

Stamford School Readiness Council Meeting
March 10, 2010
9:00 a.m.
Soundwaters

Council members present:

Burke, Jennienne	Care to Care (Family Day Care)
D'Luc, Imelda	Head Start Representative
Farrell, Anne	UCONN Stamford
Feder, Karen	Abilis
Fox, Bridget	Chair, School Readiness Council
Glenn, Sheila	ROSCCO
Hallissey, Jennifer	United Way
Mullet, Alisha	Soundwaters
O'Brien-Morrow, Polly	Parent/Pitney Bowes
Reardon, Ellen	Stamford Museum and Nature Center
Sabia, Michele	Stamford Public Schools
Short, Bob	Family Centers
Ward, Caroline	Ferguson Library
Weller, Eva	PLTI
Wenz, Karen	First Presbyterian Nursery School

Advisers:

Garvin-Kester, Barbara	Executive Director, CLC
Cammarota, Karen	Grants Officer, Grants Department, City of Stamford
Sargent, Carol	Director of State Funded Programs, CLC

Guests:

Coakley, Julie	Cooperative Educational Services
Delsanti, Janet	Early Childhood Consultation Project
Rauh, Polly	Board of Education

Please note: the following are amendments to the minutes and are can be found at the end of the minutes:

- *Appendix 1: CLC Monthly Report*
- *Appendix 2: Sacred Heart Monthly Report*
- *Appendix 3: Julie Coakle's Monitoring Report*
- *Appendix 4: Organizational Chart Governance Structure (attached)*

I. Welcome and Announcements

Alisha Mullett welcomed the Council to Soundwaters and provided information on the restoration of the Soundwaters Building and the programs that Soundwaters provide to the community.

Bridget began the meeting by making the following announcements:

- **Care 4 Kids:** the program has temporarily re-opened until the end of this fiscal year.

- **School Readiness RFP Process:** Bridget explained that this year's RFP is only for existing funded programs (CLC and Sacred Heart) since the State considers this the middle year of a two-year grant cycle. There has been a good deal of interest in slots from community providers including Bright Horizons on High Ridge Road and from Annette Yarber, a daycare provider interested in opening a center in Stamford. Bridget encouraged each interested provider in completing an RFP that would include a budget and slot data and the RFP Committee will keep applications on hand in case the State makes additional funding for School Readiness available this year. Applications from Sacred Heart and CLC are due to the City on Monday, April 5th.
- **Week of the Young Child in Stamford (May 17-22):** Bridget explained that this week was chosen because of the date of the Early Childhood Fair. She encouraged the Council to think of activities to highlight the week.
- **Early Childhood Fair Scheduled – Saturday, May 22nd** Cove Island Park (9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.). The application for the use of Cove Island Park for the Fair was approved by the Parks and Recreation Committee. There was discussion around ideas for the day including having a Physical Education teacher leading physical activities for children as well as a performer named Meredith Wright recommended by Jennienne Burke. Meredith's website is: <http://www.sweetbeatzbaby.com/>. The Events Committee will take over the logistics of planning the events for the day.
- **PCF/PAF Training at William Pitt with Instructional Coordinators and CLC Cluster Coordinators.** Julie Coakley (CES consultant) and Michele Sabia (Stamford Public Schools Early Childhood Curriculum Associate) provided an excellent two day workshop around the State of CT Preschool Assessment Frameworks. The two will be presenting this workshop to the School Readiness staff on Friday, March 12th. A third workshop for the Instructional and Cluster Coordinators is scheduled for Monday, March 22nd.
- **PKIS Sharing between Public Schools and CLC:** Michele Sabia explained staff from CLC have met several times with SPS Research Department staff (along with Bridget and Michele) to discuss ways that the communication around data. After the last meeting, it was concluded that the two groups will work together which will allow SPS personnel to access the Pre Kindergarten Information Systems database. It will provide SPS with the opportunity to look at preschool enrollment data much sooner and will help facilitate kindergarten registration.
- **SR Foundation Scholarship Update:** Bridget provided an update. 29 applications were approved at CLC; 2 families at Sacred Heart were approved. 23 families were denied because they did not provide enough information around their hardship. Scholarships represented either a 20% or 50% reduction in a family's monthly fee. CLC received \$5,300 in scholarship funding and Sacred Heart received \$340. The process will begin again in May.
- **Parent Fee policy update:** Bridget referred to the Parent Fee Policy and reported that the Council did approve the increase from 10% to 12% for those families earning more than 75% of the SMI. Also, Bridget noted a change in language around Care 4 Kids funding. Programs cannot require that families apply for Care 4 Kids so the language was changed to read that families are "encouraged" to apply for the subsidy. Because the Part Day fee cap and School Day fee cap have yet to be determined, the Council tabled the vote to approve the policy until next month.

