

**Collaborative for Educational Services
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
January 31, 2018
Franklin Regional Council of Governments**

Present from Board: Ashley Dion, Jennifer Eichorn, Don Sluter, Robert Decker, Hussain Hamdan, Craig Cohen, Suzanne Crawford, Melissa Burke, Stephanie Conrod, Patricia Smith, Dan Hayes, Maureen Nichols, Michael Knapp, Ed Sturtevant, Jonathan Schmidt, Michael Simpson, Humera Fasihuddin, Sarah Hall, John Cotton

Present from CES: Bill Diehl, Terry Senio, Barbara Siegel, Angela Burke, Sherry Smith, Sarah Molloy

Call to Order and Introductions

Dan Hayes, Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. The Board did introductions.

Public Session

Tom Grover, a History teacher employed by CES for the Department of Youth Services education initiative, addressed the Board concerning DYS and SEIS teacher salaries and salary schedules, as compared to public school peers. Dan Hayes thanked him for presenting.

Approve Minutes of November 15, 2017 Board Meeting (vote required)

Dan explained the process of approving minutes for the new Board members. He said you don't have to abstain if you were not at the meeting.

Don Sluter moved that the Board approve the minutes of November 15, 2017. Pat Smith seconded. Hussain Hamdan and Suzanne Crawford abstained; all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Approve Minutes of January 23, 2018 Finance Committee Meeting (vote required)

Hussain Hamdan moved that the Board approve the Finance Committee minutes of January 23, 2018 and John Cotton seconded. Pat Smith and Suzanne Crawford abstained; all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Strategic Planning Initiative for Families and Youth Coalition (SPIFFY) Presentation by Heather Warner

Heather Warner from the SPIFFY Coalition (Strategic Planning Initiative for Families and Youth) presented to the Board. They offer wrap around and prevention services and are directly involved with our districts in many ways.

The coalition started in about 2000 by school representatives, community members, and people from CES who recognized the need for youth data to help drive programming and decision making by and for schools. SPIFFY has been collecting youth health data since 2003 and currently every public school district in Hampshire County participates with the exception of two public charter schools. SPIFFY receives funding from different grants, both federal and state as well as support from the local hospital.

SPIFFY uses a “Risk Factor and Protective Factor” framework when collecting data and identifying solutions, and they look at all levels of the social ecology (school, community, family, and individual). In 2017 they surveyed 13 school districts (grades 8, 10, and 12) which totaled over 3,200 students in that cycle. Franklin County has their own coalition (The Communities That Care Coalition) that collects similar data. Heather noted that the surveys are checked for honesty in several ways, including inconsistent responses, use of a “fake drug”, and responding that they were “not honest at all” when asked. In these cases, the entire survey gets thrown out.

Heather passed around printed versions of her presentation and examples of the survey questions. She explained that they are able to create special reports that pull out questions on specific topics such as school climate, relationship violence, or marijuana and vaping. They also look at health equity by sorting the data based on demographics such as race/ethnicity, income, LGBTQ, and gender. As part of their analyses, they look at the data over time to see if there are any trends. For instance, they have noticed that there is a downward trend in school suspension and alcohol use, while there is increased marijuana use particularly among high school aged youth.

She passed around the 2017 Hampshire County youth health data report and explained that the school district-specific data goes to the superintendents who then decide how they want to share it.

She then passed around a handout for substance abuse based on demographics to show how they can work with the data. She noted that they are hosting a conference about vaping and gave an overview of the how tobacco is regulated and what their coalition is doing in this area.

Under the FDA, cigarettes are regulated, and in 2016 banned flavored cigarettes that are appealing to youth. To get around the ban, the tobacco industry started producing flavored cigarillos, cigars, and blunts and marketed them to kids. Due to strong Board of Health regulations in Franklin and Hampshire Counties, these flavored products are only allowed to be sold in stores that only allow people who are ages 21+.

