

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 2:08 P.M.
Wednesday, October 15, 2014
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Members Present: Alice Torres, Ed Bonilla, Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Susan Sienkiewicz, Amy Waterman, Monica Beylea, Beverly Lawrence, Kitty Robinson, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Jim Gaudreau and Liz Fraser. **Also present:** Lina Kronenberger.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Co-Chair Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:15 P.M. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Donna Marino shared upcoming MSA meeting information. The Middletown Schools Association will meet on Monday, Oct. 27th at The Youth Services Bureau (YSB), Hunting Hill Ave. at 5:30P.M. This organization serves as the voice of the parents. All are welcome to attend.

III. Acceptance of the Sept. 17th, 2014 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Donna Marino moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Susan Sienkiewicz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial and Monthly Summary Reports: Jessica distributed the financial report, explaining the new layout as requested by the Council at the last meeting. A brief discussion followed. She explained a request was made from Macdonough's Y program for an additional slot. With the permission of the state, a slot was moved from The Y's program at Bielefield to Macdonough. There are still 5 openings at Bielefield that need to be filled. Monica Beylea offered to help coordinate support to the Y for filling the slots. Alice also offered to look into recruiting. Izzi noted the Housing Authority as a resource for families that may have a need for school readiness support. Susan Sienkiewicz will share the opening information with DCF staff, too. Discussion around residency restriction followed. Jessica noted South Farms has 2 vacancies; Bright & Early had 1 opening, but filled that slot.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Local Program Update: Head Start Grant - RFP: Jessica noted that CRT has held the Head Start funding for decades. The Head Start Grant was recently opened for re-competition. The Middlesex Coalition approached ACES of Hamden to apply for the Head Start funds for Middlesex County. The funds will support the needs of families throughout Middlesex County. A letter of support from the Council was been requested. Jessica asked the Council to consider this request. Upon this request, Alice Torres stepped out of the room to recuse herself from the conversation as she is directly involved with the Early Head Start program. The location being written into the application is the former preschool area of Faith Lutheran Church on Washington St. which will also be shared with Middletown Adult Education, which will strengthen the application. In addition to space here in Middletown, Clinton has high needs for services and will be included in the grant application. Portland's program would stay in place as it is now, and a

collaborative agreement is being work out. It was noted further that expansion of infant-toddler spaces would be of great benefit for the county. Donna mentioned that an alumnus from the PLTI program did her project on the needs of the shoreline and offered to pass on her name to Jessica. Monica Beylea moved to honor the request of the committee to attach a letter of support to the application from the School Readiness Council. Izzi Greenberg seconded the motion, and the motion carried with abstention from Amy Waterman. Alice Torres remained outside of the meeting until after the vote took place, so was not present for the vote. Ed thanked everyone for this important support.

School Readiness Bylaws: Jessica shared she used Meriden's School Readiness Council's By-laws to draft By-Laws for Middletown to present to the Council for review and eventual adoption. Discussion followed specifically around the age range from 3 - 5 yrs. of age, and changing it to Birth - 8 yrs. of age to match the councils focus. Questions also came up around reappointment of Council members. It was noted we should be mindful of the terms and reappointment thereof. Several changes were made and will be reflected in the final draft for review. We have until the end of this grant cycle to put our bylaws into place. Jessica encouraged Council members to continue to review the bylaws and share with her any revision suggestions. Jessica will take todays edits and put them into the by-laws and share the draft with members to review prior to the November 2014 meeting.

School Readiness Council Policies and Guidelines: were distributed and Jessica reviewed the updated changes made. Enrollment and attendance policies were discussed. S. R. was originally focused on supporting working families, so prioritizing enrollment was discussed specifically. Attendance was also reviewed in depth. Discussion around the 9:00 - 3:00 guideline for non-working families took place. Jessica asked if the Council wanted to consider this new item. Discussion followed and the topic was tabled for further discussion. Approval of the Enrollment Policy, and the Attendance Policy up to the last paragraph, removing the non-working family information, was moved by Izzi Greenberg and was seconded by Jim Gaudreau. The motion carried unanimously. Residency/Child Eligibility and Children Aged 5 are new policies. The age 5 piece is legislative and not a guideline, so the Council must ensure programs meet this policy. Suggestions were made around verification of residency. Revisions will be made and the revised policies will be sent out to Council members for their review.

ACES EHS Update: Alice shared with the Council a data document.

Child First: In Christine O'Grady's absence, Donna Marino reported the program has 7 people on waiting list and continually request referrals.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Monica noted all committees are meeting and the next collaborative meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 28th.

Middlesex Coalition Update: Izzi circulated the CT Early Childhood Alliance Legislative priorities packet, "Invest in Connecticut's Young Children". She noted it should be available on their website. She also reported the legislative meeting held last Thursday went well and shared the Middlesex Coalition candidates' guide. Ed and Izzi reminded the Council of the upcoming legislative candidate breakfast meeting this Friday, Oct. 17th at The Cross St. Church starting at 8:15 am. This event is focusing on housing and homelessness specifically.

Izzi informed the Council that a Family Forum was held at Macdonough on October 14th. This forum is one of a number of forums that will allow the Head Start Grant application committee to find family needs throughout the county. A lot of interesting information came out of the event that was attended by 20 adults and 20 children. The information gathering method being used is a series of questions, Alice will send out the questionnaire to Jessica who will send out to

programs, the Council as well as Schools to share with PTAs/PTOs to pass on to families with children birth to 5 yrs. of age in need of resources. The information gathered will be used to align the grant application with the needs of the communities in Middlesex County.

Even Start Update: Lina Kronenberger reported their 2 classrooms are full and they have a waiting list. They are in the process of hiring a para for their program.