II. Minutes from January

The Council unanimously approved the January minutes. (Due to weather, a meeting was not held in February)

III. Monitoring Report (Julie Coakley, CES)

Julie Coakley, Educational Consultant from Cooperative Educational Services, provided a summary of her monitoring reports for the fall and winter (note that the report below does not include the classrooms located at CLC's new Maple Avenue site). Julie shared concrete examples of how teachers and staff are working to deepen their understanding of the CT Preschool Curriculum and Framework. The following is an excerpt from the report:

Stamford School Readiness Monitoring Report for Fall 2009
William Pitt Child Development Center, Stillmeadow School and Maple Avenue

To: All School Readiness Staff

From: Julie Coakley, Early Childhood Consultant

Fall 2009 Monitoring Process

The Connecticut School Readiness Program requires regular program monitoring for the purpose of determining "how the program supports children's learning and its alignment to the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework and Benchmarks." Classroom monitoring enables the program to identify strengths and address areas needing improvement on a regular basis. Monitoring gives the program staff the opportunity to plan long term improvements and to recognize consistent classroom strengths.

For the past three years School Readiness Monitoring focused on improving the facilitation of children's language development. This fall, in response to feedback from the state regarding Lesson Plans submitted with the spring, 2009 Stamford RFP, the decision was made by the Director and the School Readiness Liaison with the assistance of the C.E.S. School Readiness Consultant, to focus the Monitoring on intentional teaching. The comments from the state School Readiness Education Consultant included the following, "*The next step would be to consider how to document differentiation across benchmarks and identify specific children in which more targeted strategies are needed (response to intervention). The form that lists the months and standards each month-while an efficient way to organize the standards, I would worry that flexibility is lost if children show interest or teachers observe performance indicators in standards that were not necessarily the focus that month. I also tend to look for how higher order thinking skills are incorporated in plans, i.e. the use of Bloom's Taxonomy.*"

A Monitoring Form (*Classroom Monitoring of the Cycle of Intentional Teaching*) which includes a comprehensive look at planning, implementation of curriculum and assessment was designed and shared with the staff. (See attached) The form was utilized in a one hour observation in every classroom, except three new classrooms at the Maple Ave. site and one classroom with a teacher new to the program at William Pitt. For those four classrooms, the comprehensive state monitoring form was used. In addition, the monitor collected and analyzed the Lesson Plans for every classroom using the Intentional Teaching monitoring form. The purpose of the monitoring was to identify the specific areas in each process (planning, implementation or assessment) in the cycle of intentional teaching that were strengths or needed improvement. In addition, the activities and experiences planned were looked at through the lens of Bloom's Taxonomy to see if and how higher order thinking skills were incorporated into the curriculum.

Twenty classrooms at William Pitt and Stillmeadow were monitored using the *Classroom Monitoring of the Cycle of Intentional Teaching* form. Four classrooms (Three at Maple Ave

and one at William Pitt) were monitored using the comprehensive state monitoring form. After the classrooms were monitored the consultant met with each team of teachers to share the individual classroom Monitoring Report and to elicit the teachers' sense of their needs for training and/or technical assistance with regard to intentional teaching. Meetings were also held with the four classrooms monitored using the state form to share and discuss the information gathered during the visit. When possible the Instructional Coordinators and the Cluster Coordinators were present at the meetings.

Summary of Classroom Monitoring of the Cycle of Intentional Teaching

Program Strengths

- Every one of the twenty classrooms had current Lesson Plans posted in the classroom.
- Sixteen of the twenty classrooms had noted changes to the environment in the Lesson plan or the observer had seen clear changes to the environment related to curriculum.
- Experiences and activities were planned for a variety of Learning Centers in all twenty classrooms.
- At least one (and in many cases more than one) of the experiences or activities on the Lesson Plan was *implemented* in all twenty classrooms during the classroom observation.
- Teachers and assistant teachers are *using* effective teaching strategies in all twenty classrooms *even though they are not planning strategies*.
- All twenty classrooms had a system in place for collecting observations and work samples related to the standards for every child.
- In sixteen of the 20 classrooms, the teachers are providing experiences and activities that are not a part of the Lesson plan, allowing for child choice and spontaneous experiential learning.
- In all twenty classrooms staff report that they complete assessments on each child three times a year.

