



REPORT OF CCI EARLY CHILDHOOD THINK TANK ON GOVERNANCE

February 7, 2008
United Way of New York City
2 Park Avenue

CCI invited a group of early childhood experts to help us to reflect on what CCI had learned from other states about governance and to apply that knowledge to New York City. Our goal was to foster more systemic thinking about how to move toward a more coherent early care and education system in New York City that would better meet the needs of children and families. This report highlights some of what the attendees learned, questions needing further exploration and possible next steps. The Think Tank participants (see attached) provided an unusual opportunity to share local, regional and national expertise and to look at issues in specific relationship to what exists and what might be possible in New York City.

Key Question: What steps are needed to jump-start a sustainable process for strengthening and integrating early care and education in New York City?

Participants were reminded of the long and, in many ways, exemplary history of early care and education in New York, noting for example the emergence of diverse options for delivery for Pre-K services and the City's recent efforts to coordinate across agencies.

Participants focused the discussion on the elements of governance including standard setting, management, coordination and funding of services and systems. It was acknowledged that good governance is a key component of the entire system of early care and education. Though we spent much time discussing the system, it was generally agreed that we would try to focus on improvements in *governance* as a starting place.

As they introduced themselves, participants were asked to choose one word to describe a necessary component of governance. The planners conceived the exercise as an icebreaker; but the words, seen as a whole, are very instructive:

Vision
Coordination
Collaboration
Cooperation
Leadership

Quality*
Rational
Informed
Funding
Child focus

Authority
Sustainable
Strength
Passion

Family focus
Inclusive
Equity
Incentives

* mentioned three times

Thanks to Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, Director of the National Center for Children and Families at Columbia and other national experts such as Ellen Frede, Co-Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, for sharing lessons learned from their broad national perspective. These lessons helped guide the morning discussion.

- There are *unique circumstances* present in every state and city working on more effective approaches to governance. Therefore, no single approach fits every entity. Each state/city requires a unique approach. In fact, the solutions have to be indigenous to the locality.
- It is important to focus on governance with clear, agreed upon goals for the system and its outcomes, with collaboration within government and between government and stakeholders. Be careful that governance is not just a process of moving the pieces around.
- One needs to keep in mind the public/private interface. For example, what benefits accrue to the economy of a city with well functioning early care and education?
- There are critical connections between city and state policy.
- Governance and system improvement requires a significant effort applied over time. Improvement cannot be accomplished by fiat, and improvements must be cultivated over time with attention to learning at each stage of the evolving process.
- Success requires leadership, commitment and support brought to bear at the highest level.

The “Background Information” (attached), prepared for CCI by Todd Boressoff, reflects similar lessons learned based on his research and interviews on governance and systems building efforts across the country.

Examining the Present System

To determine a common ground for our work, the participants considered the system as it is today, looking into its strengths and areas for improvement. They saw *many strengths*: the City’s rich history, with evolved administrative structures and financial support; the commitment by the Mayor to build a quality program; the Mayor’s recently established interagency Early Care and Education Steering Committee; support from the City Council; philanthropic support; and a broad range of diverse, experienced and savvy stakeholder agencies and providers.

Some of the *areas requiring attention* included: improved alignment of policies across agencies; more efficient data collection across agencies; more, and more integrated technology capacity; increased and stable funding; common program standards and outcome measures across all types of programs; a well trained and appropriately compensated workforce in all settings, with better alignment with the public schools; a simplified and coordinated enrollment policy and strategy; common fiscal reporting requirements; and the need for a formal “quarterback,” to oversee better system-wide collaboration.

Opportunities and challenges were also identified. *Challenges* included: managing in tight federal, state and city budget environments; competition for limited resources; finding efficiencies in the present system; addressing an aging workforce and infrastructure; developing language to better describe the range of early education and care; assuring services situated where needed; assuring they are appropriate to families served; and strategic planning to build a system that is proactive regarding needs, rather than reactive to crises.

Participants saw many *Opportunities* for beginning the process of improvement, including: new funding from the state for pre-kindergarten; the executive branch's appointment of a the first ever interagency work group spearheaded out of the Mayor's Office and linking child care, Head Start and UPK; federal Head Start reauthorization, with a focus on early learning councils in every state; the extensive research and training capacity in higher education in New York City; more coherence among advocates in taking a broad view of early care and education; and work in other states/cities to learn from. There is much more discussion locally and nationally about the need to address governance. New York State has established an interagency Children's Cabinet and a Children's Cabinet Advisory Committee that establishes a format for dialogue, strategic planning and recommendation that bring together the public and private sectors.

Next Steps

CCI will complete a policy brief with recommendations regarding governance for early care and education. This will include the findings from research and interviews to provide a platform for the next phase of work.

The group discussed these possible next steps:

- Reaffirm a vision for early care and education to guide decisions around governance by establishing goals and guiding principles for a system of early care and education
- Follow up with appropriate key city officials
- Circulate the materials from the Think Tank more widely, CCI's *Early Care and Education, What it Costs*; the "Background Information; charts, etc.
- Work to identify sources of funding for the next phase of work needed to promote a more coherent governance strategy
- Identify and reach out to additional stakeholders: parents, business, higher education, pediatric
- Identify what sources of data are available to guide the decision making process on governance
- Begin discussions with candidates for Mayor to help them in framing their early care and education platform.

Questions

- What is the best way to officially engage public sector representatives?

- Do the participants in the Think Tank want to continue to work as a group and be a part of the next phase of work? How will this happen and be supported?
- What steps make most sense to raise with this administration and what makes more sense to raise in the future?
- How can we leverage the expansion of Pre-K dollars to build toward systemic change?

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