



February 2024 Council Meeting

Date/Time: February 22, 2024, 9:00-11:00am

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

Participants (15 voting members):

- Christine Brennan
- Tricia Tilley
- Laurie Foster
- Jane Bard
- Rich Lavers
- Jeanne Agri
- Dr. Kimberly Nesbitt
- Jessie Davis
- Karen Hebert
- Capt. Vicki Blanchard
- Dr. Stephen Zdravec
- Athena Cote
- Michelle Lewis
- Alexa Simmons
- Janelle Lavin
- Christina Lachance (Director)
- Christina D'Allesandro (Council nominee)
- Erin Pettengill (Council nominee)
- Krisha Dubreuil (Council nominee)

Guest Presenters:

- Eileen Murphy, NH Preschool Development Grant Project Coordinator, Full-Service Community Schools Planning Grants
- Nicole Doherty, Manchester School District Interim Asst Superintendent Teaching & Learning
- Aimee Kereage, Manchester Proud Community Partnerships Coordinator

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

- Congratulations to Tricia Tilley who was nominated by Governor Sununu and confirmed by the Executive Council to serve as Associate Commissioner at NH DHHS. Ms. Tilley will continue to serve as co-chair for the Council for Thriving Children.
- Congratulations and thank you to Capt. Vicki Blanchard who announced her retirement after 35 years of service. Capt. Blanchard was recognized for her distinguished service at a NH Senate Session. This is her last Council meeting.
- Scheduling future Council meetings: there have been challenges finding days that work for both legislators and state employees. Please share any suggestions for scheduling.
- Approval of January meeting minutes
 - Motion to approve 1.9.2024 meeting minutes (Jeanne Agri)*
 - Seconded (Christine Brennan)*
 - Motion approved by consensus.*
- Annual Report
 - Thank you to Council members for feedback, in particular Athena Cote
 - Opportunity to share additional feedback; none given.
 - Clarification that there is no data related to the Strategic Plan Measures of Success included in the Annual Report.

*Motion to approve annual report (Tricia Tilley)
Seconded (Christina D'Allesandro)
Motion approved by consensus.*

- Measures of Success Update
 - Requests for data have gone to departments, questions have arisen as data comes in and more time is needed to reconcile data. A column may be added to the spreadsheet explaining some data that is counterintuitive and some discrepancies in the data.
 - Measures will be presented at the next Council meeting.
- Training & Technical Assistance Updates
 - Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project
 - NHED, DHHS, NH Charitable Foundation and Council leadership continue to participate in this engagement, supported by the BUILD Initiative and philanthropically funded. The NH team will attend an in-person engagement in April

Legislative Updates

- Christina Lachance: Sen. Whitley and Rep. DeSimone are currently at the Legislative Office Building. There are a number of bills related to child care, children, and families. Members are encouraged to stay informed through New Hampshire's many child/family policy advocacy groups.
 - Sen. Whitley has sponsored a number of bills, Rep. DeSimone currently serves as Vice Chair of the House of Representative's Special Committee on Child Care, we hope to hear updates from both have updates when they join us next.
- Tricia Tilley: our next meeting is in April, following cross-over, and at that time we'll have a much better sense of which bills are moving forward and which have been rejected.

NH Department of Education – Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

- Christine Brennan: Welcome to Alexa Simmons
 - We don't currently have a preschool assessment tool that is used consistently throughout NH public preschool programs.
 - NH conducted an evaluation of kindergarten entry assessments. Those findings informed the decision to use the [Desired Results Developmental Profile](#) as our universal screening tool.
 - Part of the intention in selecting this tool is to elevate the importance of certain outcomes and help determine what support is needed for kids to achieve specific outcomes.
- Alexa Simmons: Currently 3 different evaluation tools are being used across NH preschool special education programs.
 - The DRDP Fundamental View was selected; there is a kindergarten version that could be utilized in the future.
 - The tool has 6 domains. The English language development domain will only be used to assess English language learners.
 - The tool works well for both typically developing children and children who are not typically developing.
 - DRDP aligns with NH Early Learning Standards, the Pyramid Model, and play-based learning

