

Stamford School Readiness Council Meeting
Wednesday, October 2, 2013
9:00 a.m.
Government Center, Mayor's Conference Room

Council Members Present:

Burke, Jennienne Peoples	Care to Care (Family Centers)
Cook, Lucia	Literacy Volunteers
D'Luc, Imelda	Head Start/Childcare Learning Centers
Feder, Karen	Abilis
Farrell, Anne	UConn Stamford
Glenn, Sheila	ROSCCO Agency
Hamilton, Winifred	Superintendent
Jennings, Mary	Stamford Public Schools
Lapine, Jennifer	Past School Readiness Council Chair
Morrow, Polly	Pitney Bowes
Pavia, Michael	Mayor
Reardon, Ellen	Stamford Museum and Nature Center
Rigano, Sue	Stamford Public Education Foundation
Sabia, Michele	Stamford Public Schools
Sandahl, Margo	Stamford Public Schools
Swan, Ellen	Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership
Wenz, Karen	First Presbyterian Nursery School

Staff/Advisors/Guests:

Ahuja, Sonja	William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund/ICOR Corp.
Arcuri, Donna	School Readiness Liaison, City of Stamford
Brennan, Karen	United Way of Western Connecticut
Garvin Kester, Barbara	Childcare Learning Centers
Pratt, Laura	Ferguson Library (in Caroline Ward's stead)
Sargent, Carol	William Pitt Child Development Center
Tarantino, Sherry	St. Clement School
Williams, Beryl	Stamford Public Schools
Witkowski, Anna	Palmer's Hill at Childcare Learning Centers

I. Welcome

Karen Brennan opened the meeting today and introduced Polly O'Brien Morrow and Karen Feder as the new School Readiness chair and vice chair. Mayor Pavia echoed his thanks to Polly passionate and committed people leading our working group.

II. Approval of Minutes from June 2013 Meeting

The Council unanimously approved the minutes from the June meeting.

III. New Business

- **CLC/Maple Avenue Construction:** Barbara Garvin-Kester shared with the Council that construction is now underway at Maple Avenue thanks to a grant from the State. This work includes consolidating and improving classroom space, and allowing for three additional classroom (for 60 students total) to be added.
- **State and Local Policy Changes:** Prior to the meeting, Donna sent out revisions to a number of School Readiness policies including: Fees and Subsidies, Staff Credentials, Notification of Staff Changes, and Program Compliance. All documents, with revisions, are provided in the minutes at Addendums A-D.

Members were invited to ask questions and discuss. Upon no issues or questions being put forth, a motion was made to accept each document as revised. A formal vote for each policy was taken and the policies were all unanimously passed.

IV. Regular Reports

- Reports from St. Clement School, CLC, and Stamford Public Schools for September were sent to the Council in advance of the meeting and are included here as Addendums E-G.
- Sherry Tarantino reported that their move from the old Sacred Heart School to their new location went well this summer. It was a lot of work, but their new space is lovely and all are invited to come and visit.
- Barbara Garvin-Kester shared that there will be a ribbon cutting at William Pitt. New playground equipment including a climbing wall, water tables, and a trike path were installed recently and are great additions to their outdoor space.
- Mary Jennings shared that the space at Rippowam for the APPLES Early Childhood Educational Center (where there is one School Readiness classroom) is almost finished being refurbished. Bathrooms and classroom space are functional, as are therapy rooms.
- A discussion amongst the preschool providers revealed that some schools have a wait list while others currently have openings. This warrants further exploration as the Council needs to help bridge programs so that all children wishing to go to preschool find program opportunities. Donna will be following up with programs and working on this.

V. Announcements

- Karen Brennan shared with the group that Sue Rigano has graciously agreed to chair the Stamford Early Childhood Collaborative. She will be instrumental in shaping the direction we take in the next several months.
- Sue Rigano shared that the Collaborative is engaged in two major pieces of work: 1) We are working with Graustein on a review of our Blueprint, data, and strategies in order to set a course of action for moving our work forward, and 2) we are establishing a relationship with the Pro Bono Partnership in order to create bylaws for the Collaborative.

