

## MEETING MINUTES

### CITY OF MESA

#### Early Childhood Education Task Force

Mesa Police Fiesta District Station  
110 W. Grove Avenue, Mesa, AZ, Community Room  
South of Southern and East of Alma School

**Date: April 15, 2016 Time: 10:00 A.M.**

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<b><u>MEMBERS PRESENT</u></b>	<b><u>MEMBERS ABSENT</u></b>	<b><u>STAFF PRESENT</u></b>
Dr. Dawn Foley	Dr. David Luna, Chair	Deputy City Attorney Alfred Smith
Mike Hutchinson	Jake Brown	Marrisa Ramírez-Ramos
Cynthia Melde	Paul Luna	Natalie Lewis
Linda McKeever	Dr. Anjum Majeed	Niel Curley
Dr. Allison Mullady (by phone)	Dr. James Zaharis	
Nancy Salmon		<b><u>FACILITATOR:</u></b>
Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo		Karen Kurtz
		<b><u>GUESTS:</u></b>
		Kim Freehan, Jordan Center
		Heather Wolf, Mesa Public Library

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1. **Call to Order:** Vice Chair Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo called the meeting of the Early Childhood Education Task Force to order at 10:14 A.M.

2. **Review And Take Action on The Task Force Meeting Minutes of March 30, 2016:** Vice Chair Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo called for a Motion to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2016 meeting.

**MOTION:** Cynthia Melde made a Motion to approve the minutes as presented

**SECOND:** Linda McKeever

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

3. **Hear Opening Remarks by Vice Chair Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo:** Vice Chair Villanueva-Saucedo stated the Task Force was charged with developing recommendations for City Council concerning early childhood education in Mesa. The timeline, funding and implementation will be the job of City Staff with the community. At today's meeting the Task Force will work towards a streamlined compilation of recommendations. The final document will include the acknowledgement new funding sources will be needed to make a real difference. This endeavor will require not only funding, but collaboration to recognize gaps, align resources and explore potential revenue streams. The Task Force also recognizes that the feasibility, scope and costs associated with this plan will need further examination.

There was concern of this issue being pushed down the road with elections two years away, although it was noted that it takes time to get the wheels in motion and identify potential funding streams. This will be an opportunity for the City to clarify its role in early childhood education and move this forward to a community-owned endeavor.

At this time, a video component is not being produced. After direction is received from the City Council, a video may be created on the process, recommendations and next steps.

**4. Take Action to Accept Resignation Request from Task Force Member, Ms. Rhonda Anderson:**

**MOTION:** Mike Hutchinson made a Motion to accept the resignation of Rhonda Anderson from the Early Childhood Education Task Force

**SECOND:** Nancy Salmon

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

**5. Hear Comments And Insights from Task Force Members and City Staff who Attended the April 11, 2016 Tours of Jordan Center for Early Education and Mesa Community College's Early Education Center:**

KinderU places special needs kids with 3, 4, and 5 year olds in one class, if that will best meet their needs. More locations are needed in the heart of downtown Mesa to accommodate families in need. The quality of teachers in both locations is phenomenal and the children were engaged, socially and emotionally developed, and free to explore and learn. The Mesa Community College program is setting up the idea of what higher learning is, being located at the college. The kids are taken on field trips to the planetarium and students have opportunities for observation and training. The student teacher ratio is high, and in some cases one on one. They currently focus on children of students and faculty and are looking for capital improvements in order to expand and possibly offer to the community. Mike Hutchinson noted a teacher with 22 years in the Mesa Public Schools is currently making \$42,000. The Jordan Center teachers are on a salary schedule with the entry level being \$35,000. The Task Force felt that teachers are under funded.

**6. Participate in a Facilitated Discussion to Craft a Shared Recommended "Mesa's Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education." Some of the questions to be asked by the facilitator include:**

- a) Do the broad goal statements accurately reflect the Task Force recommendations?
- b) Are the concrete action statements accurate, clear?
- c) Should any of these concrete actions be combined, taken off the list, added to the list or moved?
- d) Which concrete actions do you believe will be most/least impactful?
- e) Is there a particular age group that the Task Force believes deserves Mesa's priority focus?
- f) Does the Task Force wish to recommend phasing of some kind?
- g) What are the different types of funding that should be explored by the community?

