KLAMATH PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

October 22, 2025 | 10:00 AM – Noon

Attendance

Dena Haudenshild	Maurita Johnson	Amber Singh
Kathleen Walker-Henderson	David Lev	Athena Wikstrom
Karen Cole	Melissa Dorsey	Ronda Osborn
Leslie Maxfield	Melinda Gomez	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 September 2025 minutes. Kathleen Walker-Henderson motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Maurita Johnson and Amber Singh seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion passed.

South-Central Early Learning Hub Update

Athena reported that the South-Central Early Learning Hub received executed contracts from the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC). The Coordinated Enrollment contract was completed over the summer, while the contract for remaining funding streams were finalized in September and executed in October during the bridge funding period. For this biennium, DELC reduced Hub contracts from two years to one year, with plans to issue a second contract for year two. Athena explained that efforts are underway to align Hub contracts with DELC's standard funding cycle of July through June, as the Hub contracts currently operate with an October through September cycle. Some of the new Hub rules are also being incorporated into contracts.

She also shared that the Hub is excited to receive 0–5 early literacy funds again this year. The early literacy funds were originally intended to be a one-year allocation. The Regional Governance Council (RGC) will discuss how to best invest and distribute these funds in the region, drawing on feedback from the Professional Advisory Committees and Governance Councils to guide decisions. The Hub will continue updating the Strategic Plan, which will guide Hub work in the coming year.

Athena reported that staff have been working on developing messaging to support families as approximately 170,000 Oregonians on SNAP received notices that they may lose benefits in November if the government shutdown continues. The Hub is compiling resources for families, including information about cooking on a budget, stretching food supplies, and finding food pantries or hot meals. Hub staff are reaching out to local organizations to ensure all resource information is accurate and up to date.

Preschool Promise currently has openings in Klamath County at Gilchrist, with marketing underway to help fill those spots. One in-home Preschool Promise provider, Nic Nacs Quality Childcare, chose not to continue contracting for Preschool Promise, and DELC advised that those slots would not be reallocated this biennium. The Hub, however, is advocating for those slots to be reallocated and remain in Klamath County to ensure children can access Preschool Promise services. Preschool Promise applications are accepted year-round, and applications for the 2025-2026 school year remain open.

Community UPLiFT is always accepting referrals for Community UPLiFT. The Hub is always looking to add new partners interested in receiving referrals through Community UPLiFT, and Danielle can provide presentations about the program to anyone interested in accepting referrals or learning about submitting referrals. With potential federal cuts to Medicaid, and the potential loss of SNAP benefits due to the government shutdown,

Athena emphasized the Hub's commitment to responding to referrals within two business days and encouraged partners to send families through Community UPLiFT so that available resources can be shared quickly.

Strategic Plan

Athena introduced the review of the current Strategic Plan, noting that it was developed prior to Raise Up Oregon 2.0 and will need updates to align numbering with new statewide objectives and metrics. Also, with this version of the Strategic Plan, the South-Central Early Learning Hub was required to include all early childhood program activities across the region, not just those activities led by Hub staff. The Hub is waiting for updated guidance from the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) to determine whether the next iteration of the Strategic Plan should continue to include all partner activities or include solely the work of Hub staff. The plan was intended to reflect the shared goals and collaboration of the broader early learning system. The Klamath Professional Advisory Committee reviewed the Strategic Plan and provided feedback.

Discussion:

Kathleen noted that workforce development efforts, particularly those supporting the early childhood education partnerships with Klamath Community College (KCC), are not highlighted in the Strategic Plan. Child care programs continue to experience staffing shortages; having candidates who already possess background checks and required Oregon Registry Online (ORO) training would help reduce hiring barriers. Athena shared that workforce for early childhood programs is not deeply rooted in the Strategic Plan as this is one of the focus areas for Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR). CCRR supports workforce readiness through several different avenues like the Strong Start network as well as connecting KCC students and new providers to training opportunities, background checks, and helping with ORO enrollment to increase employability and reduce hiring barriers.

Attendees also discussed current Community UPLiFT goals highlighted in the Strategic Plan and attendees offered suggestions for increasing referrals. Suggestions included expanding outreach and marketing efforts through materials like posters and flyers with QR codes in both community and medical settings. Danielle shared that Community UPLiFT brochures and business card–sized materials with QR codes are available, and the Hub can deliver copies to interested partners. Additionally, Community UPLiFT Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are available for partners to share through social media or play on office displays. The Community UPLiFT flyer and links to the PSAs will be shared in a follow-up email. Members emphasized the importance of maintaining visibility for Community UPLiFT, noting its continued success in helping families connect to local support and resources.

Community UPLiFT has a 30-second public service announcement, available at:
Spanish subtitles: https://vimeo.com/835904539/347a52dd74
English subtitles: https://vimeo.com/834421711/b5121a718b

Athena reviewed the membership section of the Strategic Plan, confirming that all required sectors are represented. She encouraged members to invite others who work with families and young children to participate in future meetings. New perspectives and collaboration opportunities are welcomed. Additionally, the Family Governance Advisory Committee is continuing recruitment efforts for additional family representatives, with a focus on Klamath and Lake Counties to strengthen regional balance. The Hub will be having an informational meeting in November for families. Families will receive a $50 stipend for attending (one per family) to learn more about the Family Governance Advisory Committee and see if they would be interested in joining. The flyer will be going out as soon as the registration link is finalized.

The Strategic Plan will be revisited in2026.

Equity Lens

Athena reviewed the history of the Hub's Equity Lens, a tool developed over several years in collaboration with Capacity Building Partnerships, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) consultation firm. The process to develop the Equity Lens examined what equity means in the region beyond race and ethnicity, recognizing the unique needs of families in the region and how different diversity and inclusion can look in rural and frontier communities. Some of the key focus areas beyond race and ethnicity, and priority populations for the Hub,

include families who are geographically isolated, children and families experiencing homelessness, children in kinship or foster care, families who are not white or identify as Tribal, and children ages birth to three.