- Karen Brennan reported that plans for the Early Childhood Fair are well underway and thanked Mayor Pavia for his help in securing our new indoor location at Chelsea Piers. We have booked the live entertainment and are finalizing our list of preschool and community-based providers. Council members were asked to help with getting the word out by taking flyers and posters.
- Sue Rigano shared her flyer for the Stamford Public Education Foundation's 5K race on October 5. All proceeds will support SPEF and the expansion of its nationally recognized mentoring initiatives in the Stamford Public Schools.
- The Mayor shared his event flyer for the Diversity Parade which will be held at Cove Island Park on Saturday, October 19.
- Jennienne Burke shared that Care to Care will be hosting its second annual provider mini-conference on Tuesday, October 29. It will pick up and continue the work begun at the Obesity Symposium last spring.
- Michele Sabia shared an article from the Stamford Advocate on how difficult it is to buy diapers and the associated depression and anxiety that result when parents cannot provide for their babies. It was agreed that the Council would make this a priority issue and look for ways to help with diaper drives and information.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Addendum A: Fees and Subsidies

Stamford School Readiness Council

Fees and Subsidies

Related documents: GP14-01, GP14-02, GP14-03 & Fee Schedule

The School Readiness Council (SRC) requires all programs to collect parent fees based on the School Readiness Sliding Fee Scale and/or Child Care Subsidies to complement the State's reimbursement for School Readiness. The funds collected by each program are to be utilized in the School Readiness program to enhance the program and/or services for children and families in order to ensure high quality. All programs shall collect parent fees based on the guidelines listed below:

1. For families whose incomes are less than 75% of the state's median income (SMI) guideline, SRC sub grantee's shall determine fees for School Readiness supported child care slots based solely on the School Readiness Fee Schedule.
2. For families whose incomes are greater than 75% of the state's median income (SMI) guideline, SR sub grantees shall determine fees for School Readiness supported child care slots based solely on the School Readiness Fee Schedule. **Families who claim incomes over 75% of the state median income may provide an estimate without documentation but must agree to pay the published cost of care.**
3. **Family income and family size need not be determined when a family agrees to pay the cost of care**
4. No family, regardless of the number of children participating in a SRC's sub grantee School Readiness program, shall be charged more than the calculated family contribution.
5. No family, regardless of income or regardless of the calculated fee on the State Fee Schedule, shall be charged a fee that exceeds the sub grantee published cost of care.
6. The Stamford School Readiness Council established the cost of care as the following:

Full Day/Full Year: A School Readiness Program in Stamford cannot charge a family more than their published cost of care.

Part Day/Part Year: A School Readiness Program in Stamford cannot charge a family more than their published cost of care;

School Day/School Year: A School Readiness Program in Stamford cannot charge a family more than their published cost of care.

7. Sub grantees shall annually publish their cost of care for School Readiness supported slots and shall file their published rate with their SRC.
8. Sub grantees shall not charge fees to families receiving TFA cash assistance whom have no earned income. In this case, there will be no fee assessed whether for the family or for a child in the family that is using the School Readiness supported slot.

9. Sub grantees shall charge fees to families receiving TFA cash assistance who have earned income.
10. The SRC shall approve or reject SRC sub grantee programs' written requests regarding the waiver of fees for part day program options.
11. All fees from families received by Sub-grantees (this includes School Readiness parent share and Care4Kids collections) shall be used to support the School Readiness program in the fiscal year they are collected. Programs may set up a separate non-interest bearing account to hold parent fees collected. Fees in May and June can be used in the next fiscal year. Requests to carry over additional fees must be approved by the local SRC and in turn the SRC must seek the permission of OEC. The sub-grantee is not to use more than 5% of the total parent fees collected for administrative costs (the total of line items 111A, 119, 200 (admin benefits) and 612).
12. Parent fee collections must be reported to the SRL biannually by February 15th and August 15th of each year, for the prior six months of parent fee collection. The provider must use the standard ED 114 budget form to report how fees were spent.
13. Providers are required to establish written fee policies and disseminate them to families and staff. Such policies shall address:
 - a. How family contribution is determined;
 - b. How fees are assessed and collected;
 - c. How income, family size, DSS cash assistance status, and any other eligibility factors are determined and verified;
 - d. How confidentiality of family information is maintained;
 - e. Procedures addressing fee forgiveness, failure to pay, any process for temporary reduction in assessed fees, the process for appealing a fee determination, and non-payment of fees, and must share them with School Readiness families.
14. Providers must use the parent share determination form developed by the SRC (attached).
15. Providers must notify families of fee changes 30 days in advance before changing the fee.
16. School Readiness programs may require a non-refundable registration fee of up to \$35 for School Readiness families.
17. Parent Fees must not be collected by "teachers" or persons working in the classroom. It is important that classroom staff partner with families in a meaningful way to support and foster a cohesive working relationship. This relationship is the core for sharing and gaining information pertaining to each child's approach to learning, progress and general health and well-being

