

**CITY OF NORWALK
EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 9, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Cathy DeCesare, Co-chair; Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, George Hensinger, Community Representative; Patricia Marsden-Kish, NHA Head Start Early Childhood Program; Mary Oster, NPS Early Childhood Coordinator; Erica Phillips, Norwalk-Stamford All Our Kin; Lynn Sadlon, Fox Run Family Resource Center, Barbara Fitzpatrick, Birth to Three; Betsy Bain, Community Representative; Bruce Morris, Human Relations; Darlene Hoffler, Norwalk Health Department; Ed Musante, Chamber of Commerce; Eva Beau, Norwalk Community Health Worker; Jamie Bennetta, Staff; Joan Parris, Norwalk Community College; Lauriston Avery, Director of Five Mile River Nursery School; Sherelle Harris, Norwalk Public Library

OTHERS: Sonja Ahuja, GMF liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Cathy DeCesare called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. DeCesare welcomed the group and requested that everyone introduce themselves. Ms. DeCesare also asked members to share any noteworthy items. Mary Oster announced that the Children's Champion award was presented to State Representative (and NECC Council co-chair) Bruce Morris by the CT Early Childhood Alliance on September 3. The presentation was made to Rep. Morris at one of Norwalk's School Readiness preschool sites, the Children's Playhouse Too on West Avenue. Ms. Oster also announced that State Representative Gail Lavielle will receive the same award on Monday, September 21. Details on that presentation will be sent to members. Pam Augustine-Jefferson reported that this past summer the Brighter Futures program was a partnership between Norwalk Public Schools, Stepping Stones Museum ELLI Lab School and Literacy How. There was a pre- and post-assessment using the PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) assessment tool.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Under Other/New Business, "one program" should be changed to the "Brighter Futures program" and "Recently, Betsy Bain was honored by the Graustein Fund at the United Way event" should be changed to: "Recently Betsy Bain was the presenter of a United

Way award to David Adams, Executive Director of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund”.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 10, 2015 AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ALL OUR KIN UPDATE

Erica Phillips reported on All Our Kin starting with background information about the organization. AOK invests in:

- Providers by helping them to become licensed
- Families by helping to provide consistent, quality childcare
- Children by improving the level of care provided

AOK interacts with about 53 licensed providers and those who want to be licensed in Norwalk. Forty-nine are currently licensed with 4 more in the process. The organization works with licensed providers by providing professional development in English and Spanish. One program; *Read, Count, Grow* provides coaching, materials, and instructional support through modeling.

Ms. Phillips distributed their fall calendar which is full of events and training for providers. There was some discussion on where families who use family childcare live. Ms. Phillips stated that it is usually within the community. Ms. DeCesare asked about connections with local elementary schools-between the providers and kindergarten teachers. Lynn Sadlon stated that many of the providers care for children under 3 as many of their children leave to go to preschool. She also stated that AOK gives support during the licensing process which is very important. The process is very involved and can typically take 6 month to 1 year. Sonja Ahuja asked about the distribution of family childcare throughout Norwalk. Ms. Sadlon thought that there was an even distribution with the exception of Rowayton. AOK has a new Google map feature that they've started using. Ms. Phillips stated that they will have a better idea when they get that up and running. There was also some discussion about family childcare businesses within Housing. Patricia Marsden-Kish stated that negotiations are ongoing.

QE/SCHOOL READINESS UPDATE

Jamie Bennetta reported that there are 609 full day and school day slots in Norwalk. All slots were full in August and that there are currently a handful of open spots. There was a School Readiness provider meeting earlier in the day where marketing strategies were discussed. Ms. Augustine-Jefferson commented that traditionally Norwalk has no trouble filling all slots and that this time of year is a transitional time so there may be a few openings. She anticipates being totally full later in the month. The providers also discussed a centralized waitlist system. This would be a drop box type system and parents would need to give permission for their application to be seen online by other

providers. Centralizing the applications will help streamline waitlists and reduce duplication. It is important that we get a better understanding of our needs and actual capacity. This will be beneficial if we lobby legislators for more slots. The residency issue was also talked about among the providers. They were most concerned with children who move and would they have to leave their program. Their comments will go back to the steering committee to develop a policy. Norwalk has not had a problem of unfilled slots in past so residency should not be a problem. Neither Stamford nor Bridgeport accepts children from out of town. We have flexibility to change the policy if needed. 2-1-1 Childcare Infoline is supposed to be calling programs weekly to get information on open slots.

The providers didn't talk about a common application. That may come up as a common waiting list evolves.

There was an increase in the School Readiness reimbursement for full-day programs which was to specifically go to a teacher salary or benefit increase.

Capital Improvement grants, announced earlier in the spring went to The Marvin, The Children's Playhouse, Ely, Ben Franklin and Norwalk Community College.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL PROJECT UPDATE

Joan Parris reported on the Social/Emotional Project. A random sample of children in school readiness and Norwalk Public School programs who were going to kindergarten in the fall was gathered. Teachers used the ASQ-SE to evaluate their children. Currently, 144 forms have been returned. They anticipate another 50 from Norwalk Public Schools preschools and the forms from the Brighter Futures students. There will also be an effort to tie the ASQ scores into the PELI scores.

Lauriston Avery reported that her center sends the ASQ form home to all incoming students. Norwalk Housing Authority uses the Brigance tool. Their Family Advocates will do ASQs mid-year with families to get them on to the ASQ system. There was some discussion on the importance of introducing the ASQ to parents to introduce to parents-packet coming in the mail looks daunting.

KCAN/NECC UPDATE

Ms. Augustine-Jefferson presented information on the PELI assessment that was piloted last school year and will be expanded this school year through funding from a private donor. Approximately 900 3-5 year old preschoolers were assessed this past school year. Ms. Augustine-Jefferson showed district level data with children at red, yellow or green levels. She stressed that the assessment was given to about 900 children but we didn't support all of them and didn't support all teachers. The assessment doesn't tell teachers what to do with the data. Most of them received no intervention or change in instruction. We know down to the classroom level where the neediest kids are. That data is not being made public. Only district level data is currently published. The goal is for teachers to provide tiered support by progress monitoring between the three testing times. (Beginning, middle and end of the year).

Ms. Augustine-Jefferson showed next steps which are focused on what we can do to support the children who are in the red. Those strategies include: coaching support for preschool teachers, direct intervention, informing parents and providing training and support, developing intervention plans for kindergarten teachers and meeting with curriculum/site directors and kindergarten teachers to explain PELI, share data and plan. There are 190 incoming kindergarten kids in the red. The KCAN wants to give kindergarten teachers the information about the children and a one-page document with supports that they can use in the very beginning of the school year rather than waiting until they assess the children later in September.

OTHER/NEW BUSINESS

We will discuss the Two-generational policy that Norwalk has received funding for and the preschool RULER program at the next Council meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 11, 9:30-11 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. DeCesare adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Oster