

Stamford School Readiness Council Meeting
Thursday, March 12, 2015
11:00 a.m.
UConn Stamford

Council Members Present:

Karen Feder	Director of Youth Services/ Birth to Three Representative – Abilis
Sheila Glenn	ROSCCO Agency – After School Network
Cindy Grafstein	Mayor’s Designee – City of Stamford
Helma Gregorich	Program Manager, Family Centers
Polly O’Brien Morrow	Program Manager, Corporate Citizenship and Philanthropy
Ellen Reardon	Director, Stamford Museum and Nature Center Preschool
Karen Wenz	Director, First Presbyterian Nursery School

Grant Recipients/Advisors/Guests:

Donna Arcuri	School Readiness Liaison
Patricia Behm	Instructional Coordinator, Stamford Public Schools
Karen Brennan	Director, Stamford Early Childhood Collaborative
Karen Cammarota	Grants Officer, City of Stamford
Jennifer DeRubies	Curriculum Associate, Stamford Public Schools
Imelda D’Luc	Director, Head Start, CLC
Christine Garber	Reach out and Read
Lisa Girden	First United Methodist Preschool
Debbie Heins	Gray Farms Nursery School
Marha Hudson	First United Methodist Preschool
Ashley Lanzaro	Gray Farms Nursery School
Penny Lehman	Director of Program Services, CLC
Elaine LeGrand	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Kerry McMahan	Program Coordinator, Reach Out and Read
Christina Nelson	All Our Kin
Brooke Nilsen	First United Methodist Preschool
Suzanne Rice	First United Methodist Preschool
Jamye Smegal	Director, First United Methodist Preschool
Sherry Tarantino	Director, St. Clement Preschool
Nathalie Tocci	Care to Care Coordinator, Family Centers
Anna Witkowski	Director of Child Day Care Programs, CLC

I. Welcome & Introductions

Polly Morrow welcomed everyone and informed all that School Readiness meetings are recorded. Polly began the meeting by informing everyone that Sue Rigano, Executive Director of Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF) will be leaving SPEF and will be joining Norwalk Community College as the Director of Development.

II. Approval of Minutes from February 2015 Meeting

Minutes could not be formally approved for February 2015 because there was not a quorum present. We will approve next month.

III. School Readiness Provider Reports

Provider reports were sent in advance of the meeting and are included here as Attachments A, B, and C.

IV. Stamford Early Childhood Collaborative Update, Karen Brennan

The SECC will be hosting a Kindergarten Information Night on Wednesday, March 25 at the Ferguson Library. Jennifer DeRubeis from SPS will be on hand to provide an overview to parents. The Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk will be providing childcare. Flyers were distributed at the meeting, and electronically.

Karen Brennan reported that the SECC is excited to bring the community together around the Week of the Young Child, April 13-17. The SECC will be partnering with the School Readiness Council, SPS, the Ferguson Library, and the United Way of Western CT on events during the week. Flyers were distributed (at the meeting and electronically) for a kickoff event on Monday, April 13 from 10:00-10:30 in the Government Center lobby. Mayor Martin and Dr. Hamilton will both be speaking, and children from CLC will come and sing. We have secured funding for and will be distributing an activity placemat to all of Stamford's preschool children.

Stamford applied for and was accepted to bring a team to a special pre-conference symposium on year round learning at next week's Childhood Conversations Conference. Karen was excited to report that the following people will be accompanying here: Terri Drew, Stamford Youth Services Bureau; Jennifer DeRubeis, SPS; Tim Dudics, Stamford YMCA; Anne Farrell, UConn; Helma Gregorich, Family Centers; Jon Hock, Domus; Mary Jennings, SPS; and Anna Witkowski, CLC.

Karen reported that much is happening on the advocacy front: Many from the Council were not with us today as they are in Hartford testifying in support of the worthy wages bill. On Wednesday, March 18, Karen will be taking a group to Hartford in support of restoring funds for both parenting programs and community plans. All are welcome to join.

V. School Readiness Liaison Update, Donna Arcuri

Donna Arcuri welcomed all and introduced Helma Gregorich as our newest member of the Council.

Donna congratulated Stamford Public Schools on receiving the Smart Start Grant. She announced that Stamford will be able to provide 15 more students with a quality preschool experience.