Determining Family Income, Family Contribution and Fee

Family Income and size are used to calculate the family contribution; and must be determined at the time of initial enrollment.

- a. Programs will use the family's completed tax return as well as the family's most recent pay stubs (reflecting one month's salary).
- b. In the event a family does not meet the minimum US tax filing requirements and are not required to file taxes, the family may provide a notarized letter from their employer indicating the monthly salary.
- c. In the event a parent/guardian has just started a new job, they must obtain a notarized letter from their employer that includes the persons start date, pay rate and hours worked weekly.

Family contribution and fee shall be determined by:

- a. Taking the computed gross annual family income;
- b. Finding where on the most recently published General Policy Fee Schedule the income falls under, and,
- c. For families whose incomes are less than 75% of the State's Median Income (SMI) guideline, SRC sub-grantees shall determine fees for School Readiness supported child care slots based solely on the School Readiness Fee Schedule. For families whose income is 75% of SMI or a higher – SRC sub grantees shall determine fees based solely on the School Readiness Fee Schedule. (Fee Schedule attached)

Outstanding Parent Balance

If a parent/guardian/family has an outstanding balance at any state and/or federally funded program in the City of Stamford and refuses to pay this outstanding balance, then they are not eligible for any state and/or federally funded slot until the balance is paid in full. If a state and/or federally funded program within the City of Stamford has a parent who leaves, or is withdrawn for an outstanding balance, the program must immediately report the information to the school readiness office. The school readiness office will then notify all state and federally funded programs, within the City of Stamford, of the parent/guardian/families with an outstanding balance.

Homeless Families

School Readiness Council sub-grantees shall not charge fees to families that provide proof of residency in a homeless shelter. Parents are encouraged to apply for Care 4 Kids assistance if they are eligible. If approved by Care 4 Kids, the sub-grantee can waive the set parent fee established by Care 4 Kids.

A program may not reduce the hours of care for a child who lives in a homeless shelter.

Hardship

Each individual sub grantee reserves the right to collect less than the calculated fee but must maintain fiscal responsibility to ensure quality programming. The program may implement a hardship policy and submit this to the School Readiness Council. This policy should be based on individual family needs. This policy should be clearly stated to families upon enrollment and outline what the program considers as hardship as well as the documentation needed to determine hardship.

Work Requirements

There are no requirements regarding work status.

School Readiness Councils

The SRC shall approve or reject SRC sub grantee programs' requests regarding the waiver of fees for part day program options.

The SRC shall establish written policies and procedures for the implementation of this fee policy. Annually an updated copy of the fee policies and procedures approved by the SRC and signed by the Mayor and Superintendent, must be attached to the local School Readiness application.

Care for Kids

- a. The Care4kids policy states guidelines on how programs should charge families. All School Readiness programs must assist families whose income is at or below 50% SMI and/or who meet other eligibility criteria, in applying for the Child Care Assistance Program. All eligible families are encouraged to apply for Care4kids.
- b. SRC's sub grantee School Readiness part-time programs that do not charge fees are ineligible to participate in the Care 4 Kids program.
- c. Income determinations made by the Care 4 Kids program shall be the income determination for the program.
- d. The SRC shall require its sub grantees to submit a monthly report of actual Care 4 Kids income and review submission.