- It is federally funded and therefore free to most schools.
- Two skill levels above kindergarten readiness are included – this helps to avoid the ceiling effect and shows next steps for children who are achieving above preschool levels.
- DRDP is observation-based, not a trial-based assessment
 - Includes a developmental sequence of behavior
 - Based on ongoing routines and activities in the ECCE/preschool setting
 - Various adults are able to contribute to a child’s assessment
 - Guiding Principles for DRDP Assessment Approach:
 - Consists of naturally-occurring, observable behaviors
 - Responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity
 - Child can demonstrate competence in any language (Sign, English, Spanish, Mandarin)
 - Inclusive of children with disability and other special needs – adaptations are included
- Benefits of the DRDP
 - Provides info for:
 - Teachers to plan for individual children, small and large groups
 - Reports for families about their child’s strengths
 - State and school district data on child progress
- DRDP aligns with TS GOLD (based on Abt evaluation)
- In 2022-23 DRDP was piloted, in 2023-24, DRDP was adopted so districts could use any of the 3 tools available:
 - Current assessment tool use out of 90 surveyed centers: 21 AEPSi, 53 Teaching Strategies GOLD, 16 DRDP
- July 1, 2024 all districts statewide will start using the DRDP
- DRDP training is being offered multiple times throughout the Spring: <https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/preschool-trainings-feb-may-2024-flyer.pdf>
- Cost: DRDP is free to use, each student account is \$5, but the state will pay for all identified students and the first 200 non-identified students (if the district chooses to use DRDP for non-identified students). After that the district will be responsible for each additional student account. Very few districts are expected to reach that 200-student cap, so the cost overall will be minimal.
- Contact for DRDP: Alexa.J.Simmons@doe.nh.gov
- Questions
 - Tricia Tilley: what feedback are you getting from teachers?
 - Alexa: Transitioning to a new system is hard, but the reports available from DRDP are very helpful for teacher planning and parent communication.
 - Christine Brennan: How many PS Special Education students are there this year?
 - Alexa/Krishna: According to NHED data, 4,440 3- and 4-year-old preschool special education students. 1,759 are entering kindergarten in the fall.
 - Christine Brennan: a tool like the DRDP is helpful to ensuring language development.
 - Christina D’Allesandro: why are only 90 districts shown in the pie chart of preschool outcomes measurement (POMS) tools?
 - Alexa: Only 90 districts responded to the survey.
 - Christina Lachance: Can Head Start programs use DRDP – does it align with federal performance standards?

- Krisha: it's available to Head Start. And there are some advantages over Teaching Strategies GOLD because DRDP is free.
- Michelle Lewis: I'm very supportive of the use of DRDP statewide. The family report component is an excellent communication tool. TS GOLD also is not as comprehensive. The DRDP family report is strengths-based. This tool will make a difference to families.
 - Alexa: in addition, DRDP has YouTube training videos targeted at teachers and families. These are great resources that make it all the more accessible.
- Christine Brennan: I see this really helping parents understand developmental milestones and what to expect from their children as they progress through their development.
- Christina Lachance: It was mentioned that typically developing children can be assessed with this tool. Is anyone collecting data on typically developing preschool students?
 - Schools/programs may be tracking and using that data internally, but it's not currently tracked elsewhere.
- Kim Nesbitt: this presents an opportunity for cross-departmental collaboration between DHHS and NHED to join data from both community-based and public preschool programs. The data from *all* children could be used to improve kindergarten transitions.
- Christina Lachance: could this be a possibility for future DHHS quality improvement initiatives? For DRDP to become the standard rather than other child assessment tools in community-based child care?
 - Krisha: Certainly. Consistency between programs is one of our main motivations. Children move from one district to another all the time – being able to transfer their assessments will be hugely helpful.
 - Jessie Davis: Today is the first day hearing about this change, looking forward to working with NH ED. One barrier for community-based providers will be training in observation and assessment. Not all child care providers have taken a class in that. (Alexa echoes that public preschool teachers need that training as well). If we can overcome training and fidelity concerns, DHHS would support the use of DRDP in Head Start and community child care.
 - Krisha: We currently have a need for more trainers. This is something we're working on and we can prioritize.
- Christina D'Allesandro: how does DRDP interface with the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire)?
 - Krisha: The ASQ is a screening tool and it still has value. It can be used to give families a quick glance at how their child is doing. It's meant to catch red flags, in a sense. The DRDP is a child assessment tool.
 - Jessie Davis: The ASQ is great for getting a baseline look at a child's development. An evaluation tool like the DRDP is meant to identify children for further assessment, IEP planning, monitoring development/progress.
- Michelle Lewis: There seem to be some things that will have to be worked out in districts where children with disabilities receive services in community child care settings or Head Starts. DHHS and NHED will have to collaborate and create MOUs to ensure the assessment is completed in an authentic way by someone who has the opportunity to really observe the child. With the current assessments

– AEPSi or TS GOLD – over the years there have been situations where district staff complete assessments inauthentically because they have to get them done.

