

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, June 10, 2015
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

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TOWN OF
MIDDLETOWN

Members Present: Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Amy Waterman, Kitty Robinson, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Monica Belyea, Lina Kronenberg and Christine O'Grady. **Also present:** Cindy Guerreri and Liz Hibino.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: In the absence of the co-chairs, Jessica Stewart called the meeting to order at 12:19P.M. Condolences on behalf of the entire Council go out to Alice Torres on the recent passing of her mother. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Monica shared a breast feeding brochure she is using in an attempt to increase support for breast feeding needs in the workplace and getting recognition for employers that do so. She circulated the paperwork and asked Council members to review the list and identify any names on it they could personally contact to promote this work. Collaboration is in process with ACES, EHS and Middlesex Hospital on building support for infant mental health. Monica circulated the flyer for the initial meeting to be held on June 16th from 2:00 – 4:00P.M. at 51 Broad St.. Izzi shared copies of the Hunger Task Force's unofficial report with the Council. She reminded the Council the full report is on the Coalition website. Izzi also shared the United Way ALICE report. Donna reported the Book Mobile is getting ready for summer runs and because their building was flooded, an abbreviated schedule for the Book Mobile will include Wednesday evenings in the neighborhoods and not as many other stops as in the past. She did note they have a new van and it has music! There was a brief discussion around book donations due to the flooding and Jessica noted the S.R.C. made a book donation. Izzi, Monica and Amy also offered to make donations. Donna suggested they wait and if there is a need for additional books as the summer passes, she will contact them. Donna also mentioned a meeting to garner input on Middletown needs for an upcoming grant opportunity to be held on Monday June 15th at 12:00P.M. at Central Office which is open to anyone interested. Kitty announced the summer reading program at Russell Library has begun. Library staff is visiting the public schools promoting the program and have also visited the Snow School preschool program. She also shared Russell Library has an adult summer reading program and encouraged those present to consider joining this group. You read a book, write a brief review on the book and receive a raffle ticket for an e-reader tablet give-a-way. Kitty mentioned Early Head Start had a wonderful meeting at Russell Library. Lina announced Even Start is full for their summer two day program, they just held graduation for this year's enrollees, and Even Start has one fall opening. Liz Hibino, the new social worker, noted she was happy to be with us and meet those present. She has been working with programs directors and families of the School Readiness programs since April. Cindy Guerreri reported the Graustein Foundation is waiting for the state budget to be finalized, so she had no news on their funding as it is a matching fund.

III. Acceptance of the May 20, 2015 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date noting an error in the sentence around worthy wages. Donna seconded the motion and also noted the correct spelling of MAIC. The motion carried unanimously with noted changes.

IV. Financial and Monthly Summary Reports: Jessica distributed the financial report, showing slots full for May and noted there will be 1 slot open at the Y's program at Bielefield School reflected in the June report

when it is filed. Programs running over the summer are currently full. Recruitment for fall enrollment at all programs is underway.

V. Coordinator's Report: Jessica reported there will be \$35,000 in unearned funds for the year. Discussion around unearned funds and slot capacity followed. Cindy noted lower enrollment is a state wide issue and not indicative of just Middletown.

Legislative Update: Jessica reported there will be no cuts to the School Readiness Grant. Bill 7020 is awaiting a signature from the governor and includes language change for staff credentialing. The credentialing requirement deadline has been pushed out to July 2017. Jessica noted this decision has been met with mixed response, while it helps those working toward their degree it also hurts those that have left their child care positions and those that worked so hard to meet the current deadline. Discussion around the pros and cons of this decision took place. In another matter; the residency restriction was lifted and a guiding policy will be developed through the Office of Early Childhood (O.E.C.). School Readiness liaisons requested to be included in the process and their suggestions were submitted to the O.E.C. Discussion followed including the suggestion that 211 Info Line could be a resource that would inform parents of the residency option when they call in for child care information. Jessica noted there are considerations to be made including whether there will be a cap on enrollment from out of town families. More discussion followed. Discovery grant funds: there is a potential to request a carry-over of grant funds for approximately \$7,000. Of the carry-over funds \$5,000 would allow Liz Hibino to continue her social work supports with program directors and families, and \$2000 for administrative supports. Jessica reminded the Council there was a 5% cut in the grant this fiscal year and then 1.25% additional cut has been made. Discovery will make a decision next week on their matching funds to their communities. Cindy noted the recommendation to the Board is to absorb the 1.25% so funding will remain the same (less the 5% cut made in the 14-15 year). Jessica and Cindy are confident we are in good shape for 1 more year.