The Equity Lens was designed as a set of guiding questions to help decision-makers ensure that additional barriers are not created for families and that programs reach those most in need. The expectation is not that every question on the Equity Lens is asked, but that the most relevant questions at the time are selected. The tool is used as a northern star/grounding point for focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some questions include:

- What assumptions are being made?
- Who is not at the table?
- What unintended consequences, positive or negative, could result?

The Equity Lens is a living document and can be updated when needed and if language is no longer feels equitable or relevant. The Equity Lens has been actively used across the region to guide program design, service delivery, and internal decision-making. It has helped identify and address biases and assumptions that might otherwise impact children and families, such as restrictive gender norms or other culturally rooted expectations. The lens has also been adopted by Klamath Promise and other groups, demonstrating its broader impact.

Early Literacy Brainstorming

Athena Wikstrom introduced the early literacy conversation by inviting participants to share meaningful local efforts and ideas for investment that could be elevated to the Regional Governance Council. While funding is limited, there is room for creativity and collaboration to maximize impact and spread early literacy resources across the region.

Kathleen Walker-Henderson began the discussion by noting the importance of first defining “early literacy.” She referenced Oregon Department of Education (ODE) guidelines connecting preschool through kindergarten transitions and recalled when early literacy funds were tied to the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation (KPI) grant. Kathleen explained that Klamath KID Center previously applied for funds to support staff training in early literacy practices, which she believes would strengthen programs and benefit families. While existing training through CCRR is valuable, she noted that not all options are tailored to child care centers’ specific needs. Kathleen highlighted the importance of developmentally appropriate, research-based programming and parent involvement emphasizing that parents are their child’s first teacher. She shared examples of community efforts, including Klamath Retired Educators’ book giveaways and Little Free Libraries supported by Early Literacy funding through the Family Governance Advisory Committee, underscoring the connection between access to books and improved literacy outcomes.

David from the Klamath County Library added that the library supports early literacy through outreach story times at child care centers, themed classroom book bags, and participation at community events. He encouraged partners to connect for collaboration opportunities.

Danielle shared a parent perspective, recalling a kindergarten event she attended, where teachers shared a phonics lesson with parents, where many individuals were unfamiliar with correct letter pronunciation and phonemic awareness. She is suggesting having accessible resources for parents on letter and sound awareness to help them feel confident supporting their children.

Athena noted that the Hub has offered Dialogic Reading training in the past, designed to help parents and caregivers promote literacy even if they struggle with reading themselves. Dialogic Reading focuses on using pictures and conversation to engage children with books. She explained that the region’s average adult reading level is around third to fourth grade, and the Hub is intentional about keeping family materials accessible. The Hub continues to look for ways to promote literacy among families who may not feel confident as readers.

Dena reflected on how literacy events can feel intimidating to parents, especially when school staff use educational jargon. She suggested creating a central, family-friendly online hub for early literacy resources with

videos, reading tips, and links to book access. This resource could possibly be accessed by adding QR codes on Little Free Libraries. Athena responded that the South-Central Early Learning Hub does have a website (SCELH.com) with a parent resource page and an expanding monthly newsletter section dedicated to early literacy. Dena's ideas for additional digital resource development and cross-platform accessibility were well received.

Kathleen added that the TeachMy Kits distributed to families through KPI funds included short instructional videos for parent use, which she created, and Kay Ortega translated into Spanish. She recommended reposting those videos on the Hub's website, as they remain relevant and accessible tools for families supporting early learning at home, even if there are no kits to go along with them.

Partner Updates

Care Connections and Education, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) – Amber Singh – Amber shared that Southern Oregon University (SOU) will host an all-Spanish professional development workshop on November 15 at Klamath Community College (KCC). The session will focus on preparing children for kindergarten and provides a valuable opportunity for Spanish-speaking early educators to receive training in their primary language. Amber also reminded the group about the Early Learning Fall Conference taking place on November 1 at KCC.

Community Baby Shower – Danielle Walker – Danielle reported that the recent Community Baby Shower welcomed approximately 299 total attendees. Although attendance was slightly lower than in previous years, the event was successful in connecting families with community programs serving parents and children up to age one. More than 60 large prizes were distributed throughout the event, and planning is underway for next year's shower.

Danielle also shared information about a couple of community initiatives, including:

Family Focus: Eat Dinner Together – The Family Focus Initiative is a research-based study to strengthen the family, improve parenting skills, and enrich family time. Family Focus is promoted by Rebecca Petersen, OIT Marriage & Family Therapy program, and Healthy Klamath. Families can register to participate by contacting Dr. Garrett with Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) at kevin.garrett@oit.edu. Participating families will receive laser tag passes at World of Arkai Family Fun Center.

Nonprofit Fair – Danielle provided information about a Nonprofit Fair hosted at Oregon Tech and sponsored by JustServe, providing opportunities for organizations to connect with community volunteers. The Nonprofit Fair will take place on November 12 from 10:00 am to noon and 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm in the OIT Student Union Building.

Klamath Chapter or the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children (ORAEYC) –Kathleen Walker-Henderson announced that a new Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is now available, covering birth through age five. Previously, educators had to pursue separate infant-toddler or preschool certifications, which was costly and time-consuming when classroom placements changed. The new CDA option offers greater flexibility and affordability for early educators. Kathleen also thanked Amber for promoting the upcoming Early Learning Fall Conference and noted that the event will feature strong keynote speakers and breakout sessions for professional development.

Next Meeting:

November 19, 2025, from 10 am to noon. **One week early due to holiday break.*