

**Stamford School Readiness Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday, September 14, 2011**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**Government Center, Mayor's Conference Room**

***Council members present:***

Bramble, Melissa	DOMUS
Brennan, Karen	Stamford Discovery, United Way of Western CT
Burke, Jennienne Peoples	Care to Care (Family Centers)
Collins, Dennis	Parent
Cook, Lucia	Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich
D'Luc, Imelda	Stamford Head Start
Feder, Karen	Abilis
Fox, Bridget	Chair, Stamford School Readiness Council
Garcia, Maritza	Adult Learning Center
Hallsisey, Jennifer	United Way of Western CT
Lapine, Jennifer	CLC Leadership Council
List, Deborah	Parent & Chair, Parent Outreach Committee
Morrow, Polly	Pitney Bowes/Parent Representative
Mullett, Alisha	SoundWaters
Rauh, Polly	Stamford Board of Education
Sabia, Michele	Stamford Public Schools
Sanders, Michael	Stillmeadow Elementary School
Schreiner, Debby	Stamford Public Schools (Instructional Coordinator)
Short, Bob	Family Centers
Ward, Caroline	Ferguson Library
Weller, Eva	PLTI

***Advisors:***

Garvin-Kester, Barbara	Childcare Learning Centers
Sargent, Carol	Childcare Learning Centers
Tarantino, Sherry	Sacred Heart School

***Guests:***

Ahuja, Sonja	Liaison, Graustein Memorial Fund
Hickley, Julie	Bright Horizons at High Ridge Park
Witkowski, Anna	Childcare Learning Centers

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Mayor Pavia joined the Council at the beginning of the meeting and thanked the group for their time, commitment, and passion in helping start our young people off on the right foot. Bridget Fox then asked committee members to introduce themselves and share a little about their organization. Bridget

welcomed several new members to the Council including Melissa Bramble, Maritza Garcia and Deborah List. She also welcomed Dr. Sanders back to the table.

## II. Announcements

- Bridget re-stated that under the Governor's now official budget, all of the Department of Social Services (DSS) preschool slots will be merged with the State Department of Education (SDE) School Readiness Program preschool slots. In Stamford, we currently have 227 DSS funded slots that are administered by Childcare Learning Centers (CLC). We will know more about what this new system will look like in a few months, but there will be soon be one agency that will likely have a new name.
- Bridget is sitting on the state-wide Right from the Start committee which is creating recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor so that the newly created early childhood system in the State is of high quality, sustainable, accessible and effective in all settings and all communities for children and families regardless of race, abilities, and income.
- This year the six Stamford Public School Instructional Coordinators will be rotating their attendance at the Council meetings to allow all of them to be part of the Council's work.
- Council members each received a folder with the year's meeting schedule, a copy of the Blueprint, a progress report from 2010-11, the Council by-laws, and an overview of the School Readiness Program. Members not present will be mailed a packet.
- This year we will be putting member's bios and pictures on our web site. Look for this to be implemented in the next month.
- Lucia Cook from Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich described an event that took place in August when Representative Himes read to a group of children from Bright Minds at the Atlantic Street Optimus Clinic to showcase the *Reach Out and Read* program. Dr. Mathur gave Representative Himes a tour of the clinic and all the children, both those who attended the event and those at the center, received books and care packages from Literacy Volunteers. The event received good press and served to highlight many of the Council's early childhood partners.
- Our Parent Outreach Committee met on Tuesday and will be helping to support the Council's second annual benefit concert featuring the Swingset Mamas on **Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup> to be held at the Ferguson Library**. The proceeds will be used to help defray the costs to send all of CLC and Sacred Heart's children to a performance of *Goodnight Moon* at the Palace Theater on December 8th.

## III. Regular Reports

A report from Sacred Heart was sent in advance of the meeting and is included as an Addendum to this report. CLC did not submit a report this month.

Regular reports from the Health & Wellness, Education, and Parent Outreach Committees will be on next month's agenda. Each group is just restarting their work together after a summer hiatus.

## IV. Old Business

- A special thanks to Michele Sabia for helping to secure Big Apple Circus tickets for the 60 children who were unable to attend the Very Hungry Caterpillar performance last February. Thanks to donations from Pitney Bowes and others, we have been able to purchase safety harnesses and transportation to this year's event will not be a problem.

## V. New Business

Bridget asked the Council for comments on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant competition which will focus on improving early learning and development programs for young children supporting states' efforts to:

- increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in each age group of infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs;
- design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services; and,
- ensure that any use of assessments conforms with the commendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood.

The application deadline is October 19 and awards will be given out in December. Connecticut will be applying. There was significant discussion around the application and members had a number of comments and concerns:

- There grant is clearly about more than access to early childhood education. They will be looking at the quality of teachers and enhanced professional development programs.
- The Governor is determined to see Connecticut win this grant. It is the key to the achievement gap and dealing with literacy issues.
- A member made the recommendation that the Council goes to the Board of Education School Reps after the application has been submitted and we know what Connecticut is preparing for.
- It is not altogether clear how local agencies and groups will get the money, or what they will do with it, if the state receives a grant.

