



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

AUGUST 14, 2023

Present: Allison Bishop, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Carol Frazey, Chelsea Johnson, Christina Jackson, Colton Redtfeldt, Jamie Desmul, Jen Wright, Katherine Orlowski, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Mary Sewright, Monika Mahal, Pamela Jons, Ray Deck, Samya Lutz, Sarah Kidd, Sterling Chick, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson

Not Present: Gregory Hansen, Keith Montoya, Mike Ford, Rosalva Santos-Guzman, Samantha Cruz Mendoza, Sativa Robertson, Sterling Chick, Yarrow Greer, Vann Dartt

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p>Welcome</p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u></p> <p>I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.</p> <p>May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.</p> <p>This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land.</p> <p>Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways. https://www.lhaqtemish.org/ -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and self-care come first. • Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the best intentions. ○ Listen with an open mind and heart. • Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out/Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights. • Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances. • Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County. • What is said here stays here. • Have fun. <p>Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</p>



Approve Meeting Minutes	No amendments to discuss. Minutes from June 12 th , 2023, were approved as presented.
Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation	<p>Evaluation tool: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhjlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</p> <p>The purpose of this Task Force was reviewed, as stated in the Ordinance. “The purpose of Whatcom County Child and Family Well-being Task Force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and family make recommendations for improvement for all departments.”</p>
Community Shares, Shout-outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still openings for families to sign up for Head Start/ECEAP preschool for 2023-24! Families can call 360-734-8396 for more info or stop by our office at 1201 Cornwall Ave. • Gabriel’s Art Kids is adding a new location in Ferndale which is enabled by ARPA funds. https://www.gabrielsartkids.com/gakferndale.html • Whatcom Perinatal Task Force is doing a free two-day training on Oct 17 and 18 at Fox Hall, geared to clinical and non-clinical providers that are working with families during the child rearing years. https://whatcomperinatal.org/perinatal-mental-health-training/
Conversation on Transitional Kindergarten: Learning from other communities	<p>Ray and Christina continued a conversation about Transitional Kindergarten:</p> <p>The conversation from June meeting: Jamie Desmul and Debbie Haney presented on the development and scope of Transitional Kindergarten.</p> <p>Transitional Kindergarten is a state funded program available for children turning 4 before Sept 1st of the school year. (The Bellingham School District calls their program Promise K.) It was created to provide the least restrictive environment for children that have IEPs and allows for a mixed model approach. An IEP is an Individual Educational Program and is for ages 3 to 21. The IEP is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability who is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. The IEP is developed by a team of individuals from various educational disciplines, the child with a disability, family members, and/or designated advocates.</p> <p>Transitional Kindergarten received state sponsorship just a few years ago, but Bellingham started it around 11 years ago as a 10-week program. There is a policy in the WAC that says children can qualify early for kindergarten based on ability or need. The “need” part is what qualified Bellingham at that time. The families that would apply for ability it was discovered most of these applicants were needing that early access due to gaps in systems available. The state recognized the benefits of this program and found them more able to be successful in Kindergarten and that is how it was developed.</p> <p>This year 101 institutions in the state are implementing a Transitional Kindergarten, which is around 3,000 students.</p> <p>Debbie mentioned the focus right now is in enrollment and recruitment and meeting families to get into the right program for the children. This is a developing system, and improving this year from last as relationships are built and gaps are identified.</p> <p>Jamie shared there are not enough programs in Whatcom County to meet the community needs. The school district has the resources are best to serve the individual needs of students with IEPs. The challenge with Transitional Kindergarten is the revenue that it unintentionally takes away from community care options. It costs</p>



more money to run infant/toddler programs, so they run them at a subsidized rate by breaking even from the revenue of the preschool aged students. The infant/toddler programs require a lower student/teacher ratio than that of a preschool age program and that is why it balances out, but if the schools continue to fill up those preschool age programs those spots will be removed and it will raise the costs for infant/toddler programs.

