

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund  
Listening Session  
Group Memory**

**January 13, 2010**

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**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund  
Systems Building Listening Session  
January 13, 2010**

**Meeting Summary**

***Meeting Purpose***

To engage representatives from the extended family of Memorial Fund-supported organizations in a conversation about the goals for an early childhood systems-building initiative and the design of a process for including all stakeholders.

***Next Steps***

<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>By When</b>
Put together group memory and send to participants	IISC	January 20, 2009
Compile “anchor notes” and fit into appendices of group memory	Note takers and IISC	January 22, 2009
Temporary “design team” debriefs this conversation and looks at over-lap between short-term and long-term work to make decisions about scope of this process; need to decide with what will be feasible as a process convened by GMF	Design Team	End of January
Let GMF/Design Team know how you would like to be involved in this process going forward (informed, consulted, hands-on with content and/or process)	Participants	Today or ASAP

***Outstanding Issues/Questions or Bin?***

Decision on gubernatorial campaign strategy and timeframe vis a vis this systemic, longer term nature of this initiative

Where We Want To Be

## Group Memory

### **Participants**

Lisa Cooney, Betsey O'Connor, Fred Jackson, Donna Koser, Sherry Filiatreault, Juleen Flannigan, Pat Kopycinski, Sue Tenorio, Judy Drenzek, Joan O'Donnell, Eileen Costello, Jennifer Hallissey, Ann Pratt, Cyd Oppenheimer, Kimberly Dole, Carolyn Morrison, MaryAnn Murray, Tricia Godfrey, David Nee, Betsy Morgan, Karen Hicks, Maggie Adair, Nancy Leonard, Angela Frusciante, Sharon Kelley, Carmen Siberon, Anne Jerome, Kathy Queen, Susan Pavelko, Mary Fulton, Alan Slobodien, Erica Bromley, Mary Cecchinato, Donna Labbe, Roberta Clouet, Lori Kurasz, David Martin, Caroline LaFleur, Jennifer Baglin, Mindy D'Andrea, Donna Kehoe, Sandy Baxter, Pam Hansen, Craig Turner, Michelle Steinberg, Shelly Flynn, Susan Rubino, Sherry Linton, Merrill Gay

### **Desired Outcomes**

The following desired outcomes were presented at the start of the meeting. By the end of this meeting, the group expected to have:

A shared understanding of the history and current reality relating to this systems building work.

A shared understanding of what we mean by "systems building"

A list of ideas for the scope and results of a systems building initiative (short and long-term)

A list of ideas for high level strategies this process might employ (advocacy, listening, education, etc.) to get from where we are now systemically to where we want to be

A shared understanding of how communities, state-wide organizations and the Memorial Fund would like to be involved in a systems building initiative

A list of next steps, starting with a design process that ensures community voice

### **Agenda**

The following agenda was presented at the start of the meeting, with adjustments made during the meeting as needed.

<b>What</b>	<b>Presenter/Facilitator</b>	<b>When</b>
Participants Arrive/ Refreshments		9:00-9:30
Start Ups Welcome, Desired Outcomes & Agenda Introductions/Icebreaker	WCGMF/IISC	9:30-10:15
Where We've Been and Where We Are Now	WCGMF/IISC	10:15-10:45
BREAK		10:45-11:00

Where We Want To Be (Goal Setting)	WCGMF/IISC	11:00-12:00
LUNCH		12:00-1:00
Possible High Level Strategies	IISC	1:00-2:00
BREAK		2:00-2:10
Stakeholder Involvement	IISC	2:10-2:45
Close Next Steps/Evaluation	WCGMF/IISC	2:45-3:00

## ***Start Ups***

### **Welcome and Purpose**

David welcomed new members to the Discovery community and reviewed some of the Fund’s approaches to addressing needs of children and early childhood education, as a state-wide foundation focused on these issues. From the strategic plan, there was a recommendation from communities that there be an early childhood system that is responsive to the needs of families and communities. At these forums, the Fund became persuaded that with communities, the Fund could fill a niche posed by the collapse of government on these issues.

This state needs a serious conversation about how we organize at the state, local levels around these issues. Then government can make up its mind about what it wants to do about reform. Someone needs to think through it all and explore what it would take to make a system work.

