DECC Members: Leslie Newman, Children & Families First; Dr. Michelle Shaivitz, deayc; Dr. Kimberly Krzanowski, Office of Early Learning; Gabriela Kejner, Department of Health and Social Services; Madeleine Bayard, Rodel; Heidi Beck, Head Start Association of Delaware; Julie Johnson, Tender Loving Kare; Elizabeth Ritchie, Delaware Technical Community College

DECC Ex-officio Members: Betty Gail Timm, Office of Child Care Licensing; Mary Moor, Division of Public Health; Martha Buell, University of Delaware; Lee Pachter, Christiana Care

Attendees: Lisa Lalama, Wilmington Montessori; Debbie Taylor, Office of Early Learning; Lynn Kelley, Children & Families First; Janet Wurtzel, Division of Libraries; Candice Brown, Let’s Play; Lisa Henry, Division of Public Health; Amber Shelton, Office of Early Learning; Laura Lessard, University of Delaware; Diane Frentzel, Delaware Readiness Teams; Dawn Alexander, Colonial School District; Jamie Schneider, deayc; Sybil Baker, GACEC; Nicole Kurz-McDowell, Caesar Rodney School District; Mary Nash Wilson, Office of Management and Budget; Caitlin Gleason, Office of Early Learning; Tina Shockley, Office of Early Learning; Daphne Evans, Christina Cultural Center; Jamie Walko, Contractor; Regina Sidney-Brown, Delaware Afterschool Network; Mary Nash Wilson, Office of Management and Budget; Dr. Tanya Robinson, Delaware Early Childhood Center; Fiona Vivar, Office of Early Learning; Linda Zankowsky, University of Delaware; Lillian McCuen, EdNet; Kristy Sheffler, University of Delaware; Lucinda Ross, St. Michael’s; Cindy Brown, Office of Early Learning; Doreen Brown, Easter Seals; Jill Nix, Delaware Readiness Teams; Molly Magarik, Department of Health and Social Services; John Hulse, Department of Education; Kirsten Olson, Children and Families First; Rep. Frank Cooke; Katy Semmel, Data Service Center; James Callaway, Data Service Center; Bill Doolittle, Advocate; John Fisher-Klein, Office of Early Learning; Tam Defer, DCL-GIFT; Julie Beebe, PolyTech; Melanie Thomas-Price, A Leap of Faith; Meedra Surratte; PIC of DE; Donna Snyder-White, Delaware 211; Sam Beard, GIFT; Susan Arande, Wilmington University
Welcome/Call to Order/Approve Minutes
Madeleine Bayard called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. and welcomed Representative Franklin Cooke, as this month’s meeting is being held in his district. She noted that the focus of today’s meeting would be on the Strategic Plan. She called for any changes to the November meeting minutes. There was a request to change a word on page two of the minutes. The question was captured as “Will all licensed programs remain in Delaware Stars?” It should have been captured as “Will all licensed programs be required to participate in De Stars?” The Chair noted the change would be made. The Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes with the change. The motion was approved by Elizabeth Ritchie and Leslie Newman, and passed unanimously.

The Chair noted that the November 19 subcommittee meeting minutes were sent out, and these focused on the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, which is supported by the federal PDG grant, and include approaches that we will look at today.

Next, the Chair introduced a new ex-officio member, Lee Pachter, who works with Christiana Care. Lee has extensive experience with pediatrics, and we welcome him to the Council.

There was an update on governance, which reminded everyone that the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) will be coming under the Department of Education (DOE) (in the Office of Early Learning) on July 1, 2020. This is a complicated process, but all involved are committed to working through logistics and the impact this will have on both agencies and employees.

Molly Magarik clarified that the governance team is focused on moving the staff, not dictating policies, one path forward or a specific vision. Specific policy work will be done through the strategic planning and future work with partners.