Donna reported that we now have a link available for both private center based and home care providers to report registration information as well as any openings available. Providers can report through a private data base.

The School Readiness RFP has been posted and is available for preschool programs to apply. The application is due on April 10, 2015 and the Quality Enhancement application is due on April 24, 2015.

The Dinosaur Train trip to the Palace Theater is fast approaching on April 24, 2015. We are asking for volunteers for bus coordination and seatbelts pulling. Volunteers are also needed to join us in reviewing this year's applications for the School Readiness RFP and she thanked the volunteers that already replied.

Karen Brennan reported that we will be holding two hands-on CT ELDS professional development workshops for providers. Creative Arts will be held on April 28, 2015 and Early Scientific Inquiry on May 11, 2015.

VI. Quality Enhancement Mid-Year Report – Nathalie Tocci

Nathalie Tocci reported that Care to Care provides Health Consulting Services on State Department of Health requirements for both home care providers and center based providers. She also provides site visits and is a certified First Aid, CPR and Epi Pen instructor.

Nathalie informed the Council that Care to Care provides this instruction to any provider that needs it. She has certified over 50 participants. She delivers this service to providers so they can afford quality to their families in the health aspect of their preschool experience. This will insure that these children are healthy and ready for kindergarten.

Nathalie reported that Care to Care has contracted with six providers and has exceeded their goal. Since she began, she has seen a huge improvement in programs with updated forms and updated immunization records.

Nathalie also is going in classrooms for projects and is a participant in the Nap Sacc program. This is an evidence-based program that focuses on prevention of childhood obesity. In addition to educating parents and teachers in childhood obesity she is educating staff and families on tobacco treatment services and on the risk of second hand smoke.

Providers noted they are thrilled with this program.

VII. Special Guest, Dr. Deborah Adams – State Department of Education

Dr. Deborah Adams introduced herself and announced her credentials to the Council. Deb explained that educator requirements for teachers in preschool classrooms have remained a constant since her tenure with the State of Connecticut.

Deb gave a brief history. Legislation for School Readiness came about in 1997. In 2005 we were first introduced to legislation that would require School Readiness teachers to have a Bachelor's degree by 2015. The benchmark since 2005 was that by 2015 every classroom receiving School Readiness funds would have Bachelor degreed teacher. Because of the pressure on programs to meet this deadline, in 2011 the Department of Education and Legislators decided to try a phase in approach to the Bachelor degree requirement. Deb explained further that this is how we arrived at the 2015 requirement of 50%

of classroom teachers (Qualified Staff Member – QSM) needing to have at least an Associate’s degree and 50% must have a Bachelor’s degree.

Deb explained in 2011, the year 2020 became the a new extended deadline for the requirement of School Readiness funded sites to have of 100% of QSM’s with a Bachelor’s degree. This 2011 legislation also spoke to the higher education programs in a very small line. It indicates that Office of Early Childhood (OEC) should take a look at and approve teacher prep programs in the higher education institutions to make sure they are using the NAEYC teacher prep standards. The OEC has partnered with the Board of Regents and the Department of Higher Education to enlist as many programs as possible and the list is growing.

The legislation recognized the need for teachers with experience that are currently in our workforce who have a degree that is not in Early Childhood. Any Bachelor degree is allowed with 12 credits of Early Childhood. This legislation also expanded its reach to Child Day Care programs and State Head Start in order to integrate the systems with the educator requirements.

Deb reiterated that this is not new legislation. Without the 2011 legislation, 2015 would have been the deadline for 100% of QSM’s to have a Bachelor’s degree. Deb explained the Governor and OEC Commissioner give the order for her to write policy which gives guidance to the programs from legislation.

Deb stated she is prepared to answer questions on the policy. More than 25 States already have this requirement for their state funded programs. States submit data to the NIEER Year book that gives the status of preschool in every state. This yearbook is relied upon in congress and the senate for their decision making process about funding. She does not believe this requirement is going away based on the data she has seen. Deb then asked for questions.

Imelda stated that her Head Start program has had the Bachelor requirement since 2013. They are having problems finding qualified candidates. Deb responded that when she checked with the higher education programs, there are at least 200 graduates per year that graduate from their approved programs. Polly questioned if this could be because Connecticut does not offer reciprocity with other higher education programs in other states and Stamford is located on the boarder of New York. She asked if Connecticut looking to open up to accredited colleges in other states. Deb replied that no state can approve a college from another state. This is the reason why the Early Childhood Individual Review Route was created. If a candidate graduates from out of state, the transcripts must be reviewed.

