

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, September 17, 2014
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

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TOWN CLERK
MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

Members Present: Mayor Dan Drew, Tina Gomes, Ed Bonilla, Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berling, Susan Macary, Jim Gaudreau, Susan Sienkiewicz, Amy Waterman, Jerome Long, Kitty Robinson, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Christine O'Grady, and Liz Fraser. **Also present:** Ava Hart and Lina Kronenberger.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Co-Chair Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:09 P.M. thanking those present and informing the Council that co-chair Alice Torres was ill and unable to attend the meeting. Introductions were made. Snow School Principal Jim Gaudreau welcomed the new School Readiness Coordinator, Jessica Stewart and thanked those that served on the search committee for their time and effort to secure a new coordinator. Ed turned the meeting over to the Mayor.

II. Swearing in Ceremony: Mayor Drew swore in Jessica Stewart and Amy Waterman. The mayor also acknowledged Tina Gomes for her work supporting children in Middletown and the School Readiness Council.

III. Announcements: Donna Marino shared a flyer for the upcoming P.E.P. program beginning soon at Farm Hill, Christine O'Grady shared brochures for Child First, and Wendy Berling announced Middletown Co-Op Preschool has moved to the AME Zion Church on West St. from their former location at the United Methodist Church.

IV. Acceptance of the June 9th, 2014 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Christine O'Grady moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Donna Marino seconded. The motion carried with 3 abstentions - Lina Kronenberger, Ava Hart and Tina Gomes.

V. Financial and Monthly Summary Reports: Jessica distributed a packet of financial and program information for the 2013-2014 fiscal year and the 2014-2015 year to date. She reviewed each document with the Council and explained the changes at the state level in payment reimbursement; Full day slot reimbursement rates increase July 2014 from \$695.50 per child per month to 722.50 per child per month. Jessica also explained the State is now paying communities on a cash bases, so while the grant application and award letter are July 1 to June 30, the payments are actually done June 1 to May 31st. This new payment process created issues with both City Hall Finance and Legal, but things were worked out. Jessica was asked to add a column in the financial reports reflecting the total number of slots each program has capacity wise versus utilized so council members could see if programs were not filling all slots.

VI. Coordinator's Report:

Local Program Update: YMCA director, Karen James, left the program and her successor has left as well. The new director, Taylor Duckworth, will be starting on October 6th. Taylor is from Meriden and has School Readiness Grant work experience. Jessica is working with Heather to assist the program with the upcoming September monthly report.

Town & Country had their NAEYC visit in August and is awaiting news for reaccreditation.

Current School Readiness openings include:

Board of Education - 3

Bright & Early Learning Center - 2

South Farms - 3

YMCA,

Bielefield School - 6

Macdonough School – 1

Union St. – 10

MECN Workshops: This year's first training session was offered on Sept 2nd. Although the turnout was low, there was a great group. Beth Bye was the presenter. Jessica will request an encore presentation in February 2015. The next training for programs will be offered on October 23rd and will focus on the NAEYC code of ethics training. (MECN is the Middletown Early Childhood Network)

State Level Updates:

Quality Enhancement (QE): award letter has been received and draw down will begin next week.

PKIS System: has been closed and the state is working on a new Early Childhood Information System that will eliminate duplicate data collection. This new system will be a way for the Legislature and others to see larger data on preschool needs. A brief discussion followed. PKIS is the Pre-Kindergarten information system, a data system state funded programs were mandated to use to track children in funded slots.

Office of Early Childhood News (OEC): The OEC is currently working on agency efficiency and it will be sometime before this work is revealed.

Federal Grant Application: The OEC is in the process of on a Federal grant due October 15th, which would expand preschool access for 4 year olds, in programs with BA degreed teachers, and teacher must be paid compensation at the level comparable to the K-12 system.

Jessica noted this grant is for expansion of slots only. She has a concern about the programs currently fully funded by School Readiness or Child Day Care who do not have room to expand, but are meeting the OEC staff requirements and are paying poverty wages. Myra Jones Taylor, the OEC Commissioner is aware of the discrepancy, but due to the amount of funds (about 50 million over 5 years) the OEC could not apply for funding.

Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG Grant): is up for reauthorization. Jessica noted this is important; we need to follow it, and talk with Legislators. Izzi offered to send out an e-mail on this grant. This grant currently funds Care4Kids, and this reauthorization is huge for CT's children and early care throughout the state. Care4Kids now looks at getting people to work, but really does not look at the quality of care children receive. Care4Kids is looking at moving to a 12 month redetermination system, rather than the current redetermination which is done every 8 months.

Licensing requirements: are changing from being conducted once every 2 yrs. to annually. Licensing exemption may no longer be accepted; even for public schools. Currently licensing specialists are not consistent with messaging to programs, citing issues and then the next visit issues which were never cited in the past are now being cited. Discussion followed; Jim asked for a rubric that is used by licensing and Jessica stated she will get Jim a copy. Ed mentioned the burden on programs when citations were made, and the corrections cost programs financially. Annual visits are posed on the premise that there will be more follow through. The OEC will oversee home visitors to help with training opportunities

OEC Marketing campaign: This work will begin in October with the use of billboards to inform communities of the work of the OEC, such as 211, Help Me Grow, School Readiness, and Home Visitation. They are also advertising on Facebook and Pandora Radio.

