

FINAL REPORT

2008 ACCESS BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

June 11-13, 2008

New Orleans, LA

Prepared by

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Facilitators

Table of Contents

Background Information

- Description of the content planning
- Invitation
- Daily Emails

Narrative

- Day 1 Wednesday afternoon, June 11, 2008
- Day 2 Thursday, June 12, 2008
- Day 3 Friday morning, June 13, 2008

Outcomes

Facilitators' Recommendations

Facilitators' Final Comments

Appendix:

- A. Board Survey Summary
- B. Board Survey Summary Grid (Excel)
- C. Preparation documents sent in advance:
 - a. Bylaws Scavenger Hunt and Answers
 - b. Ready or Not Discussion
- D. Retreat agenda
- E. "ACCESS history" (Power Point)
- F. ACCESS and NAEYC Associate Degree Accreditation – Alison Lutton
- G. "ACCESS is..." (Power Point)
- H. "Who are We?" (Power Point)
- I. Revised ACCESS Mission Statement
- J. "Who are They?" (Power Point)
- K. Proposed Organizational Structure Chart
- L. Reports from Thurs. Noon Discussions
- M. Action Plans
 - a. Collaboration
 - b. Communications
 - c. Executive Committee
 - d. Membership & Affiliates
 - e. Professional Development
- N. ACCESS Annual Calendar of Activities – July, 2008-June, 2009
- O. Affiliate Representatives Report
- P. Retreat Evaluation Form

Background Information

June 11-13, 2008 the ACCESS Board held a Strategic Planning Retreat at the Courtyard Hotel by Marriott, 124 St. Charles, New Orleans, LA. The entire board of thirteen members and two facilitators were in attendance the entire three days. Participants were:

Lisa Stein, President

Mary Garguile, President-Elect

Carrie Nepstad, VP of Conferences & Chair, Shared Knowledge in Practice Committee (SKIP)

Dawn Levasseur, VP of Membership

Elisa Huss-Hage, Treasurer

Trude Puckett, Secretary

Nancy Gabriel, State Affiliate Liaison & New York Affiliate Representative

Jan Cowan, Chair, Mini-Grants for Accreditation Committee

Nancy Beaver, Chair, Social Committee & Texas Affiliate Representative

Marcia Rysztak, Michigan Affiliate Representative

Cheryl Bulat, Illinois Affiliate Representative

Lori Schonhorst, Iowa Affiliate Representative

Kathy Allen, North Carolina Affiliate Representative

This report is a summary of the Board's discussions and decisions as they contemplated organizational goals, structure, priorities, and planning. Also included are identified outcomes and facilitators' recommendations.

To prepare for the Retreat, the President, Lisa Stein, had the members complete a survey. The data was tabulated & emailed to the facilitators (Appendix A and B). The responses and the requests of the President were taken into consideration by the facilitators as they created the Retreat agenda.

The theme, "Let The Good Times Roll", with the corresponding song, was selected by the facilitators. An invitation to participate in the Retreat was emailed to all board members with follow-up information regarding lodging reservations and expense reimbursement. Dawn Levasseur coordinated the lodging, snack, & lunch plans at the hotel very efficiently. Nancy Beaver coordinated the dinner reservations for 2 delightful evening meals at some of her long-time favorite restaurants.

The week prior to the NAEYC Professional Development Institute, daily motivational emails were sent to all of the Board. These included the agenda, music, Bylaws Scavenger Hunt, and a worksheet for discussion on the book, "Ready or Not", by Stacie Goffin & Valora Washington which Mary Garguile had requested the Board read (Appendix C).

The facilitators decorated the environment to correspond with the theme, set up snacks, & instructional materials. Advance preparations by the facilitators also included creation of Power Point presentations, worksheets, & purposeful active learning strategies. In keeping with the NAEYC Professional Development Institute theme of technology, the facilitators used an LCD projector to project Power Point presentations as well as to capture Board members' comments as discussions were taking place. Computer generated templates for action plans and calendar planning were provided for the Board by the facilitators. The Board used laptops in their small group working sessions for efficient and accurate translation of discussions and plans. The products of these sessions are included in the appendices of this report.

Day 1, Wednesday Afternoon, June 11, 2008

Welcome: Lisa Stein, ACCESS President, welcomed the Board and expressed appreciation for their willingness to serve the organization and giving of their time for the next three days to plan for the future.

Facilitators, Marsha Swanson and Barbara Ann Nilsen, welcomed the Board and reviewed the agenda for the retreat. Notation was made of some of the tools, such as "wall graffiti papers" to capture Celebration, Collaboration, and Parking Lot items.

