

**Middletown School Readiness Council**  
**12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.**  
**Wednesday, December 18, 2012**  
**Wilbert Snow School**  
**299 Wadsworth St.**  
**Middletown, CT 06457**

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MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

**Members Present:** Ed Bonilla, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Liz Fraser, Monica Beylea, Christine O'Grady, Donna Marino, Amy Waterman, and Izzi Greenberg.

Also Present: Mia Vibert from CRT Head Start, Cindy Guerreri, Discovery Liaison and Merrill Gay, CT Early Childhood Alliance Executive Director

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

**II. Announcements:** Christine announced that Middlesex Hospital received a grant to conduct three Parent Cafés. Training will be provided for parents to co-facilitate. She will forward information as it becomes available. Christine confirmed that this is part of the *Help Me Grow* outreach campaign. The focus of these cafés is to strengthen families through this national model. Wendy repeated her November announcement reminding the Council of the upcoming preschool info fair on Saturday, Jan. 18th, 2014 (with a snow date of Jan. 25th) at the Russell from 10:00A.M. - 12:00 P.M. Chris thanked Wendy for providing this opportunity for families and providers.

Chris circulated flyers for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Childhood Conversations Conference to be held on March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and the Nurturing Prenatal Program that will run from January to March. Several copies of the most recent publication of Child Health and Development Institute's (CHDI) *Impact* on developmental screening were circulated. For those interested, *Impact* can be downloaded from the CHDI website.

**III. Acceptance of the Nov. 20, 2012 School Readiness Council meeting:**

Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Christine O'Grady seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Financial Report:** was distributed. As of Nov. 30th there is a balance of \$15,710 in unearned funds. As a follow-up on the issue of moving spaces between programs that was discussed at the November Council meeting, Chris noted that the spaces could not be moved. SmartEarly Learning Center is working very hard to recruit new families. There is just one opening at the YMCA Bielefield site. Chris reported that she is hoping to secure six additional spaces to convert the full pay spaces at Bielefield to subsidized spaces. She will contact Bielefield principal, Jeff Fournier, to set up a meeting to engage Bielefield in preschool recruitment efforts and to discuss plans for an upcoming playgroup at the school.

**CT Early Childhood Alliance:** Newly appointed Executive Director, Merrill Gay was our guest today. He is making the rounds visiting Discovery communities to meet people, get their input and share the goals of the Alliance for the upcoming legislative session. He discussed three goals: securing the passage of a state statute for the Office of Early Childhood, passing a grandfather bill for current child care workforce with a BA outside of early childhood, and the long running campaign for better wages for the under resourced field of the early childhood workforce. The Office of Early Childhood bill will have to go through the legislative process again this session. We want to get the bill passed just as early as possible. Merrill also encouraged Council members to speak to their legislative representatives about the need to increase School Readiness Grant funding rates. He noted that we continue to do more with less. Chris apprised Merrill of the Coalition for Children's legislative calendar of events. He noted further that the Alliance will participate in Advocacy Day at the Capitol Mar. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014. He encouraged the Council to attend this event and also encouraged groups to join the Alliance. Chris noted that the School Readiness Council, Even Start and Middlesex Coalition for Children are all members. Discussion followed.

#### **V. Coordinator's Report:**

**Monthly Report: Summary Report:** was distributed showing a steady increase in Care4kids and parent fees. Discussion around Care4Kids followed.

**Annual Preschool Experience Report:** A document detailing the additional information requested on our current kindergarten cohort with no preschool experience was distributed. The information included the number of children with no preschool and the percentage for each elementary school in the city. Discussion followed. The question arose as to how many children without preschool grew up here or recently moved to Middletown. Chris will provide additional information next month around the prior residency of the children with no preschool. Further discussion occurred around the Housing Authority and the consideration of establishing a relationship with them in order to promote preschool opportunities and other pertinent information for young families as they move in. Izzi sits on the Housing Authority Board. She is willing to initiate conversation with the Housing Authority around early childhood issues. She also encouraged everyone to contact Board members and/or attend one of the Board's meetings.

