



Emma Moench <emmamoench@utah.gov>

full comments from board meeting March 24

2 messages

Katrina Herd <katrina.herd@guadschool.org>

Thu, Mar 24, 2022 at 10:45 AM

To: Emma Moench <emmamoench@utah.gov>, School Readiness WS <schoolreadiness@utah.gov>

Hello,

Thank you for hearing my comment during the board meeting this morning. I appreciate the board's consideration of my concerns and the time they used to hear my voice.

I'm sending my full comments in this email and request that they are included in the public comment records for today's meeting. Thank you.

Good morning,

My name is Dr. Katrina Herd and I am the director of the Early Learning Center at Guadalupe School in Salt Lake City. Thank you for hearing my comments today.

I have 3 main concerns with the proposal the board has considered to change the ESA grant application process. My main concern is related to the timeline of the ESA funds. This grant funds my program 100%. While I do receive some private funding, without the ESA grant I cannot run any of my preschool classrooms without ESA funds. This equates to 6 classrooms, 120 students, 98% of whom are defined by this grant as eligible for reimbursement. Many of these students qualify for eligibility in more than one category. This also means funding for 12 teachers. I have heard many references to COVID during these discussions. Four of my staff had a direct family member pass away from COVID during the 2020-2021 school year. I understand COVID impact because the population Guadalupe serves are families living in one of the highest-impact areas. Despite these challenges, my program was evaluated twice - once by requirement and once by choice- using the ECERS-3 scale and was rated as quality both times. I elected for a second evaluation because that is the level of confidence I have in my teachers to provide what is best for children. I know they will provide quality preschool for children every single day.

My second concern comes from my position as a researcher in the field of education with experience using data to determine program effectiveness and teacher practices. I understand the purpose of statistical analyses and the use of a margin of error to ensure that minor variances in data are not discarded. It is my opinion that it is inappropriate to apply a margin of error to the ECERS-3 evaluation as it was used for program evaluation for the purpose of this grant application. Specifically, if a margin of error were going to be applied to the ECERS scores, this should have been disclosed in the Phase 1 application. To apply a margin of error after collecting data calls into question the validity of the data collected and the reliability of any future data. Whether or not all invested parties agree that ECERS scores are an accurate measure of school readiness cannot ethically be part of this conversation because the tool was previously agreed upon and all applicants were aware of the measure and the standard.

My final concern is with the early childhood profession at large and how it is perceived in the state of Utah. I am invested in engaging in opportunities for early childhood to be considered a valuable part of the education system. In many arenas, early childhood education as a profession is perceived as no more than expensive/fancy babysitting. If I am to have any hope of breaking that perception and elevating early childhood to equal status within education, we need to be observed to be playing by the same rules as everyone else. If standards are adjusted and changed, we run the risk of discrediting our profession. Particularly if it is common knowledge that the standard was changed to accommodate one

program and not others. We must hold all early childhood programs to the standards set without wavering at the first sign of a tough decision.

From my outside position, the debate over introducing a margin of error reminds me of a term I used when I was teaching kindergarten: answer shopping. Children "shop" for answers when they are told "no" by one adult, but they are determined to get what they want. They will then go to another adult and ask the same question, hoping to get a favorable answer. This behavior, developmentally appropriate among preschool and kindergarten children, does not belong among programs applying to receive public funds.

Again, thank you for hearing my concerns. I defer to the board to make a decision that will benefit early childhood programs across the state of Utah.

With Care,



Dr. Katrina Herd, EdD
 Director, Early Learning Center, Guadalupe School
 801-531-6100 x103 | katrina.herd@guadschool.org
guadschool.org
[1385 West 1200 North SLC, UT 84116](http://1385West1200NorthSLCUT84116)

"I'm going to wake up and keep trying to do good and so are you and no one gets to vote on that. It's a good time to remember this." Justin McElroy

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Emma Moench <emmamoench@utah.gov>
 To: Katrina Herd <katrina.herd@guadschool.org>
 Cc: School Readiness WS <schoolreadiness@utah.gov>

Thu, Mar 24, 2022 at 10:48 AM

Thank you very much, Katrina. Your full comment will be noted on the public website and sent to the Board.

Best,
 Emma F Moench

Early Childhood Program Specialist
 Office of Childcare
 Department of Workforce Services
 385-227-1251 m
emmamoench@utah.gov



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