

**FIRST 5 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION**

**SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES (approved March 25, 2015)
February 25, 2015**

Commissioners Present

Bruce Gibson	SLO County Board of Supervisors
James Brescia	SLO County Office of Education
Mary Kern	Community at Large
Lee Collins	Department of Social Services
Janet Murphy	Community at Large
Michael McNerney, M.D.	American Academy of Pediatrics (FAAP)
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council
Tracy Schiro	Children's Services Network

Commissioners Absent/Excused – Penny Borenstein, M.D. SLO County Public Health Department

Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood
Commission Evaluator: Tom Keifer

Call to Order

Chairperson Gibson called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

ITEM 1 - Public Comment

Sharlene Agrusa, Executive Director for Parents Helping Parents Family Resource Center. Thanked the commission for 15 years of funding. Told the Commission about the positive impact it has had in the community. Ms. Agrusa said she hopes everyone will read of the important stories in their quarterly reports.

There were no other comments from the public.

ITEM 2 - Consent Agenda

1) Approval of the January 28, 2015 minutes

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Collins made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McNerney and passed unanimously.

ITEM 3 – Review of First 5 SLO County Financial Plan

Executive Director Wendy Wendt gave review of the current financial plan and asked Commissioners to begin considering possible future modifications in conjunction with the budget and strategic planning processes. Ms. Wendt pointed out the gradual stepdown in funding and suggested it would be prudent to review the financial planning assumptions relative to this decrease in funding and adjust if necessary. Chairperson Gibson asked if and how the Commission might be involved in exploring alternative funding sources. Ms. Wendt asked the Commission to consider an Ad Hoc committee to review and make recommendations about the financial plan. Commissioners Schiro, Borenstein (not present) and Gibson will act as Ad Hoc Financial Plan Committee.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 4 – Strategic Planning Session: School Readiness Initiative

Ms. Wendt introduced School Readiness as the next major initiative in the Commission's strategic planning process. She commented that School Readiness and Health are currently the two largest initiatives. Ms. Wendt introduced the planning session agenda, to include presentations by partners and key stakeholders in the early childhood education and school readiness communities. Commissioner Brescia then spoke briefly on school performance, commenting early intervention correlates with improved performance in math and reading proficiency.

First 5 Evaluator Tom Keifer presented local schools data on Academic Performance Index (API) scores and 3rd Grade Reading Scores. Commissioners were interested in knowing if 3rd grade reading scores could be used as outcome indicators for the school readiness program.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Brescia pointed out that if we target resources strategically we see improvement. Commissioner Collins Lee asked whether we can say that First 5-funded efforts are making a difference, or are there other variables? Brescia responded that it is one of several variables that we can attribute to improved performance. Without a control group, we cannot publish it as our success alone, but we know we are contributing Chairperson Gibson asked if some of the variation in reading proficiency is related to English language acquisition. He also asked how we can assess the overall well-being of a child as they enter the system. Commissioner Brescia stated that one assessment tool available at the county level is Kindergarten readiness data. Commissioner Collins asked Commissioner Brescia whether with the new Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) funding mechanism for schools, will there be opportunity for schools districts to invest in School Readiness? Commissioner Brescia responded that our mandate is k-12; he does not anticipate schools using these funds to invest in school readiness.

Commissioner Kern emphasized that stated that children will never learn more than during the period of their lives from 0-6.

Program Officer Jason Wells, Commissioner Sokolowski, and Ms. Wendt introduced the following speakers to present stories from the School Readiness sites and relevant updates in the field of early care and education.

Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, Oceano School Readiness Coordinator and Oceano Parents/Promotores Alma and Refugio (Cuco) Herrera - Presented on the relationship School Readiness has with families. Ms. Ruvalcaba-Heredia gave an overview of the School Readiness model and the many activities and services at the Oceano SR site including: Parent classes, parent participation literacy classes, and Café hour with the school site principal. Erica added that School Readiness is about trust, and relationships with parents and other agencies. It is about empowering parents, giving them the right tools so they can help their children. Mr. and Ms. Herrera shared their experiences, how they have come to value the importance of school readiness as they have become grandparents and engaged with the Oceano program, how they participate in SR activities with their grandchildren, and as community volunteers/parent leaders supporting SR and other programs.

Chairperson Gibson asked about how the funding is balanced across programs that support children children vs. those that support the parents. Commissioner Collins responded that this is the approach of child welfare, to strengthen the parents and then the whole family is better off: "We don't water the fruit, we water the tree."

Ellalina Emrich Keller (Georgia Brown School Principal), Marilu Gomez (Georgia Brown SR Site Coordinator), and Isabel Duque-Arevalo (SR Family Advocate) presented on partnering with schools in Paso Robles and the connection between schools and SR programs. Ms. Emrich Keller and Ms. Gomez stressed how important SR has been at involving and connecting families with the schools. Ms. Keller stated that traditionally disenfranchised families become more educated on the school system, more involved at the school site, more interested in their children's education. Families volunteer more and school attendance increases. Ms. Emrich Keller said the First 5 family support counselor is critical for children and families needing crisis support. She concluded by saying that Georgia Brown and the Paso Robles school system overall could use more preschool slots, more counseling, and more year-round SR activities.