Another challenge is the care gaps around school days and hours. Traditional after school care does not allow for youth under the age of 5.

For the standard early learning care programs, creating part time care for this age group would require transportation, social emotional support after a full day of school, and financial challenges.

Every care center that offers more than four hours of care must be licensed and go through several systems of compliance, however the Transitional Kindergarten program through the schools does not have to comply with this because they are run through OSPI. This is going to have an impact on the workforce.

A public-school teacher can make around \$50,000 a year, but a preschool program teacher is usually making \$30,000 a year. This is impacting the workforce. As people get certified, they move on.

Debbie mentioned that there is a new [HB 1550](#) and that OSPI has been charged with putting some emergency rulings in for the 23/24 school year and this should be considered. There will be some new things coming related to 3-year old children as well so it will be important to consider.

Bellingham has 742 children enrolled in Kindergarten. 275 children are served in Promise K. We have not reached all kids.

Ray asked Sarah about the innovation strategy in the Healthy Children's Fund, and if that is the right space to create a request to design a way to meet this gap. Sarah thinks that this could be an appropriate place, but is early into this work as well. Debbie reiterated that Transitional Kindergarten is not the right fit for all kids. Jamie mentioned that they have had a rough time finding 4 and 5-year olds for their programs on YMCA, and if they are not being placed into Promise K and there are openings in many places then it should be evaluated.

Vesla Tonnessen is wondering if a convening has been done for parental feedback, and wondering if there is a way to subsidize the infants/toddler rooms. Jamie responded that there has been consideration about reconstructing rooms and allowing businesses to stay afloat, which would require a lot of funds. Next year it will be interesting to see if it is having the impact it appears to have.

This article was sent out to follow up the June conversation: <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/briefs/state-and-local-strategies-to-strengthen-infant-toddler-care-during-pre-k-expansion/>

Which of the ideas discussed in this article are immediately applicable in Whatcom County?

- Carol Frazey liked the incentives for family childcare homes, and making sure there are enough infant care.
- Ray Deck III mentioned that there is a licensing incentive in foster care.
- Katherine Orłowski thinks that this home-based workforce for essential employees with AI becoming more prevalent. Also want to make sure that the unintended consequences are well known from this program.
- Jamie Desmul wants to make sure that people realize most people do not want to take infants. A lot of family home people do not take infants for a reason because licensing for infant care is highly regulated. A lot of place do not want to touch it and it can be more expensive because of staffing ratio as well. Also,



	<p>centers are not unionized and family home providers are so they get a lot of kick back from the state. Single time incentives are not going to be enough to increase infant care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray Deck III brought up infant care slots, and wondering if it can be designed in an equitable way. Jamie mentioned that they lose money the most on toddler care. The hard part about infants is the highly regulated licensing. • Tilda Doughty hears the talk of streamlining licensing, but unsure how much control there is over that. The mixed delivery system for Pre-K and having a coordinated entry point is something we could do in Whatcom County. • Katherine Orłowski brought up that DC spent \$120 million on the Birth to Three Act to create the competitive salary skill. This makes sense to create a livable wage. • Ray Deck III agrees that investment in the workforce is a good strategy, and that they are testing several directions to identify the biggest impact on the workforce. • Katherine Orłowski is wondering about a strategy from the county requirements and distribution of funding, to recapture funding for the community. • Vesla Tonnesson wonders if Colorado has the same language we do around the "gift of public funds" and how they might have worked with those considerations in providing these incentives. Jennifer Wright found the link for the Colorado gift ban, see section 3. https://iec.colorado.gov/sites/iec/files/ArticleXXIX_IEC.pdf, although it is structured differently than the way it is worded in Washington. • Allie Bishop brought up looking at New Mexico, which now provides child care subsidies for all families at 400% or below the federal poverty level. https://www.nmececd.org/child-care-assistance/#CCSBFAQ10 Universal Pre-K is only one piece of that—they are tackling infant/toddler care as well. • Tilda Doughty shares that if we do not tend to the concerns we destabilize things. • Jamie Desmul mentioned that stabilizing infant and toddler care by the county indicates putting money into the existing slots because people want to see results, but we need to invest in the centers that rely on the Pre-K care to fund the infant and toddler care. • Ray Deck III mentioned that Multnomah County noticed they had destabilized childcare and came up with the child care slot system to stabilize it. • Vesla Tonnesson is wondering who is leading the work in getting all three areas together to align. Jamie Desmul mentioned that Bellingham School district was working with other programs to try to get it right, but you cannot compete with free. • Jamie Desmul mentioned it is really awkward for the providers as families are wanting to take advantage of Promise K at the school district, but if they go to Promise K they lose funding for pre-K. Again, the school district is doing their best to work with providers. <p>The co-chairs had asked for any other feedback to send emails and continue to let this information and article to simmer.</p>
<p>Parent Leadership Training Institute</p>	<p>Vesla Tonnesson shared the background and work done through the Parent Leadership Training Institute. Vesla's background is a road from waitressing locally to offering early learning and being invited to participate in different opportunities and develop understanding and skills. She was provided a microphone and given some</p>



