



January 2024 Council Meeting

Date/Time: January 9, 2024, 9:00-11:00am

Location: NH Employment Security, 45 South Fruit Street, Concord

Participants (11):

- Christine Brennan
- Christina Lachance
- Rich Lavers
- Jeanne Agri
- Kimberly Nesbitt
- Athena Cote
- Tricia Tilley
- Michelle Lewis
- Jane Bard
- Stephen Zdravec
- Kate Baker Demers

Other Attendees:

- Janelle Lavin (Council nominee)

Guest Presenters:

- Waterford Upstart: Rob Riley
- Kearsarge Regional School District Superintendent of Schools: Winfried Feneberg
- Kearsarge Regional School District Associate Director of Student Services – Preschool: Nikki Robertson

Council Business (Christina Lachance, Patricia Tilley, Christine Brennan)

- Approval of October meeting minutes
 - Motion to approve 10.02.2023 meeting minutes (Jeanne Agri)*
 - Seconded (Rich Lavers)*
 - Motion approved by consensus.*
- Annual Report confidential draft – shared with meeting attendees
 - Includes years 2022-23
 - Review and give feedback to Council Co-Chairs, Christine Brennan and Tricia Tilley or Council Director Christina Lachance before the Council's next meeting
 - One comment: enlarge the graphic for legibility
 - Once approved by the Council, at the next meeting, the report will be sent to the governor and commissioners.
- Training & Technical Assistance participation Updates
 - Hunt Institute
 - NHED, DHHS, Council leadership, and Sens. Whitley and Lang attended the Hunt Institute's Early Childhood Leadership Institute. It was encouraging to see collaboration. Primary focus was pre-K initiatives.
 - Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project
 - NHED, DHHS, Council leadership participated in this engagement through out 2023, and will continue in 2024. NH is one of eight states

invited to participate in this opportunity. Other states have notably more state and local investments in the EC system. The group is considering strategies for NH.

- Council Members might remember Harriet Dichter, she helped NH create a report to coordinate NH's Early Childhood Governance Structure with recommendations for a coordinated Office of Early Childhood in 2018

Legislative Updates (no legislators present)

- Christina Lachance: Sen. Whitley is currently at the Legislative Office Building. There are a number of bills related to children and families. Members are encouraged to stay informed through New Hampshire's many child/family policy advocacy groups.
- Christina L: we have not heard from Senator DeSimone, but assume she is at the LOB given the large number of bills being heard during a non-budget year
 - Tricia Tilley reiterates there are many important bills this session, even though it is not a budget year. Also encourages folks to keep informed.

Waterford Upstart – progress and opportunities in NH (Rob Riley)

- What are we? What do we do?
 - 90% of children who use Waterford enter kindergarten ready to learn.
 - Waterford is a nonprofit ed. tech company. Reading, math and science curricula are available. Products cover pre-K through second grade.
 - Families/providers receive everything at no cost - Laptop, internet access, software, coach (transitioning to tablets in NH)
 - Funded through federal, state and private philanthropic resources
 - More information: <https://www.waterford.org/newhampshire-fall/>
- Program: goal is 1500 minutes of use per year
 - Reading: 15 mins/day, 5 days/week (20 mins/day in summer)
 - Science: 15 mins/day, 5 days/week (20 mins/day in summer)
- New child care provider offering:
 - Time on computer/tablet happens at preschool. Provider receives computer, internet, and coaches. Coach assists provider with implementation.
 - Upstart is not meant to replace the pre-K curriculum, it is a supplement.
 - Coaching (phone, email, text) in more than 100 languages
- In NH, 3- and 4 year-olds can enroll.
 - 490 children participated last year, over 400 for summer 2023
 - 20 NH based early childhood education and care providers participating
 - Waterford Coach provides coaching to early childhood education and care teachers.
 - Currently enrolling 4-year-old (those who will start kindergarten in 2024)
 - Currently enrolling 3-year-olds (those who will start kindergarten in 2025)
- Questions:
 - Tricia T.: What is the completion rate?
 - 1500 mins assumes an October start date. That is adjusted when kids enroll later. Adjusted completion rate is 80%.
 - Tricia T. How has this been marketed? Where are the children located? Where are the best places to get kids enrolled?
 - 2/3rds of participants in NH come from child care providers, while across the U.S. the home-based option is usually more popular. In NH they are beginning to work with school districts. Success started in Nashua, then spread to Manchester and Concord.

