

**CITY OF NORWALK
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Cathy DeCesare, Co-Chair; Bruce Morris, Co-Chair; Anthony Allison, Norwalk ACTS Executive Director; Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, Instructional Specialist/Norwalk Public Schools Early Childhood Education; Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River Nursery School; Jamie Bennetta, Staff; Nicole Fagan, Carousel Preschool Director; Barbara Fitzpatrick, Star Rubino Center Birth to Three Director; Adele Gordon, Day Street Community Health Center Director; Mary Kate Locke, Family & Children’s Agency Adoption and Prevention Services Director; Marie-Ange Nicolas, NCC Parent Representative; Mary Oster, City of Norwalk Early Childhood Coordinator; Joan Parris, NCC Early Childhood Program Director; Erica Phillips, Norwalk-Stamford All Our Kin Site Director; Lynn Sadlon, Fox Run Family Resource Center Director; Ellen Swan, Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance

OTHERS: Joyce Abate, Carousel Preschool Director; Patti Terpstra, guest of Lynn Saldon

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. DeCesare called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. A quorum was present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. DeCesare greeted everyone and requested that every one introduce themselves to the group.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 18, 2015

The following changes were noted:

Page 1, under **DR. ADAMOWSKI**, paragraph 1, line 3: please change the following from: “During a retreat six goals were created they will be ready” to “During a retreat with the Norwalk Board of Education members, six goals were created and we all agreed with this vision for the Norwalk Public Schools.

Page 2, under **PRESCHOOL VISION**, paragraph 1, line 6: please change the following to “Dr. Adamowski plans to work with Stepping Stones over the next two years to

replicate the ELLI program in each of the proposed preschool classrooms in the elementary schools”

Page 2, under Preschool Vision, paragraph 3, line 3: please change the following from “building new School and if this happens” to “building new schools and if this happens”

Page 2, under **PRECHOOL VISION**, paragraph 5, line 5: please add the following after the last line: “Joyce Abate asked Dr. Adamowski why he would choose the Montessori Model. Dr. Adamowski replied: “Nationwide research shows they produce the best results.

Page 2, paragraph 5 under **PRECHOOL VISION**, line 5: please add the following after the last line: “Joyce Abate asked Dr. Adamowski “Would smart start money be used for funding for the preschools in every elementary school?” Dr. Adamowski replied, “I don’t know.”

Joyce Abate asked Dr. Adamowski if our current School Readiness slots would be given to the new public preschools? Dr. Adamowski replied: “Yes, we could allocate them.”

Page 3, under **ADVOCACY**: paragraph 1, line 4: please change the following from: “Dr. Adamowski and Mayor Harry Carey.” to “Dr. Adamowski and Mayor Harry Rilling.”

Page 4, under **RULER**: paragraph 1, line 2: please change the following from: have a wome he is working with” to “have Shawna Tominey, who he is working with”

**** MS. DECESARE MOVED THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 2015 AS CORRECTED.**

**** MS. GORDON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 2015 AS CORRECTED PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION.**

SCHOOL READINESS

Jamie Bennetta updated the group on the programs that have received reaccreditation for NAEYC. Children’s Playhouse 2 Too, Little Critters and Growing Seeds have all had accreditation visits. Children’s Playhouse and Growing Seeds have received their reaccreditation. Little Critters has not received their results at this time.

Jamie Bennetta reported that the School Readiness program currently has 609 slots. The required report was submitted at the end of November to the OEC indicating our unutilized slots or slots we can take on. Jamie Bennetta reported that Growing Seeds was

down 3 and that Growing Seeds can take 7 more and Carousel can take 20 more. Growing Seeds gained 7 slots. There have been a number of parents who have contacted the early childhood office recently who need childcare. Jamie Bennetta referred them to Growing Seeds. Carousel was given the 20 additional slots, but will not be taking them.

Apparently, there were other towns that were underutilizing the slots, so additional 27 slots were given to Norwalk School Readiness. Ms. Abate explained that her program would not be able to take the additional slots because it would be impossible to get licensing in 30 days for a new classroom. Ms. Bennetta said the original report from the City stated that Carousel would take the 20 slots, but if Carousel cannot take the slots, whether Norwalk will lose those 20 slots remains unclear at this time. Discussion followed about the challenges of opening a new classroom along with the associated costs and providing staff for it.

