

Middletown School Readiness Council

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

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St.

Middletown, CT 06457

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TOWN CLERK
MIDDLETOWN, CT

Members Present: Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Amy Waterman, Beverly Lawrence, Izzi Greenberg, Christine O'Grady, Wendy Berlind, Donna Marino, Patricia Charles, Jim Gaudreau, Mayor Dan Drew, Jerome Long, Marla Hinz, and Jennifer Cannata.

Also present: Dionne Lowndes

I. Welcome & Call to Order: With both co-chairs not in attendance (Ed Bonilla ill and Alice Torres still out on medical leave), Jessica Stewart opened the meeting at 12:13 P.M. welcoming everyone. Introductions were made. Mayor Dan Drew swore in Marla Hinz and Jennifer Cannata as official School Readiness Council members.

II. Announcements: Donna shared PLTI brochures for upcoming session.

III. Acceptance of the November 18, 2015 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Donna Marino moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Jerome Long seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Coordinator's Report:

Financial Report: Jessica shared the report stating all slots were full for November. At this time a request has been submitted to the Office of Early Childhood for 9 additional full-day spaces, 4 for Bright & Early and 5 for Town & Country per their request. Jessica explained at this time each year the OEC looks at slots consistently not filled in districts and then takes them and gives them to districts who can fill them immediately. Update: as of December 22, 2015 Jessica was altered the 9 slots have been awarded to Middletown.

Legislative Update: Jessica reiterated news she shared earlier in the week with the Council regarding the governor's budget and lack of cut to the School Readiness Grant. Izzi reported from the E.C. Alliance meeting this morning, they learned about the approved 1% budget cut (with no discretion) that will take place across the board soon. She also reported the state faces a projected budget deficit of \$550 million! She recommended programs brace themselves for future cuts. Discussion around other cuts took place. In regard to the recent budget cut, it was noted that Sen. Dante Bartolomeo did not vote in favor of the budget.

Middletown School Readiness Council Listening Tour Summary Review: The handout reflecting the survey and conclusions was shared with the Council. Discussion followed.

The following are actions taken and/or suggestions made:

- School Readiness Council handbooks were created for every Council member and distributed at the meeting. These contain an overview of School Readiness, School Readiness Council policies and By-Laws, contact information and a place to file School Readiness Council minutes. Corrections and suggestions were made, such as adding the (former) Discovery work component. Jessica noted these handbooks can also be used for orienting new members.
- Provider manuals were created for program directors and Council information was included in each.
- Jessica created a survey monkey survey for providers to gain a better understanding of their needs and found the providers are happy with current supports as they are being given now.
- Provider Council meeting agenda planning: Jessica now asks programs for input. She has been getting guest speakers from local agencies as well.

- Parent involvement is one missing component of the Listening Tour and the make-up of the School Readiness Council.
 - Jessica discussed the background of the tour and brought the introduction of the report to the Council's attention.
- Comments from Council Members:
- Interviews should be more inclusive, everyone should have been included so additional input was gained.
 - What is the intention of the Listening Tour and the questions asked, and will it be repeated every year? Yes, that is the intention of the co-chairs as stated in the report.
 - Should just the co-chairs conduct the interviews?
 - Where are we and what do we want to know from the community?
 - Discussion around the MECN workshops: Exploring who we invite to the workshops. There are limitations on who attends and the facilitators' desire to present to a certain number of audience members. Amy noted there is positive feedback for the workshops. We need to be cognizant of the purpose of the workshops as professional development for early care teachers.
 - What do parents want to know? Would a newsletter work? Should we survey parents? Some programs do inform parents on SR, while others don't necessarily do so or not with as much effort. Jessica would like to ask programs what they currently do to increase parents' awareness of school readiness, what it is and how it affect the program.
 - Develop a list of questions and have everyone review and make suggestions.
 - Perhaps change the process, for instance, anonymous survey next year and interview the following year. We need to develop parameters for the process. Is the purpose so we are more focused or how to better support the programs, how to make improvements as a Council?
 - It was noted that this exercise outlined strengths of the Council.
 - It was further noted that we had the reflection exercise on the Discovery worksheet. We can pull out the Discovery documents and review them at our next meeting to get a start on setting goals for the remainder of this fiscal year.
 - A suggestion was made to develop updates for the SR brochure and distribute it again, it will be needed for the Community Messengers.
 - The FRC developed a "parent friendly" child care resource for use when their parents ask for info. This could be more widely distributed as it is inclusive of all child care centers in the community and gives information on what services each provides.
 - Providers mentioned they didn't know the Council. Jessica asked if each member could come up with a 2-3 sentence bio she can share in the Directors binders. Providers would also like to meet Council members. Jessica: what do you think about doing a yearly "meet and greet" with them at one of our Council meetings?
 - Programs would welcome Council member visits; all you have to do is call and ask. It was suggested we follow the Board of Education's practice of "Adopt a School" and adopt a preschool program.
 - Listening tour needs more work: agreed to continue the conversation at January's meeting, and look at Discovery feedback document. Jessica stated she would share a copy of the questions from the tour when the SR Council minutes go out as well as the Discovery document.

Updates:

Child First Update: Christine reported 12 families are currently on wait list, SS/HS work has engaged 15 families and out of those, 5 referrals occurred. She noted the engagement with families in the schools has been very good. Amy praised the extra support of the third team.

Community Messengers Update: Donna reported his program was launched today. They are looking for people to become informed about school readiness, PLTI, and other childhood resources available and be able to pass on that important information to the general public. There is a \$25. stipend being offered to those that

participate in the training and go into the community as a messenger. The application process is in place and training will occur soon. As of yesterday, there were 4-5 applicants. A larger mailing of information on this opportunity will be forthcoming. They are also developing a logo for the messengers along with lanyards and buttons. If you know anyone that wants to be a messenger or inform the messengers please contact Donna.

Early Head Start Update: Dionne noted Alice will be returning from her medical leave after the holidays and provided some information on the month of Nov including: 6 referrals, 3 intakes scheduled, no waiting families, 6 exits/6 entrances and 57 home visits.

CRT Update: Marla reported CRT is full serving 77 children. She also noted they are now fully staffed. The program received warm clothing from a clothing drive at St. Pius Church and asked to be contacted if anyone knew of a family in need. Amy offered to take any leftovers for FRC.

Family Resource Center Update: Amy didn't have an update. She and Izzi may present on the Equity Summit at a future S.R. Council meeting.

Family School Connections Update: Donna noted there are 50 families being served right now. This line item received a 10% cut from the governor's budget. They collected over 100 gifts for children for the holidays.

V. Adjournment: Jessica closed the meeting at 1:40P.M.

Please note: as of January 1, 2016 all minutes and agendas will be emailed to council members, we will no longer print and send paper copies. Minutes and agendas can also be found on the City website.

Happy Holidays to all!

The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on
Wednesday, January 20th, 2016

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

