

**Professional Development Advisory Council
June 18, 2025
Meeting Minutes**

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|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Anna Perry | Joyce Gronewold | Nichole Miller |
| Beth Knight | Julia Auch | Rebecca Livengood |
| Carole Franke | Julie Lindstrom | Sandy De Leon |
| Cerathel Burgess Burnett | Kate Connor | Sara Seitz |
| Cindy Berrey | Larissa Mulholland | Sharyl Robin |
| Danen Busch | Leslie Layman | Shauna EjeH* |
| Deborah Rogers Jaye | Lisa Downey | Stephanie Hellmer |
| Emily Dorsey | Lynn Burgett | Tammy King |
| Erika Mendez | Marcy Mendenhall* | Thomas Pavkov |
| Gabriel Holmes | Marie Donovan | Tina Wiegel |
| Gwyn Moss | Marsha Shigeyo Hawley | Toni Porter |
| Hollie Hoole | Mellissa Ferguson | Trinita Winston |
| Joan Longtin | Miranda Lin | Yinna Zhang |
| Johnna Darragh Ernst* | | *Tri-chair |

Welcome and Review of Minutes

- Attendees were welcomed to the meeting.
- Minutes: February 5, 2025
 - Cerathel Burgess Burnett moved to accept the meeting minutes.
 - Mellissa Ferguson seconded the motion.
 - Minutes were approved.

Recap of May Steering Retreat

- Financial Supports
 - Focus was on the importance of engaging the workforce, with emphasis on CDA learners.
 - Committee wants to ensure new members of the workforce are integrated in a meaningful way into all ECE systems.
 - Financial Supports chairs at the Steering meeting spent time with Higher Education chairs to look at cross-over work of each of their strategic plans.
 - Need to take advantage of the opportunities for efficiencies and working together across systems as we move towards a single agency.
 - At this time there is no change to the allocated funds directed to Gateways Scholarship or Great START, funding is level for FY26.
- Higher Education
 - Kate Connor highlighted the success of the recent Gateways Higher Education Forum.
 - Committee would like to continue to strategize with the Financial Supports Committee regarding funding opportunities for the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) across the state.

- **Qualifications and Credentials**
 - During the Steering meeting QC met with Higher Ed and the Workforce Development and Pathways chairs in order to find areas of collaboration. Will gather additional information and data on training.
 - An Ad Hoc has been formed to review the Family Specialist Credential. Every five years the credentials are to be reviewed.
 - Additional Ad Hocs have been formed to review the credential information on the Gateways website and training opportunities for practitioners.
- **Workforce Development and Pathways**
 - The committee had conversations including the use of the ECE Level 1 and its importance as a potential entry point for teachers, the CDA, and teacher qualifications in early childhood programs.
 - Tri-chairs suggested that WDP review Level 1 to ensure it fits the role of a pre-teaching credential and might need some revision, building on the work of the Level 1 Ad Hoc from 2024.

State Reports

- **Transition Advisory Committee**
 - The Illinois Department of Early Child Childhood continues to add additional staff as they prepare for the merger of state agencies under one department. Christi Chadwick has taken on the role of Project Director, Workforce and Intermediaries.
 - Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) day care licensing sessions will be held later this month.
 - FY26 state budget passed.
 - ChiByDesign is taking on their next phase of work to ensure family voices, along with provider voices, are heard as the new department continues to take shape.
 - The Funding Work Group has launched two sub-groups; Funding Alignment and Funding Distribution.
 - The June 12th TAC meeting materials and notes will be placed on the TAC website soon.
- **Illinois Department of Human Services**
 - Reminder: The link for the FY24 Illinois Child Care Program Report was sent out in late May to all PDAC members.
 - The Salary and Staffing deadline has been extended to June 30th, to encourage more participation. Currently more than 1,100 responses for the survey have been received.
 - Update for Infant Early Childhood Mental Health, as it is aligned across home visiting, early intervention and child care, building out child care tracking data program and aligning pieces of work across the CCR&Rs.
 - Continue with peer-to-peer work including meeting representatives of Minnesota and Tennessee to discuss their programs regarding cohesive offerings.
 - FY26 SMART START workforce grants round 1 funding release email was sent out to programs today, June 18th, informing providers that checks have been released. Providers now can receive funds either through checks or direct deposit.
- **Illinois Head Start Association**
 - Shauna reported that Lauri Morrison Frichtl sent out her most recent newsletter.
 - The newsletter includes information on a streamlined grant application process for programs with continuing grants.
 - The government has appealed the court decision regarding DEI.
 - Head Start is asking for the five regional offices to be reinstated.
- **Illinois State Board of Education**
 - Governor Pritzker signed the FY26 state approved budget.
 - The Early Childhood Block Grant did not receive the requested \$75 million dollar increase.
 - ISBE will not be releasing a competitive RFP for FY26.

- The FY26 Continuation ECBG grant has been released.
- The Educator Licensure Omnibus was passed (SB 1947).
 - Creates a paraprofessional pathway program for individuals to earn their license in a specific content area.
 - Streamline educator licensure requirements for people who seek to work as school support personnel.
 - Allows an approved educator preparation program to, upon request of a community college, partner with a community college to offer an approved preparation program leading to a Professional Educator License endorsed in a teaching field for individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree.
- ISBE conducted a targeted redesign of the Early Childhood Content Exam with new cut scores. The new approved cut scores have been operational for all test takers, and the scores have been converted to a 100 and 300 scale. New provisions include: free practice tests are now offered, a right start preparation course, and a free re-take policy for the exam.
- The Illinois Comprehensive Numeracy Summit was held on June 3rd with discussions on math fluency and equity.
- Joyce will follow up with Emily Fox regarding the issues of the changes in grade bands.

Reflections from Breakout Session Regarding the Change to Grade Bands and ISBE

- No communication with higher education early childhood teacher prep programs and are now changing something that people thought was a settled situation.
- Concern that those in the ECE field were not consulted before this change.
- Yinna Zhang shared that in rural areas in China they made a similar decision which had negative effects on understanding of child development, play-based learning, and connections with families.
- There are shortages of teachers across all grade bands.
- Concern over how the change will impact teacher prep higher ed programs.
- Concern that ECE endorsement holders will no longer be marketable.
- Few ECE courses required for ECE subsequent endorsement.

PDAC FY 2026 Meeting Dates and Annual Membership Renewal Documents

- Reminder to fill out and return your annual membership documents.
- The next PDAC meeting will be held on September 3, 2025.

Adjourn

