

BOARD STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES
May 23, 2023

Call to Order

President Cohen called the Study Session of the Shoreline Board of Directors to order via Zoom at 4:00 p.m. on May 23, 2023. This meeting was also streamed in the Board Room at the Shoreline Center.

Roll Call

Present: Sarah Cohen, President; Emily Williams, Vice President; Sara Betnel, Director; and Meghan Jernigan, Director.

Not present: Rebeca Rivera, Director; Luke Smith, Shorecrest Student Representative; Lily Fredericks, Shorecrest Student Representative; Helen Murphy, Shorewood Student Representative; and Esme Harkess, Shorewood Student Representative.

The following topic was discussed:

District-Managed Extended Care

Presented by Hillery Clark, Co-Director of Early Learning

Ms. Clark began by acknowledging and thanking the staff of extended care and then gave an overview of the Extended Care program in Shoreline.

As a tuition-based program, it is a business within the school district and presents challenges. We are collecting funds to pay for the program, and there are many factors needed to make these decisions. Last year, schedules changed, and it was a data driven decision. The number of sites has been decreased due to staffing challenges, and these challenges continue when trying to staff the program.

The preschool before and aftercare will discontinue in 2023-2024. In 2018, the Board direction defined the priority of the preschool program with approval of a mission/vision to focus on equity and inclusion and prioritizing the education of underserved populations. Edwin Pratt had 100 Head Start students when they opened four years ago, and they have increased services to low-income families by 50%. We are looking at a 57% increase in special education preschool.

The history of changes in leadership was reviewed, and the additional roles and responsibilities that have been added with fewer staff to accomplish the goals and duties of the school. In 2020 we had two directors and three coordinators. Currently there is one director and one coordinator, with the added director task of supervising OT/PT staff and services.

In sharing the current enrollment, Ms. Clark noted less than 5% of the students are on free and reduced lunch because we do not have subsidized care through the state. This is not a sustainable model for the district with an increase in staffing needed for daily operations and ensuring compliance. Also, the licensing requirements would need additional staffing extending to various departments within the district to support the program. The costs for the licensing would likely come out of the program, but that would need to be discussed.

For the 2023-24 school year, district-managed before and aftercare will be offered at five sites and will partner with outside providers where childcare was offered in 2022-23. The District is considering partnering with outside agencies for the 2024-25 school year for all families, regardless of income. YMCA is the outside agency that will be utilized for the 2023-24 school year.

President Cohen asked clarifying questions regarding the costs that were presented. The costs presented are the ongoing costs that we know of at this time, not startup costs.

Director Jernigan asked about the YMCA's capacity and ability to continue to provide childcare in the next few years, if the demand for childcare increases.

Ms. Clark noted YMCA is a well-established agency and predicts they would be able to provide care, but cannot speak directly to that. There are different agencies that could be used if the YMCA was unable to meet the demand. The YMCA rents the facility space from the District where there is childcare.

Director Betnel asked how many of the before and after care students were children of employees. Ms. Clark would get back to the Board with hard numbers. Currently, families are showing interest and SEA members are on a priority list. Priority access is bargained with the different employee groups.

Director Betnel noted there are staffing challenges system-wide, not just here in the District. She asked if Ms. Clark you had a sense of how much of that is the impact of COVID. Ms. Clark shared her opinion that the split shift is challenging, and always has been. We are seeing staffing challenges in our communities. There are articles noting childcare specifically being hit hard and it seems this employment opportunity has been hit more than others. There are various reasons why staff have left positions.

President Cohen asked how the administrative capacity impacts the ability to offer this program. Ms. Clark sees the Director of Early Learning prioritizing mandates first (Special Education). There is a lot of daily management in being a building administrator. There is extended work done to catch up during 'off' hours.

President Cohen noted, as a program that's supposed to be self-sustaining, there is that question of balancing. If there was more investment, would there be more enrollment dollars? Having childcare at the school sites is valuable. If the District is unable to sustainably provide this service, then we need to look at alternatives. Director Cohen opened the discussion up to the group on what the next steps might be in regards to long term planning for this program. Superintendent Reyes responded that when you look at the data, there are families in our community that need this service whom we are not able to provide it to, using the current model. Not only due to staffing issues, but also some families don't have sufficient funding to access if it's available at their school. In an effort to provide as much as we can, for all families across our system, we'd like to be thinking about the 2024-25 school year and having the services be provided district-wide by a partner-- YMCA or another partner. The vision is to support the needs of our community the best way we can, in an equitable manner, so this is available to our children.