Full-Service Community Schools

- Eileen Murphy: A community school is a strategy to improve student and school outcomes through community partnerships and collaborative leadership.
 - The strategy is proven to be effective in low-achieving, high-poverty schools; NH PDG full-service community school planning grants were not limited to high-poverty schools, but US Department of Education's grants are limited to schools classified as high-poverty.
 - Main objectives: reduce barriers to learning by providing wraparound services/supports to students (health, social service and learning supports); ultimate goal is for students to have lives filled with meaningful opportunities
 - NH PDG interest in community schools
 - Support schools in preparing for the [federal grant opportunity](#)
 - Focus on family engagement, ECCE quality, kindergarten transition support
 - Schools are already doing this work, planning funds give them time and resources to be more strategic
 - Stages of development: Many planning grant awardees in the cohort are in the emerging stage of development. They had initiatives in various parts of their districts and communities, but weren't necessarily coordinating services or getting everyone together at the same table. Our funding has gone towards needs assessments, community convenings, and the development of collaborative leadership teams. Each awardee will be developing a comprehensive plan to guide their over the next 2-5 years.
 - Four Pillars of Community Schools: integrated supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices to support high-quality teaching.
 - Examples from each school district in the planning grant cohort.
 - Community School Indicators: these span the K-12 years. Data is tracked and used for decision-making and continuous program improvement.
 - Alignment with Council's Priority Outcomes from the Strategic Plan.
 - Community schools are mentioned in DHHS' NH Health Improvement Plan.
 - School Pulse Panel survey (National Center for Education Statistics): Nationally school staff is asking for wraparound supports and the type of programming we see in community schools. 60% of schools report providing wraparound supports. Funding/TA is needed to coordinate and strengthen programming.
 - Other state's have examples of statewide support programs, 6 states have received the US Education Full-Service Community Schools grants.
- Nicole Doherty and Aimee Kereage: the planning grant offered by NH PDG motivated a team from Manchest School District and Manchester Proud to convene and get organized for the federal grant program. A consultant was hired, they attended a conference as a team, and the application period was announced early last summer.
 - The PDG grant allowed Manchester to provide funding to community partners to help them be present at the table and initiate/expand programs
 - Implementation schools: Beech Street School and Gossler Park School
 - Manchester has many community partners that provide embedded wraparound supports in schools, this work began with funding from Granite United Way 10 years ago.

- Services described in the federal grant proposal have gotten an early start through PDG funds.
- Services and strategies are listed under each of the Four Pillars of community schools.
 - Vision screenings added to school-based health clinic
 - Career-connected learning (mostly STEM based)
 - Out of school time program
 - Play-based kindergarten professional development
 - Family academy model – adult education and services
 - ACERT (Adverse Childhood Experiences Response Team)
 - Steering committees and leadership teams to guide the work
 - Professional learning communities
- Communication and collaboration throughout the school and community are facilitated by leadership teams
- US ED FSCS Program: Out of 237 applicants and 30 awards, Manchester received perfect reviewer scores.
- Challenges: staffing, district facilities, funding, past experiences with community schools led to preconceived notions
- Plans moving forward: hire staff, develop MOUs with partners, pass along funding to partners, contracting with an external evaluator
- US ED has been very supportive
- Questions/comments:
 - Tricia Tilley: how do you counter folks who are saying that schools shouldn't be focusing on these wraparound activities? How do you develop buy-in?
 - Nicole: We talk about it as part of MTSS-B and communicate about these services related to that. Our goal is to support behavioral health through partnerships.
 - Aimee: We are hosting family engagement nights to explain this model to the community and help people understand what we're doing.
 - Tricia: It's worth it to continue thinking about how you'll address people's concerns about privacy and concerns that these services are not the school's responsibility. This is worthwhile, but not everyone sees it that way.
 - Christina D'Allesandro: Have you thought about any early childhood education career pathways in the Family Academy model?
 - Aimee: at Manchester School of Technology and Manchester Community College we are looking into an internship/apprenticeship program for high school students to spend time in elementary/preschool classrooms.
 - Christine Brennan: Based on personal experience in the Manchester school district, guidance counselors and related services were partly funded by Title I. How are they currently funded?
 - Aimee: it's a combination of Title I funds and families' Medicaid funds.
 - Christina Lachance: I had the opportunity to serve as a reviewer for US ED FSCS applications, and the plans applicants are required to put forward are very intricate. Kudos to the Manchester School District and all the community partners who took this on, and congratulations.
 - Kim Nesbitt: Manchester is a large school district, but it's important to note that schools of all sizes can implement the community school strategy, and schools have the option to collaborate with one another on community school projects. It will look different in a small school versus a large school, but it's still effective. It's also an approach that aligns with the conversations we've been having on the

