

CHILD CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

February 13, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center

Conference Room 4/5

MEMBERS PRESENT	Wynne Busman, Mercedes Dash, Evelyn Evans, Valerie Inman, Monica Jackson, Scott Stroh
MEMBERS ABSENT	Kerry O'Brien, Elizabeth Cassidy
STAFF PRESENT	Flor Philips, Suzanne Ritchie
COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT	None

Call to Order

Scott Stroh, Chair, called the February 13, 2024 Child Care Advisory Council meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Ready Regions Update presentation

Rhonda Houck-Morofsky, Program Manager of School Readiness, Early Childhood Programs & Services, presented an update on Ready Region work to date. Fairfax County Early Childhood Programs & Services is the lead agency for the Capital Area, which is comprised of Fairfax and Arlington counties and the cities of Fairfax, Alexandria and Falls Church.

The four focus areas for lead agencies are strengthening quality, building relationships, increasing access and engaging families. Work is underway in all four areas; however, the focus of the presentation was on Strengthening Quality through the Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) system. VQB5 measures the quality of infant, toddler and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally-recognized quality indicators; teacher-child interactions and the use of approved curricula. VQB5 was developed in response to data collected which indicated that 40% of children in Virginia started kindergarten without key skills.

Teacher-child interactions are measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS observations are used to gather classroom information about the quality of teacher-child interactions and to provide individualized feedback to educators. The reports are strength-based and provided to the educator after the observation. Local CLASS observations take place in the fall and spring for every publicly funded birth-five classroom. Scores can range from 1.00-7.00, with lower classroom scores indicating lower-quality interactions and higher scores indicating higher-quality interactions.

VDOE presented data from VQB5 Practice Year 2 (2022-2023) from programs that participated. PY2 data shows increases from fall to spring in all classroom type categories (infant, toddler, pre-K). In the RR Capital Area 2,771 classrooms participated in CLASS and scores ranged from

2.08-7.00. 6 sites received a PY2 Needs Support rating (which is a rating between 200-399, measured in 100-point brackets) and will be offered improvement planning support from VDOE. 67 sites received 499 points or lower and will be prioritized for coaching support. Most of the classrooms being prioritized are center based programs. The number of Priority Classrooms by site type in the Capital Area includes 86 centers, 19 family day homes and 2 public schools.

Houck-Morofsky emphasized that programs are not penalized if they fall in the lower range of ratings. Providers must register for CLASS observations between August 15 and October 1, participate in the CLASS observations during the fall and spring and have a site inspector visit during the year. Non-compliance, not the scores of CLASS observations, determines whether public funding is pulled, not the scores of CLASS observations.

All publicly-funded programs will receive an annual VQB5 Quality Profile which will include the quality rating and other topics of interest to families and the general public. PY2 data was shared privately with providers during the fall of 2023. VDOE is currently developing mock-ups of the Quality Profiles. In the fall of this year, the Quality Profiles will be posted for families and the general public.

Questions from Council Members during the presentation:

Council member Wynne Bussman asked about state-approved family childcare curriculum. Rhonda Houck-Morofsky responded that are many curricula available that are approved by the state and some that were developed by UVA. Some examples include Streamin3 and Frog Street. There are also coaching teams available through Ready Regions. Early Childhood Programs and Services staff can also assist in finding curriculum options for providers.

Council member Evelyn Evans asked about how observations would work for early-childhood education programs that are nature-based. She was told that observations can't take place outside, however, the children attending her program are usually outdoors 60 % of the day. Houck-Morofsky said she will get clarification about how a observations for nature-based programs would work.

Council member Valerie Inman asked how coaching support is given to providers that are identified as Priority Classrooms. Houck-Morofsky responded that there are different supports, coaching, and technical assistance available based on the curriculums and the environment of each program. For infants and toddlers, the Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction (AEII) from UVA is a good source. Ready Regions can also provide coaching with providers. TTAC supports classrooms with students with disabilities and special learning needs.

Thematic Needs Assessment discussion

Chair Stroh opened the floor for additional discussion on actionable thematic needs items that the Council can pursue in the coming year. Council member Monica Jackson suggested using the Ready Region Update presentation as a starting point for discussion, especially focusing on the Childcare providers that have scored in the lower range of CLASS observations. Jackson asked the Council to consider how to best support educators scoring lower in the CLASS system and what they could potentially do to provide support for these educators to improve. Council Member Valerie Inman also asked about childcare providers who are not receiving public funding and how to ensure children attending these types of programs are receiving quality care and education if providers are not required to participate in the CLASS system? Council member Mercedes Dash asked how to provide education around Ready Regions and CLASS to providers and the best way to distribute the information.

Overall, there was agreement amongst the council that quality & retention are the priority areas to focus on as there have been ongoing conversations in both of these areas. The topic of producing a PSA was brought up and all council members agreed they would like to continue that discussion. All agreed that recruiting new childcare providers should be the main theme of a PSA, with a secondary focus of helping low CLASS scoring providers improve.

Chair Stroh encouraged the council to think about what is actionable and a pathway to achieving results. He asked everyone to consider how to best implement ideas and to focus on what is realistic and achievable.

Old and New Business

Staff will continue to monitor the progress of the proposed state budget. Most of the legislative updates so far have been focused on funding, including additional funding for family subsidies for childcare.

For the next meeting, the Council would like an update on the resolution for Janet Reimer that is currently in progress in the Chairman's office.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Action Items

- Staff will share the Ready Region Update presentation, CLASS flyer for improvement partners and links to state approved classroom curricula with the Council.
- Staff will provide updated state data on kindergarten readiness percentages.
- Staff will provide clarification about observations for nature-based early childhood educational programs.
- Council members will think about which items/projects/ categories from the thematic needs assessment document are actionable and achievable by the council.

- The March meeting agenda will include a discussion about producing a PSA.
- Scott, Flor and Keisha will talk about available resources for producing a PSA before the March meeting.
- Staff will provide Council members with an update on the status of the resolution for Janet Reimer.

Next Meeting

March 12, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Government Center

Conference Room 4/5