All were in agreement on the draft outline reflecting the desired outcomes of the Task Force. It is important to include the connection with the City's General Plan (2040) or Council Strategic Plan as it relates to the role of education. How quality programs are defined should be clarified as to accreditation or other standards. It was noted that not everyone may be aware of the Quality First program and further definition is needed in the document. It is essential to have community awareness of the importance of early childhood education and the impact on the community and economic development. It needs to be a priority at the state level to value early childhood education. It was recommended to prioritize resources to those families most in need in terms of location, financial situation, and language needs. The language in the document should be broad in order to be all encompassing.

Alison Mullady provided her comments by email. She stated we should think big and see our role as outlining why early childhood is important and what an ideal scenario looks like. This will continue to grow the conversation around early childhood education and broaden it potentially to more stakeholders. We

should never start with the money when being innovative. Start by asking what is the problem we need to solve, and then look for opportunities, partners, and leverage everything we can to make that happen.

The Task Force reviewed and categorized the concrete action statements from a numbered list into several goal-oriented themes.

#### Expand the Capacity of Existing Programs

3. Expand Pre-K programs to full day in all Mesa Public Schools (MPS) [Strike Out]
4. Implement a grant program available to existing early learning providers to increase capacity and/or quality. This program would have an application rubric w/measurable outcomes
8. Expand the number of MPS sites in KinderU by X number per year
10. Fund additional spots at existing quality programs
12. City to provide funding (tax or grant) so that additional Pre-K offerings at existing high quality centers can be increased. More children need access. Build on existing resources like MPS
13. Create a funding mechanism to increase number of slots for low-income families by helping existing programs increase capacity of time, space, staff
14. Double the number of Head Start locations in Mesa based on low-income qualifying data
15. Extend Head Start at MPS by offering services in summer
39. Provide grants for already existing programs to produce and distribute advertisements

#### Strengthen Resources for Quality In-Home Environments

9. Establish partnership with MPS to emphasize at-home/in-home care; activities using brain based learning, Parent University
24. Offer free bi-monthly Brain Box type training within underserved communities at community rooms, parks (dependent on weather), locally patronized businesses
25. Create component of program for parent learning of skills and curriculum
26. Review/change protocols in current MPS KinderU program to include state of the art strategies that include parental participation
27. Provide opportunity for all caregivers of 0-5 to attend evidence-based parenting education classes regardless of income. This would help reduce social isolation.
29. Text based strategies program – caregivers/parents receive “bite-sized” tips to support learning and development—can be tailored to either 0-2 or 3-5
30. Community/Neighborhood parent groups facilitated by community organizations—Workshops (parenting, special needs topics), Book Clubs (NAEYC), and resource sharing

#### Prioritize Resources for Those in Need in Terms of Location, Financial Need, and Language Needs

16. Locate centers for learning accessible for families without transportation
17. Transportation is a huge barrier. Ensure accessibility of programming offered and increase programming (parent engagement & child care) in under-resourced neighborhoods
18. Ensure 50% of low-income 3-4 year olds can access quality Pre-K — use a sliding scale up to 300% of federal poverty level
19. Affordability should not be criteria. Make a Pre-K (3-4 year old) program an ongoing MPS offering
20. Develop/provide programs without tuition by partnering with businesses for support
21. Provide a way for families who don't qualify for existing subsidies to still gain access to Pre-K—sliding scale

23. Scholarships/supplements for families who fall into the income “gap” and do not qualify for other programs but still cannot afford top-rated quality sites
31. Map the areas of Mesa with increased need (under-resourced families and limited existing capacity) and create resource centers where families can access information and materials (i.e. Brain Boxes) to enhance in-home care and/or access Pre-K programs for 3 and 4 year olds
32. Create (or partner) to establish a centralized hub for resources, information and referrals for families with children 0-5, locate in under-resourced communities

Raise Public Awareness from Grass Roots to Grass Tops (business, community leaders) of the Importance of Early Childhood Education; Influencing the Conversation