**Meeting follow-up:** A subgroup of the Council wrote a post for the Race to the Top forum (see Addendum B).

Meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

**The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 11 at the Ferguson Library.**



## **Addendum A: Sacred Heart Report**

### **School Readiness Council Report Sacred Heart School September 2011**

#### **Program Utilization:**

- School Day – School Year – 41 Students
- We are currently still giving tours for prospective students
- Pre – K 3 Class – 14
- Pre – K 4 Class #1-13
- Pre – K 4 Class #2-14
- We started our school year on September 1<sup>st</sup> as planned.

#### **Program Attendance:**

- Children - 100%
- Staff – 100%

#### **Staffing:**

- We hired 2 new staff members this year.
- Marla Kerwin is now our new Head Teacher in Pre-K 4 #2 – She holds a BA in Education/Special Ed and is currently doing her Masters at SCSU.
- Samantha Theoret is now our new Asst. Teacher in Pre-K 4 #1 – She holds a BA in Communication and is currently attending NCC for her CDA. She should receive her CDA by December 2011.

#### **Activities & Events:**

- Held our first staff meeting of the year on 8/26. We offered breakfast and luncheon. Each staff member received a new copy of the newly updated Staff Handbook. Staff received paperwork in which we reviewed. All staff received a timetable of due dates for specific paperwork. Reviewed LEP's.
- Held a PD for re-cert for Medication Training and CPR for all staff on 9/6/11.
- Michele Sabia held a training workshop on LEP's for all staff members on 9/2/11. Further training is required to ensure that staff are able to create the required LEP.
- Parent Orientation took place on Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. We had approx. 27 families represented. The Parent Handbook, The Crisis Management Plan and the Community Resource Booklet was handed out that evening. Director reviewed the policies and procedures.
- Dr. Cindy Bess, our Educational Consultant came to review the classrooms (do an unofficial ECERS) to prepare for our upcoming NAEYC visit.
- SHS is currently waiting for our NAEYC accreditation visit. We should expect a visit between now and November 31<sup>st</sup> of this year.

## **Addendum B: Race to the Top Comments**

Stamford School Readiness Council  
Race to the Top Comments Posted on September 20, 2011

The Stamford School Readiness Council is pleased to provide comments on Connecticut's application for Race to the Top funding, which we enthusiastically endorse. These comments focus predominantly on the achievements and continuing priorities of Stamford, however, we offer these comments in full consideration of statewide efforts.

### Accomplishments:

The Stamford community has a demonstrated, longstanding commitment to early childhood education and care. In 1996, 38% of Stamford children entered kindergarten with no preschool experience of any kind. In the past 15 years, Stamford has narrowed that gap significantly. Inasmuch as Stamford's commitment to early learning and education is longstanding and substantial, we believe that our efforts and achievements can add valuable context as the State prepares its Race to the Top application.

With the support of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, Stamford recently engaged in an ambitious early childhood blueprint development process. Subsequently, the Stamford School Readiness Council continues to leverage significant resources around the following areas of focus: Early Childhood Education, Health and Wellness and Parent Outreach. These three working groups have assessed the state of early care and education in Stamford. The following priorities reflect the input of the three committees charged with strengthening our existing early childhood education and care system.

Below please find the grant priorities along with significant objectives that we suggest:

#### A. Successful State Systems

- Stamford currently has no state-subsidized infant/toddler slots. We advocate that the state include in its RTT application a request for increased access to and sufficient reimbursement for high-quality infant/toddler slots.
- Stamford supports strengthening the Regional Education Service Centers in order to align, promote and coordinate what is happening state-wide around early childhood curriculum and professional development.
- Stamford supports a focus on continuity of instruction and a coordination of instructional strategies between preschool and kindergarten. This would allow the introduction of standards, as manifested by the Common Core in 2014 to be introduced into a comprehensive pre-k-12 system.

#### B. High Quality Accountable Programs

- Stamford agrees with the importance of having a state-wide quality rating system for our local state-

funded early childhood programs.

- We recommend that NAEYC accredited early childhood programs should not need to repeat lower-tiered requirements in any new system.

- Stamford supports an application that prioritizes a consistent, cohesive, and comprehensive set of statewide policies, regulations, and administrative procedures that will ensure ongoing quality improvement, link meaningfully to professional development, and promote diverse, inclusive classrooms that promote the school readiness of all children.

### C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

- In Stamford, the primary focus of our state-funded programs is whole child development. The social-emotional growth of a child is at the core of early childhood development which leads to academic and life-long success.

- With the recent push by the State to promote the Infant and Toddler Early Learning Guidelines and the continued State and local efforts to incorporate the Preschool Assessment Framework and the Preschool Curriculum Framework in our early childhood programs, Stamford has strengthened the readiness of our incoming kindergarten children.

- Stamford recommends that any assessments that are developed be developmentally appropriate using objective criteria.

- Stamford recommends that the State provides funding and targeted structural support at the local level for the health, behavioral and developmental needs of children with high needs to improve school readiness.

### D. A Great Early Childhood Workforce

- Our early educators and leaders need to have access in the city to high-quality and affordable early childhood degree programs. Currently Stamford has minimal access to high-quality early childhood credentialing degree programs. We request that the RTT application has a plan to address this concern.

### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

- Stamford is advocating for a standardized state-wide kindergarten assessment to be administered prior to kindergarten entry in order to inform instruction.

- We recommend that the State build upon the existing Kindergarten Inventory by ensuring that it is administered objectively and is standardized across all CT public school districts.

- Given the demographic make-up of a city like Stamford, we strongly recommend that the K Inventory take into account the multiple languages our children speak.