- Kate B: What is the curriculum?
 - The curricula align with state and federal standards. It adapts in response to the child's initial assessment. Assessment is also run at the end of the program to produce a progress report for kindergarten teachers.
- Michelle L: Are there NH-specific marketing materials? Previous materials were too general, and families need more information to decide if this program is right for their families PIC NH can connect with Waterford about marketing to families. Overall, PIC has heard positive feedback about the program and that it's often used in tandem with other early learning programs.
 - More specific marketing materials are being developed. Rob will connect with PIC/Michelle L
 - Michelle wants to be sure families have many options
 - Rob reiterates the program is supplemental, not a substitute for Pre-k
- Kim N: Can you explain that a little more? Most people think about drill and skill or repetition. What does the program contain? Is it based on rote memorization?
 - Rob R: The software responds to the child's performance. It's adaptive. If a child is struggling in one area, that topic will be presented again but in a new way. It's not just repetitive, if the child is struggling, the software will provide new content.
 - Kim N: How does this compare to iReady?
 - Christine B: Kim, can I make a clarification? Most schools did not purchase the curriculum part of iReady, they just use it for assessment.
 - Kim N: for those who have purchased the curriculum product, how much family or provider time is required?
 - Rob R: Parents/providers have an assigned coach to help them supplement what they are already doing at home and/or classroom. The coach connects with them every other week. Meant to help with tech support and help the family/provider integrate the program into their home/classroom.
 - Kim N: It would be helpful for parents to understand what the experience is going to be like. Parents are likely wondering what they are getting – why can't they just download an educational app?
 - Rob R: Will forward materials for Council Members to access on the website. Examples of content are included. Also in both parent/provider options the adult can log in and participate in the learning – learn the songs, etc. They also have some control of the content. One example of the coach's role: if a child is using the program too much, the coach will help the family adjust their use of the computer/tablet. Materials will be available on the Council's website.
- Christine B: What challenges are providers having?
 - Rob R: The provider option just rolled out in June 2023, and in NH it started in September. It's too new to say what the challenges are.
- Christina L. noted that the National Head Start Association recently endorsed Waterford and asked, is this for the home-based program use or for center-based teacher use?
 - Rob R: Head Start uses Waterford as a family engagement opportunity – they have been big supporters. Waterford is currently tracking data to gauge the impact of family use (home use) on children's progress.
 - Currently no NH Head Start programs are participating.
- Rich L: What are the coach's credentials?

- Rob R: Experience in EC development, and, if working with providers they have experience in formal ECCE settings.
 - Michelle L: In NH are families taking advantage of the coaches?
 - Rob R: Coaching is required, and we don't see families avoiding it. Coaching is flexible – can be done by phone, chat, Zoom, etc., and time of day is flexible.
 - Michelle L: Are there options for multi-language learners? In NH, have you been able to reach diverse communities and communities where English is not the first language.
 - Rob R: Yes. English and Spanish-speaking coaches are available in NH. All coaches have access to translation/interpretation services in 100 languages
 - And promotional materials are available in over 50 languages
 - We have been successful in connecting with refugee communities
 - Athena C: Is there any kindergarten transition support?
 - Rob R: As a child approaches kindergarten, then coaches will check in with the family about enrollment and preparation for next steps.
 - Christine B: just a reminder, NH does not currently have a standardized Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA)
 - Rob R; A redacted progress report will be included with the materials shared with the Council as an example of the report kindergarten teachers will receive. If the school district is using Waterford Reading Academy, the child can continue to the kindergarten through 2nd grade curricula.
 - Kate B. asked, How well does this serve children with learning differences? How adaptable is the program for a student who is struggling?
 - Rob R: Within the software there are lessons for children up to the second grade level, so a child who's excelling can advance to higher levels beyond pre-k. A child who's struggling will be presented with some of the lower level concepts in new, but not repetitive, ways. There are over 7,000 lessons in the software, so when a child needs repetition or a new approach it won't feel repetitive.
 - Rich L. asked, Is the family exposed to commercial marketing during lessons?
 - Rob R: There is no commercial marketing. Software is funded by state, federal and philanthropic resources.
 - Rich Lavers asked, From a privacy perspective, what info and protections does Waterford have?
 - Rob R: For the home-based option Waterford has identifying information, but the data is not shared with anyone, there are extensive privacy controls. For provider-based programs, the confidentiality agreements and protections are similar to the child management software most child care programs use.
- All materials Waterford provided to the Council will be available on the Council website.

Kearsarge Regional School District – Pre-K (Winfried Feneberg, Superintendent of Schools and Nikki Robertson, Associate Director of Student Services - Preschool)

- History: served some children with special needs and offered some slots for children without special needs. Used 75% of ESSER III funding to build Bradford school. Currently have 2 preschools (New London and Bradford). OT/SLP/PT and BCBA are all split between the 2 sites. 2 new ECE Special Ed. certified teachers and 2 new paraprofessionals were added to get the second site running in fall 2023.

