

Early Childhood Advisory Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

2 p.m.

via Zoom

In attendance: Alicia Hance, Tiara Moore, Kelly Alvarez, Jennifer Spinks, Gina Davis, Penny McConnell, Dawn Nasser, Melissa Hollingsworth, Rena Pate, Tina Wiegel, Ryan Wyckoff, Nick Chatterton, Donny Gill

I. Introductions – Jeanne Dunn

Welcome – Ryan Wyckoff: welcomed and invited people to feel free to contact him if they needed any assistant.

Welcome – Kelly Alvarez

II. Old Business – Kelly Alvarez

a. Enrollment Update (Kelly)

As a result of Covid, numbers had been down, but they are climbing. With the push by the State of Illinois to bring more students into Early Childhood professions, there is a lot of help and support to get students enrolled who previously might have been unable to afford it. DACC numbers have almost doubles for this year. Students are signing up for summer and fall courses.

The Child Development Center at DACC recently held an open house. There were five four-year universities here to provide info to interested students. TRiO also had a representative here, and Dawn Nasser, Academic Advisor for students going into education, was able to sign people up for courses right on the spot. Jenny and Amanda, our Higher Ed Navigators, were also here to provide info.

b. College Express/Middle College (Nick Chatterton)

Nick reported that they had 26 students this past semester. With grant money, they were able to send students to four conferences, which were fully paid, and got students excited about ECE. The conferences really pumped student up about going into the education field.

In competition, five students scored the highest in the state, and four went on to Peoria for state competition.

There was a workshop with a speaker that was open to College Express and other DACC students as well.

College Express students were also able to go to the CDC for hands-on experience with children. They were able to assist teacher making the materials for lesson plans, and got to work with children who were not napping for one-on-one activities.

College Express was able to provide CPR certification for the afternoon College Express students while DHS was on spring break.

Nick also shared that VVEDs hired Rusty Campbell to recruit and retain future educators. This is a grant-funded position. The same grant can be used for conferences and for tuition reimbursement for ECE students, as well as some of the pre-reqs to get degrees. Also purchased 40 Macbooks for Kelly's classroom. There are two more years on that grant.

- c. ECE students used to have to get their observation hours at the CDC, but now they are able to be observed in other area programs. This is very beneficial for people who are already employed in the field, as they can be observed on the job, instead of having to take time off the job and do the observation hours at the CDC. They are observed interacting with students, or they can job shadow directors.

DACC has not normally offered ECE courses during the summer, but students wanted them, so this summer two courses will be offered. There is also one student doing an internship.

DACC is doing community outreach to see what people need. Considering adding night courses and hybrid courses to assist students. If there are courses that employers may need, reach out to Kelly, Penny, Dawn, because they are more than willing to try to accommodate the needs of our students.

III. New Business

- a. Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act (ECACE) – Penny McConnell

There are not nearly enough ECE teachers in the field. It gets more and more challenging to find people, because the pay is not good (people can make more at McDonald's), and the work is hard. There is high demand, especially for ECE teachers who are more highly trained.

There is also an issue when ECE educators reach director status. A lot of directors do not reflect the population of students in their program. There is initiative to ensure that directors and teachers represent the students they are working with.

The state is throwing a lot of money at this, and we have been figuring out ways to spend the money to help benefit the students, and the agencies who are desperate for teachers. Also to help those in the field who want to pursue higher education. We are interested in reaching out to incumbent workers.

As of today, DACC has used the ECACE grant to help five students with previous balances to return to school by paying those balances, and getting them registered to continue their education. Twenty students have received assistance with tuition and textbooks, and have received laptops. At this time, seven students are receiving success stipend for completing the fall semester and continuing their education in the spring semester. Almost \$100,000 has

reached student pockets in one way or another. We have been able to do innovative things with this grant, and, as a result, the number of students in the DACC ECE program is increasing.

b. Child Care Resource Center Updates:

- Jenny Spinks and Amanda York, Higher Ed Navigators

The ECACE scholarship covers those going to school for ECE, and attending schools that are part of consortium – DACC is one. Summer scholarships have been given out, and will soon open up for fall. On top of all benefits Penny can offer, the Navigators can also provide a scholarship, and these scholarships cover **everything**. All students actually receive a refund. This is not a loan. They get money back for cost of living, etc. The only requirement is that the student does or will work in ECE, and that they are in good standing with the college they are attending. No impact on eligibility is made by income. Starting fall this year, it is also available for those who hold B.S. for advanced qualifications, masters/director/etc.

c. Head Start Updates – Donny Gill

Just wrapped the end of Head Start for the year.

Donny said that they have over 30 job openings, mostly here in Danville. There are two facilities in Danville – one on Kimball and one on Voorhees. Only have students at Voorhees. Have a building sitting empty, primarily because they don't have the staff.

Penny asked if they are looking for directors and/or teachers. Directors? Teachers? Head Start needs teachers and early ed teacher with an infant/toddler focus. They have program aides to provide support and coverage. The question is how to get quality people and keep them.

Dr. Penny shared that our ECE program is up to 23 students, and that we need to get them through the program, so we can send them out into the field.

d. Director Updates

Tiara Moore said they have added four more classrooms to their facility. They are at 112 students now, and anticipate reaching 160 by June 5. They just hired four teachers. The staff and assistant are taking CDA. The goal is to have two teachers in each room.

She mentioned the Transition grant that will be opening in October, and hopes to give bonuses with that. Most teachers coming in at \$19 hour. They also want to find and keep quality people. Tiara also said that they would love to get someone in to be a trainer for others.

Melissa Hollingsworth of the CDC said that two classrooms that are open. They are also looking for teachers. Currently do not need any more TAs.

Alicia Hance said they current have no need for teachers, but that changes month-to-month. They are at capacity. She talked about how rural communities are struggling. Thinks reaching out to rural areas is important, that there is a childcare drought. Transportation needs are not being met.

IV. Professional Development Needs

- a. No one had anything to discuss.

V. Employment Opportunities

- a. Kelly encouraged people to send flyers and info. She is also happy to share with her students.
- b. This topic was covered at other points in the meeting.

VI. Items from the Floor

- a. Tiara mentioned changes on new background check forms. Wanted to make sure we had that info.
- b. Dawn had praise for Penny, Kelly, navigators. She's getting students registered.
- c. Penny said that the AAS will now transfer directly to 4 years schools. That option is available for those wanting a Bachelors.

There being no additional items from the floor, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting Minutes submitted by Jeanne Dunn