Program Improvements

Fully implementing the “cycle of intentional teaching” is a complex process; in the statewide Training Wheels project the understanding is that it will take three years for program staff engaged in the project (with coaching for two years) to fully understand and implement the process. The staff in the School Readiness program at William Pitt and Stillmeadow range in their skills, abilities and prior training in implementing intentional teaching. As part of the individual classroom Monitoring Reports, a set of recommendations and “next steps” were proposed to address the learning needs of each classroom team. The following recommendations are focused on the process of planning and implementing meaningful curricula based on CT Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Performance Standards and observing and documenting the children’s work to complete meaningful assessments of each child. These recommendations are an aggregate of the individual classroom recommendations and next steps. The School Readiness Program Director, Instructional Coordinators, Cluster Coordinators, School Readiness Liaison, Stamford Public School Curriculum Associate for ECE and the C.E.S. Consultant met to review the Monitoring Report and begin the discussion about next steps for program improvement.

Priority Recommendations to Improve Intentional Teaching in Stamford School Readiness Programs

- Eleven of the twenty (55%) classroom teams need training and support in understanding the meaning of performance standards and how to plan experiences for children to support their learning at all four benchmarks in the standards.
- Fifteen of the twenty (75 %) classroom teams need training, support and guidance in planning experiences or activities for performance standards in a variety of learning centers so the children have multiple opportunities to work with the skills and concepts in a standard.
- Teachers in all twenty (100%) classrooms need training, support and guidance in planning the instructional strategies they will use to support children at all four benchmarks in a standard. The skill of planning strategies for each benchmark is critical to providing differentiated instruction.
- Teachers in eighteen of the twenty (90%) classrooms need training, support and guidance in planning and implementing experiences at every level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Many teachers are not familiar with Bloom's; it is unreasonable to expect them to plan for different levels without instruction and support.
- Eight of the twenty (40%) classroom teams need training, practice, support and guidance in objective observation and documentation of children's work in the standards.
- Eleven of the twenty (55%) classroom teams need training, support and guidance in the collection of work samples related to Performance Standards for each child to inform their understanding of children's progress and next steps in curriculum planning for individual children and small groups.

Recommendations for Future Consideration

- Teachers in all 20 classrooms (100%) need training, support and guidance in using child assessment information in curriculum planning and implementation.
- Teachers in all 20 classrooms (100%) need training and guidance in completing the *Class Profile* and using it to inform curriculum planning.
- Most teachers need assistance in sharing information with families regarding intentional teaching

IV. SRC Governance Discussion (Bridget Fox, Jennienne Burke and Jennifer Hallissey)

Bridget introduced the discussion around governance by explaining that Jennienne, Jennifer and Bridget submitted an application to the Graustein Memorial Fund for the next phase of Discovery funding. The application requests \$25,000 to fund a staff person who would be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Early Childhood Blueprint. The Collaborative Agent of the Discovery Grant has been transferred from Family Centers to the United Way.

Bridget referred to the Organizational Chart and the "What does it mean to be a member of the SRC?" which Bridget credited Michele Sabia for initiating.

Jennienne Burke explained that previously the Discovery piece had been to support the work of the Council. With the Blueprint, that strategy has shifted. Jennienne spoke about the three committees: Health and Wellness, Early Childhood Education and Parent Outreach come from the Blueprint. The Events Committee will be responsible for coordinating the Early Childhood Fair and professional development activities for preschool teachers. Jennienne referenced that each Council member brings a different skill to the group and this new set-up will allow for skills to be better utilized.

Bridget explained that the Executive Committee arrived at the ideal number of 7-9 for committee size.

Anne Farrell moved to approve the Governance Structure of the Council. The motion was seconded and the Council ultimately approved the new structure.

There was discussion around how much power the committees will have (each committee will report monthly to the Executive Committee during its monthly meeting). Caroline Ward suggested that should the United Way be successful in receiving the Discovery grant funding that having a staff person dedicated to the work of the Blueprint will help with providing committees with sufficient power.

Jennifer Hallissey shared that the move to a structure is exciting and will really help to move the work of the Blueprint forward. The Executive Committee has already begun to meet regularly which has already proven to be extremely useful.