DHSS will be moving the child care quality dollars (part of a federal block grant) of about $800,000 – 900,000, over to DOE to manage. These are federal dollars so it will not show up in the Governor’s Recommended Budget. DHSS will continue to update the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and work with federal partners so there are no delays with a July 1 transfer of funds. The amount of the quality dollars is $2.26 million (federal FY19), but the amount under contract with DHSS is about $803,000.

It was asked, “Given the OCCL move, will the Delaware Stars Redesign timeline be modified?”

John Fisher-Klein responded that he is working with the strategic planning team to ensure DE Stars revisions and the Strategic Plan are aligned. They are working on the structural revision of DE Stars and focusing on standards. DOE does anticipate there will be some adjustments to the timeline, but a new timeline has not been determined yet. Final recommendations from the strategic plan are set for March 2020 and there will be a road test (piloting) with programs over the summer. When an adjustment is made to the timeline, it will be posted on the Delaware Stars website.

It was asked, “Is DOE advocating that all programs participate in DE Stars?” A decision on this has not been made yet, however this will be considered during strategic planning
and Stars redesign discussions. The group discussed the need for a discussion to include more stakeholders and the potential in the future for the Council to take a position. Members and the Chair identified the complex policy decisions to be considered before this decision would be made. Some participants advocated that an official position and vote by the DECC be made/taken.

Next, Caitlin Gleason noted that today’s discussion on the strategic approaches may provide lots of ways to look at these decisions. She suggested the best way to spend this time is to think holistically across all programs, and use the strategic plan to look at decision points together.

Next, Mary Nash Wilson noted the Governor’s recommended budget is being developed with input from briefings with state agencies on their funding priorities. There is special consideration this year due to the move of OCCL to ensure that this budget includes protections for all employees. She also noted that there will be a consideration for a $2 million increase for ECAP and a separate increase for purchase of care in the DHSS budget. The budget will be released January 30, 2020.

Molly noted that DHSS was directed to take a look at provider rates and better understand the position of providers. The Joint Finance Committee of the General Assembly kicked off a study last fall to better understand all providers’ positions, including which providers are being impacted, their rates, how rates were determined and last time rates were updated. For Purchase of Care, the current approach is the market study (the federal government requires a study to understand costs, and there is flexibility about what approach states can take). The study ends in March. We believe the study will show that DHSS has a lot of work to do that will likely require more than one fiscal year to implement. It may involve a conversation about a phase-in approach of rates/increase of rates. One DECC member asked if there is room to change or does the federal government require Delaware to measure costs and pay rates at a specific percentage. Molly indicated that no the federal government doesn’t mandate our rate. This would be on the table for discussion.

Next, Molly spoke about DHSS’s own ongoing strategic planning initiative, which is being done as part of the statewide Governmental Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) effort. While they have received a great deal of input, which has been used to develop the plan’s foundation, which can be viewed here (see top item), they want to reach out at this time for public feedback. She invited the DECC members and attendees to provide feedback on both the plan thus far and any suggestions about specific strategies that should be put into place to meet the plan’s goals and objectives. Feedback can be sent via email to: DHSS_TownHall@delaware.gov. Final strategic plan recommendations are expected in February 2020.

A large part of the meeting was devoted to work on the Early Learning Strategic Plan. Caitlin Gleason and the EY Team provided a presentation of strategic approaches that included a project scope of the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, timeline, guiding principles, vision, various approaches, unified governance model, access to programs and services, etc.
Caitlin and the EY Team engaged the audience to provide feedback electronically to several recommended strategic approaches that have been developed to date in order to get the Council’s feedback.

The next steps are to continue to receive feedback from various stakeholder groups in the next few weeks, including a discussion about including the full 0-8 age span (not just 0-5). In January, the feedback received will continue to be synthesize and finalized in a draft plan.

Jamie Schneider of deaeyc Board announced Advocacy March 31 in Dover and shared a handout with more information, including a link to http://bit.ly/ECEAdvocacy to sign up. Jamie can be contacted at eceadvocacyde@eecde.org.

No other business was conducted. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.