PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

April 24, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

In Attendance, Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Present: Shawn Massingale, Elise Hanse, Debi Groshong, Krystal Sanchez, Abby Drummond, Hannah Horvath, Staci Waugh

Staff Present: Athena Wikstrom, Danielle Walker, Heather Sewall

Krystal motioned to approve the March minutes.
The motion carried with no opposition.

Hub Update

Athena Wikstrom - South-Central Early Learning Hub Update:
The South-Central Early Learning Hub contracted with Dr. Dawn Bailey from the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) to provide in-person training in Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties on Preschool Life Skills and Preschool De-Escalation. Preschool Life Skills training focuses on equipping early learners with the skills necessary to be ready for school, including social-emotional skills. Preschool De-Escalation training provided attendees with tools to prevent students from escalating and how to respond when a student's behavior becomes escalated. The South-Central Early Learning Hub received overwhelmingly positive feedback from Dr. Bailey's trainings, and many observed that Dr. Bailey's trainings would complement Pyramid Model trainings.

Dr. Amy King is providing virtual Cards for Connection training for the South-Central Early Learning Hub region. This training includes one full day of training focusing on trauma-informed practices, how to identify trauma, and resources for working with individuals who have experienced trauma. Then, there are two half-day virtual training sessions focusing on how to use the tools Dr. Amy has developed. Dr. Amy shares hope in working with all people. There are still spots open for individuals who would like to participate in the Cards for Connection training. Individuals interested in attending the training should contact Athena Wikstrom (athena.wikstrom@douglasesd.k12.or.us).

The last training currently available with the South-Central Early Learning Hub is Kids in Transition to School (KITS) at Home. This training is for families and is provided by Dr. Katherine Pears and her team at the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC). KITS at Home is an eight-week virtual training course designed for families without access to preschool. The training focuses on equipping students with essential skills for kindergarten, including sharing and other social-emotional skills. It also includes tools for turning everyday tasks, such as laundry, into learning experiences for students. KITS at Home is available in English and Spanish. The Spanish course is not a direct translation and incorporates cultural differences into the training material. Families interested in the KITS at Home training should contact Athena Wikstrom (athena.wikstrom@douglasesd.k12.or.us).

Hub leaders, Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) staff, BUILD Initiative, and the Early Learning Council (ELC) met over several months to determine the work being done by Hubs, Hub priorities, and the vision for Hubs. During this time, BUILD Initiative drafted recommended Hub administrative rules and submitted them to DELC. Early Learning Hub administrative rules have not been revised since the inception of Hubs in 2014. There is now a Rules Advisory Committee (RAC), on which Gillian serves, and an open comment period will follow the RAC feedback period.

Gillian was nominated for the Early Learning Council's Home Visiting Advisory Committee and confirmed in her position by ELC Chair Sue Miller.

As of July 1, 2026, child care facilities will no longer be able to suspend or expel children from their facilities for behaviors or reasons unrelated to non-payment or similar administrative reasons. One support being developed for child care providers to prevent suspension and expulsion is Every Child Belongs, which will provide reflective consultation to child care providers who have students at risk of being suspended or expelled from their program.

Legislative Update

Athena shared that Governor Tina Kotek has created her recommended budget, and the legislature will finalize the state budget during the legislative session. There is currently uncertainty due to potential federal funding cuts.

The president's budget did not include Head Start. The federal budget is determined similarly to the state budget, with the president providing their recommendations and the Senate and House committees determining the final budget. At this time, Head Start and other federal funding has not been determined.

Shawn Massingale - United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start:
Douglas County has been identified as a child care desert, facing high demand for services while many families struggle to afford care due to economic hardship. The primary issue is insufficient funding and a noticeable gap in state resources, resulting in limited access to child care. Many groups, including Head Start, Children's Institute, families, and others, are advocating for increased investment in Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) in response to these challenges.

Upcoming suspension and expulsion legislation, effective July 1, 2026, may pose further difficulties, especially for rural counties like Douglas County, which lack adequate resources to support trauma-affected children. Every Child Belongs, formerly called Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, is the state's response to providing child care providers support in responding to children displaying challenging behaviors. When children are not adequately supported, it may result in other children withdrawing from care, staff experiencing burnout and financial strain, and providers facing liability issues. There is also concern that such situations may lead to the profiling and exclusion of children who require additional support. Furthermore, support exists for two House Bills focusing on early childhood workforce development, emphasizing the high costs and limited access to training. There is a recognized need for specialized skills to manage challenging behaviors, as even Head Start teachers with degrees report difficulties in handling current behavioral issues.

