****

**NORTHEAST EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL**

**Monday, January 22, 2023**

**5:30–7:00 pm.**

**ZOOM Meeting**

**In Attendance:**  Sanda Assanowicz, Patty Bryant, Patty Buell, Kayla Burgess, Sarah Carey, Mary Colario, Kristine Cicchetti, Stephanie Donovan, Erin Drake, Ted Friend, Diane Gozemba, Paula Graef, Stephanie Hynes, Ellen Jones, Melissa Kennedy, Cathy Lane, Courtney Langlois, Veronica Larocque, Rachel Macht, Kim Mansfield, Suan Michaud, Dr. Susan Nash-Ditzel, Margaret Pearson, Laurence Prentiss, Christine Rosati Randall, Kelly Robbins, Emily Ross, Sally Sherman, L. Smith, Melanie Smith Cerva, Samantha Soper, Aimee Terwilliger, Rene Toper, Mark Weaver, Allison Whitson

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Guest Speakers – EASTCONN Headstart and Early Headstart
3. Spotlighted Community – Killingly & Sterling
4. NECC Updates- Regional Director
5. Regional Programming / Community Updates
6. School Readiness Meeting

The NECC and EASTCONN presentations can be viewed in Google Drive; all links to documents and resources mentioned in the notes can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1snU24zr20FDjYNxNCP3Tf0WCFhS7RIkP?usp=drive_link>

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Agenda adjustment: Killingly to present first before guest speaker

Highlighted Communities - Killingly

Town Manager – Mary Calario We are a diverse community with a population of over 17,500, one of the largest in the NE Region. Large commercial and industrial base offering significant employment opportunities (Frito Lay, Spirol, Putnam Plastics, etc.) and many small businesses. We also provide a diversity of living arrangments – rural to medium-density areas with condos and single-family homes. With many recreation activities, active parks, and recreations, Owen Bell is our most extensive, with a splash pad and large playgrounds, trails, and boundless playgrounds. We have a River Trail with a dog park – paved for accessibility for people with disabilities. Other hiking parks. We have an active theater program and several community celebrations throughout the year. We have an active Library program with Alison, Claudette, and their team (programs like story hours, STEM, Giant Room with NYC, etc).

**Guest Speaker – See Google Drive for the presentation**

Kimberly Mansfield, Director of Headstart, and Susan Michaud presented. We service children and families in Tolland and Windham counties; we support children through our prenatal programs, including center childcare, toddler childcare, preschool, and home-based programs. This includes early Headstart, the prenatal to age 3, and home-based Headstart services, which are the 3 to 8. We are an income-eligible program, and our applications are accepted all year, so although the school year may start, we try our best with enrollments at that time; we do accept children all year round. We also get referrals from lots of community programs.

Our programs include benefits not only for kids but also for our families. We are an educational program for kids ages 0 to 5; we also have a whole family approach, so we look to meet the needs of an entire family unit rather than just the specific child enrolled in our program.

Benefits include for our kids:

* A safe & healthy learning environment
* Improve school-readiness skills
* Individualized developmental support
* Positive relationships with other children
* Supportive, caring teachers & staff

Benefits include for our families:

* Involvement in your child's education
* Free family workshops & parenting support
* Access to community resources
* Opportunity to meet other families in your community
* Leadership opportunities

Reviewed the locations for Headstart and Early Headstart (see presentation)

Home-Based Programs: Families & expectant mothers are partnered with a home visitor to provide individual learning & support in a home environment—weekly scheduled home visits to focus on the child's educational development & support positive parent/child relationships. Family Connection Time with other families provides an opportunity to support a child's play in a social setting, learn parenting strategies & build friendships with other families. Families are eligible when:

* + Meeting federal income guidelines
  + Experiencing homelessness
  + Foster children
  + Receiving SNAP, TANF, or SSI

For more information or questions:

Kimberly Mansfield, Director, [kmansfield@eastconn.org](mailto:kmansfield@eastconn.org)

Suzanne Michaud, Family Service Manager [smichaud@eastconn.org](mailto:smichaud@eastconn.org)