**New Report: Unmet Needs Survey:** of preschool spaces in the city was distributed. This report details the number of spaces the program is willing to fill, not the program's total licensed spaces. Many programs don't ever fill to their licensed capacity. The document reflected an alarming trend: there are openings in every area, even infant and toddler spaces that in the past were always full. Discussion followed. There are multiple reasons: a smaller cohort of young children, cost of care, and the change in child care needs to suit work demands. Chris will look into the birth statistics for the city. It was noted this trend in unfilled spaces in programs is something to keep an eye on.

**2014 School Readiness Meeting Schedule:** The proposed schedule of meeting dates for 2014 was distributed. Meetings will continue to be conducted on the third Wednesday of each month with the exception of February and April, as those meeting dates fall on school vacation weeks. The second Wednesday is proposed for meeting dates in those months. The March meeting conflicts with Advocacy Day at the Capitol. Merrill gave an overview of Advocacy Day

activities. Christine O'Grady moved to accept the proposed schedule of meeting dates with one exception - eliminating the March 19th School Readiness meeting in order to attend Advocacy Day at the Capitol. Izzi Greenberg seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Highlights:** The Office of Early Childhood has their new website at <http://www.ct.gov/oec/site/default.asp>. Race To The Top fund awards are expected to be announced by week's end. Senator Beth Bye has been appointed as the co-chair of the Appropriations Committee. This is very good news, as Senator Bye is a strong early childhood advocate. If the present federal budget deal passes, some of the funds lost due to the sequester will be restored, but not all. The CT Charts A Course scholarship system is now operational.

**Discovery Update:** Cindy reported that David Nee is retiring and the new executive director announcement will come after the holidays. A PreK- Grade 3 forum is being held on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Chris will circulate the flyer. Interim Discovery report is due on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Chris will be contacting people who will need to supply data and updates.

**Early Head Start (EHS) Update:** Alice is currently working with a federal technical assistance person to prepare for their visit by EHS next month. The program continues their recruitment efforts and encourages referrals.

**Head Start Update:** Mia noted that the program is still recruiting children for 20 current openings. Due to the sequestration, they cut their program from 39 weeks down to a 36-week program offering.

**Even Start Update:** Liz noted that they have five graduates so far with steady enrollment. She also encourages referrals.

**Opportunity Knocks Update:** Monica reported that all is going well. All work groups have been meeting. The Behavioral Health work group is developing plans for maternal depression screenings. The Nutrition and Fitness work group will meet on the last Monday in January. They are working on bringing the *Secrets of Baby Training* to the area. This program provides training and materials for baby behavior education in a consistent and effective manner. EHS Health Advisory Board has not yet met this year. There will be updates on every work group at the January 28th Opportunity Knocks meeting.

**Child First Update:** Christine reported that there are 19 families on their wait list. Since the wait list has consistently been high, the program is looking to add another team.

**Family Resource Centers Update:** Amy reported that they have two *Circle of Security* workshops scheduled - one during the day at Farm Hill and another at pick-up time at Town & Country. Judi Kenney has identified eight families in her program that will participate in this opportunity. Amy also noted a one day *Let's Talk* parent program would be offered, too.

**Early Literacy Collaborative Update:** The preschool programs continue to focus on promoting attendance in the preschool programs.

**PreK – K Alignment Committee Update:** The exchange visits between preschool and kindergarten teachers are being conducted. Feedback from the evaluations at Monday's shared professional development workshop was positive.

**VI. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 P.M. with thanks to those in attendance.  
**Happy Holidays to all!**

The next meeting of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on  
Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2014  
from  
12:00 - 1:30 P.M.  
at  
Wilbert Snow School  
299 Wadsworth St.  
Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Sheila C. Daniels