



Policy & Finance Subcommittee
Public Meeting Tuesday, May 19, 2026, | 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm
Virtual Meeting Located on Zoom.com.

ATTENDANCE

11 of 13 MEMBERS' PRESENT

1. Abbey Bernhardt, Systems Alignment Co-Chair
2. Brianna Cambra, Provider Support Director, The Children's Cabinet
3. Patrice Gardner, ECAC Vice Chair
4. Lela Gonzales, Workforce Support Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
5. Dr. Jerek Hough, Regional Director, Source Academy
6. Kate Pflughoeft, PDG B-5 Assistant Grant Manager, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
7. Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager, E Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
8. Denise Tanata, Policy and Finance Co-Chair
9. Stephanie Vega, Teacher, Washoe County School District
10. Patty West, Subsidy Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
11. Brooke Yarborough, Social Services Chief 2, Nevada Department of Human Services, Division of Social Services

2 of 13 MEMBERS' ABSENT

1. Kathy Yoder Bass, Council Member
2. Octavia McLaurin, Child Care Owner

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

1. Brandi Hearst, ECAC Administrative Coordinator, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
2. Tiffany Olivas, Family Leadership and Engagement Chair
3. Krystal VanDelden, Community Member
4. Anna Villatoro, Family Engagement Specialist, The Children's Cabinet

MINUTES

1. Welcome, Call to Order, Roll Call, Introduction and Welcome to new Co-Chair

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Denise Tanata started the meeting at 3:33 pm
- Brandi Hearst conducted roll call, noted above

2. Public Comment #1

Public Comment not given

- No Comment

3. Approval of a Flexible Agenda (*Discussion for Possible Action*)

The Subcommittee to vote for approval of a flexible agenda.

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Tiffany Alston motioned to approve a flexible agenda
- Abbey Bernhardt seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries



4. Approval of March 17, 2026, Minutes (*Discussion for Possible Action*)

The Subcommittee approved the March Minutes.

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Rachel Stepina had requested an extra E be removed on her name in the Attendance section on page 1
- Patrice Gardner requested the word "shard" to "shared" on page 3
- Tiffany Alston motioned to approve March minutes with the edits above
- Patrice Gardner seconded the motion
- Members voted unanimously, motion carries

5. Policy and Finance Subcommittee Transition Process Overview (*Discussion for Possible Action*)

The Members received an overview of the transition process and support roles

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Denise Tanata discussed that the members of this subcommittee already are aware of the Co-Chair structure as we just lived it, invited Brandi Hearst to share the Support role that we are now recruiting for
- Brandi Hearst shared the Secretary role, the
 - responsibility of the secretary being the task Sabrina Jonesn and Brandi Hearst do during meetings
 - Screenshare
 - Minutes
 - Roll Call
 - Quorum / watching member attendance
 - Explained that there are:
 - trainings available
 - 2 minute how to videos
 - Our support
- Denise Tanata shared that she is active in the agenda creations and the minutes review and will continue to help the Secretary
- Stephanie Vega volunteered to be the Secretary for this Subcommittee.
- Denise Tanata thanks Dr. Stephanie Vega and asked Brandi Hearst to reach out and set up Secretary training.
 - explained the importance of meeting attendance
 - When we can't meet quorum we can't meet to our work done and that
 - puts us 2 months behind each time (a bi-monthly schedule)
- Members reviewed 2026 schedule
- Denise Tanata reminded Members to let Co-Chairs and Brandi Hearst know if they can't attend via email
 - Being respectful of others' time
 - Proactive for meeting quorum
 - Try to reschedule canceled meetings
- The 2026 Meeting Schedule was posted in the chat

6. Subcommittee Goals and Objectives Overview (*Discussion, Informational*)

The Members discussed 2026-2030 goals and objectives, Interim Policy Priorities, and key activities

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Denise Tanata reviewed "Call to Action" survey from Workplan activities
 - Asked if Members agree to remove the Call to Action Survey from the website
 - Patrice Gardner suggested removing it from the website but offering it to Policy Members
 - Get to know Members and what they can do, and their skills



- Brandi Hearst to remove the survey from the website.
- Members continue reviewing Workplan with Denise Tanta, marking items complete as needed
- Denise Tanata discussed Policy Priority activities, and shared with Members that instead of ECAC making presentations they collaborated on presentations with other agencies such as The Children's Cabinet, incorporating ECAC recommendations into presentations already being done.
- Proposed putting Key messaging or case statements together for each recommendation to work on for future use.
- Rachel Stepina raised concerns regarding follow-up procedures such as:
 - After interim committee presentations
 - April 24th meeting included three hours of discussion on early childhood systems
 - Suggested that if presentations are given, follow-up considerations be part of the Workplan
 - If not presenting, a Member should review content from interim sessions
 - Ensure awareness of developments when the group is not on the agenda
 - emphasized the need to connect ECAC work with other relevant discussions
 - Similar to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education
 - Help to strengthen their visibility beyond just presentations.
- Denise Tanata agreed then shared:
 - ECAC capacity constraints
 - Not all members attend meetings
 - Suggested surveying the group to see who views these presentations
 - Noted that agendas are often posted only days in advance
 - Difficult to align with the group's every-other-month meeting schedule
 - Cautioned against offline decision-making due to open meeting law
 - Agreed on the importance of tracking legislative interim conversations.
- Rachel Stepina proposed documenting specific levels of action in the Workplan such as
 - Building awareness
 - Designating a point person to review agendas in advance
 - Acknowledged the timing challenges
 - Suggested an offline workflow for connections
 - Recognized this might conflict with meeting frequency constraints
- Denise Tanata clarified that:
 - ECAC has opportunities around June to submit policy recommendations for consideration by interim committees
 - Suggested scheduling July meeting to address deadlines
 - Affirmed the role of the ECAC is to develop recommendations and provide input
 - Collaborate with others doing similar work
- Dr. Diane Nicolet expressed concerns
 - Subcommittee might be "behind the ball" regarding current school district activities
 - Understands and respects ECAC capacity limits.
 - Proposed establishing a standing agenda item on every ECAC meeting specifically for legislative discussion
 - Ensuring continuous dialogue about the legislative future
 - Must be framed carefully to comply with open meeting law
 - Stressed the need for extensive input before making policy decisions.
- Patty West suggested creating an ongoing list of relevant meetings:
 - Members sign up to attend.
 - Attendees bring notes and updates to assigned meeting dates for group discussion.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet offered to serve as a conduit for information, with ability to
 - Share discussions from her role as president-elect of the Nevada Association of School Boards



- Student wellness
- Other various topics as ECAC sees fit topics
- Topics that may not be exclusively focused on early childhood
 - As a proactive measure
- Denise Tanata embraced the idea of a "divide and conquer" approach
 - Create a list of upcoming legislative meetings
 - Members to sign up to attend
 - Members report back with updates
- Brandi Hearst to include this as a key activity in the following on the workplan:
 - Monitoring policy meetings and assigning members to identify relevant early childhood discussions.
- Rachel Stepina added that maximizing participation involves two strategies:
 - Providing public comment if an opportunity arises
 - Reviewing recorded meetings afterwards to jump to relevant sections
 - Shared that had this protocol been in place earlier, the ECAC could have submitted public comments on family engagement topics discussed in recent meetings, keeping the organization visible in those spaces
- Dr. Diane Nicolet raised the need to distinguish between the following:
 - Personal comments
 - Official representation of the ECAC in public comments
 - Suggested to discuss developing consistent messaging that members can support ("die on that sword").
- Denise Tanata clarified the following:
 - Individuals can provide public comment on their own behalf,
 - Comment on behalf of the ECAC requires Executive Leadership approval
 - This takes a lot of time
 - Goal to ensure the early childhood community is aware and can provide input on policy decisions
 - Even if not representing the ECAC directly
 - Expressed concern that one hour every two months is insufficient for this volume of discussion.
- Denise Tanata reviewed Goal 1: Promoting an integrated, aligned, and family-centered early childhood system.
 - Objective- Advocate for an integrated governance structure.
 - Members were reminded that goals are static, the activities to achieve them are flexible and developed by us in this Subcommittee.
 - Proposed a historical overview of early childhood governance in Nevada and the national landscape as a starting point to ensure alignment among members.
- Rachel Stepina shared a resource:
 - an early childhood policy review
 - From the Preschool Development Grant, Birth - 5 needs assessment with the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy.
 - Covers initiatives since 2009
 - Does not capture the current trajectory or national perspective.
 - Should be done by the July meeting
 - Offered as a baseline to tailor focus of this Subcommittee.
- Patrice Gardner supported the idea of a review, sharing that:
 - Helpful for new members to better understand
 - Helpful for current members refresh their memory
- Denise Tanata asked Members if a review should happen within this Subcommittee or the entire ECAC?
 - Then assigned homework to review materials before the next meeting



- Brandi Hearst suggested creating a folder on the drive for shareable items, labeled by meeting dates, to serve as a permanent resource.
 - Denise Tanata requested these items be added to website before the agenda is officially posted to ensure transparency.
 - Brandi Hearst to ADA the items and post this week.
- Homework Assigned for Member s to review and Brandi Hearst to post online:
 - Reviewing Workplan- look at key activities and where we can add , what needs an edit, identify if anyone else is already doing these activities
 - Reviewing historical documents regarding the early childhood system that we will come back and discuss
 - [FINAL KFN Case Study](#)
 - [Pre-K Mixed Delivery Model](#)
 - [Interim Committee Meetings List](#)
 - [EC Governance Resources](#)

7. Agenda Items for July 21, 2026, Meeting (*Discussion, Informational*)

The Subcommittee Members discussed items to the July 21, 2026, agenda.

Denise Tanata and Tiffany Alston, Co-Chairs

- Denise Tanata requested 2 tasks before the next meeting:
 - Do a Poll for June Meeting, Include moving to 1.5 hours per meeting
- Workplan
- Dr. Diane Nicolet suggested adding Legislative Session Updates

8. Member Updates (*Discussion, Informational*)

- Members of this Subcommittee did not make announcements at this agenda item

9. Public Comment #2 (*Discussion for Possible Action*)

- Public comment not made during this agenda item.

10. Upcoming ECAC Meetings (*Informational*)

General ECAC: 5.20.26 @ 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Communications and Engagement: 5.26.26 @11:30 am -12:30 pm

Executive Leadership: 6.02.26 @ 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Bylaws Ad Hoc: 6.8.26 @ 9:00 am - 10:00 am

Workforce Development: 6. 09. 26 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Data: 6.18.26 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Policy and Finance: 7.21.26 @ 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

11. Adjournment

- Denise Tanata adjourned the meeting at 4:32 pm

• Action Items

- Brandi Hearst to create meeting poll for new schedule and added meeting in June
- Members to review documents emailed to them and reposted on the website
- Brandi Hearst to add documents to website and email members their assigned work.

• Summary

The Subcommittee discussed in depth the Workplan and ways to stay in touch with legislative news, discussing importance of key messaging and creating a Member sign-up sheet for upcoming legislative meetings.