The Fund has had conversations with its staff and trustees and they signed on (“enthusiastically endorsed this strategy from 2010-2014). Community input had a direct hand in the shape our strategy has taken; we want to work with you with communities as full partners – from creating the vision to the system’s implementation to the extent that our collective wisdom dictates.

Today, we need your input on some front end aspects: how exactly we can partner effectively.

Who’s in the room? Each of 54 communities invited to send reps; all state-wide orgs we fund were asked to be here. All have expertise. Leaving early will deprive you of some excitement; the evaluation form asks you to evaluate this session, but also about stakeholders and thoughts going forward. If you leave early, fill out form early. Nancy is our lead on this.

## **Introductions**

David introduced Curtis and Melinda from IISC. If you've already been to Facilitative Leadership training, you know them. Its creative and applied at the same moment. Curtis and Melinda will facilitate further. Thank you.

Curtis described the work of IISC as facilitators, trainers and consultants in collaborative leadership skills and large multi-stakeholder processes. We help people be better together. This work like work we've done in Springfield, MA in serving children 0 – 8 years old. We're here in that spirit, in partnership with the Fund and in humility in conversation with you.

Participants were asked to introduce themselves, communities, roles.

*What is your greatest hope for all children in Connecticut and why?*

All kids living up to their potential; a need to reach kids as early as possible

Gap between different children (socio-economic) and to have kids overcome that

Equity in the school system v. luck

Support – networks, help. Folks will need it to get there.

Idea that education begins at age 5. We want that changed. It needs a serious thought process; it begins at birth.

Through the Fund's initiative, we have many communities working within and across communities, over 100 municipalities; CT has prided itself at being autonomous; perhaps because of the economy, communities thinking about working together, and have similar goals.

Curtis stated that we never want to lose sight of the children and when we talk of systems it's about the kids and how things work for them. The connectivity, deeper relationships, meeting new people and “aha's” at the tables is another goal of the day. A participant shared this thought as well:

Children should not have to “navigate a system”; should not have to navigate, it should be obvious and based on the children.

## ***Where We've Been and Where we Are Now***

Melinda invited David and Ann to offer up comments on the history and current state of early childhood systems and systems building in CT.

David

1997 School Readiness Act was discussed during introductions. It was a giant step forward at its time. Later GMF had a legislative retreat, and Representative Thompson was appalled to hear that school readiness had been compressed to 3 and 4 year olds.

Many efforts to try and put things together across agencies.

Gentleman working on aging issues in DC. There were 36 programs for which people were eligible but you had to visit 16 or so offices to visit to get access.

Really responded to the notion that any door should be the right door.

Parents get pushed out of programs because they lose their job. Programs cut back because of the yo-yo of state funding. Program directors have to constantly blend funding streams. Neighborhoods in certain towns and cities are disconnected from systems and programs. Looking for something more mindful going forward.

Most of work done in states talks about systems as furnishings and apparatus at state or county level. Very few have thought communities.

Smart Start in North Carolina has echoes of what we are doing in Discovery.

We don't have a shared vision or blueprint for how components work together.

"System" – composed of a set of independent but correlated parts that form a whole.

There is a good deal of ground work – the Early Childhood Cabinet, Ready by Five, Fine by Nine, proposal for QRIS, 23 community blueprints and visions and results and willingness and engagement, 18 more communities that would sign up tomorrow to do planning, communities and advocates are very organized and engaged in improving things for children

GMF Strat Plan – not wanting something fragmented or flawed

Governor indicated said she would not run again. Once in a 16 year opportunity.

One thing we will explore today is how we cope with the opportunities and make this real.

We would not do this if it did not mean partnership with communities. How do we balance the important with the urgent? We come back to participation- community ownership is key.

Any plan that says "GMF Plan", why bother? If it said "A Community Plan and Vision for an Early Care System" that would be much more powerful. Over the last few years communities in Discovery have lifted up their voice and this is something we want to build on. We rejected the idea of doing just a grant to the advocates for them to figure it out, nor does GMF want to lead this. We are convinced there is a middle ground as convener, we can bring resources to the table. This is going to depend on shoe leather, good footwork and creativity.