Deb specified a School Readiness site may hire people with a Bachelor’s degree after July 2015 however; the candidate will need to have their transcripts and background material regarding courses reviewed. If there are standards missing, they will need to comply. Within a month of being hired, the teacher will need to enroll in the process and will have a year to complete the portfolio process. A similar process is used for Connecticut teacher certification for teachers coming from out of state.

Penny commented that she inquired about timeframes for “Individual Review Route” and she was told 3 – 6 months to review the transcripts. This is narrowing CLC’s pool of applicants because of this added burden. Penny stated that she believes the legislation is meant to increase the quality but needs to be more inclusive of other teaching programs. Penny asked why does there need to be an approval process if a candidate graduates from an NAEYC approved university? Deb responded that NAEYC does not

approve Bachelor degree programs. NAEYC only approves Associate degree programs. Penny then inquired about the higher education programs listed on the NAEYC site that are closer to the vicinity of Stamford that are not in the approved college list. Deb replied that the organization Penny is referring to is for State teaching certification. They use the NAEYC standards in their review. She stated that the OEC credentialing is easier than this route. Deb noted Bank St. does not use the NAEYC standards and is not CAPE approved. Therefore, because of situations like this, Connecticut created Individual Review Route.

Penny stated that the Individual Review Route is not easy and very arduous. Penny specified CLC has a teacher who has an Associate's degree from an approved college and graduated before that colleges beginning approval date; this teacher will not be grandfathered even though she went through the same program. Penny asked why? Deb replied that it is not the same program. The date listed is when the college went through their NAEYC self-study. Prior to that date, the college was not using the NAEYC standards. Courses may have the same name however courses have been modified to the NAEYC standards. That person should go through the individual review route.

Deb stated that she feels that people who are not doing well in the portfolios have not developed the competency over time that they should have. She understands the frustration if a staff member is having difficulty with their portfolio, it may be because of a greater issue and may need addition support in professional development and perhaps the state should may be able to offer more in the future for programs. Deb stated that over 200 credentials have been issued so far.

Penny noted that at the Child Day Care meeting Margaret Gustafson stated the ECTC at the Associate level was not a priority for July 1st. She asked if the language will change. Deb replied she does not believe there will be a change because all must have a Bachelor's degree by 2020. She believes Margaret was talking about priority for scholarship dollars. Priority in scholarship is for people completing their Bachelor's degree. Degree attainment is very important. Penny stated that current QSM's will not be QSM on July 1 because they do not have the ECTC. Deb stated that if there is a degreed teacher they need to go through the ECTC. She did not believe that it will take 3 to 6 months but merely a few weeks for transcript review and will follow up with the Council on the exact timeline. If the teacher is in the process of going through the ECTC, that teacher does not need to be demoted, the program can put in for an extension request.

Donna asked Penny for clarification on what Margaret suggested for teachers with an Associate's degree. Penny stated she believed it was that Associate degreed teachers could retain their position until 2020 without going through the ECTC.

Penny asked for specifics on the extension request. The extension request is submitted by the program and needs to be specific to the individual who requires the extension. The way you batch the extensions is by program with specific information on the individual. The individual needs to be in the process of becoming compliant no matter what route they chose.

Deb finished with the comment that the ECTC process is much simpler than certification and mirrors the processes in other states. It looks at education and care rather than care and education. The field itself is no longer a trade. She stated we are at a tipping point because the federal government is now looking at this and is saying that we need to make this a profession. This is confusing because the ECTC is individualized. This requirement is the same if someone were to come from out of state and teach in our

public schools. They would need to go through a process. Deb believes process for the credentialing is easier. Karen B. asked why it is necessary for the entire program to be compliant and not just the funded classrooms. Deb stated that point is in legislation but recalling the early conversations about having the School Readiness classrooms be held to different standard than the rest. They talked about looking across the entire program and not segregating children in a classroom. The purpose was about stopping the practice of segregating kids by funding streams. We believe in heterogeneous grouping.

VIII. Meeting was adjourned at 12:00

**The next Council meeting will be held on
Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Clement Preschool 535 Fairfield Ave.**

Attachment A

School Readiness Report Childcare Learning Centers, Inc.