E-cigarettes are completely unregulated by the FDA and there is no testing of the juice to determine toxic chemicals, contaminants or the amount of nicotine. California mandates putting the ingredients on the packaging. A lot of products claim to be nicotine-free but studies have found that there are trace amounts. Heather explained that this is problematic since young people may think they are using nicotine-free juice, but it’s enough to get them hooked. Many people think it’s water vapor, but it’s actually Propylene Glycol, an oily petroleum-based substance that creates aerosol when heated. Also, certain flavors have an ingredient that causes popcorn lung, named after popcorn factory workers, who got ill through exposure to the same ingredient.

She went on to share that cigarette smoking has gone down in youth, but there has been an increase in other tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes. The data shows that Massachusetts youth are 20 times more likely to use e-cigarettes than adults in the state. She showed examples of the devices that are used. The batteries are not regulated either so companies can use cheap batteries that could explode.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has model ordinances for Boards of Health who can adopt some or all if they want, such as minimum pricing, selling it in 21+ stores, etc. Compliance checks are done by sending young people in trying to buy.

Below are some examples of vaping and marijuana questions students are asked about in the survey:

- If they know what they are vaping (ex. if it's nicotine-free or not)
- Driving while drinking / riding with someone who has been drinking and driving
- Driving while high on marijuana / riding with a high driver
- If their family has rules about marijuana use. They then cross-tab this with those that do use and have noticed that those who use tend to not have set rules in their family about it.
- How dangerous (how much risk of harm) students think it is to use cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana
- What they feel the negative consequences of marijuana use are
- What would happen if they are caught using marijuana

Heather added that they are currently researching curriculum that teachers can use in the classrooms. SPIFFY supports schools in adopting full, multi-week evidence based prevention curriculum such as LifeSkills. But they also see the need for finding up-to-date supplemental sessions on e-cigarettes and marijuana, since the products and norms are changing so quickly. SPIFFY is researching any existing supplemental curriculum, but if they do not find any that they like, then they may develop their own.

Heather concluded her presentation and answered questions from the Board. The Board thanked Heather for her presentation.

Bill added that one of the things he has appreciated about their work is their positive norms campaign that focuses on the positive data and positive students behaviors, for example acknowledging that MOST students do not use e-cigarettes, marijuana or other substances. Youth and adults tend to overestimate negative behaviors, which further normalize it, instead of correcting the inaccurate perceptions about young people's behaviors. The notion there is to get people on the bandwagon of the positive norms we are trying to set.

CES Financial Report (vote required)

Barbara Siegel, Director of Finance and Operations, presented the Financial Report for the period ending 11-30-17. The Finance Committee met on January 23, 2018 and reviewed the report in detail. The deficit is not expected to remain at this level. Barbara has been meeting with department heads to discuss solutions to mitigate the losses. The November report is typically the bleakest since the summer is a lower revenue producing time and many districts are preparing their contracts with us at the start of the school year so services take time to get set up and initiated.

HEC Academy has a lower enrollment than expected. Marketing is working with the Special Education Director on a Special Education Department campaign that is intended to increase awareness and thereby use of our Special Education products and services. The addition of just one or two students can significantly affect the fiscal position of the entire department.

The Operations & Business Development area is experiencing a deficit. This is the result of some extraordinary expenses including some long-term FMLA issues that required us to assume the cost of temporary hiring; a personnel issue that required legal fees and a severance package to resolve; and consulting expenses as part of the reorganization. In addition, spending is down and that affects the amount of indirect revenue collected.

Barbara stated that it is reasonable to see some continued deficits within the Special Education and Licensure program areas but she is hopeful that we can overcome the deficit in Operations & Business Development and Professional Services.

The budget passed by the Board last June for FY18 included \$50,000 of indirect revenue coming from “unknown” grants and contracts; the figure was based on past performance. As of last week, \$46,000 had been accounted for and there are some new Early Childhood grants that may put us over the top.

There was discussion regarding expenses leading to the deficit in Operations & Business Development. Dan Hayes assured the Board that the Finance Committee looks closely at the numbers and asks the hard questions. He reminded the board that the committee includes three board members, himself, Howard Moore and Hussain Hamdan; and one superintendent from each county. He assured the board that the committee had questioned and delved into these numbers.

