

**Lane Early Learning Alliance  
Parent Advisory Council  
October 27, 2020  
6:00 – 7:30 pm  
Zoom Meeting**

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- **Reminder of Group Agreements**
  - No judgement, either positive or negative – let people share their experience without judgement
  - Confidentiality/privacy
  - Open mind to different parenting views and situations
  - Anything shared about our personal life/family remains here with the group
  - Unsolicited advice: sometimes people just want to share to share, other times are asking for advice; maybe we communicate what we're looking for: say I just want to share or I'm looking for advice
  - Respect; curtesy towards others in the group
  
- **Early Learning Hub**
  - One reason this group exists is to advise the Lane Early Learning Alliance Hub (ELA).
  - About 6 years ago, Oregon state legislature funded 16 hubs across the state- designed to coordinate systems (health care- any that serve kids 0-6) with goal that families are getting what they need, lowering barrier to access to services, organizations are talking to each other to reduce duplication of services
  - While bill was being passed, community came together to decide on “backbone” organization that houses the ELA hub – to receive grant money from the state, provide office; chose United Way of Lane County
  - Need parent voice at the center of all of this- what you need, what are the barriers, what do we want to work on? Change you can effect at the community level
  - Interesting to see different people working together to find solutions; a lot of work that goes into it (can feel like nothing is getting done on the outside)
  - ELA mandated to have a Governing Council with representatives from 5 sectors (k-12, healthcare, DHS, child care, business)
    - Very interested in hearing from parents – goal to create open, bi-directional communication between Governance Consortium and parents
  - How can the ELA support child care providers?
    - Both from the parent side (affordability, how to find) and from the provider side (what are the things that are hurting your business? What are you struggling with that we might be able to talk about at various meetings?)
    - This is the channel to the Governance Consortium to address needs
    - Opportunities for advocating at state government level (go to Salem, write letters, write letters as a formal body); mostly care about hearing from parents and small business owners- the effect legislation is having on people; powerful to hear your experiences

## 2. Group discussion: Parent Resources, part 2

- Last meetings discussed: how have you engaged with the system, what organizations do you use for your family, how are you finding resources/who do you trust with resources?
- What are you needing/missing now? What could be better? Barriers to access?
  - Respite care for folks who don't qualify for ERDC and don't have money to pay for child care
    - The ones that exist are always tied to something – ex: somebody must have disability
  - Question from Judy: what you brought up has been a huge lack in the community. Respite is usually tied to diagnosis or program. Have you seen any programs? How would you go about doing something like that?
    - Closest thing is Safe Families through CAFA; somebody who can step in and help out in that neighborly way-
    - Way for parents to form groups? Way to formalize this?
    - 90by30 is an organization that could be helpful; thinking of this as a system problem; is embedded in rural communities; addressing real everyday needs of parents – this may be something to work on with them
  - Have 4-year-old that would be in preschool but was canceled due to COVID; wanted to have an experience before she goes to Kinder – Sheldon has free preschool program that's online, teacher supports at-home preschool
    - Tension now between pre-Ks offering distance learning and parents that need in-person
    - How did you find it? City of Eugene program guide; seems like preschools are booked now
- Ayanna: anything you're hearing around resources families need? Barriers?
  - Preschool or programs that can be delivered in-home for safety reasons
  - Many parents are able to have someone home with kids but kids need to be engaged with other kids
  - Encouraging families to read with their kids
  - Now is best time to apply for Early Head Start- under enrolled right now and taking some kids over the income limit
- Preschool Promise:
  - high quality preschool for kids 3 and 4 that comes through state funding; a mixed delivery system: at-home provider, child care centers, located within schools; distance or in-person programs. The ELA does enrollment. Due to COVID and parents being out of work or not wanting kids to be in care, most preschool programs are under-enrolled. If your family makes up to 200% of the federal poverty level and want to apply complete this online form.
  - Programs are in Cottage Grove, Springfield, Creswell, Eugene, Junction City. Link to list of providers: <http://bit.ly/PSPProviderList>. Click on provider will take you to description of service delivery in COVID times.
  - Mom wanted distance learning until COVID is over- can she request this? Depending on the site/program, they're doing distance learning or in-person or hybrid; mostly school districts are offering in-person.

- Judy: home visiting programs have been advised to not do home visits unless it's an emergency; some people in nice weather have been meeting outside but when weather gets bad, will have less ability to do home visits (advised against by Oregon Health Authority)

### 3. Group discussion: Moving beyond a focus group

- Our goal is to move beyond focus group; want there to be some action coming from what it is that's most important to you as parents; also opportunities for trainings if you're interested
- Think about this group as more action-oriented: are there issues around kids and families that you would like to tackle? (Ex: Child care, kids with special needs getting services, better public transportation, county-wide library system)
  - Biggest frustration as a parent: not a lot of cohesion between agencies in the community; weird that you go to school resource person and you know more than they do; DHS doesn't seem to know what's going on the community, resources that are available – why when you go in with food stamp application not told about Preschool Promise if you have young children? So many people receiving SNAP and TANF and don't know about ERDC- what is the barrier to getting people that information when they go in? Why not as a community doing more to alleviate parent stress through these helpful resources?
- Judy: How do you get information about resources? Natural touch-points? Communication around resources is so important- maybe it's multiple times and ways.
  - Agree there is miscommunication; not everyone is on the same page; nobody told her about Head Start, preschools, help with child care- created barrier, had to stay and take care of kids without any resources; government agencies are supposed to have these resources
- Question: for the Eugene Public Library all out of district families can get a free card right now. Library is huge resource for families but paying is a barrier. Plan is to continue this.
- Ever been discussed with Preschool Promise for families who fall over poverty level but don't make enough to afford childcare offered sliding scale? Kids are missing out; lots of people fall into this category
  - When ELA did parent survey with over 1,000 parents – number 1 issue was make too much money for services but not enough to pay for child care cause it's more than rent; ERDC income level has gone up but only through end of November- trying to get the word out about that to families but it's a short-term solution in response to COVID.
  - Child care providers are small business owners, haven't been able to keep businesses going because don't have enough kids; afraid it will be even worse on other side of COVID with fewer providers and more demand
  - Going to take all of us, including legislature and community support coming together to help these families
- Judy: an outpouring of donations to help with school-age care scholarships; how can we sustain it going forward? Families didn't budget for school-aged child care
  - At state level: Early Learning Division (ELD) is the boss of the hubs, subset of Oregon Department of Education- top priority is child care, pushing for expansion of Preschool Promise- but, not simple- so many moving parts
    - Example: friend who makes \$0.50 more per hour than she pays for child care

- With COVID, parents are expected to teach now too; private tutors are too expensive, don't understand how anyone is supposed to stay afloat right now- technology issues, creates anxiety; adding in finances- kids are falling behind cause can't afford tutor
- The way they teach things is different now, can't even help with 4<sup>th</sup> grade math homework
- We will get through this – hang in there!

#### **4. Live Poll: Future meeting days/times preferences**

- Want to meet often enough that we can build momentum but don't want to overwhelm you.
  - Meet next in January.