VI. Adjournment: Ed closed the meeting at 2:08P.M. thanking those present for their attendance.

The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St., Middletown, CT 06457

from

12:00 P.M. to 1:30 P.M.

Updates from the School Readiness Coordinator not given at the meeting due to time:

Local Updates: Discovery Funding Update: Middletown received the additional \$10,000 in Discovery funding, which Izzi will use to implement the study on services and data collection being done by agencies throughout Middlesex County.

Town & Country: achieved NAEYC accreditation, congratulations!

YMCA Director: Taylor Duckworth is the new Director at the YMCA as of October 6th and she took off running. She requested to move a slot from Bielefield to Macdonough due to a parent needing care at the Macdonough site. Jessica emailed the State to request approval, and they said no problem. She got the last slot filled at Mac and filled the slot she moved as well. Bielefield still have vacant slots.

Middletown Early Childhood Network (MECN): Training set for October 23rd from 6 pm to 8 pm; focus NAEYC Code of Ethics. Trainings set for Nov 19th and Dec. 3rd: this will be a two part series on Cultural Diversity.

Discovery Community Meeting: Jessica did not attend the morning portion of today's meeting due to the EC Cabinet being this morning and her wanting to be present for the first meeting where Myra is the Chair.

Early Literacy Update: group focused on the Action plan from the discovery grant. Group felt the important focus was Circle of Security and Raising Readers this year. The Family Resource Center will run 3 COP sessions and 3 RR sessions.

The group also talked about the Attendance Incentive program; it was voiced that incentives were not working, especially with the neediest families. The group decided the conversation should be had with the Provider Council

Provider Council:

*Attendance incentive changes: talked about needing social work services for these families. Jessica talked with Daphne Donahue about ChildFirst supports as there are \$6000 in funds, Daphne suggested teachers being paid outside their work hours to do home visits. We would provide home visitor trainings to ensure consistency and safety practices.

*Also talked about paying for ChildFirst staff to help families as well through these funds.

*Policy on starting at 9 am: it is currently in council policies, will give again to providers.

*Policy on non-working families was discussed, and programs felt it would be beneficial as this is the group with the highest chronic absenteeism rates. The thought is that if we change hours to 9-3, it may increase attendance, but also put value on education and these are similar school hours, so it will set them up to Kindergarten. Jessica said she would make the suggestion at the next School Readiness Council meeting.

PreK-K alignment Committee: Group spoke about the Oct 20th joint PD with PreK and K. Math is the focus for this year; the focus will be the new Early Learning Development standards (ELDS) their alignment to Common Core and then the alignment to enVision math, a program MPS bought as a resource for math. The groups will create activities for Stand A of the ELDS, and look at common math literacy so children begin to be exposed to MPS math literacy earlier. Early Literacy group is concerned about parents and others not working in the public schools and their lack of understanding of new math teachings and literacy. Envision is a great resource for teachers, children and parents, as parents can access the system at home and so can children. We need to educate the community as well.

Playgroups were talked about again, but no firm decisions were made about what to do to get more parents attending.

PreK to Grade 3 meeting: held in Sept, Jessica, Ann, Enza, Kristen Bradley, and Melissa Barbuto, attended. This group is scheduled to meet regularly on the 3rd Wednesday of each month in Hamden from 4:30 pm to 6 pm. Any administrator can sign up and work on the different buckets of the PreK to Grade 3 philosophy.

State Level Updates:

Quality Enhancement: funds are now available and are being drawn down.

SR Liaison Meeting: CASE study was sent out over the summer was put on hold for what we thought was until next fall 2015. Instead, ALL programs receiving SR funds must complete a new student data collection document as of the Sept 2014 reporting period and it will be uploaded for 4 months. The student data sheets will be used to collect the PreK cohort group, those with only one year of PreK who will enter K in the Fall of 2015 will be reviewed. Kindergarten students with no prior PreK experience will be looked at in Fall 2015 to see if at least one year of preschool makes a difference in children's readiness. Jessica decided to have all programs begin to use the form exclusively for reporting on School Readiness slots for a few reasons: 1. It seemed too much work to have programs complete two different student data reports for Sept, then only use the form for the 4 months the state needs information, and 2. The new Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) will be out within the next year or so and the information gathered on the new student data report will be used in the new system, allowing programs to import much of the necessary data.

EC Alliance Group Update: Group met October 2nd. Focus of meeting was on Connect which was created due to Sandy Hook, and the new legislation put into place by Sen Bartolomeo, Public Act 13-178 Children's Mental Health Plan. For more information visit www.planforchildren.org. Key principals will support an effective system of mental health care: family driven, youth guided, community based, culturally and linguistically appropriate and trauma informed.

The plan lacks strong support for prenatal to age 5 children. While ChildFirst was mentioned in the meeting, it did not talk about the importance of expanding this programming or the Early Head Start model. The group brought this up, but nothing was rectified. It is clear if we help parents prenatally and within the first months of life we can recognize, treat and support those with mental illness which will lower the rates of supports for children and families upon entering

school. There is a big focus on public school systems implementing plans, support for families. This may be a time to think creatively on how funds (if they are given) from this public act are used to collaborate and support community wide prenatal through age 5 mental health.

Two Generation Learning: funds from Annie E Casey foundation. Commission on Children has pulled together several stakeholders interested in two generational learning and programs. Report due to legislature in Dec.

Early Childhood Cabinet Updates:

At this time Jessica noted all funded programs in CT, Family Resource Centers, Child Day Care Centers and Head Start hold a seat on the Cabinet, but School Readiness does not. Jessica emailed Myra Jones-Taylor asking how a School Readiness Priority District Liaison could obtain a seat at the table to ensure the 6000 children being served in School Readiness slots across CT are represented.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels

