The IRMC Extended Learning Opportunities Subcommittee is established to oversee coordination, research, and planning statewide for before and after school and summer learning programs for school-age children and advise the General Assembly and the Governor.

Attendees: Candice Buchanan, Dan Shelton, Bill Doolittle, Regina Sidney-Brown, Meredith Seitz, Tiyana Prince, Yolanda Rushdan, Tina Shockley, Connie Merlet, Kerry Stahl, Michele Savage, Pat Scruggs, Teresita Cuevas

The Chair started the third meeting of the Extended Learning Opportunities Subcommittee at 5:07 p.m. and welcomed all members. All members introduced themselves. The Chair’s Presentation was shown on the smartboard.

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2020 meeting was made by Bill Doolittle and seconded by Dan Shelton. Kerry Stahl abstained from voting as she did not attend the last meeting. All other present members were in favor of approving the minutes and the motion carried. The Chair called for public comment and there was none.

Regina Sidney-Brown of the Delaware Afterschool Network (DEAN) began the evening with a video that provided members with perspective on the afterschool services DEAN provides and how DEAN helps young people by providing high quality learning opportunities. Her presentation about the Delaware Afterschool Network included best practices, strategies, partnerships, activities, accomplishments and next steps. She provided additional handouts (handout #1 and handout #2), as well as the 2018 Data Project Report which exemplifies how DEAN is meeting the needs of children in eight promise communities in Delaware.

The Chair noted that key findings, similar to the ones found in the DEAN reports, can also be found in the UD Report entitled, “The Landscape of Extended Learning in Delaware.” The Chair noted this report represented a summary of work that was requested by the State’s Office of Management and Budget in response to a recommendation made in the Statewide Afterschool Initiative Learning (SAIL) Task Force. The Chair highlighted key findings of the report and areas for potential state action which can be found on pages five through eight of the Chair’s Presentation. She asked all members of the subcommittee to review the entire report before the next meeting (March 17, 2020). Specifically, she encouraged members to look at the funding sources in the UD Report and DEAN’s reports as this is vital to our work.
Next, the Chair noted that Denise Stouffer provided a publication from the University of Maine for everyone’s consideration entitled, “Successful Strategies for Extended Learning Opportunities.” The Chair encouraged everyone to review this document as well prior to our next meeting.

There was group discussion about transportation and whether the subcommittee will address that as part of its recommendations. Dan Shelton noted that there used to be money set aside for school based afterschool programs, of which typically about 70% was used for transportation. It was proposed that charters should return money they do not use for transportation and this could help fund afterschool programs. While reconsidering allocations could be a recommendation, it is difficult to make a reality. It was also suggested that DART transportation be considered for afterschool programs, though some members noted this has its limitations as well, especially in the southern part of the state. Members tended to think we should include transportation as that is needed for extended learning programs to be successful. Many noted that the biggest hurdle is getting kids to and from the extended learning program.

The group was reminded that there is also a need for before school programs/care, not just after school programs. It was noted that the Delaware Early Childhood Council would focus on the before care, and that maybe we need to better define “before care” and “out of school.”

It was noted that Delaware is behind on providing inclusive programs and there is a definitive gap in programs for students who need specialized services. DEAN noted that it does work with a company called Embrace which provides such service. While students with disabilities do work well in after school programs, there are some programs that are set in restrictive settings that may not be able to serve students with disabilities. Members of the group confirmed that teachers and nurses do stay in afterschool programs if needed. The group agreed to consider this issue going forward.

In Other Business, members reviewed the draft statement for the IRMC Annual Report regarding the work of the subcommittee thus far. Everyone agreed that it captured the work of the ELOS to date. Bill Doolittle motioned to approve the statement, and Regina Sidney-Brown seconded the nomination. Dan Shelton noted that the items should all be bullet format in the final version. All members voted in favor of the IRMC Draft Statement, and the motion carried.

It was determined that our Out of School Time Best Practices Document, Terms Document and all other shared documents and researched reports will be available on or at https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/4116, or here.

As for next steps, the Chair and members discussed a feasible refined deadline for coming up with and working on a draft of program standards which can ultimately be
shared with others. April was proposed as a good timeline to have a working draft available for discussion.

The Chair asked everyone to consider being assigned two or three areas that they carefully review and bring back to the group. While some members cautioned that they may not know enough about a specific area to be able to do a thorough review, others were fine with this approach. Again, the group wanted to be sure that definitions were concise and agreed upon before being asked to thoroughly do a review of other materials.

Based on the feedback provided by members an updated strategy will be presented at the next meeting. The Chair anticipates we will work from a document that we can talk about in order to create ideal standards and policy. We can then look at issues individually and note challenges with those standards and policies. The goal is to have a document we can share publicly at some point.

It was noted that a lot of current events like the Delaware Stars Redesign and the change in governance (Office of Child Care Licensing moving to the Department of Education) may impact our eventual recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.