

Children First Norwich /
Norwich School Readiness Council

Meeting Minutes for September 20, 2006

Mission Statement

The mission of the Norwich Children First Initiative is to engage our families, schools, and community to improve life outcomes for young children.

The Children First Initiative/School Readiness Council Collaborative is an effort to create an early care and education agenda that fully engages parents schools, and the community.

Attendees: Sherry Filiatreault (CFN), Duncan Profitt (Chair,CFN), Kay Eyberse (NY&FS), Anne Jerome (SR), Sarah Dudley (GSA), Bev Goulet (NHS), Veronica Granger and Pat Kornacki (Pooh Corner), Anne Krodel (NPS), Pam Aubin (NPS), Keith Ripley (Parent), Debbi Poirier (TVCCA ECE), Judy Kapilotis (Kids World) and Tonya Kapilotis (Bright Beginnings), Sheila Skahan (TRCC), Linda Massey (UCFS), Ida Parker (TVCCA Shelter), Jackie Jamrock (SEMH System of Care), Deborah Buxton-Morris (UHD)

Members of SR board: Duncan Profitt (Chair,CFN), Bev Goulet (NHS), Pam Aubin (NPS), Debbi Poirier (TVCCA ECE), Sheila Skahan (TRCC), Linda Massey (UCFS), Ida Parker (TVCCA Shelter), Deborah Buxton-Morris (UHD), Staff: Sherry Filiatreault (CFN), Anne Jerome (SR)

The School Readiness Report began at 9:00. The minutes from August 25th were approved without changes. (Pam moved, Linda Massey seconded)

The Job Description for the Liaison was approved. (Pam moved, Bev seconded)

We briefly discussed what to do with the “extra” money. Both Pooh Corner and TVCCA Early care are interested in using it. We will discuss this in depth at the Providers Meeting later this morning. We discussed what the money could be used for (only to fund additional slots or for start-up costs), and that this severely limits our ability to use the money effectively.

We will have a monitoring visit by members of the State Department of Education and the Department of Public Health during the week of October 16th through October 20th. Anne J. will be out of town that week and Anne K. will shepherd the visitors through the week. Anne J. will make sure everything is ready for them at the central space (Bishop School) and that Anne K. will have total access to whatever she may need during the week. The providers will get copies of the Monitoring Instrument and other relevant information at the providers meeting. Any one else who would like to see the Monitoring Instrument can get one from Anne J.

There will be an Early Childhood Education Forum Tuesday, September 26th at the Gales Ferry Middle School in Ledyard. The flyer (enclosed) was distributed and people were strongly encouraged to attend. Flyers for the *Help Me Grow* Community Networking Breakfast (also enclosed), scheduled for Thursday, October 5th were distributed as well.

The providers will discuss the needs for professional development and the disbursement of the Quality Enhancement Grant (we are still awaiting the letter from the SDE). There was discussion concerning the Connecticut Charts-A-Course funding, whether it will be available, and what the amount will be. We will try to have more information on this for next time. Pam would like to make a motion that the Readiness sites get priority for the Quality Enhancement money since finances will be very tight if Charts-A-Course can not provide the same level of support as they have in the past. The Readiness Council requested a letter be drafted concerning the rules for participation in the Charts-A-Course program. Will Deb and Sheila handle this?

Diane Gozemba for Mitchell College Child Care Center has forwarded a list of the training they offer, and invited Norwich to participate. We will discuss this further in the Provider's Meeting later today.

Peter Schultheis briefly described the FAST (Families And Schools Together) program (see enclosed info). There is a funder in the Norwich Community willing to support the project for the initial costs. FAST provides training for parents and families for 8-10 weeks, will follow-up monthly reunions. The training can be tailored to meet the needs of the families and the schools. New Haven has two schools involved in the program and recommends it highly. The trainer is local and can repeat the program for several schools. Our community needs 1 school and 2 community partners (non-profit agencies) to start and support the program. Peter is looking for support from the CFN council for participation and selection of initial agencies and schools. There was a generally favorable discussion about the program, but no decision has yet been made.

Sherry (Pooh Corner) will provide notebooks to those group members who would like them (or would like an extra one).

The group broke into their respective CFN Workgroups for twenty minutes to work on the Action Plans. A brief overview of what was done is as follows: Sherry noted that this work is important since we are approaching a Graustein Evaluation and need to separate what we've accomplished from anticipated tasks.

Regional: Is purchasing supplies (trade table) to help spread news about upcoming events for children in the three communities. The group is also working with the other communities to standardize the professional development for early childcare givers. Norwich participates in the Eat Smart/Grow Healthy program through this group.

Childcare: Held two of four forums. Will do two in 2006-2007, one in November and one in the Spring to coordinate with the Week of the Young Child in April. The connections with CT Charts-A-Course was VERY successful for 2005-2006, but there is

uncertainty as to whether the same level of success will be achieved this year. Efforts are being made to increase the public awareness of what it means for a center to earn accreditation. This workgroup will continue its efforts to get better connections among members of the Early Childcare community, the public schools, and the families served. The group feels it has been successful in achieving short-term goals, and will tweak the long-term goals to reflect what was learned last year.

Leadership: The group felt it had fulfilled its short-term goals, and were successful in implementing strategies. The proposal to participate in the FAST program will be studied in more detail. The workgroup will continue to run the leadership programs and secure funding to do so. Recruitment has begun for the Voices For Families program. Please contact Sherry (823-3782) if you know of any parents who may be interested. PEP will start at Thames River Family Program in October. Parent Power held a groundbreaking parent-run Candidate Forum on September 30th with Norwich in attendance (flyer enclosed).

Membership/Recruitment: *Spirit of Broadway* Street Festival was held in August. Though it was not as successful as had been anticipated, it went well. Since 11 seats remained unfilled in the theater, and the street festival ended early, parents were invited along with their children to see the show. If it's decided to hold this festival again, parents may purchase their tickets with the stipulation that when/if they show for the performance, the cost will be refunded.

Kindergarten packets: (for transition into K) will be put together. A date is needed for material distribution.

Newsletters: will be done 2 –3 times a year.

CFN hour: Duncan will continue to do the show.

Second Event: Membership would like to have two family events, a “smallish” one in the Spring, with Family Day remaining the second larger, more ambitious event. Membership will look into connecting with Groton, and New London to alternate hosting events at the Garde Theater. Other ideas were: become a part of the Winterfest in Norwich, or have a Truck Day in April. These will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Ad Hoc: 4th Annual Family Day was very successful, with approximately 3,000 people attending.

Advocacy Members in attendance: Anne Krodel, Keith Ripley, Kay Eyberse, Jackie Jamrock, Ida Parker

We went over work plan. Kay felt our strategies needed to be more specific. Some suggestions from the group were: to hold a legislative breakfast focusing specifically on

children's issues, locate someone with expertise to speak on public access TV and radio, or invite the press to attend a School Readiness Council meeting.

We brainstormed on issues that greatly affect children in our area, such as: *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the impact this has on the school system, nutrition/obesity in children, and childhood behavioral issues

The group feels that all of the above should be worked on this year, and that other subcommittees were also doing a lot that crossed over into the advocacy subcommittee.

The Family Day and Membership committees have done a lot to get information about young children out to the public in addition to the Regional committee.

Kay will speak to Bev Goulet to find out a tentative date for the legislative breakfast.

Graustien will be holding the annual Stone Soup Conference October 24th. If you'd like to attend, please call Sherry at 823-3782.

Next meeting is at the Dime Bank at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, October 18th

Hope to see you there!