Quality Improvement System (QIS): formally Quality Rating Improvement System has dropped the "R" for rating and is currently focusing on quality. The rating will be added back at a later date after support is provided to improve the quality of programs. There will be five state regions with a representative for each region who will support improving quality.

Smart Start RFP: is being developed and should be out by late October, with submissions due in the December/January time frame and awards coming out in March. This grant asks the public school system to expand preschool programs. Funds available: \$75,000 will be award for school districts to retrofit classroom space and then another \$75,000 per classroom for running a preschool program. This is not sufficient funding, and public schools will need to contribute. At this time a needs assessment is being done by CHEFA to determine which communities demonstrate the need to expand. Only those showing need will be asked to apply for funding. In the event a community is not on the list, the community can petition to apply if they can clearly document the need for preschool expansion. The RFP also requires teachers must hold the teacher certification for PreK, which will mean public school wage compensation.

Discovery Communities Meeting News: Myra Jones Taylor discussed the development of a new SASID generator; a SASID is a student identifying number assigned to all children who would be entered into the system. Currently public schools systems assign SASID ID's through the Public School Information System (PSIS). This system will include School Readiness, Child Day Care, public schools receiving state funds, Care4Kids and those within home visiting. Each will be assigned ID's and the system will have unduplicated information on a large amount of children across CT.

Discovery communities concern shared: Smart Start is going to take all the BA degreed staff who want to be paid a living wage, yet ALL Early Care programs in CT to pay ALL degreed staff what they deserve.

Early Literacy Committee Update: Jessica noted this committee will be meeting later in the month for their first meeting of this school year.

PreK - K. Alignment Committee: The committee met on Sept. 3rd. There will be four professional development days for preschool and kindergarten staff this year. They will be focusing on the alignment of math standards. The group will be looking at the new Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS), their alignment to the CommonCore K envision math and Middletown Public Schools Kindergarten curriculum. The goal is to help all share math activity ideas and recognize the joint work both groups are doing for Middletown's children, as well as looking at the alignment between PreK and K so students are exposed to early math curriculum and math literacy which will better prepare them for Kindergarten.

E. C. Alliance Group: had their annual meeting in Hartford on Sept 4th. The focus is currently on the "We Vote for Kids" campaign. Please call Izzi if you need signs and bumper stickers. It was also noted the Alliance is focusing on the State Representative seats. Jessica shared copies of Liz Fraser's blog on the Governor's speech delivered at the meeting.

Middlesex Coalition of Children Report: Izzi reported they are working on a children's report card for the past year of data. This will be created in booklet format allowing for one area of data; this will be in print format and web-based. She noted the data will be diverse in content. Once the report is developed, she will be looking for people to be ambassadors for the report to get the word out. This would give a better over-all picture, outlining connections we may not individually see, it will reflect community trends that may become future issues the Coalition can focus on for action. Jessica thanked Izzi and Chris Fahey for the work of the writing the Discovery grant for an additional \$10,000 in funding which will help support the booklet work. She also mentioned she would like to add the Middlesex Coalition to the Updates in the agenda beginning in October. Izzi announced the Coalition is going to sponsor a candidate forum at their Oct. meeting. Izzi stated Ann Faust will be the guest on housing and homelessness, at the Housing meeting which will immediately follow the Opportunity Knocks meeting.

Community Foundation Grant Update: was delivered to the Foundation on Monday September 14, 2014 requesting \$5,000 which will be used to continue the Storytelling Program for community providers.

VII. Updates: Discovery Update: Our Discovery liaison, Cindy, was not in attendance to offer any news. Jessica did note we are awaiting word on the additional \$10,000 in funding. She hopes to hear within the week.

Early Head Start (EHS) Update: EHS is back up to 60 families; hired a new home visitor, and weekly socialization sessions will be offered.

Head Start Update: Director, Marla Hinz, was not present to give the Council an update.

Even Start Update: Lina Kronenberger reported their classrooms are full and they have a waiting list. Even Start is working on their NAEYC re-accreditation.

Opportunity Knocks Update: In Monica's absence, Susan reminded the Council of the upcoming kick-off meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 23rd at the Hazen Room of the YMCA from 12:00 - 1:00P.M.. Discussion followed around the new universal access and "invisible homeless" people. Additional discussion around birth rates followed. The Council is interested in following this issue.

Child First Update: Christine noted they are recruiting families. She noted that changes in directors at programs who are not so familiar with Child First and the summer break doesn't allow for teacher referrals, thus the recruitment.

Family Resource Centers (FRC) Update: Amy reported activities are just getting underway and didn't have much to report on at this time. The summer playgroups went well. She is recruiting more families outside of both schools districts and wants to make sure families know they can access the FRC regardless of their home school. The Kindergarten Kick-Start 5 week program for Macdonough and Farm Hill went well this summer.

Housing the Farm Hill program at Farm Hill, as opposed to the former location at the Green St. Art Center, worked out well, too. Amy reported the average daily attendance was 13-14 children. Wesleyan University students and a lead teacher were at both sites to run the program. This offering is made possible by a grant from Liberty bank for 1 year. Enrollment is based on F&R lunch children that may not have attended preschool and/or performed low on the kindergarten screening in May. In regard to garnering additional funding to continue this valuable program, Christine suggested CBDG or community improvement funding and Kitty mentioned the Rotary Club.

VIII. Adjournment: Ed closed the meeting at 1:34 P.M., with thanks to those present.

The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St., Middletown, CT 06457

from

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

Respectfully Submitted by: Sheila C. Daniels