ECEP Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Date: January 23, 2014

Attendees: Ami Bigit, Angy Stacey, Bryan Jones, Cheryl Kagawa Costantini, Claire Bainer, Dave Taggart, Ingileif Hallgrimsdottir, Kat McDvitt, Kenneth Kuchman, LeNorman Strong, Lisa Garcia Bedolla, Mary-Ann Spencer Cogan, Pamm Shaw, Rebecca Tracy, Sasha Leveton, Steve Hinshaw

Absent: Bob Flaharty, Ken Jaffe

1. Welcome
Our next meeting will be February 13 from 1:30 - 3:30 in the Berkeley Room.

2. Approve Meeting Notes from Previous Meeting
Notes are approved.

3. Strategic Plan Framework and Discuss SWOT Analysis
Data points gathered from the SWOT analysis exercise by the Advisory Committee will be used to help create a strategic plan for ECEP. Next steps will include determining priorities for immediate and future work and what the Advisory Committee’s role should be in those elements.

4. SWOT Analysis Data Overview and Discussion
Kat reviewed the results of the SWOT analysis survey with the Committee.

Priorities raised through the SWOT exercise were wide-spread including operational and strategic issues and the Advisory Committee discussed options for how best to address the broad range of issues within the SWOT data and begin establishing timelines for immediate and future work. Additional discussion focused on how best to maintain the Advisory Committee’s focus on strategy and planning and avoid getting caught up in operational issues.

The main concerns raised through the SWOT exercise were:
- Support of parents
- Hiring of teachers
- Consistent quality in the classroom

Hiring of Teachers - Current Status
ECEP management has improved the hiring process for teachers and the changes have resulted in stronger teaching candidates being placed in the classroom. Additionally, closer supervision and guidance to new teacher hires during the probation period has resulted in improved teacher quality.

The existing ECEP staff is receiving management coaching to address some of the more problematic areas and discussions have started to create a plan to improve teaching skills across the board. Two strong new additions to the ECEP leadership team will help in this area.

A suggestion was made to look at Alameda County programs which provide coaching and both program and teacher evaluations for free.
Measurement Tools - ECERS, ITERS, CLASS
ICRI is doing a 1 year follow up re-evaluation through ECERS (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) and ITERS (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale) assessments in Jan. & Feb. to compare last year’s results to this year and track any changes.

ECEP is also considering the future use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) to assess classroom quality, program quality, and provides a tool to help teachers become more effective.

There was discussion about the relative merits of ECERS, ITERS, and CLASS, with ECERS and ITERS seen as more focused on the environment and CLASS more of a relationship model, which may be the preferred more comprehensive tool going forward based on some of the comments by ECE and education experts in the room.

Quality
There was a question about the definition of “quality” and how we would know if we have high quality. On some level this is a very philosophical question, and it also relates directly to our curriculum. We currently don’t have a specific statement of quality though the program has referenced the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards in the past and was previously certified at most locations.

The NAEYC has fairly well articulated quality standards:

http://families.naeyc.org/accredited-article/10-naeyc-program-standards#1

One comment was that emergent curriculum is good if the teacher delivering it is skilled as it requires a high level of student observation and reflective practices. If those skills are not well developed, then having a proscribed basic curriculum is a better starting place from which to build an emergent curriculum approach for each classroom.

Teacher Manuals
A question was raised about the existence of revised teacher manuals with more firm/clear expectations of what teachers should be doing. Are there resources available to help teachers looking to improve their own classroom performance?

Status update: The teacher manual is being updated by ICRI and a draft should be available by mid-February. The revised draft will need to be vetted by teachers and their union which will likely take several months. There also may be an additional vetting process with state regulators.

Teacher Turn-over
There was a question about teacher turn-over. In general, ECEP has experienced low turn-over, primarily losing teachers and staff to retirement. Three new career substitute teaching positions have also been created which has had a positive impact on continuity of care and consistency in teaching quality. We have hired 7-8 new teachers in total, including the full time career substitutes.

Enrollment
The Committee discussed opportunities to increase ECEP enrollment with comments being made on both creating a quality program which naturally will attract more families and being more strategic in recruiting families by specific areas (e.g. subsidized student families). The
Committee also discussed growth trends with Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programs and impacts on older children in ECEP. Should future recruiting focus more on infants and toddlers? Increased numbers of infants and toddlers will create greater expenses for ECEP as these programs are more costly to operate.

Info on TK:  http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp

A proposed State bill which will provide universal TK for all 4 years old will likely pass in the next year. If this happens, it would create great changes in existing models for child care and the way in which families select child care services. The TK trend should be monitored closely by ECEP.

