

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois**

**Special Joint Meeting November 18, 2015**  
Held at Oak Park River Forest High School  
201 N. Scoville, Oak Park, Illinois

This is a special joint board meeting of the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, the Board of Trustees of the Village of Oak Park, and the Collaboration of Early Childhood Care and Education Governing Board.

Jeff Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Sacks, Felton, O'Connor, Spatz, Datta, Spurlock and Brisben  
Absent: None  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley (7:22 p.m.), and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

Members of the District 200 Board in attendance: President Jeff Weissglass, Vice President Jackie Moore, Thomas Cofsky, Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Sara Dixon Spivy, Superintendent Dr. Steven Isoye and Clerk of the Board Gail Kalmerton

Members of the Village Board in attendance: Colette Lueck, Bob Tucker, Glenn Brewer, Village Clerk Theresa Powell, Mayor Anan Abu-Taleb, and Village Manager Cara Pavlicek

Members of the Collaboration for Early Childhood Development Board in attendance: Chairperson Ann Courter, Treasurer David Weindling, members Carollina Song, Laura Crawford, David Sutman, Penny Williams Wolford, Diana Rosenbrock, and Executive Director Carolyn Newberry Schwartz.

Also present: Craig Williams and Maureen Meter from Parenthesis.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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Craig Williams from Parenthesis reported on what will be happening regarding available support since their contract will be ending with the Collaboration. He shared stories on how the partnership was successful. He shared the concern of closing relationships between the counselors and young mothers. He reported that the organization aggressively raised funds and has a cash reserve of over \$300,000 to ensure continued support. In about two years they will evaluate the program and determine next steps. He reported that this plan does not include a budget for the reporting to the Collaboration, which would cost about \$10,000 - \$15,000 monthly. However, Parenthesis has a research scientist available who is willing to work with the Collaboration at \$5,000 – \$10,000 a month. He asked for a letter of cooperation from the organizations in attendance, and reported that Parenthesis will maintain and add new clients for the next two years while seeking additional funding.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and approved by all boards.

## **GOVERNING BOARD REPORT**

### **Future Meeting Dates and Planned Topics for Discussion**

President Weissglass reported that the IGA Governing Board is scheduled to meeting on February 24, 2016 and May 11, 2016. Both meetings will include a progress report and a financial update. The draft Budget will be shared during the February meeting. The May meeting will include a report on the end of the program year and election of officers will occur.

### **Administrative Report**

Bob Spatz reported that the IGA calls for the governing board to share a financial audit report. Therese O'Neill, the IGA Board Treasurer was not in attendance, and Spatz read the following written statement on her behalf.

“As the administrative District, upon receipt of the semi-annual invoices from the Collaboration for Early Childhood, typically by May 15 for the July 1 payment and November 15 payment, District 97 then invoices itself, District 200 and Village of Oak Park. Each entity deposits such invoiced amount into its segregated account at Community Bank. Representative District 97 works with Community Bank and is informs when all three payments are deposited, and then District 97 authorizes the transfer from the three individual accounts to the Collaboration account and notifies Carolyn Newberry Schwartz. For the 2015-16, the first payments have followed this process and we are awaiting the invoice for the January payment, which if not already in the mail, will be received in about a day or so. We also coordinate a date with the auditors to commence the FY2015 audit. They will be undertaking that shortly.”

## **COLLABORATION ANNUAL REPORT**

David Weindling reported on the financial status of the Collaboration, reviewing the completed audit for the fiscal year 2015. He shared that all books were found to be in good order, and that the staff was well prepared and easy to work with. Weindling reported that nothing unusual was found in the audit, and noted that some programs are restricted for specific purposes.

Weindling noted that the Collaboration will be returning the excess funds (\$77,000) to the public bodies in accordance with the Intergovernmental agreement. He explained that a process had been created to determine the amount that would be retained by the Collaboration and the disposition of the extra funds.

Interest was expressed in understanding why there is an increase in the accounts receivables. A date error (6/30/2014 should be 6/30/2015) was noted on the Fiscal Year Ending portion of the report.

A brief recess was held so that all in attendance could exit the building due to a fire alarm. When the meeting reconvened, Weindling finished by reporting that the database is listed as an \$87,000 asset to the organization.

## **REPORT ON PROGRESS**

Ann Courter updated the boards on the history of the Collaboration Intergovernmental agreement, and reported that the Collaboration for Early Childhood made significant progress toward establishing an integrated early childhood system of high quality services and programs in our community during 2014 -2015.

Courter reported that early identification of developmental delays, coupled with effective intervention, allows children to maximize their learning potential. The American Academy of Pediatricians recommends that all children receive at least three developmental screenings between birth and age three. In our state, only around 28 percent of children receive a screening before kindergarten, and so many enter school with previously unidentified special needs that put them at risk for falling behind academically or socially. But in our community, the Collaboration

## **REPORT ON PROGRESS** (Continued)

has worked hard to establish a developmental screening program, led by Shannon Ellison, and has trained and supported staff at 27 child care centers, preschools, and family child care providers, and three medical practices, to conduct regular screenings for all their patients and students. The results have been impressive, with over 1,000 children screened for developmental issues, and those with concerns were referred for appropriate attention. The Collaboration also provided hearing and vision testing at 36 child care and preschool sites in Oak Park and River Forest, for 1,327 children.

