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, Denise Stouffer, Rebecca Feathers, Zaida Guarjardo, Rosalia Martinez, Al Cavalier

The Chair started the second meeting of the Extended Learning Opportunities Subcommittee at 5:08 p.m. and welcomed all members. All members introduced themselves.

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 meeting was made by Bill Doolittle and seconded by Regina Sidney-Brown, with Denise Stouffer and Rebecca Feathers abstaining from the vote as they were not at the November 21, 2019 meeting. All members were in favor of approving the minutes, and the motion carried.

Tina Shockley provided an overview of the IRMC meeting that occurred on January 15, 2019. Minutes of that meeting can be found here.

The Chair’s Presentation outlined items to be covered during the meeting including the scope of work, ELOS Terms, guest speaker considerations, five key focus areas, national and local resources for best practices for extended learning programs and services, as well as the duties of the subcommittee.

She noted that we have an identified target population of school-age children and suggested using the federal definition (see ELOS Terms), which focuses on children between 4 and 12 years old. The group discussed the definition, considering the definition that the Office of Child Care Licensing uses, which is children who have started kindergarten – based on grade not age. The age of 12 years typically is when such services end, although some members wanted to extend the definition to include students up to the time they graduate (and potentially until age 22 if in need of special education services). For its purposes, the group is considering the following as the definition of School Age: Kindergarten to age 12 or until graduation for those students who have have special needs and are still receiving services. The Chair reviewed the terms and definitions currently listed and encouraged everyone to add/edit definitions in the chart.
Next, the Chair called for any suggestions for guest speakers to present at future meetings. She noted that we had referenced Delaware Afterschool Network doing a presentation. Others suggested speakers are someone from the Delaware Early Childhood Council, Caitlin Gleason who is leading the PDG/Strategic Plan work, someone who works with before/after school programs in a high school, someone from the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) mission (as they did a lot of work in this area), and having someone from Sussex County, perhaps the Boys and Girls Club of Delaware as they provide statewide services.

A graphic of existing before/after school program categories was suggested as well as reviewing the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration’s Extended Learning Opportunities in Delaware report. Member Regina Sidney-Brown of the Delaware Afterschool Network (DEAN) indicated that DEAN worked with United Way and University of Delaware to do an environmental scan of eight promise communities of afterschool programs - where they are, program category, hours available, time frame (summer/weekends), etc. The Chair referenced another recent report on summer programming for Wilmington youth that was provided for the Governor. The report is not yet publicly available but it does provide characteristics of high quality summer learning programs that it pulled from the RAND corporation and the Wallace Foundation. Once available, the report will be shared with the subcommittee.

Members indicated that “funding” will be another important definition. As we know, services follow the dollars so the group will need to understand how programs define services, how they are funded and how programs are helping families. Member Bill Doolittle referenced an excerpt from the Delaware Equity Funding Collaborative Technical Report that indicates a cost of $35 million per year to implement statewide best practices (which does not include transportation costs). It was suggested that we find out over the next year how some of the afterschool programs are funded.

The Chair also suggested the group create a statement for the IRMC Annual Report. It was suggested that because of the short time before this is due, and the fact that we will not be having any recommendations funded this fiscal year, that we identify one non-funding related item (from the top five key focus areas) as the focus of our statement. The Chair will provide a suggested statement to be voted on by members at the February meeting.

One member suggested we also look at “impact,” specifically how to define it and how programs are measuring it. The Chair asked if this data is being captured anywhere? Data seems to be minimal to none. Discussion indicated that when you look at national programs, they come with national tools, but local afterschool programs may be limited in terms of capacity, therefore measuring may be difficult. Zaida Guajardo of the Boys and Girls Club, a local program, noted she would be happy to share their best practices.

The Chair came back to the five key focus areas and asked which of these the group wanted to focus on for this coming year. There was discussion around the development of program standards and federal dollars typically going to fund structured
programs. Drop in centers are a safe place, but are not necessarily structured programs due to lack of funding. For example, the use of 21st Century funds is very structured, but this can also limit viability.

The Chair brought up the Wallace Foundation which is where some of the SAIL Report recommendations originated. She noted some of the various summer programs (see page four of the Chair’s Presentation). She suggested we have a document like this for Delaware - a resource for recommended best practices. We will need to look at the best practices and present them to our Delaware partners. There are folks out there who have done the leg work for us.

Someone suggested looking at the Region III work. The group agreed we will want to look at that so we know where and what we are.

The Chair continued to have the group think about the work they want to accomplish in this first year (and what work we can report out on in next year’s IRMC Annual Report) based on the five key focus areas. She reminded the group we need to find out what is working in the field, and then we need to have recommendations for standards and funding going forward.

Ultimately, the group agreed that the scope and goal for this year is to focus on the five key focus areas:
- Delaware Best Practices Document
- Best Practices Policy Recommendations
- Develop Program standards and funding protocols
- Establish standards for program performance and evaluation
- Recommendations regarding coordination of services

The group also agreed with the duties of the ELOS Subcommittee (see page 5 of the Chair’s Presentation).

Further discussion was around (3) Establish standards for program performance and evaluation. It was asked do we know what has worked or not worked in Delaware. We will find that out through the researching national and local trends and best practices.

The Chair suggested assigning a lead for each item, and/or having shared documents for discussion.

One member asked if there is any state with before/after care program policies that are executing them well. Again, research is needed, but we do believe it will yield the answer.

The group decided that for our next meeting, they would start looking at the first couple of key focus areas, those being (1) performance and evaluation and (2) program best practices. They will also continue to add to the ELOS Terms document. A shared Best
Practices Document will be provided to members so they can start entering best practices experiences so we can see overlap, share experiences and knowledge, etc. Additionally, Regina Brown will look into the national research and local trends piece. Her organization has this in a data project report. The group would also look at the Extended Learning Opportunities in Delaware report, and determine what other states are doing.

For next month the group will also try to narrow its focus to ensure we can work on all the five key areas.

Chair noted that we will revisit the committee meeting schedule, given the fact that we may have some new members join the subcommittee.

The Chair called for public comment but there was none. The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.