
New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) Steering Committee Meeting

Agenda for Children
8300 Earhart Blvd. Ste. 201
New Orleans, LA 70118
September 3, 2015
11:30am

Committee Members in Attendance: Joyce Ridgeway, Kate Mehok, Carole Elliot, Dr. Keith Liederman, Maria Blanco, Superintendent Patrick Dobard, Sonjia Joseph, Kristi Givens, Dr. Anthony Recasner

Committee Members in Absence: Thelma French (Adrian Todd attended as non-voting proxy) and Superintendent Henderson Lewis (Sean Perkins attended as non-voting proxy)

At 11:38, the meeting was called to order by Dr. Anthony Recasner

Key Points from Coordinated Enrollment Framework

- Superintendent Dobard expressed that the Coordinated Enrollment Framework is a clear and transparent process that will help serve the most vulnerable children. He recognized the hard work of Kristen Illarmo and those who had participated in the working groups to inform the process. Kate Mehok stated that process seems very communicative and should work well for parents.

Presentations

- 2015-16 NOEEN CLASS Observations—Elizabeth Kief
 - As a community network, NOEEN is required to conduct CLASS observations in every toddler and preschool classroom in publicly funded programs in Orleans Parish. All classrooms will be observed by the network twice a year—once in the fall and once in the spring. The fall observation window is from September to December 15th and the spring observation window is from January 1st to May 15th. Teachstone (the company that provides training, materials and oversight related to the CLASS tool) recommends having children in the classroom for at least one month before starting observations.
 - NOEEN’s original plan to complete the required observations called for hiring a cadre of contracted observers and utilizing Agenda for Children staff. One of the primary reasons the network decided to utilize contracted observers was that the Department of Education had required networks to demonstrate that programs minimized conflict of interest as much as possible in the original application for Lead Agency and defined “conflict of interest” in such a way that basically prevented providers from completing their own observations. In the interim, the Department revised its definition of a conflict of interest so that, as long as an observer is not an immediate family member of a program administrator or of someone who provides technical assistance in that

classroom, they can conduct the observation. This means that program directors and principals (if they are CLASS reliable) can now observe their own programs without violating the State's definition of conflict of interest.

- If directors or administrators observe their own programs, NOEEN can verify that they are accurately scored through the quality control measures already in place—the Picard Center (third party) is conducting observations in a portion of the classrooms in each network to provide a completely neutral “control” observations and 10% of classes will be double coded by the network, meaning that two observers will observe a classroom at the same time so that scores can be compared and verified for accuracy.

Key Points, Questions, and Concern from NOEEN CLASS Observation Presentation

- Dr. Keith Liederman stated his worries over perceived bias and that we should try to attempt to conduct the observations the way we had done in the past by utilizing observers within the network, but having them observe different program types from their own (e.g. a Head Start director would assess a school or center-based program). Sonjia Joseph stated that she would prefer an independent assessor coming to her center to conduct an assessment, rather than conducting observations herself.
- **Could the Picard Center be hired to do all the assessments?** They don't have the capacity to do so and their role as a check to the internal assessments precludes them from acting as “internal assessors.”
- **What does it take to get staff at programs trained in CLASS?** In order to become a certified CLASS observer, participants must attend a two-day training and take and pass a certification test within eight weeks after the training to prove their reliability.
- **Would we be able to pay to support the CLASS assessments being done in an unbiased manner?** It would be illegal for programs to pay.
- Dr. Recasner agrees with the committee's concerns, but the lead agency needs help raising money and building capacity to conduct observations in the way the group would like.
- **Is there an opportunity to go back to the State and ask for more money?** Unfortunately, no. If we want more money we would need to raise it from other funders.
- **If we vote for Agenda for Children's suggestion (to utilize internal assessors employed by program partners to assess NOEEN classrooms), is there a timeframe for when NOEEN would move to a model of only utilizing contracted observers and Agenda for Children staff for observations?** It would only be for the learning year.
- Adrian Todd expressed her concern that if we do the assessments as previously done, then we will not make a good case that it needs to be done differently.
- Superintendent Patrick Dobard volunteered to advocate and go to the business community to help raise the necessary funds to move to the “ideal plan” of only utilizing contracted observers and Agenda for Children staff as observers.

Action Items (s)

- **Action Item No. 1:** On the motion of Superintendent Patrick Dobard and seconded by Sonjia Joseph, the Committee approved the 2015-16 NOEEN Coordinated Enrollment Framework
- **Action Item No. 2:** On the motion of Dr. Keith Liederman and seconded by Joyce Ridgeway, the Committee approved the meeting minutes from August 4, 2015.
- **Action Item No. 3:** On the motion of Kristi Givens and seconded by Kate Mehok, the Committee approved Agenda for Children's recommended changes to the NOEEN CLASS Observations
- **Action Item No. 4:** On the motion of Superintendent Patrick Dobard and seconded by Joyce Ridgeway, the Committee committed to using the original plan for staffing the observer corps as NOEEN's long term plan.

At 1:16 pm, the meeting was adjourned.