KLAMATH PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

April 22, 2025 | 10:00 AM – Noon

Attendance

Ronda Janecke
Mary Ruiz
David Elliott
Tessa Saindon
Holly Mancebo
Crystal Lemus
Connie Venegas
David Lev
Lana Raber
Gillian Wesenberg
Laura Barajas
Amber Singh
Athena Wikstrom
Danielle Walker

Please note: For ease of member access, South-Central Early Learning Hub – Klamath Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings will be held virtually unless otherwise notified.

Welcome and Introduction

The Klamath PAC reviewed and approved the March 2025 minutes. Members of the Klamath PAC voted to approve the minutes as submitted. No further discussion. Motion passed.

South-Central Early Learning Hub Update

Gillian Wesenberg provided an update on the South-Central Early Learning Hub. The Hub recently offered in-person training sessions on De-Escalation Strategies and Preschool Life Skills in each of the three counties (Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties), featuring Dr. Dawn Bailey and Spencer Corey from the Oregon Institute of Technology. These sessions have now concluded. Dr. Bailey led the Preschool Life Skills training, focusing on proactive boundary-setting techniques, while Spencer Corey facilitated the De-Escalation Strategies training, which provided tools and approaches for situations where preventative strategies are not successful. Gillian also attended a Pyramid Model training hosted by Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) in Douglas County and noted how well the content aligned with both the Preschool Life Skills and De-Escalation Strategies trainings.

In addition, the Hub is offering a regional virtual Cards for Connection training with Dr. Amy King, an internationally recognized therapist. This training supports educators and caregivers working with children from prenatal through age 18 by offering tools to strengthen connections and respond to trauma. Dr. King has extended an opportunity for new participants to become accredited with Cards for Connection. To qualify, individuals must view recorded session of the Hub's first training covering the foundational understanding of trauma and its impacts, then attend two live virtual trainings scheduled for May 9 and May 16. Anyone interested in enrolling should contact Athena at athena.wikstrom@douglasesd.k12.or.us for support.

Athena noted that Dr. King emphasizes the importance of building connections. She also highlights that therapeutic interventions can be provided by anyone, not just therapists. Each participant will receive the Cards for Connection tool along with ongoing support through weekly virtual gatherings. The Cards for Connection tool promotes relationship building and is designed to be developmentally appropriate for ages prenatal through 18. Each card has two sides: one with suggested activities and the other with corresponding talking points to guide conversations with children or parents. For example, a card for 18-month-old children may suggest building connections through play, and include activities such as bath time, special one-on-one time, peek-a-boo, reading, or involving another adult to give the caregiver a break. These activities are paired with explanations, such as how play fosters problem-solving, social-emotional skills, and the importance of repetition in brain development.

Gillian added that the South-Central Early Learning Hub is also virtually offering the Kids in Transition to School (KITS) at Home Program to families across the region. KITS at Home was developed by Dr. Katherine Pears at the Oregon Social Learning Center. KITS at Home is a research-based, evidence-informed program designed to

support families. The Hub is targeting families whose children have not attended preschool or who live in geographically isolated areas.

Athena noted that KITS at Home Program consists of 90-minute weekly sessions over the course of eight weeks designed to help families prepare their children for kindergarten through every-day activities. The Hub has resources available to assist with technology access for those facing barriers.

KITS at Home Program is offered in both English and Spanish. The Spanish version incorporates culturally relevant content and adaptations to better serve Spanish-speaking families, ensuring that all participants receive tools in a way that is meaningful and accessible to them. The Hub is actively encouraging registration to reach as many families as possible.

At present, there are no significant legislative updates, as the state is awaiting the May revenue forecast and additional information regarding federal funding. There is a possibility of a special session being called following the conclusion of the current legislative session due to ongoing uncertainties. Head Start is sharing that they may not be included in the President's proposed budget. Similar to the state budget process, the Presidential budget serves as a proposal, with final funding decisions made by Congress. In response, Head Start programs are encouraging individuals to contact their legislators and advocate for continued support.

