



**Maryland Family Engagement Coalition**  
**Monday, April 16, 2018**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:** Amy Beal, Amanda Courie, William Dixon, Julie Dobies, Evelyn English, Nancy Garcia, Mary Gunning, Jacqueline Grant, Loretta Hoepfner, Robin Hopkins, Karina Hudack, Cyndi La Marca Lessner, Melanie Martin, Kia McLeod, Marjorie Miles, Nora Morales, Barbara Scherr, Chris Peusch, Tenaeya Rankin, Simon Russell, Carrie Sanders, Karyn Spellman, Dorothy Stoltz, Chris Swanson

- **The 2018 Maryland Family Engagement Summit:** Robin Hopkins announced the event date for the 2018 Maryland Family Engagement Summit: Thursday, July 26 at the Maritime Institute Conference Center in Linthicum, MD from 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.
  - This year's focus will be on parent leadership, and social and emotional learning.
  - The keynote speaker will be Joyce Epstein. Her School-Family-Community Partnership Model is an influential model in parent involvement research.
  - The 2018 Maryland Family Engagement Summit committee finished reviewing the proposals. The following workshops were selected.
    1. Workshop A: It Takes a Village: Understanding Millennials and Gen Xers as Parents (Lacey Tsonis)
    2. Workshop B: Family Services Head Start Policy Council (Jody Burghardt)
    3. Workshop C: Parent University Program (Britney Pitts)
    4. Workshop D: Building High-Impact Culturally Responsive Family, School, & Community Engagement (Karmen Rouland)
    5. Workshop E: The Importance of Culturally, Diverse Voices in Educational Settings/Utilizing Immigrant Parent Leaders (Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez and Laura Gardner)
    6. Workshop F: Pre-k Suspension and Expulsion (Mike Muempfler)
    7. Workshop G: Promote Collective Capacity in Family Engagement with Technology (Krista Respass/Conni Strittmeyer)
  - More details are coming.
  
- **2018 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Regional Leadership Symposium:** Karina Hudack gave a brief overview of the KRA Symposium.

- The MSDE Division of Early Childhood Assistant State Superintendent Steven Hicks and the Office of Child Care Director Jennifer A. Nizer are currently hosting the 2018 KRA Regional Leadership Symposium.
  - On April 3, the KRA Symposium was held at Wor-Wic Community College for Caroline, Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties.
  - On April 4, the KRA Symposium was held at Chesapeake College for Anne Arundel, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties.
  - The next KRA Symposium will be held April 17 at the Adelphi Judy P. Hoyer Family Learning Center for Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties.
  - There are two more symposiums being held May 15 at Johns Hopkins University/Center for Technology in Education (CTE) in Columbia and May 23 at the Board of Education in Washington County. For more information, please send an e-mail to Karina Hudack.
  
- **Kellogg Grant:** Cyndi La Marca Lessner, Robin Hopkins, Dorothy Stoltz, and Chris Swanson provided Kellogg grant updates.
  - Robin Hopkins provided an update on the Parent Leadership Learning Party training (PLLP). Ready At Five has 40 statewide MOUs for PLLPs and general LPs. The organization received additional funding for Montgomery County, Prince George's County and the Baltimore Judy Centers. Ready Rosie continues to show growth.
  - Dorothy Stoltz provided an overview of the Maryland libraries that are in the midst of year two for the MSDE Child Care Division funding to support family engagement goals of the Kellogg initiative. Half of the 24 library systems participated in year one. The remaining 12 library systems are currently implementing family engagement projects, such as:
    1. Families from a homeless shelter will join a family engagement evening at Wicomico County library for fun, surprises and lots of ideas/manipulatives on how parents can work with their children to improve school performance.
    2. Early literacy transition-to-school backpacks are being developed for circulation at Washington County library. The library will be adding STEM educational materials, such as "first microscope," to the Early Learning Center.
    3. Kent County library will create Laptime Story Kits using a combination of board books, early childhood puzzles and puppets. Each kit will contain two to three board books, a puppet and wooden puzzle or nesting blocks.
  - Cyndi La Marca Lessner provided an update on the Kellogg grant. The Kellogg grant has been extended until 2019, and received additional funding to support the Family Engagement Consortium.
  - Chris Swanson provided an update on the MSDE Division of Early Childhood Maryland EXCELS/JHU CTE participation in the 2018 Bmore Healthy Expo. The event was held March 3rd at the Baltimore Convention Center. Maryland EXCELS distributed a variety of materials to parents and families. Also, Maryland EXCELS is turning five this year. Please

reach out to Chris Swanson for any ideas on how we can create more opportunities to collaborate with the community.

