

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, November 20, 2012
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Members Present: Ed Bonilla, Alice Torres, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Susan Macary, Wendy Berlind, Beverly Lawrence, Liz Fraser, Susan Sienkewicz, Izzi Greenberg, Monica Beylea, Christine O'Grady and Amy Waterman. Also present: Mia Vibert from CRT and Pat Austin from Cross St. Church.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Co-Chair Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:12 P.M. thanking those present. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Wendy Berlind announced that on Sat., Jan. 18th, 2014 (with a snow date of Jan. 25th) Russell Library will be sponsoring a Preschool Fair from 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. Chris thanked Wendy for providing this opportunity for providers to showcase their program to families. Chris circulated a flyer for the Nurturing Prenatal Program running January through March. A Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) flyer for recruiting tax preparation volunteers was circulated. Ed noted that many former VITA volunteers are returning to provide this service and they are a good group to join. He also noted that the training is very thorough. The Middletown Early Childhood Network workshop December flyer on "Storywalks" to be presented by staff from the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative was also circulated.

III. Acceptance of the October 16th, 2012 School Readiness Council meeting:

Susan Macary moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Wendy Berlind seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Report: was distributed showing a balance of \$12,328 in unearned funds as of October 31st. It was noted there are still openings in a few programs: one each at the YMCA and Bielefield and three at SmartEarly Learning Center. The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) reports that there are open spaces in many other communities across the state as well. As has been done in the past, the OEC will be offering communities the opportunity to bid on those unused spaces. Middletown will bid on six School Day spaces for the YMCA program at Bielefield. They currently have six full pay openings and there is a need for subsidized spaces at that school. A brief discussion followed. Christine O'Grady proposed looking into moving open slots from Smart Early Learning Center to programs that are able to use them, if possible. Monica seconded the motion and it motion carried unanimously. Chris will work with the preschools to see how best to fill the open spaces.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Monthly Summary Report: was distributed showing enrollment, revenue, insurance, income and Special Education demographics on all children enrolled in our School Readiness programs.

The data provided showed that all children have health insurance and our programs continue to serve those children most in need.

Annual Report on Kindergarten Students With Preschool Experience: was distributed. 411 students are currently enrolled in kindergarten with 88% having at least one year of a preschool experience. The state defines a year as being at least nine months in a preschool or childcare center-based program. Family day care homes are excluded. The data provided preschool experiences rates at every elementary school, by income, and by race for 2013-14 kindergarten cohort. Graphs depicting preschool experience rates for kindergarteners from 2000 through 2013 were also included. Discussion followed. This year, 50 kindergarten students did not have a preschool experience. A listing of addresses for these students by elementary school was included in the report. A request was made for data on the number of kindergarten students per school. It will be provided at the December Council meeting.

Race To The Top Summary: a copy of the summary of the application developed by CT Voices for Children was distributed and reviewed with the Council. Discussion followed.

National Women's Law Center Strong Start for Americas Children Act Summary: was distributed and reviewed. It was noted that Connecticut is well poised to receive funds and implement the outlined activities, as federal requirements are already in place. Advocacy alerts will be forthcoming.

Early Literature Collaborative: several preschool program directors and Chris attended a forum on chronic absenteeism with national leader Hedy Chang. Data showed the correlation between chronic absenteeism and failure to read on grade level by the end of third grade and low high school graduation rates. Chronic absence is defined as being absent 10% or more of the time, regardless of the reason for the absence. That is equal to two days per month. Preschool programs are implementing an attendance incentive program and are already showing improvements. Initial data collections showed that attendance and tardiness are serious issues in our preschools.

Pre-K -K. Update: Preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers are conducting their fall exchange visits now. There is a lot of energy around the collaboration between preschool and kindergarten. The shared professional development in December will focus on math standards in preschool and kindergarten.

EC Alliance Update: Maggie Adair stepped down to join the Office of Early Childhood as the manager of Government Relations and was replaced by Merrill Gay, the former New Britain Discovery Coordinator. The Alliance is starting to develop their legislative priorities for the coming session – getting the Office of Early Childhood into statute, competitive wages for the early childhood workforce, and protecting our state and federal early childhood programs from funding cuts.

Discovery Update: David Nee is retiring and a search is in place for his replacement. Predictions are that there will be an announcement in March. The Memorial Fund will then work on a five year strategic project with its new executive director. In preparation, they are

assessing how well their current programs and support services are working. Middletown was chosen to participate in a phone survey about the liaison support system.

Early Head Start update: Alice reported that the program is looking for referrals. They are currently serving 56 families and recently lost three families. They are developing new recruitment cards and are settled in at their new location at Moody School. They are waiting for 1/1/2014 application approval from the federal office. This application has a couple of part-time positions for family engagement that are intended to promote parent leadership. It also creates a Parent Child Institute for family learning activities to encourage social/emotional health. They have three social worker interns this year. A social media strategy is being worked on. The annual Head Start report is available and Alice will bring it in December to share.

Head Start Update: Mia noted that there are openings in the program. Lawrence School is CRT's sister school and the staff is looking forward to working with the Lawrence staff. She also noted that their attendance incentive program is going well and they are seeing improvements in average daily attendance.

Even Start Update: Liz Fraser reported that there are 14 filled spaces in the program and she is expecting two additional families to be coming in soon. Work statewide is ongoing for dual generational learning program. The development of a family portfolio system is underway. This system will help families track their progress. A Kellogg Grant through Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) will support the program and allow the creation of a board and outreach to other communities.

Opportunity Knocks (OK) Update: Monica reported that reorganizing is ongoing and she is excited to be back at the helm. The three traditional work groups remain in place – oral health, nutrition and physical activity, and social-emotional health - along with the Early Head Start health advisory work group. Groups will report out at the OK monthly meetings. There is an effort to increase participation of health care professionals participating in Opportunity Knocks. Cliff O'Callahan has offered to act as the liaison to the health providers. Monica reminded the Council of the upcoming monthly meeting next Tuesday and welcomed all to attend.

Child First Update: Christine noted that the program is serving 30-32 families with 15 on the wait list. The average wait for services is two months. She noted there are whispers about adding another team. They are holding monthly meetings with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to discuss particular family needs.

Family Resource Center (FRC) Update: The Council welcomed back Amy Waterman from her maternity leave. She is happy to be back and continues her work supporting families at Macdonough and Farm Hill Schools.

Cross St. Church: Pat Austin noted that six to seven students are attending the after school program daily. Wesleyan students are functioning as the tutors for the program. Spanish lessons are also being provided. Cross Street is looking to stabilize the program and increase the number of children using it. They have a van but no driver or funds for gas. The program serves children from kindergarten through high school. It was suggested that Pat talk to Snow principal,

Jim Gaudreau, about any Snow School students who might benefit from this program and to Wesleyan's Community Partnership office regarding the Wesleyan students as tutors.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:37 P.M. with thanks to those in attendance.

The next meeting of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on
Wednesday, Dec. 18th, 2013

from

12:00 - 1:30 P.M.

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St.

Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels