LINC Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2008
McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University

In attendance:

Matt Brue	Lauri Morrison-Frichtl
Karen Craven	Sheena Panoor
Lynne Curry	Aisha Ray
Norm Durflinger	Chris Rosean
Lori Fanello	Bert Hendee
June Grivetti	Jodi Scott
Alicia Haller	LuAnn Shields
Ava Harston	Nancy Shier
Kay Henderson	Deb Strauss
Lisa Hood	Teri Talan
Erika Hunt	Martin Torres
Paula Jorde-Bloom	Debra Trude-Suter
Brenda Klostermann	Joyce Weiner
Sarah Madson	Katie Dealy
Jan Maruna	Holly Knicker

I. Welcome and Introductions : Dr. Paula Jorde Bloom, Teri Talan, Lisa Hood

Dr. Bloom gave the official welcome to the university. Lisa started the round of introductions for attendees. Two attendees from IARSS and LUDA were attending by phone.

Dr. Bloom gave a powerpoint overview of the work of the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership. In the 1980's, Dr. Bloom came to National Lewis to start a graduate program for early childhood center directors (the first in the country). The Center operates on a long-term strategic plan. The Mission is to enhance the management skills and leadership capacity of EC leaders. The work takes place in four areas: training, technical assistance, research and public awareness. Dr. Bloom provided an informational packet with descriptions of many Center activities.

The Center works on several initiatives with Chicago. These include the Coaching for Results initiative with CPS and the Archdiocese of Chicago, and The Next Generation of Chicago Leaders professional development initiative to guild the EC workforce. Other Center work includes providing technology training for EC directors and a number of management institutes dealing with current issues faced by directors. The Center hosts a three-day national leadership convention in Chicago in May. This event provides means for states to share best practices in EC leadership, skill-building sessions, a public policy forum, and networking.

The newest initiative, funded by Pritzker, is to develop a national director's credential. It will fill the void in some states that lack a director's credential. NAEYC has partnered with the Center to create this on-line director's credential, to be launched in the spring of 2009. The initiative is called Aim4Excellence.

The Center does program evaluation work, including organizational climate assessments producing work environment profiles; application of the EC program administration scale measuring leadership management on a variety of subscales (adopted by the State of Illinois as part of its Quality Counts

effort); a complementary tool called the business administration scale for family child care. The Center partners with NCCRRA in delivering training and program evaluation data collection.

Center research looks at their own program effects. It publishes quarterly Research Notes. In 2001, the Center published a landmark study, funded by the McCormick Foundation, called *Who's Caring for the Kids?* portraying the EC workforce in Illinois. It laid the groundwork for Preschool for All. An updated version (2008 edition) will be published soon.

II. Revisiting Kristie Kauerz's Presentation to Highlight Outcomes and Policy/Practice Options in Aligning the Learning Continuum (Lisa Hood)

Powerpoint Presentation: *Learning Continuum Outcomes and Policy Options*

Lisa provided a pair of handouts summarizing key points of Ms. Kauerz's presentation from the last LINC meeting. One handout reviewed "What P-3 Does," and the other summarized goals and policy options. Lisa proceeded to review the key points about what "P-3" is supposed to accomplish, including holistic accountability approaches and sharing of best practice.

Lisa then laid out each P-3 goal and the options for policies and practice that Ms. Kauerz had presented to potentially meet those goals. The goals include:
- Expand programs
- Engage parents and families
- Address the whole child
- Recognize and assess multi-dimensional readiness
- Improve transitions
- Establish standards
- Increase alignment
- Ensure continuity
- Use data

Each goal has policy implications at the state and local levels. Some of these may be different for Illinois than those Ms. Kauerz outlined. Also, for each goal, best practices can be identified.

III. Drawing Out the Elephants in the Room: What are the Issues and Barriers to Aligning the Learning Continuum? (Norm Durflinger)

Norm posed the question to the group: "What is the problem that we are attempting to solve?" He pointed out that the last two meetings had laid out many problems. Norm proceeded to give some examples, such as the public/private provider disconnect, which may be a communications disconnect; funding problems, etc. He said that for this meeting, funding, or the lack thereof, will be "off the table" as an identified problem, because it gets in the way of finding out the real problems, and is not something that a group like this can solve. Working on the money problem will come after ideas are proposed for aligning the learning continuum.

He gave an example of a concrete problem as the fact that the two universities represented in the room (NLU and ISU) do not incorporate Early Childhood issues and concepts in their administrator preparation programs.

He instructed the group to take several post-it notes and list a problem on each one. If members can think of 20 problems, they take 20 notes to write on. Then the notes will go up on a large wall, and

volunteers will organize them into categories. This will produce a manageable set of problem areas to discuss. The group spent the next 25-30 minutes writing down problems and barriers and posting them on the wall. A group of four volunteers worked to organize them into categories as the notes were added by various members.

Norm then had the entire group visit the wall to review the various problem categories. He told them that they could move their own post-it notes to a different category if needed to improve the groupings.

