

**Early Childhood Council of Kern  
Executive Committee Retreat Meeting – Wednesday, July 29, 2025**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Alesha Brown at the Reider Center at 12:14 p.m. In addition to Alesha, Yadira Mendoza, Deborah Murr and Mike Bledsoe also attended the meeting. Staff attending were Amanda Cruz-Ardoin, Stacy Barnett, Natalie Diaz, and Lisa Vargas.

**Public Comments:** Alesha read the Public Comments statement. There were no public comments.

**2024/2025 LPC Reflection:** Items discussed included the Workforce Survey. The information collected is distributed to the early childhood field. The diversity of the council allows for true advocacy for the children. The Wendy Wayne Scholarship supports the Child Development workforce, which will assist more in the future with two scholarships being presented annually. It is also important to show that the Council is part of Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), and to get the Council's name out to the public.

The Strategic Plan is moving in the direction of the Council's growth, and is revisited at every Executive Committee meeting. The Directors Luncheons have been a benefit to the director-level staff, along with the Contractors gatherings (which there will be an attempt in 2025-26 to bring them back in person or as a hybrid). Time and resources were sometimes used, but there needs to be work time added to meetings to work on Council initiatives to allow the Council to strategically come together. It was mentioned that meeting agendas needed to be more strategic, including looking at other ways to present Council updates to members (not just emails). A suggestion was a digital document to easily get information out to members and the public. Deb mentioned offering additional information on Kern Health System's health supports. To add to Council community involvement, members will look at additional events in which to participate.

Regarding engagement of members, Alesha mentioned not just to meet to hold a meeting, but also to include a social role. On the question of how we have grown as a Council, Deb stated that she did not know about the Council. She joined to learn more about early childhood programs in the county, and has made her feel very welcome. She also mentioned that there are too many acronyms. Yadira suggested identifying centers to invite to Council meetings, with Alesha adding that this would allow members to hear from different types of centers. Lisa suggested a panel discussion featuring different types of centers. Natalie suggested tying the presentations into the member survey results. Stacy stated that the survey results overall were very positive. There were no public comments.

**2024/2029 Strategic Plan:** Amanda said that moving forward, the plan will help the Executive Committee continue to reach the goals. **Goal 1:** i. Ami Moser and Stacy are working on putting together the Collaborative, with which the Council will have a role. Target completion is Dec. 31, 2026. ii. Regarding the Communication Plan, Yadira will help to forward the plan. Amanda spoke with Rob Meszaros from KCSOS Communications. Yadira stated that the smore is up and going, but for now to get information out to the public, Facebook may be the method. Stacy suggested looking at web site from LPCs in other counties for ideas. Amanda mentioned that the First 5 Kern web site has some ideas. Items could be linked to resources offered by organizations. This will be an ongoing project. iii. Early care and education events hosted by partners that the Council can support include Sensory Story Time (for which additional information from the partner will be sought). The Directors Luncheons in person were complimented by those who attended, and Deb was thanked for securing \$1000 from her employer KHS for the luncheons. The Workforce Development Committee (which hopefully will

continue forward being led by Myetta Beavers) was involved in many community events. There is also a Back to School event at the Kern County Museum. Lisa mentioned the Leadership Summit on Aug. 6, which will convene leaders from Kern County school districts. Target completion for this item is June, 2026.

**Goal 2:** i. The Workforce Survey will continue to be required for participants of the Workforce Pathways program, and will be shared with contractors. It must be able to be updated. Target completion for this item is June 30, 2026. ii. Regarding an annual professional development opportunity for the workforce, there is a plan for an Inclusion Seminar in Spring, 2026. A majority of Workforce Survey completions requested Inclusion. Planning for the Kern County ECE Conference will also occur. Lisa mentioned that KCSOS Curriculum and Instruction department is offering a Language and Literacy Conference Nov. 14 at the Doubletree Hotel, which will also include early childhood. This could also be an event the Council could help support. Lisa also suggested extending the conference to Saturday, Nov. 15, which would allow for offering different strands. Invitations could go to the ECE workforce and their families to attend the event. It was also suggested to check on the First 5 Kern ongoing mini-grants to support trainings to work on braiding funding. Alesha reviewed the 2023 Infant/Toddler Seminar and its popularity. Target completion for this item is June, 2026.

**Goal 3:** i. Alesha put together Talking Points. These could be discussed with the Council about creating different versions for different groups. Target completion for this item is November, 2025. ii. The Ambassadors program has a target completion date of June, 2027. iii. Regarding presentations from local partners, Amanda and Natalie have been reviewing an agency list. Target completion for this item is June, 2026. iv. Target completion for this item is June, 2027.

Regarding the use of Zoom for future Council meetings, Stacy requested a check with County Counsel to see if there are any changes in the law. There were no public comments.

**2025/2026 ECCK Executive Committee meeting schedule:** The following dates were shown on the schedule (all held from 3 to 4:30 p.m. in City Centre – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom): Aug. 13, Sept. 24, Oct. 15, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20. Mike made the motion to approve the schedule. It was seconded by Deb. The motion was unanimously approved. There were no public comments.

**Member Reports/Next Executive Committee meeting:** \* Amanda reported that Genevieve from Kern County Library will join a future Council meeting to consider applying to be a member. Another potential Council member is Margot from FIELD Institute. \* Deb said that she would provide health resources to Amanda to distribute to Council members. \* Next Exec Committee meeting is Aug. 13. There were no public comments.

**Adjournment:** Deb made the motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Yadira. The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Bledsoe  
Secretary, Early Childhood Council of Kern