Alisha brought up the issue of term limits. It was decided that this needs to be addressed and formalized. The initial feeling of the Council is that two years would be an appropriate commitment for Chairs of the Committees. Anne referenced the need for succession plans on committees and the need to make sure that these will be working committees. There will be an expectation of committee members that there will be work outside of meeting times. Polly Morrow suggested that Chairs and committee members have staggered, two year terms. Eva asked about recruiting and Anne responded that Council members and Chairs will be responsible for targeted recruiting. Karen Wenz referred to the original committee members and it was decided that those members would be approached first. Jennifer Hallissey explained the importance of parent participation on the committees. Imelda explained that she has parents who would be interested in participating but that we will need to have translators available. Jennienne also re-iterated that we are responsible for children ages 0-8.

It was decided that there needed to be a vote to approve the nomination of Committee chairs.

Bridget called for a vote for to approve the nomination for Dr. Madhu Mathur to chair the Health and Wellness Committee. The Council unanimously approved her nomination.

Bridget called for a vote to approve the nomination of Anne Farrell to chair the Early Childhood Education Committee. The Council voted unanimously to approve her nomination.

The following is a list of committee sign-ups:

EVENTS COMMITTEE:

**Karen Wenz
Karen Feder
Polly Morrow
Eva Weller
Carol Sargent
Alisha Mullett
Beryl Williams
Bridget Fox**

HEALTH & WELLNESS

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
COMMITTEE:**

**Anne Farrell (Chair)
Michele Sabia
Barbara Garvin-Kester
Polly Rauh
Ellen Reardon
Karen Wenz
Alisha Mullett**

PARENT OUTREACH

Dr. Madhu Mathur (Chair)
Sheila Glenn

Jennifer Hallissey
Imelda D'Luc
Janet Delesanti
Polly Morrow
Sheila Glenn
Eva Weller
Sonja Ahuja

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Appendix 1: CLC Monthly report

School Readiness Report – March 10, 2010

Utilization - we were completely filled for the month of February.

Staff changes- There were no changes in the staffing pattern for February. We continue to have an open position at Maple Ave, Cluster E and Cluster F.

Special Events and Activities –

- Read Across America - activities took place the week of March 1-5.
- All hearing and vision screening are complete- Follow up visits will be scheduled.
- Lunch and Learn – February 25th – “Money Matters” was very successful. Parents all received a calculator, energy saving light bulbs, and a lot of wonderful information. Presenter was from CL&P.

Issues and Trends - Having interviews to fill the positions but applicants are over qualified and will not accept the salaries offered for Assistant Teachers.

Appendix 2: Sacred Heart Monthly Report

School Readiness Council Meeting Sacred Heart School Report

February 10, 2010 & March 10, 2010

1. All 21 slots were filled during the month of January. We had one child/boy who was withdrawn on January 31st to leave to visit India. The family is moving to Wilton upon return from India. On 2/8/10 we transferred the SR spot to another child in our program.
2. On 2/26/10 a SR 4 year old child was withdrawn from SHS due to inability to adjust to the program and also behavioral and emotional problems. Our program took several steps to put into place strategies and a plan to help ensure progress. Mom would not work with the Stamford Preschool Team and brought in outside help from the Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center. After several parent meeting attempts to develop a plan, Mom decided not to participate. The behavioral problems not only continued but accelerated. Child's last day was 2/26/10. Child was put into another private program here in Stamford.
3. Parent with 2 children, 1 for Pre-K 4's and 1 for Kindergarten will be starting on Mon. 3/15/10. The new Pre-K 4 child will fill the SR spot.
4. Very few absences from SHS. We sent out the Sickness Policy again to ensure that the parents understand when a child may or may not attend school.
5. I have been attending the AFP monthly meetings. Donna Delohery met with me to come up with a timeline for our visits and accreditation.
6. SHS staff teachers have filled out the NAEYC Teacher Survey's. All survey's have been returned.