Jennifer Snyder, ERSEA Coordinator & Project Specialist [jsnyder@eastconn.org](mailto:jsnyder@eastconn.org)

**Staff Updates December/January:**

**Upcoming Social Emotional Learning (SEL) & Support Workshop**

* Wed., January 31, 2024, FREE Dinner 5:30-6:00 pm;   
  Workshop 6:00-7:15 pm
* Goodyear ECC/ Killingly Family Resource Center
* For families with children, ages 2-8 yrs. old who live in any of the following CT towns: Brooklyn, Canterbury, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson & Sterling

**Early Leanring Kit Project Update:**

* Children 3-5 years old who are not enrolled in an early learning program
* We've had over 300 EL Kit requests kits across our 7 communities over the past 2 years
* 30 new requests in the past 2 months

**Business Associations:**

* The NECC joined Putnam, Killingly, Plainfield, and Thompson business associations to connect with local businesses. We've attended Putnam and Thompson so far and plan to attend more to share our resources.

**Parent Ambassadors Update:** Melissa Kennedy updated the group on:

* Discussed opportunities for new/more locations to be supplied with Resource Guides.
* Discussion of spring outreach "playgroup" event(s).
* Continued assembly/drop offs of SEL kits as needed.
* Maintained social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, being sure to respond to comments and messages.
* Discussion of potential new PA in Plainfield area.

**Community Programs Sharing:**

**Stephanie Hynes: NDDH** – NDDH is giving out radon kits (1 kit per family). Testing for radon at home is essential as it can lead to lung cancer. Pick up at NDDH, and NDDH will give results after the family returns the completed test.

Question: Sally – do families have to go to the office to pick them up? If we have a family event, could NDDH give them out? Yes, families do have to pick up. But community partners like YMCA and DayKimball have given them out. Yes, we could come to the event.

**TEEG – Erin** - Strong like a mother, we have changed to a daytime meeting, a flyer has changed, and we will send a new flyer. TEEG will start doing a monthly focus on family – February 29, Crockpot meals – flyer coming.

**Diane Gozemba – EASTCONN:** Hosting Infant / Toddler Conference on March 1, 2024 – Responsive caregiving and focusing on communication. April 27 – Play Conference. I will get the flyer sent out.

**EASTCONN Headstart is collaborating with Killingly and Plainfield** to hold Circle of Security Classes.

On Wednesday evenings starting March 13, childcare and dinner – flyers will be coming. Plainfield Circle of Security class in Plainfield during the day, childcare, and light lunch – begins on February 22, Thursday, 11:30–1:00 pm 6-7 weeks. It was nice to collaborate with Plainfield to offer the training at different times so different families can access it.

**Allison – Killingly Library**: Take your child to Library Day on Sat. Flyers will be sent on February 3 at 10:30 to Pequot Museum – live animals "Life under the ice."

Chris R: Please let us know if any community programs want flyers at our SEL workshops.

**School Readiness & Highlighted Communities:**

November Meeting Notes: They were attached to the agenda for review before the meeting. Motion to approve by Sally, Patty Buell seconded, no discussion, no opposition or abstentions, all in favor.

Program Updates: Chris Rosati presents the program update link for Google Documents, which everyone can view in the google drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I39Ks2O4lQ6-2rSFrFn8ZaoM7sqOihhJ?usp=drive_link>

Bylaws – Recommended amendments sent before meeting, motion by Patty Bryant accept amendments as presented, Patty Buell Seconded, no discussion, all in favor.

Highlighted Communities - Killingly

I am most proud of implementing the pyramid model and purposeful play. The Pyramid model has been a game changer for GECC, ongoing coaching model: Through training, coaching, and modeling, we embed Pyramid Model practices into every area of our student's day.  We foster high-quality environments, routines, and relationships with and between students, families, and staff. I'm super proud of our team, and soon to have our first visit from another district to see how we implement this.

We looked at view boards in the classroom; all classrooms across the district received Viewboards.  What would this look like in preschool, considering developmentally effective practices? We use it for modeling play planning, mini schedules, letter hunts, and number talks. We are highly interactive and aligned to standards – we are very proud of our success.