Today is not the first word or last word, but a step in a collaborative path to creating a new way of doing business in Connecticut for our youngest children.

Population Outcome =

Ann

The CT Early Childhood Alliance is statewide organization and includes state-funded centers, school readiness programs, family resource centers, CT Parent Power, Discovery communities, CAHS

This past year we did work to ensure there was some funding for early care programs (Head Start, School Readiness, etc.). Did advocacy on behalf of community plans.

Wanting to include these in advocacy agenda going forward.

This coming year we have to do a lot of work to protect programs. Having been thinking with GMF about long-term systems building work. Alliance has come up with its own vision of what a system would look like.

Broken systems that are frustrating to providers and parents alike. Problems with data.

Need a system that works for parents (info about what programs are out there).

November 14<sup>th</sup> – public meeting unveiled components of a systemic vision

Uniform reporting system

Unified funding streams

Fully funded slots

Quality rating system that works

Workforce development

Coordinated transparent data collection

Opportunities:

Gubernatorial race

Early Learning Challenge Grant (federal monies) – to be competitive we have to do some things that are not currently happening

Early Childhood Cabinet – started in 2005 and was moving towards this kind of system but was defunded, vacuum presents an opportunity to fill

Don't want to just be at the table but help to set the table.

Sense of urgency – need to do this with all of us and in a timely way.

Once heard that a community is “people who understand, feel and act as if their destiny is intertwined.”

Questions for Content Clarification:

Will we get copy of the notes? YES!!!

Table Buzz (reactions, additions)

All of the apparatus that was talked about re: the current system applies mainly to 3 and 4 year olds and poor children.

The hardest part of developing a system is starting by imagining that the old system has evaporated, work backwards from the goals we want to achieve.

The plans of the 23 communities have not yet impacted the State. They remain 23 points in a system that is not yet integrated. Need to raise this to shared awareness.

There is another system in CT – 100 youth service bureaus that are developing RBA systems. This cannot be disconnected from those working on birth to 8.

One of the challenges is having consensus on identifying the problem or issue you are trying to address in your community. Sometimes we fail to keep in mind what the initial boundary is of the population we are working with. We do well intended things but they may not be addressing the problems we set out to address. Sometimes we get too caught up in immediate concerns. People have to agree that the problem is worth responding to state-wide (how do state-wide concerns relate to community-based issues?)

We have a lot of work to do in the systems of politics and politicians. We can have these great ideas and we are up against some formidable foes. They may agree with us but can't get out from underneath themselves. Have to include a plan that includes that piece of this.

We can't ignore reality that there is a recession. Communities are receiving fewer dollars and need to make hard choices about what to support and what not to support.

The public will can help to weather a lot of the political and economic storms. Look at senior citizens. The problem is lack of consensus. We have to build consensus about this so that the perceived benefits will be undeniable.

### ***Where We Want to Be***

Melinda presented the Big Picture framework, indicating that the previous conversation filled in the details of the “context” for this systems-building work and the “currently reality” of the system and systems-building effort. In this portion of the agenda, we are convening ourselves to talk about the “desired future state” of an early care system and

systems-building efforts. To get there, we will do a couple rounds of World Café. These rounds will focus on the questions:

What do we want to see as the result of our systems building work?

What does a successful system look like?

Harvest (What were common and resonant themes?):

We need a seismic shift to move from a system where we are focused on people not taking advantage of the system to a system focused on kids reaching potential.

Values – talked about a clash of values. All of these issues go back to our values in our communities and society at large. There needs to be a values shift.

Messaging – we need a common language that is shared and understood.

To convert skeptics and show many different people that birth-12 is a worthy investment.

A successful system will prove to naysayers that this is worthy for communities and entire state.

System has to be family-centric, not just child-centric. Family as driver for change.

A hub model – all families go to one location for all services, no stigma related to any service location.

Data collection begins as families enter the door for services.

Communications writ very large – persuasion (75% of people in the state are not currently parents of young children) and confusion (not using same terms or using same terms with different meaning). Emphasize use of simple language (what we've got is puzzling to most consumers).