It was suggested that options could range from transitioning ECEP to become the training site for TK sites and teachers to transitioning out of the 4 year old care completely.

We expect a market for quality private early education will continue. We have a program that serves a population with high quality expectations but many also have limited financial resources. If we had a quality program that was cost competitive we could expand.

What do we want ECEP to be? What do we want ECEP to stand for and to be? Is it only brick and mortar? Is it more? What is our vision and how do we make that vision happen financially because it seems like no one on campus wants to pay for it.

We should decide what and who we want to be, and then be nimble and respond to the environment.

Fundraising
One way of looking at the financial arena relates to fundraising - not just philanthropy. We’ve talked for 5 years about campus partners whose financial support could help us as the program helps them. If financial sustainability is one of our strategic priorities then the tactics we come up need to focus on creating appropriate goals and measurements. We need to identify the swim lanes that become our strategic priorities.

Another source of funding might be government funds. There was mention that there are bills to provide more funding for infant spots.

How do we evaluate the elements of the SWOT?
In reviewing the SWOT, a question was raised about the difference between:
- “not good enough and important so we need to make it better”
- “good enough and important to make even better”

We need to view this in the perspective. If it’s not good enough today, how important is it to improve it? If it is good enough, how important is it that we improve it?

Last year we got clear data that things were not good enough. Now things are better. If we’ve reached a semi-baseline do we keep making it better or do we move on to something bigger? The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to figure out our focus for the Advisory Committee.

Dave Taggart suggested that the SWOT has helped us identify what is important, but not really what the Advisory Committee should focus its efforts on. He suggested a different tool to help us
take the results of the SWOT and reformulate them into actions that the Advisory Committee might take, and then prioritize those actions. His approach reframes the SWOT elements as verbs rather than nouns facilitating the distinction between operational and strategic activities.

Some of the words we might use are:

- Review
- Oversee
- Implement
- Survey
- Monitor
- Investigate
- Advise

So some examples might be:
- Investigate new facilities
- Investigate home care models
- Create task force to investigate
- Develop a plan that contributes to financial sustainability with metrics and timeline
- Investigate First Five money

With action items, timelines and clear statement of jurisdiction (where is it strategic and where operational)

To Do: Dave, LeNorman, Steve and Kat will create a list of verb oriented SWOT items for the next meeting.

**Operational Update:** Mary-Ann

**Enrollment**
We’re running around a 10% vacancy rate. We are also re-enrolling parents for the next academic year. We did get the website re-launched and it looks nicer than it did before. At some point it will be interactive and we’ll start marketing Dwight Way. We already have lots of interest and demand. Dwight Way will have:

- 2 Classrooms of Infants @ 9 each
- 2 Classrooms of Toddlers@ 12 each

A Toddler and an Infant classroom are each from CKC’s portables (Building 5A) which will then be retired. Net increase in overall ECEP capacity is 21.

We are evaluating the enrollment mix at Haste. We have one preschool classroom completely filled. We are evaluating whether we could shift a preschool classroom to an older toddler classroom in anticipation of future demand shifts that may occur with TK. However, we must also balance staff skill sets, flexibility to move, and how changing the mix impact where younger classes then feed into. Enrollment is a complex algorithm at any ECE program, but especially so at Berkeley.

Dwight Way will feed into Harold Jones, but not exclusively. We’ve been hearing from parents to want to shift to different classrooms. We’re trying to accommodate parent requests as possible.
We have limited capacity to quickly adjust teaching staff when the enrollment decreases because of union contracts and personnel policies at Berkeley. This does make us less agile than organizations without labor constraints while on the positive side providing teachers with a greater sense of security.

Enrollment changes mid-year are just part of the normal ebb and flow in most organizations, but especially so at Berkeley with Visiting Scholar parents, etc. who may only be here for a semester. We don’t currently have a wait-list (except for infant and some toddler classes) and we limited flexibility to quickly reallocate staff. We have managed staffing by reducing the number of substitutes and student helpers. As an example, closing a classroom, which we are not considering at this time, would generally require us to lay off staff based on seniority. So the last teacher hired is the first to be let go in such a scenario.

Executive director search
A new interesting candidate with strong multi-site experience was recently invited to campus. We’ve received mixed feedback. LeNorman and Mary-Ann are going to do a site visit and perform more due diligence on the concerns raised before proceeding further.

Additionally another candidate was just recommended by the search committee but is so new we haven’t had an opportunity to review his/her credentials.