Child care workers generally do not possess the same level of training as behavior specialists or special education teachers, making workforce development crucial for sustaining child care programs, ensuring safe environments, and supporting continuity of care and school readiness. Moving forward, a form letter in support of Head Start is being finalized. The group also discussed the possibility of submitting a collective letter to legislators from the Professional Advisory Committee. Athena and Gillian will review and refine the letter before it is submitted.

Family Connects Oregon Presentation

Elise Hansen – UCAN - Family Connects Oregon:
The Family Connects program is a universal nurse home visiting initiative designed for families with newborns, and is overseen by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). Legislation passed in 2020 states that all families in Oregon with newborns are entitled to a free home visit from a nurse. Oregon has adopted the Family Connects model, an evidence-based nurse-led approach from North Carolina, to implement this service statewide. In Douglas County, planning began in the summer of 2024, with the program launching in February 2025. This initiative integrates with existing home visiting services such as Healthy Families, Babies First, and CaCoon, making it a logical expansion of those efforts. The United Community Action Network (UCAN)'s application to provide Family Connects in Douglas County has been approved, and nurses are currently conducting visits while refining referral pathways.

Visits, which are free of charge regardless of insurance, are conducted by registered nurses (RNs) who have received specialized training in areas such as newborn and postpartum care, lactation support, and infant assessments. The first home visit is typically scheduled around three to four weeks postpartum. Visits address a significant healthcare gap, as mothers generally are not seen until six weeks postpartum, and babies are not assessed between two weeks and two months unless specific issues arise. Services provided include weighing and measuring the baby, conducting a full infant physical checkup, postpartum assessments for mothers, mental health screenings (including evaluations for depression, intimate partner violence, and substance misuse), and socioeconomic needs assessments for issues such as housing and utility support. While 90% of visits

occur at home, alternatives are available for those in shelters, experiencing houselessness, unstable housing, or have other housing concerns, ensuring accessibility regardless of housing status.

The program is entirely free to families, regardless of their insurance coverage, and is covered by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) and private insurance as mandated by the state. Services are still provided free of charge if families lack insurance coverage. Every family in Oregon with a baby under six months is eligible, and the program is not limited to first-time parents. The program is shared with families through interest forms at hospitals, online self-referral forms, and community referrals, such as those from Community UPLiFT. Currently, hospital staff typically refer high-risk families to the program. As a result, there are ongoing efforts to retrain hospital staff to refer all families, as the program is designed to be available to all families.

Family Connects Nurses not only provide care but also offer parenting education and reassurance, guidance on baby-wearing, and referrals to resources like utility assistance and child care. Families have provided positive feedback, noting appreciation for the reassurance they receive, even if they do not have significant concerns. If families face urgent needs related to lactation or housing, early visits can be expedited. Another gap the program fills is lactation consultation, as there were only two outpatient consultants available in Douglas County, and the hospital no longer employs a lactation consultant. As the program expands, there is a need to strengthen other home visiting programs, such as Healthy Families and Early Head Start, to effectively manage increased referrals. Healthy Families is currently full, and Early Head Start has a limited number of openings available.

Debi Groshong from the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians highlighted her ability to provide community support to both Tribal members and non-tribal members, including free items such as breast pumps and car seats, through her grant-funded initiative. Collaboration efforts are ongoing.

Coordinated Enrollment Update

Shawn Massingale - United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start:
Shawn provided an overview of the state Coordinated Enrollment Work Group, which includes DELC staff, Hub Directors, and Head Start Directors. The group's primary purpose is to streamline and enhance coordinated enrollment practices across various early childhood education programs, specifically Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK), Baby Promise, Early Head Start, and Preschool Promise. To achieve this, Shawn outlined four key functions that the work group prioritized.

First, they will focus on developing and implementing localized outreach and marketing plans. This entails creating effective outreach strategies for the four programs, engaging with school districts and Title I schools to maximize impact, identifying target populations, coordinating outreach efforts across programs, developing shared marketing and recruitment materials, establishing success metrics centered on enrollment increases, and creating educational resources to help families evaluate program safety and quality.

The second focus is on developing screening tools and informational forms to help families understand program options, eligibility criteria, available services, and how to select the most suitable early learning option for their family. Updates on this work are anticipated next month.

The third function involves collecting and sharing data. A framework for tracking enrollment progress, remaining program capacity, and community-specific needs has been identified as necessary. This data will be utilized to support strategic adjustments and ensure full program enrollment.

Lastly, the group aims to facilitate connections for enrollment by developing systems that improve referrals and warm handoffs between eligibility staff and families. The goal is to ensure that families are actively connected with appropriate programs rather than being passively referred. It is noteworthy that similar efforts are already in

progress within the county, with collaborative weekly meetings involving Community UPLiFT staff, Head Start staff, public health nurses, and other partners. This is also being done through referrals from Community UPLiFT.