VI. Other Updates:

EHS: In Alice's absence, there was no news. She is still awaiting news on the Head Start grant application.

Discovery Update: Cindy reported Graustein will fully fund the applications as they were submitted in April and on June 17th the staff will present next high level strategies and based on response they will talk with communities. This is the final year for the current focus and work is underway on wrapping up.

Listening Tours: were completed with all parties requested to meet with the exception of the Head Start program working into the schedule. Jessica noted she heard the tour went well and program directors were happy with the visit and being able to share their thoughts with Alice and Ed. A full report will be shared with the council soon.

Head Start Update: Jessica gave update, as Marla was not present. Head Start is working with Wesleyan University's cognitive labs for math activities for their summer program. They still have not heard from the federal government regarding the Head Start grant award. Jessica noted she did ask if there was going to be a reallocation process change from O.E.C. on the unfilled Child Day Care slots and has not received a response. Middletown would like to have subsidized infant/toddler slots for the families in need.

Even Start Update: Lina gave her update earlier in the meeting, but noted everything was going well at the program.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Monica reminded the Council the June meeting is scheduled for the 23rd and she is wrapping up work for the year. She noted perinatal and well-baby.referral guides will be going out.

Child First Update: Christine reported there are 12 families on the wait list, there has been approval for 2 new positions from the SS/HS grant and there will be a full time clinician and care coordinator through this funding stream. Child First staff is excited about the additional support and the posting will be online soon and interviews will take place within 2 weeks. There was a discussion around children having behavioral issues at some community programs around napping. Jessica and Monica will work on this issue of concern with program directors to ensure they receive the supports needed for children and staff.

FRC Update: Amy reported the FRC RFP is scheduled to be out on June 17th. State level funding passed through the legislature with additional funds to New Britain for a new site. Amy announced she is going to be the vice president of the FRC Alliance. Congrats to Amy from the Council on this position. In reference to the upcoming Kickstart program, Amy noted she did not seek out School Readiness children purposely in her recruitment efforts as these children will be in a program for the summer. She plans on contacting the Snow preschool program coordinator and the Y Bielefield program for possible additional enrollees. She went on to note that Middletown Adult Education (MAE) has been very receptive allowing the program to be housed at their site. The FRC has received a \$10,000 grant to beef up parental involvement through the Graustein Foundation. There is concern around the sustainability of the Kickstart program and Amy plans on having a conversation with Central Office around support of the program as grant funding winds down. She noted Anna would like to expand the program and is looking into the availability of federal funds to do so.

Middlesex Coalition for Children Update: Izzi reported she was contacted by Rep. Matt Lesser. With the implementation of budget now underway, Rep. Lesser would like to be sure of the needs in Middletown. Please contact Izzi with any suggestions of needs that she can pass onto Rep. Lesser. Donna mentioned Family School Connection as one need since funding was decreased in the past and sites were reduced from 5 to 3 in the school district.

Family School Connection Update: Donna noted things are going well with 3 home visitors and summer plans at Woodbury Circle. She was contacted by the Carabetta Apartments liaison stating she is open to collaborating with agencies in the area to support families in their apartment complexes. Izzi suggested a summer lunch site at Woodbury Circle would be great. Izzi will e-mail the summer lunch sites to Jessica and she will send out this important information to the programs.

VI. Adjournment: Jessica closed the meeting at 1:45P.M. thanking those present for their attendance.

**The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on
Wednesday, September 16th, 2014**

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St., Middletown, CT 06457

from

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

Happy summer to all!

Respectfully Submitted by:

Sheila C. Daniels