Gillian also shared that she is serving on the Department of Early Learning and Care Rules Committee for Early Learning Hubs with multiple other sectors represented. Since the inception of Early Learning Hubs on July 1, 2014, there have been no formal administrative rule changes. There are two rounds of rule updates scheduled, one this year and another next year. Three Hubs are currently involved in providing input to the Early Learning Council (ELC), and opportunities for public input are available for those interested in contributing feedback.

Gillian was also recently nominated and appointed to the Early Learning Council (ELC) Home Visiting Committee. The Home Visiting Systems Coordination work is transitioning from The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF) to the Center for Coordinating Oregon's Home Visiting Systems (CCOHVS) at Portland State University (PSU). Her focus is to be a voice for Tribes, and rural and frontier communities.

Danielle provided an update on Preschool Promise. Applications are still being accepted for the 2024–2025 school year, and the Hub has now opened both returning and new student applications for the 2025–2026 Preschool Promise year. Once a child qualifies for Preschool Promise, they remain eligible until they enter kindergarten. New student applications for both school years are available online at southcentralhubenrollment.com.

To qualify for Preschool Promise, children must be three or four years old by September 1 of the school year for which they are applying, come from families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and reside in Oregon. The Hub encourages all families to apply, regardless of income, as additional considerations may apply. This year, the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) introduced a new income adjustment policy: if a family exceeds the income threshold but pays more than 30% of their income toward housing, the Hub can apply for an income adjustment. Additionally, participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) now qualifies as automatic income eligibility for Preschool Promise. The new updates to income qualifications and adjustments, better align the program with Head Start, creating greater consistency. They also expand access for families who may have previously been ineligible.

Danielle also provided an overview of Community UPLiFT, which connects expecting families, families with children from birth to age five, and children up to 21 with special needs, to community resources. Family Resource Facilitators, who are also Community Health Workers (CHWs) or in process of becoming certified as CHWs, conduct motivational interviews with referrals to identify specific needs and offer information and referrals to programs. Online referrals can be completed at community-uplift.com or via smartphone by texting the keyword "uplift2" to (541) 351-3100.

Community UPLiFT also has a 30-second public service announcement available with subtitles in both Englich and Spanish:

- Spanish subtitles
- English subtitles

Danielle is happy to offer Community UPLiFT presentations—either in person or virtually. The Hub is also always looking to add providers who are interested in accepting referrals from Community UPLiFT. For more information, contact Danielle at Danielle.walker@douglasesd.k12.or.us or by phone at (541) 880-4655.

Connect, Restore, Thrive Counseling

Tessa Saindon joined the Klamath PAC meeting to present information about Connect, Restore, Thrive (CRT) Counseling. CRT is a non-profit counseling practice serving individuals from birth through age 100. The organization employs a team of therapists, each with a specialized area of focus, including services for young children and families, adults, expectant mothers, individuals experiencing eating disorders, and more. Services at CRT Counseling do not require a referral from a healthcare provider.

CRT Counseling accepts the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) as well as most private insurance plans. To support individuals who are uninsured or face high out-of-pocket costs, for example, CRT offers two financial assistance programs designed to make services more affordable and accessible. Their mission is to ensure that financial challenges do not prevent individuals from receiving the behavioral health support they need.

It is important to note that CRT does not provide high-acuity services. This means that they do not offer on-call, emergency, or after-hours support, and there are no psychiatrists on staff. As such, CRT may not be the best fit for everyone seeking services, but they work to connect individuals with appropriate resources, such as the Klamath Basin Behavioral Health (KBBH) Mobile Crisis Team as well as other referrals.

CRT also offers the Circles of Security Parenting (COSP) program, facilitated by one of three certified staff members. This attachment-based course is designed primarily for parents of children aged five and under, though families with older children have also found it beneficial. The six-week program is offered quarterly at varied times; morning, daytime, and evening, to accommodate different schedules. Child care and meals are provided. The program is billed through insurance, so participating families must complete an intake assessment and qualify. The next session of Circles of Security begins in June. Families interested in participating should contact CRT Counseling directly.