power that elevated her understanding and experience as a parent and care provider, and led her to her position as director of operations for a nonprofit. She says she will never forget that.

Through her coalition work, Vesla learned about the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) as an example of incorporating parent experience and parent voice. It is a free 11-week course that helps parents and people that work with parents develop leadership skills. This training is done through Washington Family Engagement.

This runs on a college quarter timeline through Everett Community College and has a Children's Leadership Training Institute as well. The 11 weeks is divided into two parts: first building a cohort focused on personal self, neighborhood, and local committees and then focusing on civic engagement. Skills developed include public speaking, understanding systems and use person voice for change. Graduations are often held at the Washington State Capitol.

The PLTI participants work together to find a community improvement project and identify steps to implement. When Vesla was in this program, their community project was to bring this PLTI to Whatcom County. They worked with Mount Baker Foundation for funding. This training is offered to both English and Spanish speaking families. The classes are available for state wide participation. They have one particular cohort in Spanish dedicated to Whatcom to build some community. These are all online, and although they tried to shift in person they heard from families online works better. Christina Jackson, also a graduate, worked to build out transportation to all of the Head Start programs in collaboration with the Opportunity Council.

Washington Family Engagement also provides consulting on how to incorporate that family voice into the strategic planning and quality improvement efforts. The WA State Dept of Health is working with them on a Family Engagement Center which will help K-12 school districts provide resources for their schools and communities.

If you know of a family please have them review online. The course requires around 7 hours a week, and it can be intense. Around 85% of the 25 participants graduate per class.

More information can be found: <https://www.wafamilyengagement.org/>



ARPA Childcare Funds-Allocation Plan

Kayla Schott-Bresler shared information and planning from the Executive's Office on the ARPA Childcare Funds. The document below breaks down funding into different spending categories and recommendations.

Whatcom County ARPA Childcare Allocation Plan

Project	Amount	Details	Status
Laurel and Forest Project	\$1,000,000	Sponsored by Opportunity Council – 65 new slots	Under construction
2023 Expansion RFP	\$6,827,173	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Opp Co Bellis Project •Meridian School District •Gabriel Arts Kids •WWU •YMCA Barkley •Boys and Girls Club <p>242 new/preserved slots, at least 20% low income</p>	Working on contracts
Stabilization Project (through OC)	\$1,988,241	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provider stabilization grants •Scholarship Funds •Tech platform •Training •Emergency childcare vouchers 	Contracted
Internal Staffing	\$471,787	Health dept staffing	Budgeted
Additional capital expansion funds and/or pilot expansion programs	\$1,672,827	Focus on infant and/or drop in care	Requesting Task Force Recommendation
Home-based childcare start up program	\$500,000	Will contract through third party provider for startup cohort	Requesting Task Force Recommendation
Additional stabilization grant funds (through OC)	\$125,000	To meet remaining stabilization grant need	Requesting Task Force Recommendation
Cushion to invest in above projects as needed	\$414,972	Depends on needs of above projects	Requesting Task Force Recommendation
TOTAL	\$13,000,000.00		