Nancy Norton, SLOCOE CA State Preschool Director, presented to the Commission on operating First 5 preschools and the two First 5 extended day programs at the School Readiness sites. Oceano, established in 2005, has served 200 children and their families. Oceano Extended Day (2013) has served 26 families. Georgia Brown, established in 2006, has served 180 children and their families. Georgia Brown Extended Day (2013) has served 30 families. Ms. Norton spoke to the important social-emotional and cognitive development that children receive through participation in quality preschools, that in combination are needed for success in TK thru 12th grade and in life. Ms. Norton explained that children attending the SR site preschools are children who will likely be attending Oceano or Georgia Brown Elementary Schools. She also explained that each First 5 preschool has capacity for 20 children, and extended day programs have capacity for 16 children. She explained that the program supervisor needs to have a bachelor's degree, the teacher needs to have an AA, and at least one staff must be bilingual.

Commissioner Sokolowski asked if preschool staff notice any change in the level of demand for early intervention for children with special needs. Ms. Norton responded that teachers are the ones to see and notice when an early intervention is needed. Commissioner Brescia added that with more educated/trained ECE educators, we do a better job at early identification and directing services to them. Monica Swift-Hjerrild, (Georgia Brown First 5 Preschool Teacher) stated that First 5 Family Support Counselor Magda Williams "is a blessing." As trust builds with these types of strong relationships between professionals and families, we see increased requests for mental health services. Chairperson Gibson stated that when we think of "where else to invest" in the School Readiness model, he thinks of Cambria where there is a large population of families with limited English proficiency.

Shannon White Bond, SLOCOE Early Learning For All (ELFA) Coordinator, presented on Implementing Transitional Kindergarten in San Luis Obispo County. Ms. White Bond explained that Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 created Transitional Kindergarten (TK), the first year of a two year kindergarten experience for those students who are born between September and December. The act required a "developmentally appropriate curriculum; aligned with K standards; taught by credentialed teachers." There is concern in this county and others that this standard is critical, but has not been fully integrated at the classroom level. In response to this concern the State responded with two changes to the Act: Senate Bill (SB) 858 established 1) the intent that TK curriculum be aligned to the California Preschool Learning Foundations and California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks developed by the CDE; and 2) that credentialed teachers who are first assigned to a transitional kindergarten classroom after July 1, 2015, have, by August 1, 2020, at least 24 units in early childhood development classroom time or equivalent experience as determined by the school district, or a child development teacher permit. Ms. White Bond explained that San Luis Obispo County, through the Office of Education and ELFA Network, support TK teacher trainings to enhance the understanding and quality of TK implementation.

Chairperson Gibson asked for clarification about the number of TK classrooms. Ms. White Bond and Commissioner Brescia answered that there are 28 TK classrooms throughout the county and that some districts provide pool children from several school areas to be in one TK classroom. Some areas where there is a single kindergarten classroom, TK and K, share the same room. Ms. Wendt added that TK creates a major shift in how the 0-5 cohort of children get served and asked what role First 5 should have with helping build and shape TK programs. Chairperson Gibson asked if we should just be advocating for the state to do the right thing. Commissioner Brescia responded that we should not count on the state to offer this kind of support and funding. Ms. White Bond emphasized that there is so much brain research to show why a focus on this age cohort is so important.

Commissioner Collins asked about the Kindergarten School Entrance Profile (KSEP) and whether it was a valid tool. Ms. White Bond explained that yes it was validated by Mike Ferlong at UCSB. Chairperson Gibson asked about the number of kids receiving the KSEP and could it be used as an outcome measure for First 5 kids as the leave programs and enter kindergarten.

Shana Paulson, Child Care Resource Connection (CCRC), presented on Capacity in Child Care in SLO County. Ms. Paulson defined the types of child care including Licensed Exempt Child Care, Center-Based, and Licensed Family Child Care. CCRC makes referrals and works with families to give them choices that fit with their needs. They also support eligible families with child care subsidies. Many families are looking for full day, evenings, overnight and weekend care. Child care requests for children under two years of age are on the rise. Overall, the majority of child care requests are for children under the age of 5.

Commissioner Sokolowski announced that Head Start and Early Head Start had recently received a Partnership grant to partner with child care centers and family day care, creating 68 new slots starting in April for infants and toddlers in high-poverty areas.

Wendy Wendt spoke about Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and the current role played by First 5. She introduced Raechelle Bowlay-Sutton, Local Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, to present on QRIS. Ms. Bowlay-Sutton explained to the Commission that QRIS is a coordinated approach fostering quality early learning opportunities for families. It is being developed in communities across California and the nation as a tool to support the work of building, sustaining and communicating progress related to quality child care and early learning programs. It is also seen as way to standardize how quality in these programs is measured and defined. A local Consortium which includes First 5 and other stakeholder organizations is working to develop and launch QRIS framework/system in San Luis Obispo County.

Ms. Wendt announced a QRIS-related RFP from First 5 CA is due to be released in April.

Public Comment:

There were no comments from the public.

ITEM 5 - Commissioner Comments and Announcements

Commissioner Murphy stated that while we have been focused on preschool age and under 5, we have not heard enough about 0-2, and 0-3. She added that in all of our work, starting the conversation at age 0 is critical.

ITEM 6 - Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

*All materials referred to in these minutes, as well as an audio recording of the meeting, are available at the First 5 SLO County office. Call (805) 781-4058 for information. **The next Commission meeting will be:** March 25, 2015, from 4:00 to 6:30 PM at the County Office of Education Board Room, 3350 Education Drive, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405 Room, 3350 Education Drive, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405*