

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 20, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: Cathy DeCesare, SVP, Strategic Initiatives, United Way of CFC; Craig Creller, Interim Chief Academic Officer (Superintendent's Designee); Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River Nursery School/Director; Nicholas Brophy, Principal, Jefferson Science Magnet School; Patricia Foley, School Improvement Director; Monisha Gibson, Odyssey Early Learning Center/Director; Patricia Marsden-Kish, Norwalk Housing Authority Director of Education; Mary Oster, Early Childhood Coordinator/City of Norwalk; Rovitta Paul, The Children's Playhouse Director; Jamie Zyla, School Readiness Coordinator

OTHERS: Yvette Goorevitch, Chief of Specialized Learning and Student Services; Maureen Sullivan, Specialized Learning and Student Services Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Creller called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

He also stated that he would be leaving the meeting at 5:30 due to a scheduling conflict. He suggested that perhaps the group would consider adjusting the time of the meeting to earlier in the day. The group will try meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Creller introduced Ms. Goorevitch and Ms. Sullivan who came to greet the Council Members and make a very short presentation. Mr. Creller said that an issue had come up about students who were receiving School Readiness funding and also need services from the Norwalk Early Childhood Center. He explained that he had asked Ms. Goorevitch and Ms. Sullivan to come and give a quick overview of the law involving this issue. Mr. Creller said that the goal of two co-chairs was to facilitate the best possible parameters for Early Childhood programs.

Ms. Goorevitch said that she had a meeting about six weeks earlier to discuss the fact that students in the School Readiness Program could be discriminated against in terms of not receiving the services they need. There is a group of approximately 20 students with IEPs who are dually enrolled in School Readiness Program and in NECC program. She then spoke about how the IEP were done and said there were meeting with the families where they explained the families could have a choice of where they wished to have their child enrolled. Most of them expressed a need for childcare services and related services such as Speech, OT, PT and other similar programs. Having the children remain at the

school for the full day would require the staff to work with the service providers to arrange services on site. This would prevent the children from being commuters and having to travel between two sites.

This appeared to fulfill the requirement for a child receiving a School Readiness slot needing to be in the School Readiness program for a full day and also allowed the staff to implement IEPs. There are students who have significant needs or can not handle a full day in the School Readiness program. Those students will need special arrangements. Ms. Sullivan will be working with the team at NECC program regarding being a School Readiness Provider and being an evaluator for all the pre-school students who need this.

Ms. Goorevitch said that she was working with Ms. Zyla on developing a policy regarding this. She said that she wanted to focus on the currently enrolled students. Half of the PPTs have already been completed and approximately seven or eight students will remain in the School Readiness program full time with related services. Services should begin during the coming week. The start was delayed because of snow events and scheduling changes. The students will need some space for the service providers and the student.

For the coming year, there will be more preparations made so the students are enrolled during the spring and summer, the IEPs will be done and plans made for providing services. Ms. Goorevitch said if she was invited back to another meetings, she could talk about how the PPT should be conducted and what the role of what the child's School Readiness provider should be.

Ms. Goorevitch said the District had been unaware of this situation until the State sent some changes regarding the issue. If a child is referred the providers will be involved in the PPT.

Ms. Zyla pointed out that if a child is not on site for the required six hours, then that student is considered as not meeting the requirements for the School Readiness program. Students who are enrolled for the half day program won't meet the requirement, the Office of Early Childhood implemented this new change last year. Ms. Goorevitch started in September and this issue is a major change for School Readiness. No one has currently lost funding. However, Ms. Goorevitch pointed out that there was a threat of the District losing funding due to non-compliance. Ms. Zyla went on to explain the implications of this on the available School Readiness slots.

Ms. Paul then gave an overview of her attempts to get help for her three students who have not received services. Discussion followed about the attempts to schedule services and updating of PPTs and IEPs. Ms. Goorevitch pointed out that the parents must give the District written permission to share the IEPs. She explained that the point of the State program was to eliminate the split programs and have the children receive their services at the School Readiness provider's site.

Discussion followed about various needs for the students, whether the parents would be charged for delivery of services, the amount of transportation, the needs for childcare and what is in the best interest of the students.

Ms. Goorevitch said that she felt that any student with mild to moderate needs should have access to any program that their family chooses and receive the support services on site. There are a small number of student who are more severely impaired and whose parents need childcare services. This will require specific planning for each student.

Ms. Gibson pointed out that were hundred of poor inner city children who were not able to access the services they need. Ms. Goorevitch replied that they had narrowed down the number of students to about eight. Ms. Gibson said that these students had come from a group with the demographic of poverty and the providers needed to understand those children and know what was in the best interest of those student. Ms. Goorevitch agreed. Ms. Gibson said that she was hearing something different from what she heard at the previous meeting. This type of situation needs to be rectified for all the students, not just one. Discussion followed about the details.

Ms. Goorevitch said that she appreciated the fact that the Department was created to serve children, and appreciated the fact that there were children from poor families who rely on the District programs for childcare. She said that she not minimizing the issues and had been discussing these concerns in the past month with service providers. Providing services on site for the students who need services but do not have severe needs is generally felt to be a step in the right direction. The collaboration would help the teachers, the programs and most importantly, the students. If students have experienced a break in services, they are due make up services. She added that she would take the names of the students that Ms. Gibson and Ms. Paul were concerned about and get back to them once she had a chance to review their files.