- **The Maryland Family Engagement Coalition:** Robin Hopkins facilitated a vote that approved the Maryland Family Engagement Bylaws. Cyndi La Marca Lessner requested recommendations for the Steering Committee.
  - We are looking for six to eight organizations to serve on our Steering Committee.
  - The Steering Committee members should represent family-serving organizations from across the state with an extensive focus on family engagement as well as varying areas of expertise or influence, such as:
    - Community Based Organizations
    - Consultants
    - Corporate
    - Education Associations
    - Higher Education
    - Families
    - School Districts
    - School Boards
    - State Government
  - We have recommendations for two groups: Maryland Coalition of Families and MELLFIN.
  - Please forward your recommendations to either Kia McLeod or Cyndi La Marca Lessner.

**Q:** Chris Peuch asked if all the steering committee members are non-members of this group?

**A:** Yes. The steering committee will include a member of the Early Childhood Family Engagement Coalition but the rest of the members will be from other family serving groups or organizations. Some recommendations include The Maryland Coalition of Families, MELLFIN and the internal FACE team.

**A:** Barbara Scherr explained that the FACE team is responsible for overseeing the state family engagement plan.

**Steering Committee Recommendations:**

1. Maryland Coalition of Families
2. FACE team
3. MELLFIN
4. Social Services
5. The Parents Place of Maryland

- **Maryland Families Engage (new Hub community website):** Chris Swanson presented an alpha version of the new website.
  - The new Hub community website was developed to speak to families, professionals and leaders.
  - Our timeline is to have a soft launch during the end of June, which will not be advertised.
  - The “Official” Launch will be Thursday, July 26 during the 2018 Family Engagement Summit.
  - The “Home” page features a quick and easy navigation, and was developed for user engagement.
  - The site navigation breaks down into the following:
    - Resources
    - Events
    - News
    - News
    - Maryland Family Engagement Toolkit and Framework
    - About us
  - You can sign up for the e-newsletter, *The Toolkit “In Action”* that Kia distributes. Our goal is to ensure you are receiving the information and sharing it with your constituencies.
  - We are focused on conveying a message of educational change.
  - How do we encourage families to tell their stories? How do they communicate with us? We’re not there yet—need to figure out and make this clear.

**Q:** Chris Peusch asked if there will be separate options for parents/families like EXCELS?

**A:** Right now, there’s not enough content to make it worthwhile.

**A:** Cyndi La Marca Lessner explained that the framework is geared toward professionals and providers, who are overwhelmed with information. This is a one-stop shop. We are looking to build out the website as we grow. Consumer Education website can possibly be merged with this site too. Issues like suspension and expulsion, illegal child care—those issues will look different to professionals and parents. We need to make sure we’re doing this strategically.

**A:** Kia McLeod explained that the messaging behind the website is that it’s a partnership. The way that the website is currently structured is that it’s a partnership. The Resources page will have topics broken down that focus on both parents and providers, examples include: life and community events. Any life events related to young children will include resources for providers, parents and families. We want to make sure everyone has access to the same information.

**Q:** Will there be a translation function?

**A:** It will be built into the browser. Not natively translated.

**Q:** Dorothy Stoltz wondered if we could link to stories from places like the Baltimore Sun?

**A:** We will have an editorial process in place. Hopefully, some of the Coalition members will volunteer. However, we're not in control of content and accessibility, so we need to be mindful of what we link to.

**Q:** Jacqueline Grant asked if the website will be mobile optimized?

**A:** Yes, the soft launch is when we will have time to get more feedback from users, i.e., if it works on a mobile or iPad.

**Q:** Julie Dobies asked if there will be a language path?

**A:** Yes, it is based on Google translate. They translate for up to 85 percent accuracy with common syntax errors. The website also has a feature to "add a resource" with an editorial team to review and see if this is aligned with our message. CTE has an editorial team to review submitted content and this is an opportunity for consumers to contribute. We have more resources coming up and that will be the trend we expect after the website is launched. On the "News" tab, there's another opportunity for users to submit and contribute news and events. The editorial team will have to define whether it is a reliable source, i.e. if there is a story.

**Q:** Robin Hopkins asked if there will be an automated system to ensure the hyperlinks are working correctly?

**A:** Yes, we have a process in place internally at CTE.

**Q:** Barbara Scherr asked if the website will be for all families or all ages?

**A:** We want to include all families; but we do not want to lose our focus. One of the groups involved is NAFSCE and some of the conversations are to maintain the early childhood focus; while reaching out to our partners. We are currently looking into this.