The Board was given gem bracelets and related them to ACCESS as multifaceted, flexible, connected, together they make a whole, etc.

In "ACCESS history/accomplishments" Power Point presentation (Appendix E) the facilitators reviewed the history of the organization and the heritage of past presidents, conferences, and member benefits.

The Board celebrated the accomplishments of ACCESS with traditional gestures of shaking hands, giving pats on the back, high fives and hip, hip hoorays!

Alison Lutton, Director, Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation, NAEYC, encouraged ACCESS to collaborate with NAEYC in a variety of ways including the revision of the professional preparation standards, developing faculty leadership, and Associate Degree Accreditation support (Appendix F).

Facilitators presented "ACCESS is..." as a motivational Power Point (Appendix G) that can be used by the organization.

After break, the Board each presented some object that represented their life -- helping them to be better acquainted but also realizing that they and the membership are the life of ACCESS.

The purpose, mission and belief statements from the by-laws were examined with "Who are We?" Power Point and discussed, resulting in a document that captured responses of how ACCESS carries out these goals (Appendix H). A continued discussion led to the realization that this section of the by-laws needed revision.

At the end of the first session the Board prepared bumper stickers for ACCESS. Some of the outcomes were:

- *ACCESS = Advocacy At It's Finest!*
- *ACCESS to Lifelong Learning*
- *ACCESS Bridge to Learning for ECE Teachers*
- *ACCESS to Quality Teachers for Young Children*
- *ACCESS: A Community College Early Childhood Support System*
- *ACCESS to Lifelong Learning in Support of Early Childhood*
- *ACCESS – Lifelong Learning ECE Professional's Support*
- *ACCESS – The Link to Quality ECE Professionals*

DAY 2, Thursday, June 12, 2008

The Board began the day with hand dancing, reminding them that sometimes they are leaders, sometimes followers and often creative. Facial gestures brought the partners close together.

The Board was divided into three groups to come to consensus on revision suggestions to the ACCESS Bylaws Section 2a Purpose, 2b Beliefs, and 2c Mission. Each group reported their thinking.

Rather than delegate the revisions of the purpose, mission and beliefs solely to the Bylaws committee, the Board decided they would rather work on this as a group. They used the notes they had made from the first activity to then come to whole group consensus on a mission statement (Appendix I).

Mary Garguile, President Elect, led a discussion reviewing the Bylaws to inform the Bylaws committee of changes that may need to be made. Trude Puckett & Jan Cowan took notes for the committee's future reference.

Facilitators presented "Who Are They" Power Point (Appendix J) with a brief discussion of the value of being an ACCESS member. Quantity and location of current members were pointed out on a U.S. map.

Further discussion in relation to the mission statement centered on a critical analysis of the Board's structure. With the new draft ACCESS Mission as a guide, Vice Presidents and alignment of standing and ad hoc committees were conceptualized (Appendix K). It was felt that the revised mission's activities necessitated more efficient and defined Board responsibilities. The Committee structure would involve more members in committees to build leadership for the future, and to define and assign specific manageable tasks for more efficiency. This revised structure will be discussed further on a Board conference call with the intent the Bylaws revision include something similar. It was recognized the procedures for bylaws revisions must be followed.

The structure change would result in the following:

Vice President of Collaborations, with an Accreditation Committee, an Articulation & Career Pathway Committee, and a Social Networking Committee

Vice President of Communications with a Newsletter Committee and Website Committee

Vice President of Membership and Affiliate Reps with a Membership Benefits Committee, Liaison to Affiliates and a Recruitment and Retention Committee

Vice President of Professional Development with the SKiP Committee (Shared Knowledge in Practice), and the Conference Committee

With a new ACCESS Board structure, three groups of Board members brainstormed during lunch the implications of the Mission changes on responsibilities and potential projects under a new structure. (Appendix L). Results were shared with the entire group.

An activity to recognize changes in the room environment following lunch reminded the Board of the possible results of change: improvement, perk interest, risk, maybe confusing or uncomfortable, not always an improvement.

In the absence of Camille Catlett, an overview of the CONNECT project funded by the US Dept of Education was given by the facilitators. Potential involvement by ACCESS was discussed. Agreement was reached on the importance of ACCESS' collaboration.

The "Guided Design" handout from Camille Catlett was also shared. A discussion followed regarding potential collaborative involvement with webinars, etc.

The board was energized for their hard work with an exercise, "When You're Up", demonstrating that conflicting words and action can cause confusion and sometimes conflict.