Addendum B: Staff Credentials

Stamford School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Policy Regarding Staff Credentials

Related documents: GP 13-04

Stamford Policy on Notification of Staff Changes

The Stamford School Readiness Council understands that the most significant predictor of quality in early care and education programs is the qualifications of the staff in the classroom.

All School Readiness programs are required to meet School Readiness staff credential levels required by the State Department of Education as outlined in **GP 13-04**. **The standard affects the ENTIRE PROGRAM accepting state funds not just School Readiness Classrooms.**

- From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2020, "staff qualifications" means at least 50% of those with primary responsibility ("teacher") for a classroom of children hold a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education. (Specifics outlined in GP 13-04) from an approved institution of higher education.
- On or after June 30, 2013 "staff qualifications" means that for each early childhood education program accepting state funds for infant toddler and preschool spaces associated with such program's child day care program or school readiness program, 100% of those individuals with primary responsibility for a class of children hold a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education. (specifics detailed in GP 13-04)
- A "teacher" can be grandfathered if he or she has a bachelor's degree and 12 ECE credits but "teacher" can only teach in his or her current program. If he or she would like to move to another state funded program, the "teacher" must obtain ECTC (Early Childhood Teacher Credential) the CT Charts-A-Course system.

Each program must maintain and provide the School Readiness Council a monthly staffing schedule for each classroom program wide. This schedule must include the name of the person with primary responsibility ("teacher"), staff qualifications and classroom. This individual must be present for six hours of the Full-Day space type and for all hours of the School-Day and Part-Day space type. In the Extended Day space type, a qualified individual must be present for 2 ½ hours in a wraparound program and six hours when the Extended Day program operates during the summer. In some circumstances this may require revised staff schedules or require qualified administrators to be in the classroom in order to ensure that classrooms are appropriately staffed. The intent of this policy is to provide time for teachers in Full-Day and Extended –Day space types to have teaching time with children at least 6 hours per day and utilize at least one hour per day (non-contact time with children) for planning and appropriate learning experiences.

In the case of extenuating circumstances, such as a staff member's resignation, a program shall document their efforts, in collaboration with the SRC, to seek the most qualified person. If the program is unable to find an individual with the appropriate credentials, the School Readiness Liaison shall then contact the SDE to approve the hiring of an individual who meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Four-year degree;
- Associate degree;
- One Year Certificate in ECE with 30 credits from an approved institution; or
- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

When such an individual is hired, they must agree to enroll in an ECE credit bearing course that will allow them to obtain 12 credits in ECE and/or child development from an approved institution within 18 months of being hired in order to meet the "qualified individual" requirements.

See attached GP 13-04 for specific language and requirements.

Addendum C: Notification of Staff Changes

Stamford School Readiness and Quality Enhancement

Notification of Staff Changes

Related (TA/SR – 02-03)

Programs receiving School Readiness funding are required to have available a **program wide** current list of all staff related to the early care and education program with credential status noted for each **as well as submitting said current list to the SR Council prior to each scheduled meeting**. All staff includes classroom staff, support staff, and administrators **throughout the entire program not simply School Readiness classrooms**. Evidence of staff education and credentials (including updated CDA certificate, copy of high school diploma, copy of bachelor's degree, etc.) must be kept in each staff person's file.

In the event that a program experiences major changes in staffing, the program must notify the Stamford School Readiness Liaison of the changes, coverage plans and replacement strategies.

Notification must be in writing.

Major changes include:

- the departure of a staff member with "qualified individual" requirements
- the departure of a Program Director
- the departure of two or more staff at any level in a short succession
- any departure that jeopardizes compliance with School Readiness requirements

Important note: experiencing staff changes and/or notification of the Stamford School Readiness Liaison of staff change does not exempt any program from its obligation to meet all State Department of Health, State Department of Education and local School Readiness Council requirements for appropriate staff/child ratios and staff credentials (see ALERT TA/SR-02-03, attached).

Addendum D: Program Compliance

Stamford School Readiness Council

Program Compliance

Funded Providers, while autonomous in their program operations, must comply with the standards as stated in the following documents:

- Valid and applicable Guiding Policy and Program Operation Policies from SDE/DSS;
- Grant RFP and proposal;
- School Readiness Council Policies; and
- School Readiness Legislation.