Consistency across standards and supports.

Community plans have similarities. Can State take plans and common elements and use these at the higher level; communities can implement the more diverse elements.

Problem is that if there are 169 communities with plans that are functioning, what does a state-wide system do? It is not clear that we will ever get away from the 169 systems.

Does system mean “government” only?

Part of conversation at our table was about ending silos at the systems level. This doesn't mean anything if it doesn't work for communities and families.

Change focus to consumer away from geography or funding-stream focus.

We need good data systems that are transparent that communicate this is a worthy investment for those who do not care about it. Citizens at large need to be able to say, “I want this and I trust the government to do this.”

Philanthropy and business have more of a role and understand the impact of “the system” on the communities.

Be mindful of the correlations that we make between data.

The discussions have to have much more diversity at the tables.

### ***Possible High Level Strategies and Tracks of Activity***

Curtis reviewed the Big Picture and located the group to now focus on the arrow, “How Do We Get There”, by brainstorming several possible high level strategies together at tables. On large post-its, each group was asked to agree on 3 high level strategies to present to the larger group for analysis and sorting on a large wall. The groups reported out on high

level strategies as follows:

- Group consultation to synthesis the work that has already been done in CT.
- Include professionals in field building and creating the system.
- Educate/influence the gubernatorial candidates and the system as a whole.
- Political influence that all gubernatorial candidates articulate ECE as a priority
- Data system more accessible to local communities
- Statewide marketing campaign
- Public will campaign: educate people on the problems with ECE in the state
- Financing strategy that blends state and local money
- Statewide to convene stakeholders on a results statement, indicators and locally developed actions
- Informational systems for candidates; individual participations in campaign
- Communication plan – agreed to, plain language
- Early childhood cabinet
- Statewide campaign stressing support for 0 – 8 years
- Support gubernatorial candidates with ECE focus
- Consensus on EC priorities and engage state agency partners in the planning process
- Shift in beliefs in values --- develop a social marketing campaign with common language and broad appeal
- Data collection beyond academic success
- Buy in for change at state and local level
- Eliminate silo effect
- Form a social marketing campaign for
- Central hub for families so that they can get their resources at a single point of entry at all levels (county, state, etc.)
- Sustenance approach for the big picture for what we want for EC

Curtis then asked participants to add anything that they are excited around but has not been listed yet:

- Organizing and advocacy v. communications and marketing
- Consumer voice specifically as it relates to parents.
- Systems characteristics (e.g., “no wrong door”, “single entry point”)...what does the system look like? Would be helpful to understand how the elements of the system come together. Someone has to wrestle with how it should look like. “Systems architecture” – what is it, then how to build it.
- The details of what’s included on a big picture level to fight the battle around that. This is the broad brush that would be presented to the gubernatorial candidates.

The categories of the strategies proffered, and relevant resources, were identified as follows:

<i>Politics</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Architecture</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Single Point of Entry</i>

<p>Election work group – to create roadmap for the candidates, then connect stakeholders to meet with them (candidate forums, etc.)  Hire CT Citizen Action Group or other group to show us how to do this.  Money  Staff time  Volunteer time  Legislative Training and \$ to pay for it  Poll on ECC and Ed;  Forum based on poll results  Obama-campaign type website  Packets – gubernatorial and legislative candidates (staff, money)  Campaign participants  Convention delegates (having packets to promote ECCE)  Organizing model – short and long term  Stakeholders: parents, Discovery Communities, Women, PLTI, Alliance, Civic Groups, Chambers, schools, faith communities.</p>	<p>Goal: Data system that supports communities retrieve and analyze data, user friendly and comprehensive;  Analysis and retrieval critical; data to determine what kids need.  Some resources: P20 Commission  Charter Oak  CT Economic Resource Center – “Open Indicators Project”  CT Voices</p>	<p>Coordinator to design a system with all stakeholders represent3ed (providers, local agencies, parents, etc.)  Learnings from the Ready by Five program, etc.; include local and statewide successes to learn from  Money for consultant (who does the consultant answer to?)  Timeline: asap (ELCGrant – March announcement – streamline funding, statewide advisory council, uniform recording systems)  Workforce Committee of the Early Childhood Alliance as a resource</p>	<p>Concise, simple, informative, message that can be customized as needed (i.e., diversity, local communities);  one message, logo that everyone can get behind  Expertise  Time – volunteers  Focus groups  Money</p>	<p>Goal: Make 211 more robust  Expertise (planning, design, influencers who can make changes)  Stakeholders: united way, state agencies, hospitals, civic groups, faith based, rotary clubs, etc.  Technology: radio, social networking, blogs, telephones, texting (to get info to families)  During planning process - conversation with families and providers.  Being eligible for free lunch, free breakfast, etc. and make it automatic</p>
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### **More comments, contributions, observations across group ideas:**