Action Plans (Appendix M) were developed based on the Mission, and the discussions earlier in the day. Small groups worked to assign manageable tasks to a planning calendar, indicating the responsible Board member, timeline, resources and the measurable outcome of the activity. The facilitators combined these individual planning calendars into ACCESS Annual Calendar of Activities – July, 2008-June, 2009 (Appendix N). This is a draft that will be refined as Board members consider the tasks planned and their reasonableness to accomplish. They all are depending on enlisting members to assist in the work.

DAY 3, Friday Morning, June 13, 2008

The Board came together for the final session and listed some of the accomplishments of the Retreat. They wrote on graffiti sheets:

- "Consensus on Mission
- Revealed strengths of individual members
- Goals set
- New friends

- Relationships promoting friendship and professionalism
- New board position
- Teamwork
- Focus
- More defined structure
- Through all of these activities, new board members and experienced board members worked together to create a new direction. We all have a stake in the success of ACCESS."

A Board Meeting was held for official business that needed to be conducted. Those activities will be reported by the ACCESS Secretary in the June minutes.

The Board played "Sock it To Me" illustrating that patterns of operating are easy with one task but become more difficult when juggling more than one, resulting in the digression from the plan and sometimes dropping the ball (sock) but the necessity of picking it up and attempting again to return to the plan.

Board members completed Retreat Evaluation forms (Appendix P) and submitted them to President Lisa Stein before departing at various times throughout the meeting. Results will be tabulated by Connie Walton, Administrative Assistant.

The board was divided into two "teams". Team success huddles were held. Members wore crazy glasses to represent the retreat's clearer vision for ACCESS as they congratulated each other with a baseball team style "high five".

The Affiliates gave a short report from dinner table discussions focusing on maximizing the support they can not only give each other but potential affiliates in states where groups of associate degree faculty are already meeting or in states where there are close to the required 10 members (Appendix O). Others around the table added to the discussion with frustrations of not being able to recruit members or form Affiliates. It was suggested that workshops at state conferences be planned specific for faculty as a potential recruitment tool. A suggestion was made that possibly 2 faculty in the state could begin a friendship and slowly build in other people. Naming of the Affiliate formed by rolling over another already existing faculty group needs to include the ACCESS name in the title. An Affiliate can use the national ACCESS bylaws as a template for their own.

Links can be made between the www.ACCESSsece.org website and the state group if they have one.

An informal discussion continued with the remaining Board members regarding membership.

- A question was raised about the names and emails collected at ACCESS PDI sessions and the follow-up. They will be sent electronic copy of the ACCESS membership form.
- The 1.5 year PDI Membership Sale was discussed with advantages and disadvantages.
- Adjuncts as potential members led to a discussion of the membership dues structure and if an institutional membership would help. Many colleges will pay for an institutional membership for the institution but not for an individual.

- A membership scholarship was mentioned as a possibility.
- The Faculty in Associate Degree Programs Interest Forum can be used as a vehicle for sharing documents and supporting one another.
- Another group for collaboration in the pursuit of members could be the leaders of early childhood student groups.
- Another group attached mailing labels "Ask me about ACCESS" to their conference name badges.
- The membership year was discussed with a consensus that there are more reasons to leave it as the calendar and fiscal year than moving it.
- The format of the Membership Directory was discussed, using it as a networking tool for members and a member benefit while protecting their information. Hardcopy dissemination and formatting other than a database were mentioned as ways to protect the membership list from inappropriate use.

A discussion evolved about the website:

- A question was raised about selling advertising on the website or in the newsletter and what would be a conflict of interest. Several volunteered to collect copies of other organization's policies regarding advertising to review. That brought up the whole "conflict of interest" in general and Board members felt that it would be good to have a conflict of interest form for all Board members.
- The website Members Only area was discussed with some members feeling strongly that MOST information should be generally open as a membership recruitment tool. Others raised the question then "Why would they join?" The importance of continually adding information to the website was stressed. No consensus was reached.
- The Communications Committee would like to see ACCESS conference session handouts and a searchable database. They are working on that.

The Retreat ended at noon with more goodbyes, and a group of people who now know each other much better and are dedicated to work together "to support associate degree programs, faculty and staff in the preparation of early childhood professionals."

Outcomes

There were many outcomes, some unintentional, from thirteen ACCESS Board members coming apart from their busy lives to concentrate on the organization. They fall into the following categories:

SOCIAL

- **Bonding** – Many board members had only an auditory acquaintance with each other from conference calls. They were able to get acquainted on a professional and social level from the Retreat tasks and the meals together.
- **Individual strengths** - Through the interactions at this Retreat each Board member revealed their working styles, sense of humor, knowledge and talent that they bring to the Board. This Retreat will help the organization to better utilize and draw on those.

- **Networking** – Besides getting better acquainted, Board members made linkages and contacts not directly related to ACCESS on which they can act as resources and support for one another.

