



**JRSN Advisory Board Meeting
May 21, 2026
Draft Meeting Minutes**

Donna Austin, Board Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:38 and asked for a roll call.

Members present were:

Ms. Donna Austin, Vice-Chair
Ms. Michelle Aguirre
Ms. Jolena Broussard
Rabbi Yossi Chesney
Ms. Lillian Guilbault
Ms. Arielle Hughes
Ms. Anita Kennedy
Mr. Larry Manshel
Ms. Yolanda Motley
Dr. Paula Polito
Ms. Monique Rouege
Ms. Kate Wendel
Dr. Shondra Williams

Members absent were:

Ms. Charmaine Caccioppi
Dr. Gina Easterly
Mr. Jim Garvey
Ms. Ruth Lawson
Ms. Yolanda Motley
Mr. Chad Nugent
Ms. Rochelle Rabathaly
Ms. Stephanie Rizzuto
Dr. Libbie Sonnier

Donna asked guests to introduce themselves and thanked them for attending. Invited guests included Christine Briede and Olivia Stricklin. There being a quorum of Board members, she asked for a review and approval of the March meeting minutes. Paula moved to accept the minutes as presented. Michelle seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed.

Seats Committee

Monique reported that the Seats Committee finished the RFP process for the 2026–2027 Local and State Match funded seats. The committee finalized and released the application, the scoring rubric, and priority guidelines for seat applications (e.g., Jefferson Parish residency, siblings, greatest need) and communicated these clearly in application materials. The committee advertised and hosted an informational session for interested applicants and reviewed the funding opportunity, timeline, selection process, and answered questions. The Seats Committee identified and recruited 4 neutral reviewers who read and scored applications, using the established scoring rubric.

Monique then shared a spreadsheet showing the applicants (identified only by number and not by center name) rank ordered by score. The spreadsheet also showed the recommendation for seats for the top scoring applicants noting currently enrolled B3 children and new seats for 26-27. After board discussion, Rabbi Chesney moved that JRSN accept the recommendation of the Seats Committee, Yolanda seconded the motion. A vote was called and all were in favor.

Monique asked Sarintha to notify centers as soon as possible and initiate the process to fill the seats according to the LDE B3 eligibility and enrollment process.

Finance Committee

Rabbi Chesney reported on the work of the finance committee and shared a proposed budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. He reported that the Network successfully secured several important funding awards that will strengthen early childhood systems throughout Jefferson Parish:

- Ready Start Network Continuation: \$100,000 (increase from \$74,000 the previous year)
- Early Childhood Workforce Project: \$145,226
- Family Engagement Project: \$ 61,725

Income also includes the \$250,000 funded by the JP Council for seats, to be matched by the ECEF/state match funding. Planned expenses across projects were presented via handout and included project administration and management, project implementation and evaluation, associated expenses, and indirect costs. After discussion, Larry made a motion to accept the proposed budget, Paula seconded. A vote was called and all were in favor.

Sarintha added that the new grant awards are exciting new opportunities, but they also operate on a reimbursement basis. Thus, we will continue to have challenges with cash flow due to the reimbursement-based system. She highlighted the continued need for unrestricted funds to address these issues and suggested a target of \$50,000 in reserves and mentioned exploring potential funding opportunities with foundations.

Programs Committee

Arielle reported that the Programs Committee is currently reviewing various options for the most effective use of Family Engagement & Workforce Development funding. Potential uses being considered include professional development opportunities for providers and staff, coaching supports, family-focused training, and a family engagement/event fair designed to provide resources and support to families. Efforts must move quickly given that activities must be completed, funding spent, and reimbursement requested by December 31, 2026 (which really means before the holiday break). Sarintha clarified that the LDE is encouraging full completion and project close-out by the end of November.

The committee shared plans to distribute a provider survey to gather feedback directly from early childhood providers regarding their needs and priorities. Survey feedback will help inform decisions about how available funding could be used to best support families, strengthen the early childhood workforce, and address the needs of providers across the network.