Preschool Promise and Community UPLiFT Update

Danielle Walker - Family Resource Facilitator - South-Central Early Learning Hub:
Danielle provided an update on Preschool Promise enrollment and eligibility. Applications for the 2024–2025 school year are still being accepted. The program accepts applications year-round to maintain a waitpool and fill openings quickly if families move or leave the program.

Returning student forms are now available for students who attended Preschool Promise sites this year as three-year-olds and are interested in continuing as four-year-olds next year. It is important to note that returning students retain priority status for enrollment. The returning student forms are brief, and the only required documentation is proof of address.

New student applications are now live. Preschool Promise applications can be found at SouthCentralHubEnrollment.com. Families can submit applications for UCAN's Preschool Promise site in Glide and UCAN Head Start via UCANCAP.org.

To qualify, Preschool Promise students need to be:

- Three or four-years-old on September 1 of the school year they are applying for,
- Live in Oregon
- Have a household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The South-Central Early Learning Hub encourages all families to apply for Preschool Promise regardless of income, as there are some exceptions.

The Department of Early Learning and Care has recently updated its eligibility requirements. Families can now use benefits letters indicating $0 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Additionally, families whose housing costs (rent, mortgage, house insurance, utilities, etc.) exceed 30% of the household's gross income can have their gross income reduced by the amount by which their housing costs exceed 30%. For example, if a family's housing costs are 40% of their household's gross income, their reported gross income to qualify for Preschool Promise can be reduced by 10%.

There is currently one Preschool Promise opening each at Days Creek Charter School, Yoncalla, and the YMCA of Klamath Falls. A waitpool is encouraged for all sites.

The Glide Preschool Promise site is fully enrolled for the first time this school year.

The South-Central Early Learning Hub's Community UPLiFT is always accepting referrals for families who need resource navigation and support. Community UPLiFT serves families with children from birth to age 5, expecting parents, and youth up to 21 years old with special needs. The Hub recently added Cow Creek's Public Health as a referral partner to the Community UPLiFT system in Douglas County.

Ronda and Danielle can provide Community UPLiFT presentations and staff training on referral processes as well as training on the use of the secure data portal. For further information or support, families can contact Danielle Walker (danielle.walker@douglasesd.k12.or.us) or Ronda Osborn (ronda.osborn@douglasesd.k12.or.us).

Partner Updates

General Summer Program Updates -

- Lunchbox Express Schedules:
  As schools finalize schedules, they will be shared on the Hub's Facebook page and Head Start social media platforms.
- The Celebrate Children Event at Wildlife Safari was cancelled for this year. Efforts are underway to resume next year.
- Healthy Kids Day, hosted by the YMCA, is approaching. Attendees should check the YMCA website for details.

- The Jerry Bruce Campus Spring Fair is scheduled for May; flyers will be distributed once they become available.

Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) – First Thursday Events - Abby Drummond: First Thursdays will begin their summer series with outdoor programming in June. August's event will feature a back-to-school theme, offering haircuts and trims for children, gift certificates for those not served during the event window, and shoe gift certificates from Encore and Big 5. Suggestions for additional contributions to the back-to-school theme are welcome. Adapt Mobile Medical Clinic will continue to participate through the summer, offering immunizations and sports physicals. August's First Thursday event will be held on the second Thursday of August due to a scheduling conflict with the Douglas County Fair.

Family Relief Nursery Updates - Hannah Horvath:

- April 29 Community Event (1–3 PM):
  - Held in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.
  - Activities will include planting blue pinwheels, creating blue handprints for a tapestry, and unveiling a clean and organized resource room, complete with clothing, diapers, wipes, and other essentials.
- May 23 Children's Heritage Fair:
  - Hosted at the Cottage Grove site in partnership with Bohemia Mining Days.
  - Free, family-oriented event with historic themes and costumes.
- Program Growth:
  - Preschool and toddler classrooms are now fully staffed and operating four days a week.
  - Enrollment has increased from two students to 11 students in the preschool class.
  - Outreach services remain available for families not enrolled in classroom programs.

Migrant Education Program Update - Krystal Sanchez: Most migrant education programming for this region is currently based in Lane County. Efforts are underway to expand summer outreach to Roseburg, in anticipation of the arrival of incoming migrant communities. Limited staff capacity within migrant education affects expansion; however, community collaboration is appreciated.

The South-Central Early Learning Hub's local coordination and structure, including the Professional Advisory Committee, serve as a positive model for other regions.

Next Meeting Date

May 22, 2025, from 10:00 am-12:00 pm