

**Middletown School Readiness Council**  
**12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.**  
**Wednesday, February 18, 2015**  
**Wilbert Snow School**  
**299 Wadsworth St.**  
**Middletown, CT 06457**

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TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN  
MIDDLETOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Members Present:** Ed Bonilla, Alice Torres, Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berling, Amy Waterman, Beverly Lawrence, Kitty Robinson, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Susan Sienkiewicz, Jerome Long, Ann Perzan, Monica Belyea, Jim Gaudreau and Pat Charles.  
**Also present:** Cindy Guerreri.

**I. Welcome & Call to Order:** Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12: 14P.M. Introductions were made.

**II. Announcements:** Wendy reported the Preschool Information Fair at Russell Library held on January 31st was attended by 20 families, totaling 50 people. It was a good turnout and went well. Thanks to Wendy for her work on this important offering. Monica shared two behavioral health provider training offerings. Donna shared two workshop flyers for CT Core Standards and PEP bilingual training. Ed reminded the Council United Way's VITA services have had a lot of cancellations to date and recommended people remind those interested in their service to call and make an appointment soon. He also reminded the Council this month's MIAC meeting will be held tomorrow at 8:30A.M. and all are welcome to attend. The topic of conversation will be around CT Works, in efforts to extend awareness of their Middletown office. Izzi reminded the Council that the Middlesex Coalition for Children's March 12th meeting will be their annual Legislative Breakfast held at MxCC. This year's push will be to garner support for worthy wages. She also noted it is important for testimony around this issue.

**III. Acceptance of the January 21, 2015 School Readiness Council meeting minutes:** Wendy Berling moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Kitty Robinson seconded the motion. Cindy Guerreri requested an amendment to the minutes under the Discovery Update; where stated "... funding will occur" should read "funding may occur". With the amendment made, Monica Belyea moved to accept the minutes. Kitty Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Financial and Monthly Summary Reports:** Jessica distributed the financial report, showing just 1 opening in the YMCA program at Bielefield School. This reflects a great effort on behalf of YMCA Director, Taylor Duckworth, to fill the other 6 slots. Jessica noted children are aging in for March and April enrollment.

**V. Coordinator's Report:**

**Legislative Update:** Jessica noted the Alliance meetings take place every Monday, but due to recent weather events, meetings have been cancelled or conducted on a call-in basis. Jessica discussed her work on the worthy wage issue. She has contacted School Readiness programs and urged staff and parents to testify. YMCA program director, Taylor Duckworth, did give testimony to Jessica and will testify in person if her schedule permits.

Izzi offered to create sample testimony and she is willing to deliver any written testimony to Hartford. Izzi noted Merrill Gay had an op-ed in today's CT Mirror supporting worthy wages. The Alliance hopes this session's focus will change the reimbursement rates for program staff members holding Bachelor Degrees. They are proposing a \$5 million request under the 50/50 rule.

Jessica informed the Council that Gov. Malloy was delivering his proposal for the state budget at this time and Liz Fraser was present and would be updating Jessica periodically throughout the meeting.

**Local Program Update:** Jessica continues to work on teacher registry as her monitoring focus. Bright & Early Update: Jessica went through every staff member's transcript with Kara. The program has work in progress to convert the large gym into a classroom of 20, reducing staff by 1. She noted another staff member is trying to get her Associates Degree and other staff members are working toward that goal as well. Jessica reiterated the need for accredited universities to help lessen the difficulty for staff to take the necessary courses. She is meeting with Town & Country director, Judi Kenney tomorrow to discuss their credentialing issues.

Amy and Jessica received information on an upcoming symposium, Childhood Conversations, offered to Discovery communities to be held on Mar. 20th. They need to send a team of 6 and Jessica, Amy, and Izzi are planning on attending this workshop. Jessica asked if anyone else had any interest in joining them. Donna agreed to attend. The flyer was shared outlining the workshop. Cindy added this workshop is attached to Childhood Conversations and the campaign for grade level reading. She noted New Britain will be presenting and they have data showing reading levels increased due to year round work around literacy. A brief discussion followed. Monica will pass the information onto Family Advocacy staff. Jessica will ask all program providers if any would like to attend this workshop.

Jessica and Izzi have had conversations around folding the Discovery budget match into the Legislative Breakfast. Discovery has made the same commitment as last year, matching funds allocated by the state for early childhood initiatives. Izzi added the Planning Committee has been meeting after our Council meetings, CT Voices for Children will be working with Izzi on this year's Legislative Breakfast. Cindy mentioned we should watch Rep. Christine Rosati's House Bill 6004 for those matching funds of \$900,000. from the state to retain the Discovery match. She mentioned Sen. Ted Kennedy co-signed the bill and requested anyone with contact to him should encourage his presence at the Legislative Breakfast. While this discussion was transpiring, Liz sent word that the Governor's budget cut this funding. Jessica stated she did ask Graustein staff if funding would be cut all together if state funds were cut. They don't know what the Foundation will do, but hope funds won't be cut all together.

#### **Other Updates:**

**Discovery Update:** Cindy noted she shared the bulk of her update under the budget discussion. She reported a Discovery funding extension application will go out shortly to Discovery communities and will be a simple application process. The new RFP focus will be announced in the summer.