Given the need to move quickly, the Programs Committee requested authorization from the Board to make decisions on behalf of Jefferson Ready Start Network (JRSN) regarding the use of the Family Engagement & Workforce Development funding. The Rabbi made the motion, Monique seconded the motion, and the full Board approved the request, authorizing the committee to move forward with decisions related to the allocation and use of these funds, provided the committee stay within the approved budget.

Arielle also reported that the Programs Committee will lead efforts to develop a more comprehensive strategic planning session, likely in the Fall, now that funding has been approved within the JRSN budget. Strategic planning will continue after initial decisions are made regarding the Family Engagement and Workforce Projects.

Leadership/Executive Committee

Donna reported that the Executive Director contract for professional services by Sarintha Stricklin is expiring June 30th. Donna reported that the Leadership Team met and has plans to evaluate Dr. Stricklin's performance over the past year and make recommendations regarding contract plans moving forward. Donna asked the Board to extend Dr. Stricklin's contract through August 30th to allow the committee to complete the evaluation and make contract plans by the next Advisory Board meeting. Rabbi Chesney made a motion; Donna seconded the motion. Donna called for a vote; all were in favor of the 2-month extension.

Nominations Committee

Paula reminded Board members that we continue to seek parent representatives for the Board.

EEIC Project Update

Olivia reported that the EEIC Steering Committee recruited a Grassroots Council and convened three times (March, April and May). The Grassroots Council is comprised of 13 providers across all Jefferson Parish Council districts. They discussed possible sustainable funding sources for early care and education. Rochelle Wilcox of For Providers by Providers and Wilcox Academy presented at the April meeting. Provider-informed action items from meetings include: (a) Meet with other providers to share information about the need for sustainable funding and to inform about Grassroots initiative; (b) Update fact sheet and amend, as needed, for provider audience; (c) Create talking points for stakeholder meetings. Updated and drafted materials to support grassroots effort, include

- Updated fact sheet with latest census data to reflect ECE landscape in Jefferson Parish
- Prepared talking points for providers to meet with other providers and key stakeholders

Olivia shared that the EEIC Steering Committee participated in the final community of practice for the EEIC grant with other Ready Start Networks/EEIC grantees. To close out the grant, which is ending 6/30/26, the Steering Committee will meet with project evaluators to discuss project progress and outcomes and ensure the final report is completed accurately and timely.

Program Funding Updates

Sarintha reported that the Network successfully secured several important funding awards that will strengthen early childhood systems throughout Jefferson Parish:

- Ready Start Network Continuation: \$100,000 (increase from \$74,000 the previous year)
- Early Childhood Workforce Project: \$145,226
- Family Engagement Project: \$ 61,725

Sarintha also reminded the Board of the \$250,000 from Jefferson Parish Council for a three-year commitment, with an additional \$250,000 state match, which was approved at the April BESE meeting.

Communications Team

April reported the communications team worked to maintain consistent visibility for JRSN through ongoing social media content, graphics, scheduling and community engagement throughout April and May. We expanded storytelling opportunities with providers by engaging Grassroots Committee members and conducting meetings to gather stories and photos for upcoming provider spotlights. We supported key awareness and recognition opportunities, including GiveNOLA Day email outreach and submission of a Gambit 40 Under 40 nomination. We continued proactive community and media monitoring to identify engagement opportunities and keep JRSN connected to relevant conversations.

Grant Updates and Initiatives

Sarintha reported that in addition to the grant awards previously described and discussed, we are waiting on notification regarding the United Way grant application written to support economically disadvantaged families in Kenner. These award notifications should go out any day.

Announcements

Christine shared that the annual Senior Expo sponsored by JCF will be held on June 25th.

Sarintha reported on the successful JRSN luncheon with the Jefferson Legislative Delegation at the Capitol on March 31st and thanked the United Way and the Jefferson Community Foundation for serving as partners. Monique and Libby reported on the additional early childhood events at the Capitol including April 7th Dads Day at the Capitol and May 9th Early Ed Day.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.