Ms. Bennetta said that she had contacted Gerri Rowell at the OEC about Norwalk's new residency policy. The policy stipulates that a family not residing in Norwalk had to either work or go to school here to qualify for a spot. Ms. Rowell said that School Readiness regulations do not allow us to restrict residency.

Ms. Sadlon asked if there would be a point where the City was maxed out on capacity and have met the desire of the parents who wanted the preschools. She went on to speak about the percentage of children who had a pre-school experience and how that would impact the children.

Ms. Oster said that when parents whose children participate in Brighter Futures complete the Parent Survey they usually indicate that their children did not attend preschool because they did not know about the preschool program or there was a problem with transportation. Many people do not realize that there are spots with subsidized tuition.

Ms. DeCesare said that perhaps the people who work with Birth to 3 may need to communicate about the pre-school experience to the families. Mr. Allison said that 82% of the students have experienced pre-school but there was no information on how much pre-school. Discussion followed about the importance of quantifiable data.

Ms. Avery said that it was her experience that in her private pre-school, the population has declined. The discussion moved to the shifts in the various populations. Mr. Allison spoke about the changes in the areas of residency for the various populations.

PRIORITIES FOR 2016

Ms. DeCesare said that the Early Childhood plan was written to cover 2012-2016. She then listed a number of conversation starters for determining new priorities to steer the

Early Childhood Council where it wants to go. Ms. DeCesare said that she would like to end up with a short list of what those present at the meeting thought.

Some of the topics that were suggested were:

Prenatal to Age 2.

No prenatal care or late prenatal care.

Housing for pregnant women.

Mothers are undocumented

ASQ/Home visiting

Family Childcare/Kith-kin/grandparents

Quality

What it is? (NAEYC/ELLI/STEAM)

How do we get there?

Parent Outreach/Education

Transition

B to 3 - to PreK to K to 3rd Grade.

Parents as partners

Ms. DeCesare said that it is important to be sure what the Council members want for Norwalk. She said that for those who are passionate about this issue, they can work with the group to make sure the outcome for the children is better than it is today.

KCAN UPDATE

Mr. Allison said that he listened to the thoughtful suggestions. He said that he felt sure that everyone had spent much time thinking about this. He said that as an observer, there was no systematic process from birth to age 8. There is an opportunity to work with Ms. Sarah Mead. He said that the group could come to consensus about what quality means rather than NAEYC. With Ms. Mead's help, the group could actually develop an attainable goal. He said that there were 60 providers in Norwalk, but they have never all been in the same room. The reason that the program struggles is because the process doesn't work. Ms. Mead will help analyze the action plans and create a strategy. Ms. Mead will facilitate the meeting and help work more efficiently.

Ms. Avery said that almost none of the preschool providers would attend the meeting. She said that there would be a multitude of different issues. Mr. Allison said that it would be important to have the providers work together to support each other. There is funding for Ms. Mead to come work with the Early Childhood providers to create an Early Childhood Plan with everyone's input. He said that his frustration was hearing the Council's frustration. The Council has everything they need, but Mr. Allison felt that the

Council could turn the corner with Ms. Mead's help. He challenged everyone to contact two providers and get them to the meeting so everyone could work together.

Ms. DeCesare said that Ms. Mead did the ConnCan report and described where it could be found on the Web. She added that she had the opportunity to hear Ms. Mead speak.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

Proposed Care4 Kids Plan: The CT Office of Early Childhood held a public forum at NCC on Connecticut's proposed plan for federal CCDF funds (Child Care Development Funds) which Connecticut uses for the Care4Kids program. Ms. Oster said that there is an opportunity to comment online and that she will send the link to the Council members. She also distributed a summary document regarding this.

Ms. Oster added that the Federal Childcare Nutrition Act is up for reauthorization. We are advocating that the act includes a provision for a second snack for children in care for more than 8 hours.

Ms. DeCesare said that there is a set of recommended questions that physicians will begin using at well-child visits to screen for food insecurity. She encouraged everyone to keep checking the ECE list serve for additional information.

OTHER / NEW BUSINESS

There was no additional business that needed to be considered.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. NICOLAS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. MORRIS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services