**ACES Update:** Alice reported the Early Head Start Year 1 plan of their 5 year plan was approved and the first 6 months of funding has been allocated. ACES is still waiting for Head Start re-competition news. The re-competition review will continue through March. Alice remains hopeful and will update the Council in March.

She reported the YMCA program passed NAEYC re-accreditation and ACES is working with the Y around their teacher credentialing requirements. Congratulations to the YMCA!

Alice distributed their 2014-2015 Program Year School Readiness Fall Cycle Update #1 report to the Council. She noted the goals listed totaling 9 as they added 2 additional goals to their previous 7 goals. The data reflects they are reaching families and serving babies earlier. Domestic violence, mental health, including maternal depression and housing are all issues of concern. They are working closely with DCF, Middlesex Family Advocacy and Child First. Efforts to increase time families can interact within the EHS offerings are being made. Alice offered to show a video of work being done to conduct this scoring and the Council was receptive this opportunity. Alice noted there is a lot of data they want to compile and a trend analysis would be interesting as their first cohort will soon be going to kindergarten. Donna noted the Wesleyan University may have students that could assist Alice in compiling data. Susan noted the success of the program is to catch moms early and encourage them to take care of themselves and relationships with home visitors and moms have been a success.

**Head Start Update:** no update, as Marla was not present.

**Even Start Update:** in Lina's absence, Jessica reported Even Start had their NAEYC visit and felt it went well. Cindy Smernoff worked with the staff to prepare for the NAEYC visit.

**Opportunity Knocks Update:** Monica reported the Oral Health and EHS Health Advisory committees will meet Friday at noon. They are working on the dental provider survey and Home by 1 as well as looking at health services screening. She and Alice noted ACES purchased a screening tool for hearing tests. This is very good news because this important test is not being conducted in pediatric offices. The monthly Opportunity Knocks monthly meeting will be held on next Tuesday, Feb. 24th, with discussion on the BMI screening report. Monica shared some data on preschool expulsions for the July - Sept. 2014 time frame - 2 children were expelled, 49 at risk children were maintained in programs and Cindy Smernoff conducted 21 site visits. Child First served 43 families and currently has 18 families on their wait list. They conducted 730 in-home consultation visits. Help Me Grow data shows 145 people participating in the mail-in program, up from 72 in previous year. Considering the large number of babies born at Middlesex Hospital, she noted work on increasing the awareness of this informative program is needed.

**Child First Update:** Christine O'Grady is sick, too, so Jessica reported on her behalf that a clinician is leaving next Friday. They will be looking to replace her. Monica is confident the position will be filled quickly.

**FRC Update:** Amy reported the governor made no cuts to FRCs. They are hitting a bump in the road for the summer Kickstart program since both Macdonough and Farm Hill are not viable venues as both will be undergoing construction/repairs. Amy continues to look into different locations and will be meeting with program founder/organizer, Anna Schusterman. Several alternative venues were mentioned - Green St., CRT, Oddfellows, and Faith Lutheran. Green St. and CRT are not able to accommodate the program; Oddfellows and Faith Lutheran are possibilities. Amy will follow up with both. She wants to find a location prior to the kindergarten registration dates at both schools, since the enrollment is based on findings at the registration sessions. Space is needed for 30 children. Even Start was also mentioned as a possible venue. Amy also informed the Council she will be conducting a Circle of Security training at Even Start and is very excited about it. This training is currently being conducted at Town & Country. A Raising Readers program is ongoing at Macdonough with 15 families enrolled. Amy is hoping to recruit these families to participate in the upcoming Circle of Security training following the Raising Readers program.

The Family Resource Grant application will be released soon and will be competitive. Grant reviewers will be using new data system for this grant process. Amy is confident in the MPS Family Resource Centers program. She is partnering with Monica on engaging Farm Hill families, working on trust and getting those families to the FRCs.

**Middlesex Coalition for Children Update:** Izzi reported Wesleyan University Service Learning students are working on the childhood hunger survey in Middletown and hope to include a few other communities (Portland, Old Saybrook, and Clinton) in their survey work. Identifying how many children are food insecure will be the focus of this survey work and school data will be reviewed and used for additional information gathering. The findings will be presented at the May Coalition meeting. This work has been done on a five year interval and this is the third survey in Middletown.

**Family School Connection Update:** Donna reported the Family School Connection will be expanded to include Farm Hill School in addition to current sites at Bielefield and Snow Schools. Bielefield is serving 34 families and Snow had 3 new referrals. A donation of jeans has been made and a trade-in event will occur at Bielefield and Snow Schools. She also noted the program is hoping to send home visitors for summer training.

**Other News:** Salvation Army is interested in a being a host for the summer lunch program. This is good news as their location is optimal.

Bright & Early Learning Center also had their NAEYC re-accreditation visit and felt confident that it went well.

**VI. Adjournment:** Ed closed the meeting at 1:29 P.M. thanking those present for their attendance.

The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting **will not be held at Snow School** on  
Wednesday, March 18, 2015

**Instead, we will meet on March 18, 2015**

**at**

**Legislative Office Building**

**Hartford, CT**

**10:00A.M. Parent Leadership Press Conference (Room 1B)**

**11:00A.M. Local Early Education Council Press Conference (Room 1A)**

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

Sheila C. Daniels