Ms. Goorevitch, Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Creller left the meeting at 5:37 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. DeCesare suggested that the minutes be tabled to the next meeting. This was acceptable to all.

SCHOOL READINESS

Policy A-05 and B-06 – Ms. Zyla said that copies of the updated policies had been emailed to the members. Ms. Goorevitch has made some small changes to the B-06 policy. She asked everyone to review these and prepare for a vote at the next meeting. Due to the weather conditions, the last providers meeting was cancelled, but it has been rescheduled. Once that happens, the B-06 policy will be included for a vote at the next meeting.

Ms. Marsden-Kish asked if the District had the figures on the numbers of students that need the extra services and the ability of the District to provide those services. Ms. Zyla said that she did not think so at this moment. However, the goal is to have the Special Needs IEPs mirror the District's IEPs percentage. Capacity would be the biggest challenge.

SR Grant – The program is full and they are currently in QSM compliance, but cautioned everyone that it could change at a moments notice. There have been discussions about adjusting the timeline for future compliance.

All the RFPs have been submitted from current School Readiness providers and two outside groups, Stepping Stones and the Children's Corner, are interested. One has submitted an application and the second one has an extension due to the timing of their inquiry.

Ms. Zyla said that she was working on starting a small review team for the budgets, site visits and RFP information. Ms. Avery, Ms. DeCesare, Ms. Naranjo, Ms. Oster, along with Ms. Zyla as a School Readiness coordinator. However, Ms. Zyla added that if anyone else was interested, she was open to their joining the group. Ms. Locke has expressed interest in joining the group. The Council will be determining where the funds will be allocated.

The discussion then moved to the availability of School Readiness slots and the private slots fees. Ms. DeCesare said that the allocations would be made on April 17th and then it is submitted to the State. Ms. Zyla said that she did not think the State makes any changes on the allocations. Discussion followed about the details of the allocations. Ms. Gibson spoke about the need for high quality programs for the low income families.

Quality Enhancement – Ms. Zyla then distributed the draft of the QE Individual Vendor Justification Page. She pointed out that All Our Kin and Kith and Kin were given the forms to fill out and that they had not yet submitted their requests. Discussion followed about following up for the programs that had not responded and engaging the providers.

The discussion then moved to the provision of materials to the kindergarten students. Ms. DeCesare said that the Council needs to think about whether they wanted to provide materials for the Early Childhood programs, instead of providing kindergarten materials.

Ms. Zyla said that in the past, the QE budget requires a justification application that is supposed to be filled out by the applicant, but in the past it has been done by staff. Ms. Zyla said that she inherited this job but would prefer that the applicants fill out the form instead.

Ms. Gibson then spoke about the transition process and the interest in this area by the kindergarten. One issue is providing funding for substitutes when the providers want to attend a program. Ms. Gibson said that she would coordinate the application for budgetary allocations to cover substitute teacher for the providers to attend transition training. Discussion followed about other allocations, such as Special Needs Training programs.

Ms. Zyla then distributed copies of a draft of the Language and Literacy Professional Development Work Plan. She said that the providers would be filling them out about their staff. If the provider's staff is providing training, the Council wants to know about it so they can utilize the resources. They also want to plan Professional training programs. It will help pinpoint strengths and areas that need improvements. Ms. Gibson said that this was really a great form. Ms. Zyla said that Norwalk ACTS was participating in this, also. Discussion followed.

Policy A-05 and B-06

Ms. Zyla distributed copies of the A-05 policy and said that it had been emailed out to the Council Members. This will be voted on at the next meeting.

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Kindergarten Registration – Ms. Oster said that Kindergarten registration is totally online. After discussing this with the group, it was decided to have a community and outreach events. The first session (Tier 1) was held on March 19th at Odyssey, The next session is scheduled for March 31, 2017 at the Norwalk Public Library on Belden Avenue.

Ms. Oster said that there were 180 applications that were completed as of earlier in the day. The other events will be held at the Norwalk Early Childhood Center and Stepping Stones Museum. Some of the families needed one on one assistance. The ASQ is also online.

Ms. Zyla said that there had been a program for the providers before the main community meeting took place but due to the weather issues, this had not happened.

Tier 2 of the project will follow after the Stepping Stones event and the Housing Authority will host an event. Ms. Gibson asked if the parents could be paid to help others online or doing things. Ms. Gibson pointed out that some of the parents became very involved in helping others who were not as proficient in filling out the forms online.

It was pointed out that the most difficult portion of the online application for Spanish speaking families was the ASQ survey portion. That portion can take up to an hour.

However, there are still families that arrive in September without any prior notice. Ms. Marsden-Kish said that the Housing Authority will be working on letting the families know in advance. Ms. Paul said that her staff will be making a point of doing a meeting about knowing where they were in the process. Ms. Gibson said that the process requires having an email and that the staff had to help them with that also.

Next meeting will be April 17, 2018

Voting on SR Grant and QE

Voting on B-06 Policy

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. DeCesare thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services