28. Host an annual “Early Ed in Mesa” conference that allows providers and families to learn about opportunities, best practices, share info, etc.
33. Utilize current MPS media/outreach strategies to inform parents about Pre-K programs
34. Partner with 150 local hospitals, faith based groups, pediatricians, and schools to increase awareness of free/affordable Pre-K offerings
35. Increase community awareness on the importance of quality Pre-K (0-5) through Community Service Announcements / Utility bills / Libraries / TV-Web-Radio
36. Create an awareness campaign for Mesa (bilingual) to promote the idea of families as the first classroom and promote existing early education opportunities
37. Have an aggressive Public Relations and Marketing Plan to consistently “tell the story” about the City and MPS plan to improve kindergarten readiness
38. Work with local community champions and organizations to increase public awareness about the importance of early childhood
40. “Early Childhood Day” – host a 1 day conference for business leaders, community organization leaders, and public officials to learn about early childhood education research, impact on society and existing programs, etc.
41. Present program to each school PTO and staff meeting. Find opportunities for Public Service Announcements
49. Organize community drives for resources of supplies, etc.

Strengthen quality programming, where needed.

1. Expand the number of centers enrolled in Quality First located in low-income, under-resourced neighborhoods (Combine 1 and 2)
2. Identify goals timetable to increase the number of entities participating in the Quality First initiative
5. Subsidize some funding for teacher certification in early childhood in exchange for recipients agreeing to teach in a Mesa early learning program for 5+ years
6. Partner with high quality sites and lab schools to develop educator training, teacher swaps, coaching/support groups (could be for 0-2 but harder to find)
7. Offer professional development to all providers/teachers from Pre-K to 3rd grade to increase quality continuum
11. Sites may agree to be training sites for other schools/providers
22. Reduce teaching costs – add staff by partnering with training programs for teachers and other early childhood education related professionals (OT / SLP / Social Work / Nursing)

City Role

42. Establish a separate and diverse governance structure to put emphasis on new Pre-K initiatives
43. Establish an early childhood coalition that convenes around shared measures and common agenda to align and leverage resources
44. Make the new Pre-K initiatives an integral part of other workforce development strategies pursued by the City/region
48. Influence the State of Arizona to fund Pre-K and full-day kindergarten

Funding and Accountability

45. Partner with school districts to use Kindergarten Developmental Inventory to measure outcomes
46. Sustaining the programs – collaborate with external researchers to collect and analyze data to show results and keep programs funded – will also allow more opportunity for external funds
47. Do a uniform survey of school students at different grades that could help determine what helps kids be prepared for school and what does not

Key Statements on Funding and Accountability:

- Need significant resources to impact this issue
- Mesa has the opportunity to be a leader in the community as well as in the State and nation
- There must be accountability through measurement as part of this effort
- Cite research – can influence the entire continuum from 0-5
- Examine existing resources to determine where to invest to make the most impact

Age Range: There was discussion on whether to target a particular age range to have the strongest impact in the event that there are not enough funds to accomplish all of the goals for early childhood education. The 0-3 range is important to address as the first year is critical to brain development and at risk families need support to meet basic needs. The Pre-K 3-5 age range is equally important as resources are limited and success in the early school years has a significant impact on future success as well as the economic development of the community. Research needs to be cited on the value of improving early childhood education for both the 0-3 and the 3-5 age ranges. The Task Force decided not to lock into an age bracket as both need to be addressed and the program design will determine which age group will be impacted.

**7. Discuss Next Steps:**

- a) Note: May 26, 2016, 7:30 A.M. Mayor and City Council Study Session, 57 E. 1st Street, Lower Council Chambers. This is the meeting where the Task Force's recommendations will be presented to the Council. As close to full attendance by the Task Force is appreciated.
- b) Staff will need two weeks to refine the Strategic Plan to reflect the Task Force input, as well as to include research, a cost index of existing facilities and programs, and a glossary of terms. The recommendations to Council will need to be finalized by the week of May 12 to allow time for design and formatting before presenting to City Council on May 26, 2016.

**8. Discuss and Confirm Whether a Final Committee Work Meeting is Needed on Wednesday, April 20, 2016**  
**9:00 a.m., Fiesta District Police Substation:**

The April 20, 2016 meeting will be moved to allow Staff time for revisions to the document. The Task Force will meet to review the revised draft of the recommendations and to provide final comments on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 9:00 A.M. at the Fiesta District Police Substation.

**9. Adjourn Meeting:**

**MOTION:** Linda McKeever made a Motion to adjourn the meeting

**SECOND:** Cynthia Melde

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 P.M

Submitted by:

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Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo, Vice Chair

(Prepared by Dana Desing, TE: 14082507)