There is around \$2.5 million dollars available unspent. They would like to use \$1.6 million for childcare capital or expansion. Considering \$500,000 for a cohort of new home-based childcare centers which include education and supplies. They think this will be around 17 new businesses in Whatcom County. The Opportunity Council needs around \$125,000 to continue stabilizing. This leaves \$414,972 as a cushion. As the 2023 Expansion RFP money is finalized, there may be funds left and they recommend including that into the \$414,972 cushion to invest in outlined projects.

Each provider in this is required to hold 20% of slots for low income.

Katherine Orlowski indicated she heard of a center that had religious language on a website, and was wondering if there are opportunities to change that. Kayla mentioned that the provider had actually dropped out, and it was not the county that removed them from the pool.

Samya Lutz had a question about home-based childcare. The City of Bellingham has a program to support home-based care startups if they meet the 80% of area median income to provide funding to help with licensing requirements. When they developed the program one of the challenges discovered was the system to educate on childcare or adult care. They had to travel and it became a barrier. Kayla indicated the county is hoping to spend part of the \$500,000 for a locally based training.



	<p>Kayla indicated they would like to begin releasing the funds as soon as possible and need to get support from this task force. On that Ray Deck III is recommending that the Healthy Children’s Fund workgroup would be a great place to spend some time unpacking this.</p> <p>Vesla Tonnesson recommended that the task force vote to allow the Healthy Children’s Fund workgroup to decide on behalf of the entire task force whether to support these recommendations.</p> <p>The task force voted, and passed with consensus with a Fist to Five vote.</p> <p>Jamie Desmul shared a new development that last week that people receiving scholarships for ECE degrees from the state were informed they are not continuing the funding for this degree. This could be an opportunity for ways to invest. Kayla requested a copy of the letter, and Jamie will try to get one and send on so that Kayla can have a conversation in the Executive’s Office.</p> <p>Ray Deck III will send out an update following the Healthy Children’s Fund workgroup meeting.</p>
<p>Healthy Children’s Fund Update</p>	<p>Sarah Simpson shared an update on the Healthy Children’s Fund. This space will be held every meeting to provide updates. This will be done by Sarah, or Chelsea Johnson, or hopefully the Healthy Children’s Fund Workgroup.</p> <p>There is a lot of work being done to connect in the community. People are starting to see the layers of support in the community and how this work will impact other areas.</p> <p>The Implementation Team have reviewed the advice provided from a state level consultant and community convenings, and have a created a timeline for funding. In terms of childcare expansion, working on an innovation fund, outreach to increase Working Connections family enrollment, emergency child care vouchers, and professional development scholarships. ECEAP transportation, and ALICE family child care subsidies. Also looking at assessing how county government interacts with these areas, and expanding and retaining workforce strategies. In terms of vulnerable children some peer to peer supports, housing supports, Nurse Family Partnership expansion, and behavioral health strategies. Also looking to offer technical assistance opportunities so that all organizations have the resources they need to apply and aren’t excluded based on their capacity.</p> <p>Ray Deck III reviewed the Healthy Children’s Fund website for the county, and noticed there is no administrative implementation plan which was developed separately. Why are they both not on the website for accountability and review of the public? Sarah said she is unclear on that and will work to get the answer.</p>
<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Jackie asked how much of the total funds regarding ARPA funds were allocated to the County. Kayla answered that \$471,000 of the \$13 million.</p>
<p>Closing</p>	<p>Adjourned at 5:27</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>Next regular meeting: September 11, 2023 <u>Location: Hybrid</u></p>