ORGANIZATIONAL

- **Historical perspective** – The Board reviewed the organization’s past history and the milestones such as tax-exempt status, important collaborations that have been forged, and individuals who have contributed to ACCESS success.
- **Celebrating ACCESS accomplishments** – Throughout the Retreat the Board celebrated individuals and the organization itself for the contribution it has made to advocate, support and promote associate degree programs preparing professionals for the early care and education field.
- **Collaboration** – The Board created an extensive list of organizations with similar interests that have been or could be potential partners in future projects. As the list grew longer, Board members saw how ACCESS has its own “nitch” while still related to other organizations in the field. They realized that through collaboration ACCESS’ mission and goals can be maximized.
- **Operating procedures** – The Board raised its awareness of the processes necessary for amending the bylaws and confirmed the accuracy of present Board actions.

TANGIBLES

- **Proposed revised mission statement** – Through the Bylaws review the Board realized the unwieldy and duplicative nature of the stated purpose, mission, and beliefs resulting in a draft of a revised mission statement to be presented to the membership for acceptance.
- **Proposed Bylaws revisions** – Through review of the bylaws, input was given to the Bylaws revision committee to streamline and update the bylaws for more efficient operation of the organization. A final set of revision proposals will be presented to the membership for acceptance.
- **Proposed Board Structure** – Upon examination of goals and operating procedures, Action Plans were delineated for each goal area. This will result in the clarification of responsibilities, focus on the stated goals, and divide the activities to reach the goals into manageable areas of responsibility. Strategies for reaching the goals were articulated and scheduled for completion.
- **Planning Calendar** - The individual Action Plans were combined into a master Planning Calendar to act as a timeline for activities to reach the stated goals.

Facilitators’ Recommendations

- **Begin with organizational stability** – Carefully review and revise Bylaws and organizational structure to represent the mission and operating procedures without binding details that become obsolete in changing times.

- **Board Books** – It was apparent that members on the Board referenced their Board Books. New Board members need to receive them immediately upon being elected. Continue to develop, update, expand, and use the Board Books.
- **Assure procedures are followed** – Bylaws particularly as well as operating policies and procedures should be clear to all Board members and strictly followed so as to not jeopardize tax-exempt status. Each Board member is responsible for knowing and following those procedures. From past minutes, update the list of Board operating policies and procedures.
- **Action Plans and Annual Calendar of Activities** – Continue to review and revise action plans, to allow enough time for the smaller preparatory steps of each activity.
- **Budget implications** – There is hardly a decision that is made that does not have budget implications. Expenditures not in the current year's budget need to be carefully considered prior to taking action. The Action Plans that were developed need to consider the "cost" and weave that cost into the present budget or budget creation for the following years.
- **Membership issues** – A short conversation toward the end of the Retreat did discuss membership – strategies for recruitment and retention, dues structure (organizational and individual), the PDI membership sale (pro and con), member benefits, how to answer the question, "Why should I join?" This needs a focused conversation since membership is your purpose and the organization's life.
- **Accreditation** – Define and clarify methods for technical assistance using lessons learned by accredited programs. Explore additional methods of sharing best practices.
- **Marketing** - Updating all marketing materials will be essential in the coming years.
- **Website** – This is a tool that can greatly benefit not only members but entice or convince potential members that this organization has useful information to disseminate. Find a person whose sole responsibility is to update and add content to the website.
- **Face to Face Board meetings** – It became very clear that coming together at least semi-annually for at least a half day Board meeting is very important. While the monthly conference calls and telephone meetings of sub groups have much improved the Board's communication, it is especially enhanced by the act of stepping away from one's desk, home, and other responsibilities to intentionally focus on the organization and to know each other personally.
- **Long Range Planning** – The Retreat schedule was amended to give more time to the mission revision and structural changes that the Board felt was of immediate importance. Consequently, long range planning was not formalized. It would be wise for the board to consider at their fall meeting some long range planning at least 3 years and 5 years out. This will assist the board in seeing a delineation of goals and tasks beyond the next twelve months.
- **"Ready or Not" discussion** – The provocative material from "Ready or Not" appeared in some of the comments during the Retreat but there was never time with the revised agenda to address the issues raised in that book. It may be worth a dedicated

conference call or threaded discussion online to discuss the implications for associate degree faculty.

Facilitators' Final Comments

We thank you for the opportunity to guide the discussions and future planning of ACCESS. The contributions of every member of the board were exemplary at this Retreat. As we depart from Board involvement, we know that ACCESS is under quality leadership. We have five parting words, "Let the Good Times Roll"!!!!

Marsha Swanson & Barbara Ann Nilsen