Council. It's about integration of services, it's about collaboration, it's a comprehensive wraparound approach that works for not just early childhood, but children of all ages. It builds on what Christine Brennan always says, that schools are the connectors of communities.

NH DHHS – ARPA D Updates

- Karen Hebert: Jessie recently moved to NH with broad experience in ECCE over the span of 23 years. She's been a provider, an advisor to child welfare, a congressional advisor, served on councils, was an administrator for the CCDF in Idaho, and now she's doing this here.
- Jessie Davis: There are many [ARPA D activities](#) at DHHS.
 - DHHS is also re-vamping the communication and data system for child care and we'll have some big changes released by the end of this year.
 - ARPA D Projects:
 - EC Provider Credential Challenge with many professional development opportunities
 - Child Care Workforce Recruiting and Retention project (awarded to Public Consulting Group) – partnering with [Be Well Care Well](#) for workplace improvements for EC providers
 - [Child Care Business Improvement project](#) (Child Care Accelerate)
 - [Family Child Care Expansion Pilot through Community Development Finance Authority](#); creating an FCC startup guide, working with St. Anselm's Center for Ethics on a zoning project, collaborating with PIC to develop resources
 - Child Care, Business and Employer Partnership – Child Care Partnership project through Granite United Way – materials are currently being vetted by DHHS,
 - Developing Family Friendly Workplace technical assistance program.
 - Conducting an employer survey.
 - Engaging the business sector through the NH Business Roundtable.
 - Conducting a Family Friendly Environment case study to highlight best practices for inclusive work environments.
 - A community-based child care initiative is being piloted by the Coos County Directors Network, ARPA funds will extend the pilot. This initiative is a collaboration between many partners in Coos whose goal is to expand the Gorham Community Learning Center.
 - Information about these programs and opportunities for providers will be disseminated with the help of Child Care Aware
 - NH Alliance of Early Childhood Coalitions is doing lunch and learns which provide much more in-depth information about each initiative
- Karen Hebert: We currently have an unprecedented volume of activity at DHHS. Over the last 4 years, \$167 million in Covid-related funding has been received by the Department. The majority of that has gone to EC providers directly. To date \$120 million has been distributed. An additional \$23 million has yet to go out the door through two pending grant opportunities (one for [workforce](#), one for [child care operating expenses](#)). \$5.2 million from ARPA D initiatives will go towards providers (through CDFA's family child care project and the [child care business health improvement project](#)).

- There's information on the DHHS website about ARPA D-funded projects and other Covid-related funding projects. NH Connections website will soon have information added under the [ARPA D tab](#).
- Pear Associates will be conducting a full analysis of all of these initiatives by the end of the calendar year (2024), and the Department's next step will be making decisions based on that evaluation.
- Krisha: when do APRA D funds have to be spent down by?
 - Karen: They have to be liquidated by 9/30/2024

Public Comments:

- Joelynn Drennan, Senior Director, Early Childhood Initiatives, Granite United Way: ARPA D work at GUW has included a collaboration with Behavioral Health Improvement Institute to conduct an employer survey. Results are being analyzed now. The [Best Place for Working Parents website](#) has launched.
- Sarah Fox, Program Manager, NH Alliance of Early Childhood Coalitions. [Lunch and Learns](#) will feature each ARPA D project. Objective is to share information about these opportunities. CDFA will be presenting on March 7. There's also a monthly newsletter for the early childhood community statewide. Send newsletter contributions to Sarah Fox: sfox@nhaecc.org

Motion to adjourn (Jane Bard)

Seconded (Christina D'Allesandro)

Motion approved by consensus.