The group then reconvened to review the categories. They were:
- Training
- Higher Education
- Governance
- Leadership
- Standards
- Accountability
- Communication
- Families
- Data/Assessments
- Lack of Urgency

Some members commented that some categories overlap; for example, training and higher education, higher education and leadership, and governance and leadership had a lot of similar issues within their categories.

The urgency issue was raised: for some outside of the group, there is no urgency to change current practice. Others perceive these issues as extremely urgent. Norm suggested that the urgency category be pulled out, and that for each of the other categories, we ask the question – why is this urgent? Or is it?

Norm then suggested that the group break for lunch, and that the members will break into small groups to examine the top issues.

IV. Lunch

During lunch, the members reviewed the post-it wall and categories, and then voted for their top three category choices.

Category Voting Results:

- Training - 6
- Higher Education - 9*
- Governance - 10*
- Leadership - 12*
- Standards - 5
- Accountability - 2
- Communication - 17*
- Families - 2
- Data/Assessments - 2

*Indicates high votes

V. Reaction to the Morning Discussion: How Do We Get Beyond the Barriers? (Norm Durflinger)

Norm reviewed the results, including the top four vote getters. He mentioned that standards, assessment and accountability are really one group (alignment), and the group may want to combine those categories and votes.

Joyce Weiner of Ounce of Prevention talked about problems with definitions, and said that some people may have voted differently if they were using the same interpretations of words. She wrote some general notes to this effect.

- Need cross-sector systemic approaches
- Need alignment across systems (vertical and horizontal) as an approach to solving problems
- Accountability is critical to good governance.

    Some questions that arise from these identified needs include: What are the components in each sector? What is the meaning of "alignment"? What are the barriers to achieving success with each component?

Norm acknowledged that these general issues and the issue of definitions are things the group will need to consider along the line. He then directed the members to divide into four smaller groups based on the top four voting categories. He asked them to work to define the "scope of the work" for each category. For example, "leadership" is a very broad topic—what real work would we do, which barriers will be addressed, what action plans could be developed, in the context of the mission of this project? The groups will use the post-it items in each category as a starting point for their work.

The members self-selected their groups and divided up to work on their chosen topics. They took with them the post-it items for their respective categories. Staff members reviewed the remaining post-its from other categories and distributed any that applied to the group study topics.

VI. Key Messages/Next Steps Forward   (Norm Durflinger and Lisa Hood)

The **communications group** reported out first. They distinguished between external (families, public) and internal audiences (educators, care providers) before looking at barriers and strategies. ***Barriers:*** lack of knowledge about (1) early learning, (2) available programs, and (3) school readiness; the need for a unified data system about students; the need for a common language with which to talk about these subjects; and the lack of an organized method/structure to collect and disseminate needed information. These barriers can be addressed through a variety of methods (materials, websites, networking, clearinghouse structures) once the necessary knowledge is identified. Other barriers mentioned include lack of mutual respect across sectors, no clear definition of ECE, and poor communication among sectors.

The **higher education group** reported next. **Barriers:** poor cross-sector planning across preparation programs (administrator and teacher), which may be due to the structures of courses and programs at universities; K-12 principals need knowledge and skills in ECE and how to collaborate across sectors; the need to integrate ELL and diversity coursework; and the fact that principals and directors lack incentives for alignment and understanding each others' work. The current Type 75 certificate needs to include an ECE focus. Principals need to be taught ways to be more consumer-focused. Also, there is a need for cross-divisional work at state agencies, such as ISBE (e.g., ECE and certification).

The **leadership and governance groups (merged)** reported. The group did not specifically list barriers, but instead suggested a pilot project in which the leaders across sectors are all appropriately informed, and try to put into practice a seamless continuum. The pilot would incorporate higher education and communications strategies, would apply alignment of standards, assessments and accountability measures. A pilot would provide evidence that a continuum works. One member asked if the public districts that have Preschool for All could serve as a pilot group. The ISBE representative thought that might be too narrow for a viable pilot with broad applicability.

Lisa Hood mentioned an overarching concern, mentioned earlier, about creating a statewide sense of urgency for the continuum work.

Next steps:
- Principal survey was sent out on Friday, responses due October 22, preliminary data will be provided at the October 29 meeting.
- Professional development inventory was sent out to ECE and K-12 providers, to gather data on the types of PD that are being offered around the state. Also searching for IAA courses that address some of these alignment and collaboration issues.
- ECE Director survey is in the development process and should be sent out within two weeks.
- Delphi survey will be sent out to members reacting to the information gathered at today's meeting. This will provide feedback to move forward on October 29th.
- Five members are serving on the School Leader Task Force subgroups. The Task Force will be providing recommendations to ISBE and IBHE regarding principal preparation. A web site to track the work of the School Leader Task Force is available at: http://www.illinoisschoolleader.org/

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, October 29 at 10 a.m.** It will be hosted by the South Area Office of Preschool for All, Chicago Public Schools, 525 E. 35th Street, Chicago. More information about the meeting will be forwarded via the listserv in the upcoming week.