**Q:** Barbara Scherr explained that families have kids of all ages and we don't want to lose opportunities to share with the consumer.

**A:** We can have a screen focused on content we are producing for all kids and start closing those gaps with families. We are also building the website with this focus to provide an opportunity for other states to use this resource.

**Q:** Chris Peusch asked if families and professionals are looking for childcare, is there going to be a link for MFN LOCATE or resources for children with special needs? How do we connect the dots?

**A:** I think we need to find a strategic concept at the state level as to how we are going to connect this information. This might be part of the consumer education that we are currently discussing.

## The “EVENTS” page:

**Q:** Chris Peusch asked if the site will allow users to add an event into their mobile or e-mail to a calendar?

**A:** We need to give the ability for users to filter information.

**Q:** Loretta Hoepfner suggested we do not segregate our audiences.

**Q:** Dorothy Stoltz asked if we could use geomapping for events?

**A:** We want to add the opportunity for users to share the events listed on the website into social media.

## Recommendations:

1. Divide up by parents and professionals so users don't get lost, maybe by icons? Photos?
2. Family activity page
3. Professional development page
4. On EVENT submission form: Who is the audience? (families, providers, age range)
5. Maybe not divide by page? There's probably a lot of overlap. This is where the icons are useful.

- **The Maryland Family Engagement Coalition 2018 Priorities:** Cyndi La Marca Lessner divided the members into three workgroups to review the list of priorities (from December 18 meeting brainstorming workgroups) and determine low cost/no cost options for the Coalition.

### **1. Promote Family Engagement**

- Text Messaging: Create Tips for Parents “Take 15”

Low cost – program is already developed. Needs to be disseminated differently.

- Social Media Toolkit

Low– Mid cost

- a. Prioritize Connecting to Families
- b. Inform school systems of effective ways to engage families.
- c. Collaborate with the Judy Centers, local early childhood programs and public schools
- d. “The Elevator Pitch” — each coalition member commits to “pitching” stakeholders using prepared elevator pitches.

- The Maryland Families Engage Website

High cost

### **2. Training and Resources**

- MSDE Online Family Engagement Training

Free and Receive CEUs

- a. Viewed module from mobile phone and it's difficult to access (time consuming). An account must be created and the profile is lengthy with lots of required questions. Is there a way to reduce some of this information?

- Better promote what is currently available

High cost

- Family Engagement Toolkit Training—MFN, Doctors, Hospitals, Realtors

- a. Toolkit-promote and create a provider module or in person trainings. (MFN is currently developing Toolkit training.) Use Kellogg funds for larger roll out. Conduct trainings for local ECACs.
- b. Determine who else has or needs the Toolkit?
- c. Public Service Announcements for family engagement and child care (what is legal child care?). Prince George's County has a PSA, "Who is watching your child?" Montgomery is launching a campaign. Statewide campaign is needed with one consistent message.
- ReadyRosie  
High cost
- Learning Parties  
Mid-High cost

### 3. Support Local Efforts for Family Engagement

- a. Most districts know how to engage families early, but then once they are in elementary school engagement drops off.
- b. How does the Coalition work with local LEA family engagement representatives to help staff value the "parent voice" in their child's education?
- c. How do we help LEAs reach hard-to-reach families (homeless, low-income, ELs, fathers, etc.)?
- d. How do we help LEAs ensure that family engagement doesn't drop off after kindergarten?
- e. How do we distribute family engagement materials and/or communications to school systems, Maryland librarian associations and/or churches?
- f. Transitions (early childhood to kindergarten programs, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools)
- Pursue potential of local community resources through public libraries and/or other groups such as churches, parks and recreation departments, and pediatrics as a clearinghouse or conduit to families.

Low-High cost (depends on the pre-determined materials and/or communications)

- a. Loretta Hoepfner will distribute pre-determined materials and/or communications to physicians who can pass them on to parents and families.
- Work with public schools to promote understanding of family engagement—particularly in moving from pre-school into K-12, how it evolves through school career.

Low-High cost (depends on the pre-determined materials and/or communications)

- b. Connect with family engagement specialist for each jurisdiction to help support and increase understanding and awareness of the state's family engagement initiatives.

- **Future Meetings** - 3rd Monday - every other month from 1 - 3:30 p.m.
  - Monday, June 18, 2018