Tessa also shared information about Empowered Mammas, a weekly group therapy program for pregnancy and postpartum support. The group provides child care and a space for mothers to connect and work through the challenges of pregnancy and postpartum experiences. CRT also maintains a family lending closet with maternity clothing, postpartum care items, toys, and clothing for children five and under. They do not supply diapers. Empowered Mammas is currently on pause but will resume in June. The program does not have a curriculum and operates without formal start and stop dates. There are typically about five to six participants at a time.

Lastly, CRT is launching a new program this summer called the Summer Positive Paths Program, designed for children ages five (who must be potty trained) through 17 or 18 with a behavioral health diagnosis. Children are grouped by similar diagnoses and work in small groups with a therapist and a Qualified Mental Health Associate (QMHA) or another support staff. The program includes group therapy and skills training and will run two days per week, providing both transportation and a meal. It is tailored to each child's treatment plan. Due to high interest, the waitlist for summer is currently closed, but families are encouraged to check back around May 15, as space may open if some families decide not to participate.

For additional information or questions regarding CRT Counseling, please contact Tessa Saindon at Tessa@crtcounseling.org.

Partner Updates

Family Governance Advisory Committee – Athena Wikstrom – The Family Governance Advisory Committee includes members from Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties. The Hub is continuing to recruit parents and caregivers who are expecting or have children under the age of five to join the committee. Meetings are held virtually, and technology support is available for families who need assistance, helping to remove barriers to remote participation. Families also receive a $50 stipend for each meeting they attend to show appreciation for their time and to recognize them as the professionals they are.

Families on the committee did an excellent job, writing a grant to fund Little Free Libraries. Three of the four libraries in Klamath County have been placed so far. One library is in Merrill, one is in Malin, and the third is in Klamath Falls. The committee hopes to place the fourth library in northern Klamath County. The books in the Little Free Libraries focus on diversity, featuring characters of varying ethnicities and abilities, so children see themselves represented in the available books, and many titles are available in English, Spanish, dual languages, or other languages. The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians provided books in their native language, Takelma, and the Klamath Tribes is working on selecting books for the Little Free Libraries as well. Families are doing a great job of stepping outside their comfort zones, connecting with businesses and community partners, as well as maintaining and stocking the libraries.

Family Governance Advisory Committee members have shared with the Hub and Mitten Mommas what they need as parents to feel supported and prepared. They requested and have received training from Mitten Mommas on topics like Individual Family Support Plans (IFSPs), Individual Education Plans (IEPs), advocacy, conflict resolution, and more.

Take Root Parenting Connection – Laura Barajas – Take Root has three upcoming events scheduled at the Klamath County Library: Weaving Craft Night for teens and parents on April 24; Literacy Event on May 7; Potty Training Workshop on May 9. Laura shared flyers for these events in the chat. Please share them with the families you work with.

Care Connections and Education / Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) – Amber Singh – Care Connections and Education will host a Pyramid Model training on May 17 at Klamath Community College (KCC). The training is free of charge, and participants will receive a Pyramid Model kit valued at $250. A virtual check-in will be scheduled after the training for participants to connect with trainers, ask questions, and discuss implementation.

Klamath County Library – Summer Reading – David Lev – The Summer Reading Program will begin on June 16. Children who register will receive reading logs. Older children are encouraged to read for 20 minutes each day, while younger children can be read to for the same amount of time. Children will earn a book after completing 20 days and a t-shirt after completing 40 days. In addition, collectible trading cards for a card game called Reading Dragons will be available at each of the Klamath County Library branches. There will be a wide range of fun programming for families throughout the summer.

Although there are currently no sensory story times, the library offers other regular early childhood programs. Little Buddies Story Time, for children from birth to age five, takes place on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. at the Main Branch. The South Suburban Branch hosts a Wobbler and Toddler Story Time on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. The Chiloquin Branch holds a weekly story time on Wednesdays from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. Additionally, the Main Branch offers a Baby and Toddler Drop-in Play Time for children ages three and under on Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to noon in the Program Room. This is an unstructured play time open to families.

Oregon's Dino Story Exhibit will be featured at the South Suburban Branch next week and will move to the Bonanza Branch the following week. The Klamath County Library offers programming for all ages, and full details can be found on their online calendar at https://klamathlibrary.org/library-events-calendar.

Next Meeting:

May 28, 2025, from 10 am to noon.