February 2015

- Program Utilization
 - a. Authorized Capacity – 374 – Full Day; 97 – Part Day; 60- Extended Day= 531
 - b. Slot Utilization – 374-Full Day, 95-Part Day, 60-Extended Day
 - c. Attended – 532
 - d. Ages – 211- 3 year olds, 277 - 4 year olds, 42 - 5 year olds
 - e. Children with disabilities - 18 with LEA- IEP; 2 without LEA-IEP
 - f. Notes and Trends:
- Program Attendance:
 - a. 100% of enrollment
 - b. Notes and trends:
- Staffing
 - Open Positions-
 - a. Cluster A – Assistant Teacher
 - b. Cluster A - Teacher
 - c. Lathon Wider- Head Teacher
 - d. Recruitment – ads on-line, local newspapers, postings at NCC.
- Training:
 - a. Yale/Ruler – February 3 and 13
- Special Events/Activities:
 - Teachers are preparing lesson plans based on the Preschool Curriculum Standards and the individual needs of the children.
 - Lunch and Learn – Developing Capable People – Christina Soto -February 4
 - Lunch and Learn – Yale Ruler – Feb. 26th
 - Lathon Wider C – opened Jan. 28
 - Teacher completed Child/Class Profiles
 - Bookmobile – Feb 10 and 24
 - Stamford Museum and Nature Center - “Maple Sugaring” – Feb. 10, 11, and 12
 - Music and Movement with Fiona Angelov – every Tuesday and Thursday
 - Parent Advisory Council – Feb. 18
 - Teddy Bear Parade – Feb. 27

Attachment B

St. Clement Preschool

February – 2015

Program Utilization:

- School Day – School Year – 41 Students to date
- Pre – K 3 Class – 15
- Pre – K 4 Class #1-13
- Pre – K 4 Class #2-13
30 SR slots taken, 1 SR slot is open, but a new applicant will be starting as early as next week. Waiting for Health Form to come in.
- Continuing tours each day. Currently looking for Pre-K 3 & Pre-K 4 students.
- New enrollment for 2015 – 2016 school year is now up to 25 children.

Attendance:

- a. 85% attendance. Many children out due to the cold or snowy weather. & children sick with stomach flu.
- b. SCP had two delay's and two snow day's during the month of February. Any snow day taken will be made up at the end of the school year. SCP families will be notified on April 21st with an updated calendar of final day of school.
- c. February vacation was from 2/16 to 2/20. SCP reopened again on 2/23.

Staffing:

- We are fully staffed! 3 Head Teacher's, 3 Teacher Assistant's & one After School Program assistant.
- 99% attendance - Staff out with colds or family issues.

Activities & Events:

- d. All SCP Staff were trained for Medication Training on 2/4. Nathalie Tocci, RN was the facilitator for the training.
- e. SCP hosted a Pajama & Pancake breakfast on 2/6. Everyone enjoyed pancakes, turkey sausage, juice & water. Our chef for the morning was our Teacher Asst., Kat Johnson.
- f. Our Valentine Celebration on 2/13, resulted in an overload of goodies. SCP families generously donated cupcakes, cookies, muffins, juice, water and paper goods. Our celebrations are not a success without the help of our wonderful families. Guest readers read many books about love, family and friendship, shared together in each classroom.

Attachment C

Stamford Public Schools School Readiness Classroom Report

February 2015

- **Program Utilization**
 - a. Authorized Capacity: 15 School Day, School Year slots
 - b. Ages: 4 year olds
 - c. Students with disabilities: 1 child with special needs

- **Program Attendance:**
 - a. Illness: Attendance was consistent this month.
 - b. Notes and trends:

- **Staffing:**
 - a. Staffing is in place.

- **Training:**
 - a. Continuing NAEYC training with standards and partnership with Instructional coordinators
 - b. Continuing PBIS-(Positive Behavior & Intervention Support) training

- **Special Events/Activities:**
 - a. Scientific Inquiry: Building Structures "House Project" unit introduced
 - b. Attended: Sid the Science Live at the Palace Theater with parents
 - c. Ferguson Library Bookmobile continues to visit
 - d. Students continue to participate in weekly enrichment activities including Cooking, Bartlett Arboretum, Bricks and Motors, Yoga and Animal Embassy