

## School Readiness Meeting Notes

8/16/2023 @ 1PM

Via ZOOM-In Person

**Council Members Present are in Bold: Dale Izzo, Robin Comey, Dr. Chris Tranberg, James Cosgrove, Diane Pappacoda, Deidre Popkin, Erin Hearn, Kaliula Spears-Burgess, Lauren Skultery, Isa Bolotin, Ariana Loyola and Carole Weisberg, (Via ZOOM), Rachel Kalman, Emily Yates, and Charles Cicarella.**

The Meeting was called to order by Dale Izzo at 1:02 PM

1. A motion was made to approve the June 7, 2023 Minutes.

1<sup>st</sup>: Ariana

2<sup>nd</sup>: Diane. Motion Carries

2. SR Liaison Report

Carole and Dale introduced new members to the Board: Emily Yates, Blackstone Library Youth Services and new Superintendent, Dr. Chris Tranberg.

Carole reported that Vanessa has resigned from the SR Council due to moving out of state. We, therefore, have a parent representative position open. The council heard about two potential candidates from Ariana and Diane for the Council.

A motion was made to accept the two new Parent Representative candidates: Melissa Hey and Crystal Pelletier.

1<sup>st</sup>: Dale

2<sup>nd</sup>: Robin

Motion Carries

Carole will be following up with the candidates.

Carole sent the 2023 legislative summary to the SR Council and highlighted a few of the items that directly related to SR. In particular the change to Kindergarten entry age requiring that children must be 5 yrs old by September 1<sup>st</sup> by next year. The consensus of the members present was this is a welcome change that supports child development. There will be about a quarter of the children who may need a third year of preschool due to this change. The question was raised about how requests to Principals for waivers might be handled. Dr. Tranberg related that the district will be discussing this and come up with a consistent policy for the district. The possibility that children with disabilities receiving services in the Early Years program might be affected was also raised. Charles responded that the planning team has some flexibility, and this will be on the agenda and addressed so that no child with disabilities will lose services.

Robin reported that OEC and legislators are also discussing a change in the current policy to admit children 2.9 years old into the 3 year classrooms in school readiness programs. The change is expected to re-align with kindergarten entry age so that children would be 3 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> to enter preschool.

Other legislation noted was that early childhood centers can keep EpiPens on hand for emergency situations without a doctor's prescription. And, good news that next year the reimbursement rate for School Readiness will be increased to \$10,500 per slot.

Carole reported that she had met with both program directors and talked about how they are meeting Quality Components and that both of our SR programs will report on their activities related to them at SR council meetings.

### 3. Program Site Reports:

- a. BELC: Diane reported that they are entering their NAEYC Accreditation renewal this year. All spots are filled for the start of the New Year. Diane has established collaborations with 14 different programs and services and continues to host the Branford Director's Networking group. Diane would like to work on updating the Branford Early Childhood Resource Book that used to be published by BECC. Robin offered that she may have the original file to share with Diane. Carole, Robin, Emily and Ariana will work with Diane on the updates. Since BECC is no longer an entity, it was felt that this could be a publication of the Branford SR Council and be available as a digital file online.

Dale remarked how we have been trying to get a dedicated website presence for School Readiness on the BOE site. Currently it's hard to find us and information isn't easily updated. Dale suggested that the Town of Bedford may be able to support this since this is the place where all our meeting agendas and minutes are posted.

Diane is working closely with the FRC and their parenting coordinator for parent involvement. They support the Branford Community Dining Room for free dinners and family activities.

- b. FRC: Ariana reported that she has completed her application for the FRC's NAEYC Accreditation renewal. All went well and she is just waiting for notification. She has started coffee talks with parents during drop off; Focus during the Summer was transition to kindergarten. FRC is also looking into implementing a Fatherhood curriculum/Volunteering program. FRC and BELC are collaborating for professional development. The FRC will be conducting surveys of staff and families to involve them and learn their interests and feedback. The FRC is also opening up their Parent Advisory Committee to members in the community. Lastly, they will be hosting Vision Screening sponsored by the Lion's Club in October.

- c. Both sites maintain extensive wait lists.
4. School/Community Reports:
- a. Emily reported that the Blackstone Library finished their summer reading program. Mary has had story time with the programs. Have held concerts with families and have hired a new children's librarian (Nicolette).
  - b. Robin reported that the Early Childhood Committee at the State Capital in Hartford will be starting up again in February.

5. Old Business: none

6. New Business: A discussion was heard about the new Kindergarten age requirement for School Year 2024.  
A discussion was held about Care 4 Kids in the public schools and in the preschool programs. It is being discussed in the schools and the programs are still looking into it. There is currently a waitlist for Care 4 Kids. It is currently closed to new families.

It was noted that there have been changes to some of the OEC General Policies in the last few years, as well as our amendment to residency requirements in Branford SR Council policies. Dale and Carole will work together, and Robin offered to help, to update the Branford SR Policies and Guidelines. They will also review the by-laws.

Carole reported that during the meeting with the FRC and BELC programs, it was discussed that parent involvement be a priority for the coming school year. Some things to focus on would be transition to kindergarten and what it means to be ready for school. It was suggested to include parenting information sessions/workshops during the Week of the Young Child, Pre-K Fair. Possibly call it Parent University.

7. Public Comment: None. Charles made special mention to thank Ariana for the wonderful job she is doing at the Family Resource Center.

8. Adjournment:  
A motion was made to adjourn at 2:07PM  
1<sup>st</sup>: Robin            2<sup>nd</sup>: Ariana  
Motion Carries