Highlighted Communities – Sterling, Ted Friend – Superintendent, presented along with Maggie Pearson.

We are a smaller, rural community. Sterling Community School serves families (PreK-8th) in the quiet northeastern corner of the state. We have two half-day preschool classes (a.m. and p.m.) serving 25 students.  1-Preschool Teacher, 1- Preschool Paraeducator, 1 Special Education Teacher, and Adult Support Staff per student needs. Added Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing; students receive American Sign Lesson with our TOD-HH bi-weekly. Families receive activities to support the instruction at home.

Sterling School Readiness has a collaborative agreement with Sterling Recreation Authority. Sterling preschool student community activities include apple picking at the orchard, fire truck visits, trunk or treat, Christmas Caroling, etc.

Current enrollment: 14 Students in the morning and 13 in the afternoon. Ted mentions that with 35 years of experience in education, the biggest strength of Sterling Public Schools is the Social Emotional Learning embedded from pre-k through 8th grade; worked hard developing the program over the last several years.

Question: Renee asks Maggie about the sign language classes – is that based on student need and supporting the entire classroom (we have a large population of non-speaking children) interested in knowing? Answer: Yes, we started the work with a few students; then, for the preschool specifically, we wanted to make the total language approach include all the kids.

School Readiness Quality Component Report: Quality Enhancement Grant: Each community receives a small amount of money to provide quality services to their program. The Quality Enhancement funding aims to assist early care and education programs in addressing quality standards and expanding comprehensive services for children and families. Putnam highlighted what it is doing around coaching and mentoring with teachers and paraprofessionals, hosting events for staff, and training the trainer. Hosting regional workshops (will get the flyers out to programs), using purposeful play in classrooms, and how to inform parents. Melanie shares an overarching view: most districts receive $3,381, Putnam a little more as a priority district, and there are guidelines on what can be spent. Most do professional development for staff, can also be used for purchasing supplies or scholarships for employees to take classes or for family engagement. As a regional collaborative, we try to collaborate and share PD for all communities to attend.

Updates

* A revised sliding fee scale has been sent out for programs to use
* FY 25 SR RFP will be an extension - not a full grant. Liaisons have a meeting in February with OEC for more details

Monitoring Updates: Second monitoring visits are underway:

Melanie: Brooklyn and Plainfield have received 2nd visit; they are in the monitoring visit tab in Google Drive for members to view. Putnam and Sterling have theirs in the next few weeks.

Chris: Canterbury: In the process of visit 2 (split into two trips), I will put that information in Google Drive.

Emily: Killingly and Ellen: Thompsons are coming up in the next few weeks.

School Readiness Program Policies Reviewed

* In revising the SR Program policies to align with new OEC General Policies - I will bring them to this group for review/voting at a future meeting.

Collaboration Agreements:

One agreement highlighted this month is Putnam is with Daily Bread and Salvation Army. We have weekly food bags (50 a week), preparing meals to get kids/families through the weekend. They supply us with snacks for all schools for kids who don't bring snacks (be surprised that many kids in high school are hungry during the day); these get distributed through nurses and social workers at school. Help with backpack and holiday giving (gift registrar and angel-giving program). Helps with camp scholarships for kids over the summer. They provide preschool food tastings (books, recipes, and nutrition information), send home ingredients for parents to make.

Family/Parent Input Question: Please share any personal stories from parents/families whom the new Kindergarten age change will impact. We put the question out via Survey Monkey, 29 families from our seven communities. Patty shared that it looks different in each community – families need to reach out and keep in contact with each school to stay updated as deadlines/waivers, etc., are all different. Some survey comments from parents are that they will have to pay for another year of childcare, the ability to earn income, and how it affects their business.

Patty mentions the concern about how districts reach out to families, not in a program. Can we add a question on how families get their kindergarten registration information to EL Kit sign up? What about other distribution areas like Library playgroups, WINY announcements.

* Chris will send the data from the survey data out.

The next meeting is March 18, 2024, and the highlighted committees will be Thompson and Canterbury.

The meeting Adjourned 7:02 pm.