

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

Sept 18, 2024 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Attendance

Steve Schenewerk
Michael Carter
Maurita Johnson
Lane Stratton
Heidi McGowan
Jennifer Jackson

Rhonda Janecke
Chellsey Maher
David Elliott
Dena Haudenschild
Analia Nicholson
Julie Hurley

Gillian Wesenberg
Heather Freiling
Vanessa Pingleton
Athena Wikstrom
Danielle Walker

For ease of member access, Regional Governance Council (RGC) meetings will continue to be held virtually unless otherwise notified.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair, Steve Schenewerk, welcomed members of the Regional Governance Council (RGC) and individuals introduced themselves.

Members of the Regional Governance Council reviewed the June 2024 minutes. Steve Schenewerk motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Michael Carter seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion passed at 11:14 am.

South-Central Early Learning Hub Update

Athena shared The Family Governance Advisory Committee applied for and received the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation (KPI) and Early Literacy grant to place Little Free Libraries throughout the region. The committee plans to include bilingual and diverse books. Libraries will be placed in accessible rural locations.

The Family Governance Advisory Committee has been meeting for nearly two years and is now developing roles and responsibilities and meeting cadences. An information postcard about the Family Governance Advisory Committee was generated to attract additional membership in Klamath and Lake Counties. Members have requested and will begin receiving trainings about topics like technology, Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), 504 plans, Early Identification of Dyslexia, and more.

Gillian shared the following DELC Policy Option Packages (POPs):

POP 101: \$5.7 million for agency operations staff

POP 105: \$3.1 million for child care licensure staff (to reduce ratio to recommended 1 licenser per 50 child care providers) (Federal Funds)

POP 580: \$25 million for Early Literacy

- Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- Early Learning & Kindergarten Guidelines revision & professional development
- Other investments (To Be Determined)

DELC recognizes that there are other funding needs. Other needs include funding for

- Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)
- Tribal Early Learning
- Family Childcare Provider Health Coverage

- Ongoing access to other DELC programs (ex. Preschool Promise, Relief Nurseries, etc.)

The Governor requests state agencies develop POPs aligned with the Governor's targeted investments. The governor reviews POPs and compiles a recommended budget. The legislature uses the Governor's recommendations to develop the state budget.

Gillian also noted that DELC, the Early Learning Council (ELC), and Early Learning Hubs are still working collaboratively with the national research organization, Build Initiative. Build Initiative was contracted to develop definitions of Early Learning Hubs and their work.

There is a new DELC Director of Operations, Joel Metlen, who transitioned from working in the Director's Office at the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS).

Suspension and Expulsion Planning Grant

Newly passed legislation that prohibits children in early care and education settings, regardless of funding, from being suspended or expelled begins July 1, 2026. In preparation, the state released suspension and expulsion planning grants to help support the implementation of the legislation. Douglas ESD applied for the planning grant and has created an interagency agreement with the South-Central Early Learning Hub to facilitate the planning process from now until June 2025.

The Hub contracted with Heidi McGowan to host focus groups with parents, behavioral health providers, in-home child care providers, center-based child care providers, and community partners. The Hub also contracted with Dr. Amy King to help design the implementation plan.

There are concerns that limited funding will cause implementation challenges for the South-Central Early Learning Hub region, as each Early Learning Hub in the state will receive funding for one full time employee to provide support for teachers. Due to the size of the South-Central Early Learning Hub region, it will be difficult for one individual to support all child care settings across the region. One advantage for the region is that Douglas ESD participated in a pilot project with a grant from The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF) to provide a Behavioral Support Specialist for child care providers in Douglas County. The pilot project is similar to the work being developed with the suspension and expulsion legislation. Douglas ESD will continue to utilize TFFF and PSU to support the ongoing process.

Heather advised that Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) contracts were amended to allow for a new Inclusive Specialist full-time employee (FTE). The Inclusive Specialist will promote and support inclusive practices by offering technical assistance and consultation services, assessing subsidies for children [who receive Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)] needing extra classroom support, and providing professional development opportunities for providers.

Maurita shared that one of the local ODHS frustrations stems from not having more investments for Family Coaches. One thing Family Coaches have been actively involved in is reducing student absenteeism with Klamath Promise by serving as a warm line for both the Klamath County School District and the Klamath Falls City School District. The outcomes of the Family Coaches is what attracted the Doris Duke Foundation grant for Klamath/Lake Counties. As per request, Maurita will share data with the Regional Governance Council via email, that shows how Family Coaches are an important, upstream prevention model that keeps families out of the child welfare system.

State Preschool Promise RFA & Coordinated Enrollment

Athena gave an update about the Request for Application (RFA) for Preschool Promise reallocation. There are 18 seats/slots available in the region for reallocation. The state reviewed reallocation applications and determined none of the applications matched priority areas requested by families and the Regional Governance Council (RGC). The Hub has requested an additional DELC RFA for providers in the requested priority zip codes to apply for the 18 Preschool Promise slots. The Hub also submitted a public records request to receive the names of the providers that had applied for Preschool Promise.

There are seven Preschool Promise openings for students in the region. There was a higher rate of Preschool Promise student turnover at the beginning of the year. Families shared they applied for multiple types of programs and selected the program that best met their needs. Turnover at the sites is slowing. Most providers have waitpools, and if an opening becomes available, it can typically be filled quickly.

Regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR)

Heather Freilinger shared that Care Connections & Education, the regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR), is continuing to support individuals reach their professional goals through monthly connections and training opportunities.

