time. There is a small set aside for graduate level scholarships which will be a competitive process for institutions to apply for, and this should be launched late summer.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

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None.

### CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

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Dr. Brian Durham shares the following announcements:

- The next meeting is May 19, from 1pm to 3pm. The dates through the end of the year are in the Welcome Packet and members should have received holds for these.
- Advisory Committee Members are required to participate in a series of trainings. These will be sent out in the next week or so.
- There will be a link to an Exit Survey to get your thoughts to inform future meetings.

Dr. Brian Durham adjourns the meeting at 3:01 PM.