Courter reported that the Collaboration hosted three educational meetings with pediatricians' practices to provide information and resources, including ways to work with parents and care providers to address children's challenging behaviors. The Collaboration also produced and distributed a directory of referral procedures and available local early intervention services for physicians and child care providers, to support them in screening and to help families obtain interventions early, when they will make the biggest difference in the lives of the children they serve.

She noted that an important component of the Collaboration's work is providing parents with information, resources, and supports, so that they can make the best decisions about quality early care for their children. The Collaboration has revamped its Website and expended its use of social media to make a vibrant and useful resource for parents and the community of early learning providers.

Courter reported that a research-based and evidence-informed home visiting program for families with children age prenatal to three years, who confront multiple risks, is a key component of a comprehensive coordinated system of early childhood supports. The long-term stability of this home visiting part of the system is crucial to the success of the jurisdictions' groundbreaking investment.

Over the past two years, the Collaboration's staff worked closely with Parenthesis Family Center to expand home visiting and parenting support programs. As of October 31, 2015, 58 families were engaged in the jurisdiction-funded Parents as Teachers home visiting program. Despite the program growth, and improvements in data collection and quality improvement activities obtained through extensive supports from Collaboration staff and from third parties provided through the Collaboration contract, the Collaboration determined in June, 2015 that it needed to explore options for a different vendor due to Parenthesis's ongoing operational and financial issues. On June 6, 2015, Parenthesis notified the Collaboration that Parenthesis would end its 2014-2015 fiscal year with grave financial difficulties. After careful review the Collaboration's Board determined that it was no longer confident that Parenthesis would be able to reliably provide the infrastructure and support needed for a contract of the magnitude of ours.

The Collaboration recognized that the home visiting program was a foundational piece of the system development for which the Collaboration had contracted with the jurisdictions. In July, 2015, the Collaboration notified Parenthesis and the IGA Governing Board of its concerns and that it was actively seeking a new vendor. The Collaboration terminated its contract with Parenthesis Family Center effective December 31, 2015.

The Collaboration enthusiastically entered into a contract on October 19, 2015, with Easter Seals of Metropolitan Chicago to serve the families being served under the Collaboration's terminated contract with Parenthesis, and to further expand service levels through its Partnering with Parents home-visiting program. Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago has operated a wide range of programs in its Oak Park center on Madison Street since 1968, including medical rehabilitation, workforce development and military and veteran services. Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago's Head Start/Early Head Start services, based in Oak Park, will complement the addition of the

**REPORT ON PROGRESS** (Continued)

Home Visiting Program. Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago’s development department is also located in Oak Park. Erikson Institute, another leader in early childhood education, also shares office space with Easter Seals in Oak Park for their Center for Children and Families. Easter Seals has provided home visiting services for more than 30 years and is recognized as a leader for these services in Illinois. Easter Seals has experience in coordinating outreach and services with other home visiting providers, as well as expertise with research, community collaboration, and a commitment to the use of data for quality improvement. Easter Seals is in the midst of hiring program staff and the Collaboration will support their efforts to establish referral relationships over the next two months so that they are ready to engage families starting in January, 2016.

On November 4, Parenthesis notified the Collaboration that it had obtained significant private funding and intends to continue serving the 58 families they had engaged in home visiting services under the contract with the Collaboration, funded by the jurisdictions. This was unexpected. We are pleased that new funding is being committed to early childhood programs in our community. We celebrate Parenthesis’s new success, and we will work with them to wind down the other aspects of the contract and encourage them to voluntarily provide data from their programs in order to contribute to the measurement of our progress in implementing an integrated system of high quality programs. Collaboration partners across the Villages freely share data as part of their commitment to work toward developing this coordinated system of early childhood supports and measuring its impact.

Hephzibah Children’s Association will now offer Early Head Start for up to 12 children. The Collaboration will work with all three agencies: Parenthesis, Hephzibah, and Easter Seals, to develop a coordinated outreach and intake process through the work of the Home Visiting Task Force to ensure that families meeting risk criteria are placed in the program that best meets their needs. Coordinated intake is a strategy that other communities have utilized effectively, and we will use this approach in our publicly funded preschool outreach and enrollment as well.

The Collaboration will work with Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago to expand the number of families actively engaged in the home visiting program, and ensure that programs funded through other local and federal sources are prioritized for enrollment so that the contract funds are used wisely to expand upon existing programs.