Need for clarification on the application of any of these standards is to be brought to the attention of the **Council through the School Readiness Liaison, Donna Arcuri, who can be contacted at 203-977-4589.**

Addendum E: CLC Monthly Report, September 2013

- Program Utilization
 - a. Authorized Capacity – Not available at this time
 - b. Ages: Not available at this time
 - c. Children with disabilities - Not available at this time
 - d. Notes and Trends:

- Program Attendance:
 - a. 99% of enrollment
 - b. Notes and trends:

- Staffing
 - Open Positions-

 - a. Teacher-Cluster A, Assistant Teacher – Cluster A

 - b. Recruitment – ads on-line, local newspapers, postings at NCC.

- Training:
 - September 11 – Julie met with Directors and Coordinators from 10:00-12:00 and new staff from 1:30 – 3:00 on the learning experience Plans

 - September 18 –SST/ Tier 1 -Classroom Management – Transitions/Friendship Skills – Trish Behm

 - September 25 – SST/ Tier 1 - Emotional Literacy – Trish Behm

- Special Events/Activities:
 - Teachers are preparing lesson plans based on the Preschool Curriculum Standards and the individual needs of the children.
 - Part Day children returned to School September 3rd and 4th
 - UConn intern began in Cluster A – A1 – on September 9th.
 - Stamford Museum and Nature Center visits began last week of September and will run into October.
 - Clemente Fund Raiser- September 9 – 30 – proceeds pay for enrichment activities for children.
 - Lunch and Learn – Curriculum Overview – Margo Sandahl – September 26th
 - Yale has begun their work with the control groups – September 9th.

Addendum F: St. Clements School Monthly Report, September 2013

Program Utilization:

- School Day – School Year – 45 Students
- Pre – K 3 Class – 18
- Pre – K 4 Class #1-14
- Pre – K 4 Class #2-13
- All 25 School Readiness slots are full.

Program Attendance:

- 100% with the exception of 3 registered children who were traveling and came back during the month of September to start school.

Staffing:

- Vicki Druehl – Admin. Asst. – Resigned in August – School Office
- Nancy Mitchell – P/T Admin. Asst. – Started in August – School Office
- Audra Greer – Head Teacher – Resigned in July – Pre-K 3
- Alison Curcio – Head Teacher – Hired in August - Pre-K 3
- Marla Kerwin – Head Teacher – Resigned in August – Pre-K 4
- Currently interviewing for Head Teacher position – Pre-K 4 (Offer sent out.)

Activities & Events:

- Sacred Heart School closed its doors at 1 Schuyler Avenue on Thursday, June 20th. The program was moved on June 24th, to a new building at 535 Fairfield Avenue and is now called St. Clement Preschool. The State of CT has issued a new license with the name of St. Clement Preschool and is valid until 9/30/17. NAEYC has also been informed about our move. The final paperwork was approved at the end of August. All other pertinent agencies have also been informed regarding the address and new name.
- Staff members came in throughout the summer to unpack boxes and begin setting up their classrooms.
- SCP held its 1st Staff Meeting & attended a Professional Development on August 23rd. Staff members were treated to a Breakfast and Luncheon and attended Infant & Child CPR & Medication Training the same day.
- St. Clement Preschool opened its doors on September 26th starting the 2013-2014 school year.
- Parents attended a Parent Orientation Evening on September 12th at 7pm. Director & Teachers gave tours, handed out Parent Handbooks, Crisis Management Handbooks and Community Resource Booklets as well as assorted information. Staff members gave a wonderful presentation regarding the CT Preschool Assessment Framework and Curriculum. Refreshments were served.

Addendum G: APPLES Early Childhood Educational Center, Stamford Public Schools Monthly Report, September 2013

Enrollment

17 children (11 boys and 6 girls) are enrolled in the class.

First Language

7 children speak Spanish as a first language, 9 speak English, 1 is Bilingual.

Family Contribution

To date, income verification puts most families below 26% of the State Median Income

Wait List

We have 14 children waiting for a spot. This is without any active recruiting