

Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee

June 5, 2024
2PM via Zoom

MINUTES

- I. In attendance: Kelly Alvarez, DACC; Stacey Black, DCFS; Gina Davis, DACC; Melissa Hollingsworth, DACC; Dr. Penny McConnell; Cindy Montgomery, Crosspoint; Dawn Nasser, DACC; Stacy Pickett, DACC; Stephane Potts, DACC; Lisa Rhodes, Crosspoint; Ami Siefert, DACC; Jenny Spinks, CCRC; Amanda York, CCRC
- II. Old Business: Kelly Alvarez opened with updates
 - a. Enrollment numbers have increased with full-time and part-time students. The program graduated six students in May. The ECACE grant allowed the students to focus on school. Stipends, laptops, books, supplies, and gas provided by the grant helped the students financially and kept them moving through the program. Four students were able to attend the NAYCE Conference in Tennessee this year with grant funds, a fantastic learning experience. Five students also attended the Ooey Gooey Lady workshop at Kaskaskia College, a day filled with hands-on learning opportunities. Kelly offered a Monday night class and a late afternoon class, which allowed the students a better chance to attend classes. Once Kelly started working from home, she collaborated with Melissa Hollingsworth to help students complete the last 8-weeks of classes uninterrupted. The program has seven interns for the summer.
 - b. College Express kept the program busy with 25 students between the morning/afternoon classes. Six of Kelly A. students qualified to go to SKILLS USA to compete this year. One student went on to rank 1 in 10. Kelley Cervantes reported that there are many students interested in the ECE program. They have heard about the classes from other students or older siblings, so the word is out. Kelly A.'s summer Career Camp also generated much interest from 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the surrounding communities. It will be bigger than ever this year with estimated 32-36 students planning to attend.
- III. New Business: Kelly A. turned the meeting over to Dr. Penny McConnell to report on ECACE.
 - a. The ECACE Grant increased the ECE program numbers from a normal 12 students to 42 students. The grant will expire June 30, 2024 and will not continue. DACC has a plan to teach out students in this program providing free tuition, with a set of parameters for the students to stay in the program. Perhaps an increase of funds from the DACC Foundation. Students can also rely on FAFSA and other scholarships to complete their program. The college will also have a set of every book needed for the program available in the library. Kelly Alvarez, Dr. Penny McConnell, Dawn Nasser, and the DACC TRIO program will all be available as on-going support for students.
 - b. CCRC updates reported by Jenny Spinks. The program is in a limbo situation with very little information or updates coming from the State. They are still working to enroll students in the program using FAFSA and other scholarships. Students must jump through some hoops to keep the scholarship through CCRC.

- c. DCFS report from Stacey Black. There are big changes happening within this State agency starting with July 1 a new agency called Department of Early Childhood, which will include DCFS, ISBE, and other entities. This new agency has until 2026 to get things implemented. In the meantime, licensing will still go through DCFS. There are no new regulations at this time, but expect changes in the future with this new agency.
 - d. Melissa Hollingsworth helped with college express the second 8-weeks of spring 2024 semester and the College appreciates her hard work. As a director, she updated the group on the need of new teachers and students to work in the DACC Child Development Center. The center has one intern and they are awaiting a background check for a second intern. Kelly explained that all the students do observations, at the DACC CDC they are under Melissa's guiding hand. Other centers have also opened their doors for students to do observations; this gives students a perspective on how different centers handle different situations.
- IV. Employment Opportunities: Kelly is appreciative of the feedback given by DACC CDC, it helps her to see what areas the students may be lacking and she can adjust her curriculum accordingly. Not many centers were able to attend today's meeting, but Kelly will let them know that if they need anything or can give feedback she has open ears.
- V. Items from the Floor
- a. Stacy Black lamented that Vermilion and Iroquois counties are looking for teachers. Head Start is unable to open because of staffing issues at this time, not for a lack of clients. Many graduates want their own center, but there is ample opportunity for work at other centers.
 - b. Comments from Cindy Montgomery at Crosspoint is that the center is fully staffed and full of children. She emphasized that the students at DACC must have hands-on moments with the children. They need to know that they are the nurturers and understand why the lesson they are teaching the child is important. The 'why' not just the how of teaching.
 - c. Melissa H. put out a plea to advisors concerning the issue with the interns not realizing that they are getting close to internship. The background check can hold up their start date. The full background check (not just name check) needs to be completed a month or two before the internship starts. A plan needs to be in place, perhaps fingerprinting at the beginning of their last semester. Stacy P. has taken over advising for ECE and K-12 Education and has agreed to have conversations with Dr. McConnell.

VI. Next Scheduled Meeting: Spring 2025

Submitted by,

Lisa J. Osborne