Needing to know what the “ask” is. We need to know what it is that we’re asking people to do...not sure it came out in this round.

We’ve said “0 – 8 years”, but most working in “0 – 5year”; most teachers don’t see themselves there; Should we focus on early childhood as 0 – 5 before they enter school; no consensus yet on that answer.

Significant challenge: look at the conversation/system as inclusive as it relates to income... rather, create a system, experience, message that includes all families. How to operationalize that is huge.

### ***Thoughts on how we’d like to be involved:***

Curtis – the last few comments raise up the fact that there are key agreements re: scope, various tracks, and how they work together. He then reviewed a slide describing the various roles

Go back to our communities make sure we are represented throughout each circle

Hard for some of us to figure out what hat we’re wearing when we come here – as parent, as part of my job, etc.

Important to remember that this strategy is about working together “in full partnership with communities”. Some Discovery people represent communities and local collaboratives... this is how you’re defining what “full partnership” means for you is useful.

Regional Listening Tables that the Fund has done previously was very good and could be done again.

Look out for feelings of déjà vu...approach with an understanding that folks feel burnt out on the planning part. Need to write down what the end product and timeline looks like and who the change makers on the team, making decisions.

Need idea of what the commitment means - time, meetings, etc.

Ownership – what communities who are not in the room now so that they can be included in where we are in the conversation.

Discovery Collaboratives involved in Input and Feedback Meetings and Communication and Outreach; members of collaboratives could be part of the inner 3 rungs, as representatives from the collaboratives. Collaboratives as a source of talent and expertise.

1 or 2 collaborative reps to be a part of the design team – do we nominate, select, etc. how would communities determine who gets to represent communities? Have more than a few people from major cities due to the complexity of the problems in those communities; people could self-select or be picked – either way if others could also provide input as necessary. Poor communication kills everything – its critical to communicate

Categorize people by population and categorize communities to include them that way: 54 discovery communities; 169 towns...would like to see the process look more inclusive rather than less inclusive – include people who have not been in the Discovery process as well.

45 communities represent a huge proportion of the children of color and low income kids. Regional representation because each region comes with their issues; at least you have voice for their issues.

Let GMF/Design Team  
 know how you would like  
 to be involved in this  
 process going forward  
 (informed, consulted,  
 etc.)

Question asked of the group: What does full partnership mean to you ?  
 If I'm on the DT and from New Britain, do I rep NB or the community – how does that get framed? There is a representative aspect of it where you'd rep NB but also community as well. DT members work in the ultimate interest of the goals of the initiative. One of the first design conversations is how to constitute the members of that group.

**Questions about the Process Going forward**

Q: If the process design dictates that diversity be increased, how would I be considered (Hispanic v. Woman v. etc.)? There are different dimensions of diversity; a strategic conversation is : how do we need diversity represented at different levels in order for this to be an inclusive process. No one person can represent all of one stakeholder group.

Q: What are the responsibilities to being a representative?  
 That's another core design question. Process maps, for example, capture how, when and with whom to communicate.

Q: Design team. When begins, when ends, on-going, etc.?  
 Its frontloaded. Team convenes after making the roadmap, and then to tweak it as you go. Davis Foundation work ended up being 2 years: 1 year planning, 1 year implementation. Met around 6 times as a Design Team.  
 Comment: This model is applicable to a longer range; doesn't apply to the gubernatorial election.

**Next Steps**

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*Name of Client Organization*

*Name of Meeting – Date  
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