7. SHS families will be receiving the NAEYC Family Survey's upon return from April vacation. A letter of explanation will accompany each survey.
8. We celebrated Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday on Fri, 1/15! We "shared" snack together as a group. We then saw a short "YouTube" video put to Stevie Wonder music that the children really enjoyed and danced to. We also had every child do a handprint for our "Together We Can" bulletin board. This is will stay up for the entire year.
9. SHS hosted the Catholic Schools Week. On Sunday, January 31st we hosted our 1st Open House for tours for next fall. We also hosted Open House Monday, 2/1 and Tuesday 2/2/10. The turnout was very slow but receptive. We have received many applications for Sept. 10'. We are receiving many calls from interested parents and have had many drop ins. We are also marketing our Kindergarten Class for next year. Several of our current Pre-K 4 parents are interested in staying with SHS for Kindergarten next year. We sent out a memo requesting parents to let us know their intentions for returning back to SHS. We received many back stating that they will be returning to SHS, particularly our Pre-K 4 class.
10. Catholic Schools Week is also a week in which we celebrate with many children's activities. We started Monday off with a Pizza Lunch Party! Tuesday was Pajama Day, complete with Pancake Breakfast. Our Kindergarten Class invited us all in to a shadow puppet show about Groundhog's Day! Wonderful!! On Wednesday we had Crazy Hat Day. Everyone wore crazy hats to school and we also made hats for those who didn't have any. Thursday was Teddy Bear Picnic Day. Students brought in their favorite Teddy Bear and a small towel or blanket. We all had snack in the gym while Teddy Bear Picnic was read to the group. Of course we had Teddy Grahams for snack!! Friday was Fun Day in the gym area as well. Staff members set up many activities for the entire group to participate in. Parachute and balls, Freeze dance, Bean bag toss, Hoop toss, Obstacle course, hoola hoop fun, basketball toss and many more that kept everyone busy. The entire group had snack together in the gym. Each child was treated to either a puzzle, play dough, or a small soft doll (each doll represents a community worker of some kind)
11. The two assistant teachers and director have all begun school and are immersed in school work and homework. I am already amazed as to what each of the assistant teachers are bringing back to the school!
12. My Administration & Supervision class at NCC is wonderful. I have enjoyed and learned so much from some of the other Directors' in the class. On Saturday, 3/6, my class hosted an informal meeting with Marilyn Parks Jones, State of CT, Child Care Licensing Supervisor. She was very informative about the Regulations and answered many of our questions.
13. SHS had two delay's on 2/3 & 2/11 and two closure's 2/10 & 2/26.
14. We finally found someone to put together all 3 of our Little Tyke Young Explorer Computers for each classroom. Very child user friendly and it came with some wonderful programs that we thought would be much too advanced for our little ones, boy, did they prove us wrong. These computers are such a nice addition to each classroom. We are very thankful to the United Way and IBM for their donations! Please see photo attachment.
15. Dental Hygienist, Celeste Baranowski (City of Stamford) visited SHS on 2/24 to teach dental hygiene to our children. She has a lovely program that shows each child how to brush and floss using her dinosaur with teeth. She also gave out new toothbrushes!
16. On March 3rd, we celebrated Dr. Seuss Day!! We read Green Eggs and Ham and The Cat in the Hat. Staff and students dressed in black, red & white.
17. On 3/10/10, all Diocesan Preschool Teachers will be treated to a workshop given by Dr. Cindy Rzasa Bess at Assumption School in Fairfield. She will cover everything from the CT. Preschool Benchmarks to "How to set up a Preschool environment."
18. All SR families are currently going through the redetermination process for March. We would like to thank Penny Lehman from the CLC for her help and support during this process.

19. I will be meeting with Dennis Uniform on 3/12 to discuss our uniform. Right now we are in transition between the more formal and the new more comfortable and appropriate uniforms for our very young children.
20. I will be attending the Stamford Directors' Group Dinner and Speaker on 3/11/10.

Appendix 3: Julie Coakley Monitoring Report

Stamford School Readiness Monitoring Report for Fall 2009 William Pitt Child Development Center, Stillmeadow School and Maple Avenue

To: All School Readiness Staff

From: Julie Coakley, Early Childhood Consultant

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- **At least one (and in many cases more than one) of the experiences or activities on the Lesson Plan was *implemented* in all twenty classrooms during the classroom observation.**
- **Teachers and assistant teachers are *using* effective teaching strategies in all twenty classrooms *even though they are not planning strategies*.**
- **All twenty classrooms had a system in place for collecting observations and work samples related to the standards for every child.**
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- **Eight of the twenty (40%) classroom teams need training, practice, support and guidance in objective observation and documentation of children's work in the standards.**
- **Eleven of the twenty (55%) classroom teams need training, support and guidance in the collection of work samples related to Performance Standards for each child to inform their understanding of children's progress and next steps in curriculum planning for individual children and small groups.**

Recommendations for Future Consideration

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- **Teachers in all 20 classrooms (100%) need training and guidance in completing the *Class Profile* and using it to inform curriculum planning.**
- **Most teachers need assistance in sharing information with families regarding intentional teaching**