

City of Austin Early Childhood Council

October 11, 2011

Recommendation from the Policy Development and Research Workgroup regarding the proposal for a city-funded Early Childhood Classroom Mentor

Background

On August 10, 2011, a group of child care providers met with Shannon Jones, City of Austin HHSD Acting Director, and presented a proposal for a city-funded Early Childhood Classroom Mentor to “provide support for child development center classroom teachers with young children in an effort to prevent behavior challenges.” Mr. Jones referred the proposal to the Early Childhood Council (ECC) and tasked the group with reviewing the proposal and developing a recommendation. At the ECC meeting on September 13, 2011, the Council assigned the task to the Policy Development and Research (PD&R) workgroup. The workgroup met on September 14, 2011, reviewed the materials provided, discussed the proposal and developed the following recommendation. (This recommendation will be presented at the full ECC meeting on October 11, 2011.)

Recommendation

The PD&R workgroup recognizes the great need to address challenging behaviors in early childhood classrooms and recommends that any city funding for this effort be used to expand the number of centers served by the United Way Capital Area Success by 6 Social and Emotional Learning Collaborative (SELCL). This recommendation will be included in the overall Early Childhood Council recommendation to City regarding how city funding is allocated for early childhood services.

Rationale

The workgroup recommends an expansion of the SELCL for the following reasons:

- It is a more efficient and effective use of city funds to expand existing services in the community rather than create a new program.
- The SELCL model builds the capacity of child care centers to address challenging behaviors (versus intensive intervention with individual children).
- The model has been in practice in the Austin community since 2004 and has undergone iterative improvements.
- SELCL utilizes evidence-based methods and has a collaborative approach that is coordinated by the United Way Capital Area Success by 6 Initiative.

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The Social and Emotional Learning Collaborative

The Social and Emotional Learning Collaborative (SELC) began in 2004 as an intervention to promote the positive social and emotional health of children in child care centers. The partners in this collaboration include Austin Child Guidance Center, YWCA of Greater Austin, and Raising Austin. Collectively, the project partners provide consultation, training, technical assistance and psychological support services to child care center staff, teachers, parents and children.

(Excerpt from “Promoting Children’s Success through Improved Behavioral Health.”)

Back up materials

“Early Childhood Classroom Mentor” proposal presented to Shannon Jones

“Early Childhood Behavioral Health Consultation: Developing a Model for Texas” (source unknown)

“Behavioral Consultant Model of Mental Health Service Delivery,” Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition

“Social Emotional Learning Collaborative for Central Texas Children in Child Care Centers,” United Way Capital Area

“Promoting Children’s Success through Improved Behavioral Health,” United Way Capital Area

Promoting Children's Success through Improved Behavioral Health



In some Austin schools serving low-income families, the percentage of **kindergarten children held back each year is almost 20 percent.**

*Research shows that children are often held back not because they lack the cognitive skills to progress, but rather, **because of behavioral problems.***

Adults know that when they are gripped by intense feelings such as grief or fear, it is difficult to concentrate on the task at hand. Likewise, when children are upset, they are far less receptive to what adults are trying to teach them. A child's learning can be adversely affected by everyday stresses – or major challenges such as parental divorce, economic hardship, or family moves. (1)

One proven best practice to support children's emotional development is universal **access to behavioral health consultation through child care centers.**

This means that child care centers are able to call on behavioral consultants to work with children as needed. **The result?** When behavioral consultants are able to reach children with emotional problems and help them express feelings and learn self-control, the **children are then much more likely to succeed in school.**

In 2006, only 4.5% of child care centers in Austin had access to any type of psychological support services. This year, *the number of child care centers with access to a behavioral consultant **more than tripled, in large part due to a new collaboration initiated and funded by United Way Success By 6.***

The partners in this collaboration include Austin Child Guidance Center, YWCA of Greater Austin, and Raising Austin. Collectively, the project partners provide consultation, training, technical assistance and psychological support services to child care center staff, teachers, parents and children. And when families, teachers and behavioral consultants work together, the benefits for children are magnified.

(1) Fredericks, Linda, Roger Weissberg, Hank Resnick, Eva Patrikakou, Mary Utne O'Brien, "Schools, Families, and Social Emotional Learning." 2005. University of Illinois at Chicago. p. 2.

Austin Child Guidance Center

Melanie Walter-Mahoney, LMSW (512) 451-2242

- Classroom observation
- Child assessments
- Individual, family, and group interventions with staff, parents and children
- Staff and parent workshops
- Consultation and referral

Raising Austin

Cindy Rojas Rodriguez, M.Ed. (512) 785-0636

- Research-based training of preschool teachers using research based curriculum from the Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
- Focused on practical classroom management strategies, promotion of children's pro-social behavior and school readiness, and reduction in classroom aggression and increase in cooperation with peers and teachers

YWCA of Greater Austin

Pamela Schott, LCSW (512) 326-1222

- Teacher Support Groups with licensed mental health professional during children's nap time. Topics include teaching child development concepts, teacher-child relationships, stress management and self-care
- Individual counseling for child care staff and parents



Social Emotional Learning Collaborative

For Central Texas Children in Child Care Centers



**Are your children ready for school?
Are your children ready for *life*?**

What is social- emotional learning?

When children know how to:

- Experience, regulate and express emotions
- Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- Explore the environment and learn

Outcomes of working with the social-emotional learning collaborative:

- Participating teachers and parents develop knowledge, skills and behaviors that support children's optimal social and emotional development.
- Children and adults in need receive support services for social-emotional concerns.

What happens when children don't have these skills?



Don't be left behind!