Ed Sturtevant moved to accept the Financial Report for the five months ending November 30, 2017 and Hussain Hamdan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

HEC Academy Summer School Budget (vote required)

The proposed rate for the HEC Academy Summer School tuition of \$5,618 for members and \$6,180 reflects a 6.8% increase over the FY18 rate. The CBWE program (Community Based Work Experience) closing results in an increase of the administrative costs since they are now spread out over fewer programs. This budget does not include a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment).

Under the current deficit conditions, we are not proposing a COLA though we value and understand the importance of one. We hope to be able to propose one by the time we present the full FY19 budget. We would determine if Summer school employees would be eligible based on tuition revenue; if not, the COLA would go into effect for the school year contracts.

Bob Decker moved to approve the FY19 HEC Academy Summer School Budget & Tuition Rates as presented and Hussain Hamdan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Content Teachers (vote required)

This is the third and final phase of the previously approved plan to bring Content Teachers onto the Teachers Salary Scale. The cost to complete the transition is approximately \$24,000. It is not an equal split, as it has been in the previous two years. This year each teacher is making the entry to their lane and step on the scale. We will continue to look at how our wages compare to other districts, particularly for Paraprofessionals and Specialist Assistants.

Bob Decker moved to approve the increase to bring Content Teachers onto the Teachers & Specialists Scale and Don Sluter seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Barbara also informed the Board that we are looking at the possibility of changing how we distribute employer contributions to healthcare. Currently, CES contributes based on years of service; 50% in year one, 60% in year two, 65% in years three through five and 75% in year six and beyond. We are looking to change to a 70/30 split and grandfather those who have already achieved the 75% level. The goal is to create equity across the agency and to increase our ability to recruit new employees. Our current

policy has become a significant issue for recruitment, particularly for Special Education Specialists. We have been researching the benefit distribution offered by other collaboratives and districts and we have yet to find any that use a similar step system. We will be looking at vacation scale next and hope to have more for the Board at the March meeting.

CCATT and OTC Update

CCATT

Sherry Smith, the Director of Special Education, presented the updates on the business plans for two of their centers. We looked at both the Collaborative Center for Assistive Technology and Training (CCATT) and the Occupational Therapy Center (OTC) and we all agreed that the work on OTC's business plan is very pressing due to the deficit level they were operating at. Once the school year got underway we were presented with the challenging circumstance of a critical staff member retiring in two weeks. This has shifted our approach and we have to think about things in a different way. We will dive deeper into this work after the February break, but the conversations have already been started around where they see themselves (for example, as a generalized team or a team with more of a specialized focus). We are discussing restructuring evaluations of clients, what will be different about OTC services, and who we can recruit to replace the open position.

OTC

We have been diving in deep in this area. We have been talking about the business plan and highlighting areas we want to approve. The planning group, which consists of Bill Diehl (Executive Director), Terry Senio (Deputy Director), Sherry Smith (Director of Special Education), Barbara Siegel (Director of Finance & Operations), Kathy Levesque (Director of Business Development), and Sarah Molloy (Special Projects Coordinator), met and talked about how we would measure the success of the business plan. This group identified six outcomes that would indicate success. These outcomes are laid out in the packet that the Board received.

One of our biggest conundrums is that their caseload is full, but there are times that the Center is available for use and could support more clients. As a first step, we need to increase our capacity for managing our services; we are addressing the barriers regarding our protocols and practices after looking at past data. We concluded that the current fee structure for evaluations does not cover the actual time spent on evaluations. We will be changing the fee structure to correct this. We also determined we need to be more strategic around the structure of the direct and consult work. We need to be firmer with our clients in adhering to our policy of a 45-minute hour. The remaining 15 minutes would include time for the therapist to record notes, consult with the client, and do any required set up. We will offer our parents the opportunity to opt out of this model and receive a full hour of direct treatment for their child with the option of purchasing additional consultation time.

We are also looking at our cancellation policy and how to meet the needs of CES as a business, but also accommodate for the challenges that our families face. These families tend to have the most challenges with medical needs, etc. We are looking at developing a job description for a COTA (Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant).