The Strong Start network, which provided a year of training to childcare providers who have been in business less than two years, ends in December. Next January, Strong Start will be repeated, allowing providers to join the Strong Start network at any time throughout the year. The CCRR Website is: <https://672care.org/>

The new Inclusive Partner employee in Klamath Falls will also have the role of supporting the Klamath County Spanish child care provider cohort. The Spanish provider cohort has been showing growth and movement.

The Klamath County 2024 Early Childhood Conference is on November 2 at Klamath Community College (KCC). More information will be provided soon. The Douglas County fall conference is October 4 and 5 at Umpqua Community College (UCC). On Friday night, October 4, there will be a showing of Forget Me Not: Inclusion in the Classroom. The keynote speaker for Saturday is Rusty Keeler, an expert on Risky Play. Registration and more information can be found online at: [2024 Early Childhood Care and Education Conference - Risky Play - Umpqua Shopping cart \(enrole.com\)](https://enrole.com).

The CCRR Preschool Promise Technical Assistance Team is full again and are actively coaching in Preschool Promise programs. Coaches are working on highlighting Preschool Promise Programs. Last week, the team highlighted Nic Nacs Quality Childcare, an in-home provider in Klamath Falls. Some Preschool Promise Programs will be receiving an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) Assessment which issued to assess the quality of an early childhood or preschool program. CCRR will be holding a class Thursday and Friday for providers to learn more about the assessment and what to expect.

Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) Findings

Regina Wheeler joined the Regional Governance Council to provide a summary of research activities, key findings, and the development of the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation (KPI) and Early Literacy Request for Application (RFA) for the South-Central Early Learning Hub region.

The Hub received funds from the Department of Early Learning and Care (DEL) to distribute to community partners. PRE was tasked with collecting and analyzing data that would lead to suggested strategies for the Hub to adopt for KPI and Birth through Five Early Literacy. Findings and suggested strategies were summarized in a summary report. Findings were utilized to develop an RFA for community members interested in applying for grant funds.

PRE hosted information gathering sessions with school district representatives, and information gathering sessions with county representatives. The information gathering sessions for county representatives were facilitated by the South-Central Early Learning Hub. Informational sessions helped PRE to better understand initiatives that are already in place, and what would be helpful to have in place. Previous data collected from family input sessions was included with information gleaned from districts and community partners.

PRE received and analyzed 20 Early Literacy plans from School Districts across the region. School districts utilize an abundance of curricula and programs to enhance early literacy strategies among elementary students. Preschool programs who prioritize social-emotional learning and building foundational education skills are advantageous in preparing students for traditional kindergarten settings.

PRE found that a gap exists in providing families who had children not enrolled in preschool programs with adequate information regarding kindergarten readiness. Home visits, centralized information made available on the Hub's website, and toolkits provided at local organizations would allow families to practice kindergarten readiness skills at home. Promoting kindergarten readiness among families at home would increase students' ability to build skills needed to succeed in a traditional kindergarten setting. Also, increasing information about family events would strengthen relationships and community building among families, students, and their schools.

Regina also shared insights from their research that led to the structure and contents of the summary report and creation of the Request for Applications. The report provided to the South-Central Early Learning Hub included:

- Grant Background and Purpose
- Eligibility Requirements
- Budget
- Application Instructions
- Evaluation Process
- Application Information Form
- Technical Application

PRE also suggested that the grant application be translated into Spanish. The Hub contracted to complete translation into Spanish and the Spanish translation version was distributed to the community in both English and Spanish.

Home Visiting Systems Coordination (HVSC) and Community UPLiFT

Vanessa shared that the state has come together to create the Center for Coordinating Oregon Home Visting Systems (CCOHV). CCOHV is working on mapping home visiting services across the state and will be hosting a Home Visting Summit with The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF) Home Visiting Systems Coordinators, Portland State University (PSU), and state Home Visiting Systems Coordinators to determine how work will move forward across the state.

The State Home Visiting Systems Coordinator visited Douglas County and will be visiting Klamath and Lake Counties in the spring.

The August Connect Share and Care training was self-care, presented by Tessa from Connect, Restore, Thrive (CRT) Counseling. The events are hybrid across the region, with in-person locations rotating between Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties. Connect Share and Care training brings together family coaches, early childhood home visitors, and family support professionals for short training opportunities.

Danielle gave an update about Community UPLiFT and shared that since 2017, Community UPLiFT has received a total of 1,459 referrals. In the last quarter, April - June 2024, Community UPLiFT received 85 total referrals. Of the 85, there were 47 referrals for Douglas County, 35 for Klamath County, and no referrals for Lake County.

Hub staff is working on outreach to providers and will be presenting at Sky Lakes Outpatient Care Management next week. Danielle also presented the Hub, Community UPLiFT, and Preschool Promise at the Healthy Klamath meeting in August. Staff has been attending various community events, like First Thursday in Dougals County and Third Thursday in Klamath County.

Referrals are lower in Lake County for various reasons. Athena shared that Lake County tends to be well connected, and Lane, Lake County ESD Superintendent, added that rural areas like Lake County are independent in nature as they are a frontier area and isolated.

Regional Partner Updates

Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) - Maurita Johnson – The Director ODHS is holding a partner forum on Oct. 23 in Klamath Falls from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm at the 9th Street Venue in Klamath Falls. The forum is an opportunity to weigh in about ODHS priorities.

Closing

December agenda items: Information on Voting Member Terms

With no additional business, the meeting adjourned

Next Meeting: December 5, 2024, at 11:00 am