



Early Childhood Education Advisory Meeting Minutes
Home and Family Life Building, Room 129 / Zoom
April 15, 2026, from 4- 5:15 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 4:03 p.m.

a. Present:

Sue Akins-Fields, LCC Faculty, Early Childhood Ed
Michaela Jackson, Dean of Education/ECE
Ale Sanchez, LCC Education Advisor
Jenny Smith, Program Manager, Educational Partnerships (minutes)
Josie Zbaeren, LCC Faculty, Early Childhood Ed
Madeline Busby, LCC Head Start Family Advocate
Heidi Byers, LCC Student Representative
Kari Johnson, Director, LCC Early Learning Center
Laurie Severson, Head Start/ECEAP
Jeff Strange, Kelso School District, Teacher

b. Remote:

Carol Jack, Child Care Aware – Scholarships

II. BUSINESS & INDUSTRY UPDATES

Head Start: Center aides are being hired. Education not required but encouraged. Center aids are not eligible for EAG funding. Classroom observations and evaluations are happening in preparation for the May review. File reviews will also be conducted. The rapid expansion of TK enrollment reduced the number of ECEAP slots available. Some school districts and other programs may pursue an ECEAP expansion (Ballmer Grant) but those slots will also be very competitive and based upon community need. Head Starts can pursue the working day model to offset the financial impact. But eligibility for the working day model will be limited to those who qualify for before and after-school subsidies.

LCC Early Learning Center: The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is changing how childcare is funded. They currently allow billing on child enrollment. It will be switching to attendance-based billing, which will impact both families and childcares.

Kelso School District: Transitional Kindergarten (TK) slots are decreasing, which may impact affordability.

Community Events: Safe Kids: May 2 - Legos, helmets, and car seat safety with booths. Clinic this Saturday. Check FB announcements.

Kelso - Kinderpalooza at Coweeman Gym - no applications (they go to school) - May 5, 2026. The website includes a map showing the boundaries between Kelso and Longview.

III. LCC PROGRAM UPDATES

a. Faculty Updates

- Retirements: Sue Akins-Fields is looking forward to spending time with family. Spring will be the final quarter. June 30 is the last day.
- Adjunct position has been posted, and interviews will be taking place soon.

b. Construction: The new building is resulting in the Science and Physical Science buildings being demolished. ECED classes will be moved to other locations. June 30 is the last day.

c. Enrollment / Student Success

- Classes are full with waitlists. We open new courses when waitlists are high enough.
- We have to remind students not to procrastinate with enrollment, as waiting could put them in line behind visiting students.
- P.A.C.E.: PACE modules refer to structured, multi-part training programs designed for professional development in early childhood education. These modules are self-paced, interactive, and designed to provide certification, continuing education credits, or skill-based training. 60 PACE students are completing, and they will be ready for college courses in the fall. We are open to taking those students.

d. Early Achievers Grant (EAG)

- Ale (ECE/EDUC advisor) will work with EAG as well. Grant management, recruiting, marketing, and state meetings will be added to her position description, pending approval.
- EAG application for funding has been submitted. We requested funding for 20 (up from 18). Enrollment is traditionally 200% over our request, with approximately a 5-person waitlist. Some students believe that they are only interested in certificates, but often they continue on to their AAS.

e. Curriculum Changes

- Approved Curriculum changes: Quantitative Math 131 will be a math course beginning in July. It was previously a Natural Science.
- ECE is available online, with some hybrid requirements for field placements.
- Stackable Certificates: Can students still complete the state certificates? Yes, we are still within the guidelines, with outcomes altered enough to maintain relevance.

- Practicum Evaluation Forms: The program's expansion has increased the number of practicum placement opportunities. We are hoping to receive some feedback from our advisory on the information shared. Especially the Practicum Observation form
- Action Item: Extend an invitation to share this information and provide feedback. Include electronic copies (links) with the Google form. We will include this discussion at the fall meeting, but we request feedback earlier.

f. Discontinuing the BAS-TE ECE non-cert route

The ECE Non-cert route was a way to get the ECE bachelor's degree without certification. We haven't had enough student enrollment to offer the non-cert route since 2025. Cohort 4, every non-cert student transitioned to the cert route. LCC is exploring a human development degree, and many ECE students are interested in this training. Classes are applicable to those seeking a bachelor's degree, but not to those seeking teaching credentials. ECE Endorsements (certification) will still be available.

IV. LCC Events

- Directors Dinner - May 6, from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. in LCC West Room 129**
- Assistant's Dessert - May 7 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. in LCC West Room 129**

V. CAREER CONNECT WASHINGTON

Lower Columbia College has applied for Career Launch approval through Career Connect WA. We have been sponsored and are nearly complete with the endorsement applications for Early Childhood Education, Education, Manufacturing, and Welding. We appreciate the letters of support and look forward to receiving endorsement applications in the near future.

VI. K12 UPDATES

Childcare Aware Updates

- Childcare finder was sent to all providers statewide, requesting information to be published for equitable access. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/find-child-care>
- BAS scholarships have been discontinued this year. The next fiscal year looks the same. We will support current scholars. Updates expected in the next month or so.
- Students who are completing AA - Montessori scholarships: we have a list going. Please get on the list. Funding was cut in half. Maybe 10 slots.
- Please dispose of outdated flyers. Information is incorrect.

VII. ADJOURNED 5:04 pm

- Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 2026, from 4 to 5:30 p.m.**
- Minutes Approval Reminder**

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