We have implemented a new billing system that allows us to collect more data that will be necessary to make informed decisions; for example, we can determine how much the specialists are doing

mandatory administrative (and non-professional level) tasks at a very high cost rate that could be managed by someone else at a lower cost rate.

Kathy Levesque has been working on market research and getting our marketing strategies ready to roll early to mid-Spring so that when we have the capacity for more clients, we are ready.

A Board member asked about hiring a consultant, to which Barbara responded that we have not thought about a consultant since we are currently using internal people. Dan added that CES is a very self-reflective agency and part of the reorganization is looking at increasing communication between departments and reducing costs.

Dan continued that we are focusing on these two areas right now and have focused on Mt. Tom before. CES staff have pulled in other people, including Board members to help. Bill added that he appreciates the Board's support and the members who were there at the beginning.

Hires and Separations (vote required)

Dan explained for new members that approving hires and separations is a requirement of the Board.

Melissa Burke moved to approve the hires and separations as presented and Suzanne Crawford seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Barbara added that Allison Garriss is here as our guest and will start next week. She is our new Administrative Support Supervisor and will be taking over the Board duties.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The last meeting it was asked that we bring our conflict of interest statement to our lawyer to review. We did and she (Gini Tate) made a couple of changes. The first part is a little stricter than we had to have it, but she said it's good to have. We need everyone to sign these statements.

Discussions

Due to timing, Bill pointed out a few items from his Executive Director's report and listed the ten issues that CES is focusing on, which are listed in the below section.

Executive Director's Report (PLEASE SEE BOARD PACKET)

Bill pointed out a few items from the opening letter. He then prefaced our ten key areas of advocacy by explaining that we represent a plurality of the small and rural districts in the Commonwealth. One of our roles is to educate and advocate with elected officials and others about issues that are affecting small and rural districts in both counties and the Berkshires.

1. support of legislation to strengthen the ability of collaboratives in Massachusetts to serve member districts through the pending "Act Relative to Educational Collaboratives;"
2. support of small and rural schools, including additional funding as recommended by the Rural Schools Coalition. Bill added that we are part of the Rural Schools Commission and that Stan Rosenberg has agreed to move this forward;
3. additional support for regional transportation;
4. the implementation and funding of the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission (FNRC);

5. an increase in the Circuit Breaker funding. The amount of funds set aside for Circuit Breaker is about the same as last, but it can only cover 65% now, rather than 75% in the past;
6. additional salary enhancements for educators of youth in Department of Youth Services custody;
7. support for early literacy skills, specifically for Reading Recovery – one of the few interventions in first grade that has proven to be effective with long-lasting positive effects. Several of our districts implement Reading Recovery with notable success;
8. support for primary prevention and community-based youth health promotion;
9. support for any efforts by the Legislature to address educational issues related to equity and inclusion;
10. increased funding for Early Childhood Education and for EC Mental Health services.

These are the ten issues we are focusing on. Bill opened it up to the Board to offer any suggestions or input. Bill offered to send the Foundation Budget Review Commission's recommendations to the Board.

Board members suggested the following issues:

- Equitable reimbursement for Charter schools. Bill noted that in the past we've done a lot of advocacy around this, but it does continue to be an issue.
- The last mile for high speed internet as it is an equity issue for kids
- The overall funding of SPED in general - make it clearer how much is spent on SPED, such as having a line item for it.

Bill told the Board to let him know if they have any other ideas or thoughts.

Bill informed the Board that the North Berkshire Academy opened January 2nd. On May 15th the Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito will be coming to have a ribbon cutting ceremony. CES will help Berkshire districts form a collaborative which will then take over running the North Berkshire Academy.

Bill mentioned the closing of the CBWE program and explained that we have had shrinking enrollment. We did not have any member districts anymore so Springfield was the one keeping it going and they said they could not do it anymore.

Dan mentioned the Social Justice & Equity (SJE) conference. Board members can come to this and other CES workshops and conferences if there is room, and only have to pay any expenses for food or materials. The Board received the FY17 Highlights publication.

Adjournment (vote required)

Hussain Hamdan motioned to adjourn at 9:00 PM and Ed Sturtevant seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.