The Collaborations work in building and implementing a unified early childhood database has been reported to the Intergovernmental Agreement Governing Board in May and September, 2015. The Collaboration has worked to build a culture among our early childhood partners that supports data collection through dedicated staff time and use of data for continuous quality improvement and monitoring progress and impact. The Collaboration will issue a second report on benchmarks in January, 2016 and use the data to inform program strategies and practice.

**SPECIAL FOCUS – THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE IN OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST: INCREASING PROGRAM QUALITY AND PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

Diana Rosenbrock reported on the professional achievements of the Collaboration this year. She noted that the professional development programs are coordinated by the Oak Park River Forest Early Childhood professionals, the Professional Development Committee and herself. She noted that research demonstrates that;

- (1) Supported, nurtured teachers have successful classrooms.
- (2) Teacher levels of educational attainment and training are closely associated with high quality programs.

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**SPECIAL FOCUS – THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE IN OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST: INCREASING PROGRAM QUALITY AND PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT** (Continued)

- (3) Teacher education is also associated with the responsive and innovative teaching that greatly benefits children and better prepares them for kindergarten entry.
- (4) Highly trained early childhood professionals who are committed to professional growth are associated with providing high-quality early learning environments and programs.
- (5) The needs of the Oak Park professionals are similar to the rest of the state.

Rosenbrock noted that the Oak Park River Forest Early Childhood Workforce consists of poorly compensated individuals with limited resources to pay for professional development and continuing education. They work in isolated settings with limited, or no access to professional development opportunities. Their schedules are dedicated to caring for children; their hours are long, and rarely include time for planning, individually or as a team. Additionally, they need support decoding the state’s Early Childhood System. She noted that the Collaboration is currently focused on Common Core, Illinois Gateway and ExceleRate Illinois, and reported that there were no face to face trainings supported by the state of Illinois last year.

Rosenbrock reported that the Collaboration aligns their work to the Early Childhood State Systems and requirements. She noted that the Collaboration is an “approved Entity” with Gateways, the early learning accreditation agency for the Illinois Early Childhood Workforce, and that all trainings offered are registry approved and align with state Professional Development Framework.

ExceleRate Illinois encourages early learning providers to participate in ExceleRate, which is the state’s continuous quality rating improvement system. The Collaboration offers coaching on quality improvement and how to effectively engage in ExceleRate. She noted that all of the trainings align with the professional requirements that staff need to enable their sites to advance along the continuum of quality criteria.

Additionally, the Collaboration continues to offer career development advising to early childhood staff in all types of programs around, credentials, degrees and certificates, professional development; quality trainings (Gateways Registry approved). They offer an annual symposium and provide leadership coaching to center directors and the family child care providers.

Rosenbrock reported that so far this year, 10 trainings have been offers. She noted that many of the trainings are offered in the evenings and on Saturday mornings to accommodate their needs. They address the struggles and challenges, offer guidance, address behavior issues, and getting to know and trust state programs and systems.

Newberry Schwartz reported that 71 percent of the directors and 54 percent of the teachers have received more than the state requirements for professional development. She noted that 62 percent of the teachers are receiving 20 hours or more of training which is above the state standard of 15 percent. This places these teachers in the gold level of standards.

**CALL TO THE BOARD – ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND TOPICS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Collaboration was acknowledged for sharing their detailed reports and for their success through this turbulent year. It was noted that their efforts are a model for the country.

CALL TO THE BOARD – ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND TOPICS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

**CALL TO THE BOARD – ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND TOPICS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS** (Continued)

Interest was expressed in seeing the first collaborative cohorts enter the school system, and extending the data sharing to include the high school. Interest was expressed in participation from District 90. Interest was expressed in knowing what is being done to reach the neediest families, hearing more about is the developmental delay screening process, and in sharing of data with the non-unit partner schools.

The boards were reminded that this is a five year contract that is only two years away from renewal. The group was reminded that this is a unique undertaking and changes may need to be made to the Intergovernmental agreement over time.

It was noted that District 97 is working with District 90, District 200, and the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) to support a data equity bill. District 97 is also working with lobbyists on the wording of the bill. It was noted that a second resolution exists that would allow local collaborations to build a birth to 20 year old longitudinal database. It was noted that District 97 and the Collaboration submitted a presentation proposal to the Joint School Board Conference last year, but was not selected to participate. They will try again next year.

It was reported that the CLAIM committee met with Senator Harmon and he requested additional information regarding the data sharing needs. Interest was expressed in knowing how District 97 can support the Collaboration, and in reviewing the data in three – five years to identify what progress has been made in the categories of vocabulary in the core curriculum. Interest was expressed in knowing what the challenges are and what it will take to be successful. Additionally, interest was expressed in making inroads with other taxing bodies.

Dr. Kelley applauded the work of the Collaboration and noted that the district continues to articulate with the high school regarding data sharing.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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There being no further business to conduct, President Gates declared the meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday, December 1, 2015 beginning at 7 p.m. at the Administration building located at 970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois.

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Board President

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Board Secretary