Director Jernigan asked if the District uses any kind of strategy for prioritizing students who are on the list based off current programs they are in. Anything like that in place now, or something we'd like to think about moving forward in future years? Regarding the extended care program the District manages, Ms. Clark noted there is priority for SEA members per their contract. They have returning student status, which means they have priority to their current schedule. When spots open, they have priority, and then siblings after that. For others it becomes a lottery for families who show interest. It is thought that the YMCA likely prioritizes returning student and members.

Director Jernigan was struck by the numbers of the extended care students by program. Hi Cap students have a pretty high number of students currently utilizing this program. She wondered what the reason was for that situation. Ms. Clark said she's guessing it is about access. This is a program for which parents pay tuition. The free and reduced lunch program has the lowest numbers represented; her guess was that it's the funding piece.

President Cohen asked for clarification as to whether or not the YMCA program at schools is the licensed program. Ms. Clark confirmed, yes, and is not sure if the YMCA provides the former programming it used to as all agencies have been affected by COVID. They may have chosen to focus on licensed childcare.

When asked how the YMCA is working out for our families, the District does not have data on the outside agency. Superintendent Reyes said she'd have to follow up and get back to the Board on that.

Director Betnel asked about the possibility of YMCA or another partner possibly offering before and aftercare at Edwin Pratt. Ms. Clark said that is something that we would need to look into. Most districts do not offer full day preschool and there are no districts or agencies doing before and aftercare preschool that she knows of.

President Cohen thought continuing the conversation around partnering with outside licensed care sometime next year would be a good idea. This would give an opportunity to learn more about the transition, more broadly across the district, that Superintendent Reyes recommended earlier.

It was suggested to have someone from the YMCA walk the Board through what the partnership has looked like and give context on our district in particular. Also, what possibility is there that the YMCA has to honor our bargained agreements, and what impact may that have on existing agreements? Would there be pathways for District employees who are interested in continuing to work in the capacity to transition to employment with the YMCA? Ms. Clark noted there is contract language around that.

Director Jernigan suggested it would be helpful, looking at the upcoming years of 2024 and beyond, for the District to develop a committee of members and staff and partners to participate in a discussion around before and after school offerings. This could be a visioning process or whatever the Superintendent sees appropriate. It would be better to have a more diverse group of stakeholders at the table when thinking about the way this program evolves moving forward.

Director Betnel thought it would be helpful to understand more about how before and aftercare operate in districts around us. Ms. Clark shared that most districts do partner with other agencies. There are examples of districts that had their own programs, but have moved to using partners. There are two districts that offer their own programs, but they also use outside agencies as well. Typically, it is outside agencies that are offering that childcare.

When making these decisions, earlier is better. Last spring was stressful trying to figure out what care would look like. Then there were changes made in August and it was stressful on both staff and families. It is best if decisions are made early.

Superintendent Reyes noted if the Board's direction is to have a stakeholder group come together to develop a recommendation, that group would need to be established in September so that a recommendation can be brought forward in December. Then the District can share with families what the direction is for 2024-25.

It was suggested that there may be a less time-consuming process that may be more achievable for the District, and what that might look like. That is something we can discuss later, but any kind of diverse views we can incorporate into decision making process would help the District to land at an appropriate balance for what can be offered and what the community needs.

Ms. Clark said the District is looking at serving 275 students maximum next year to give perspective of what we are looking at. When having these conversations, something to consider is licensed

care vs. unlicensed care. A bigger picture question is whether or not the District wants a licensed care program. That is a very different program which needs a designated leader. If it isn't the District doing it, we would want to connect with other agencies to identify what services they offer.

That brings up equity across sites as well so we don't have some sites that are licensed and some that are not. This could be the focus of the stakeholder input or a topic the Board explores more deeply. The disparity across sites has been reported, and it would be helpful to obtain information on what the difference is between licensed and non-licensed programs.

President Cohen said the Board's request should take into account the current budget challenge, but this does seem to be a process that would be well served by a community mechanism that is specific. There are different perspectives that we're trying to balance. The Board can work with the Superintendent about how to devise a process that will be streamlined and minimally impactful on workload, while keeping everyone in the community on the same page, knowing the decision will involve some degree of change.

Ms. Clark was thanked for her thoughtfulness around this and the data and information shared today.

Adjournment: 5:01 p.m.

Sarah Cohen, School Board President

Attest: July 18, 2023

Dr. Susana Reyes, Secretary
Shoreline Board of Directors

All documents referenced in the minutes may be viewed in the Superintendent's Office during normal business hours.