- Current capacity across two sites is 60 students.
 - Two 2.5 Hour Morning Session for 3-year-olds
 - Two 4 Hour Programs w/Lunch for 4-year-olds
- Adjustments have been made in response to family needs:
 - Transportation
 - Only available for children with an identified disability. Parents want transportation for children without disabilities, but drivers are very limited currently.
 - Adjustment of Schedule, Length of Program, and Enrollment Options
 - Some working parents have struggled with the part-time pre-school schedule. A Monday option was added, they will start allowing parents to enroll in both AM and PM sessions for full day care in fall 2024
- There's clear awareness in the Kearsarge community that children benefit from an early start. The community has been very supportive, and they are aware it's not exclusively an academic preparation program. SEL is included as well as early academics. There's a focus on building an excitement for learning and learning through play.
- Social worker in the school district supports the preschool program, primarily assisting families with children with special needs.
- Questions:
 - Tricia T: What needs are you struggling to meet?
 - Nikki: Community providers are strained – there are still waitlists for many early childhood services .
 - Nikki: There are many children with social-emotional challenges, for example 4-year-olds who still prefer parallel play.
 - Nikki: There are increased autism diagnoses and families need resources and in-home supports. Some school staff are visiting homes to help them.
 - Nikki: Families looking for developmental evaluation for their child see an where is doesn't take 18-months to get in, the school social worker has been critical in finding options for families.
 - The educator crisis is a challenge and it's only building. We need more teachers. Superintendent Feneberg says, "We need to make public service cool again." This is a systemic issue where people think society should be designed for only what they want – we've lost our ability to compromise.
 - Kate B: What is tuition for your program? What is the revenue model? Does the tuition cover the cost? Is this model replicable?
 - This is not a self-sustaining program. Tuition revenue is about \$30,000. Parents with typically-developing children pay about \$145/month, and that fee is waived in some cases where it's a barrier for the family.
 - This is probably not replicable. The school board has given the program significant support.
 - Preschool per pupil cost is unknown, kindergarten per pupil cost is about \$21-22,000 in Kearsarge Regional School District
 - Kate B – have you dipped in to NH CCDF
 - Nikki – no we do use NH CCDF, we created our own sliding scale. Head Start closed in our area creating a larger need for services in the school district.
 - Michelle Lewis: kudos to the Kearsarge administration for cultivating support from the school board. It has taken extensive work to get to this point. The Parent Partnership Board in Kearsarge is another commendable aspect of the culture of support for early learning.

- Rich Lavers: sharing this presentation with other school districts may be very valuable for those who are struggling with contentious school boards. Regarding district enrollment numbers, how do projected declines impact you?
 - Kearsarge has been fortunate to have stable enrollment. It's difficult to ask for support or funding if enrollment is declining.

DHHS Updates (Christina Lachance)

- Jessie Davis, new BCDHSC Bureau Chief was unable to join.

Council Updates (Christina Lachance)

- There are three employees from NHED who will be joining the council after their nomination is confirmed.
 - Janelle Lavin (present today)
 - Alexa Simmons
 - Krishna Dubreuil

Public Comments:

- Liz Scruton (NH Children's Trust Early Childhood Initiatives Director)
 - New Senior Program Director – Tracy Ferguson (formerly Tracy Pond, program manager at Child Care Aware of New Hampshire), Tracy will be supporting Family Resource Centers in NH.
 - If anyone is interested in connecting with the network of Family Resource Centers, reach out to Liz/Tracy.
 - DHHS has awarded a Regional Lead contract to NH Children's Trust in October. Reach out to Liz if you have anything you would like shared with the Regional Lead network.
 - Child Abuse Prevention Month is coming up in April. Keep an eye out for NH Children's Trust's many presentations on what you and others can do to prevent child abuse through family support. Efforts are being made to disentangle child/family poverty and child abuse and neglect.
 - Kathy Palys, also present today, joined the Children's Trust as Early Childhood Specialist in October 2023. Kathy will be taking over New Hampshire Connections.

Council Member Comments:

- Rich Lavers: NH Paid Family Medical Leave
 - Big focus right now on individual open enrollment. Enrollment is only open for 60 days/year. It runs through January 29.
- Christine Brennan: NHED
 - The LETRS program (based in the science of reading) is still providing courses to caregivers and providers of young children. Additional materials were provided this week during in-person school visits with local communities, and analyses/problem-solving are being conducted on why some aren't completing the course. Stipends for participating are available for all early childhood care and education teachers and para-educators
 - Kim N: is excited to bring materials back to students teachers.
- Michelle Lewis: Parent Information Center of NH/NH Family Voices
 - Presented on the family engagement work New Hampshire has engaged in at the national Preschool Development Grant conference along with Robin DeAlmeida. Great lessons can be learned from projects in South Carolina as well.

- As the B-8 Family Community Advisors under Preschool Development Grant, PIC NH has started the Family Voice network. This is a resource for anyone looking for input directly from families. They have already given feedback on both NHED and DHHS initiatives.

Motion to adjourn (Christine Brennan)

Seconded (Jane Bard)

Motion approved by consensus.