

## **School Readiness Council Meeting Notes January 25, 2023 - Via Zoom**

**Present:** De Popkin, Erin Hearn, Diane Pappacoda, Robin Comey and Carole Weisberg (non-voting member) and Pam DeMaio attending for Ariana Loyola (non-voting),

The meeting was called to order at 1:10pm. These notes of the meeting are provided in order to keep council members informed. No official minutes were taken as there was not a quorum present in order to conduct business and take minutes.

The November 16, 2022 meeting minutes were not approved since we didn't have a quorum. However, a correction to the minutes was reported and the corrected minutes will be presented for review and approval at the next SR Council Meeting.

### **Legislative Update:**

Carole provided a report on the many bills that have been proposed for the new Legislative Session that relate to Early Childhood Education and school readiness. And also reported on the priorities that CT School Readiness Liaisons have set for this legislative session. There are a couple of bills that address the critical need to increase SR Reimbursements Rates (HB 5540 and SB 225). CT SR Liaisons believe an increase in reimbursement rates is also tied to addressing staff shortages. There has not been an increase in SR Reimbursement since 2015, however, staff wages have increased \$5.85 per hour since then and a minimum wage new hire in 2023 will make \$12,168 more than a new hire in 2015.

SR Liaison goals were identified as:

1. Increase SR reimbursement Rate
2. Continued Administrative Funding, increase in Liaison compensation percentage.
3. Address Staff Shortages (tied to reimbursement rate)
4. Change Kindergarten Eligibility Date. January 1<sup>st</sup> start date is too late.
5. Extend grant cycle from two years to 3-5 years
6. Group health care

Robin Comey discussed a few of the bills she has introduced and co-sponsored in greater detail including HB 6200 An Act to Expand Birth-to-Three Program (to cover Birth-to-Five). This would address the gap in special education services for young children between the time when they age out of Birth-to-Three and become ineligible for services to when they start school at age 5. A second bill introduced by Representative Comey is HB 6333 An Act Concerning the Availability of Epinephrine in ECE Programs. This would allow early childhood programs to be able to stock and provide Epinephrine for any child who has a severe allergic reaction. And HB 6114 An Act Concerning Health Insurance for EC Educators.

### **Program Site Reports:**

Branford FRC:

- Pam reported that the program is doing great with Ariana on board!
- Ariana was in contact with CT United Way regarding application for the Wage Supplemental Funds and was able to apply for funding on behalf of the staff in the program.
- They are currently at 100% enrollment. Pam mentioned a correction to the November minutes to reflect that they were looking to fill two full-pay slots (not SR slots) at that time. Their waitlist is very active. They will have 10 children moving on to Kindergarten at the end of this year.

- The district has begun to offer wrap-around pre-K services at the FRC. Children can enroll in either morning or afternoon care and pay for the opposite sessions if they want a full-day. There was some discussion on effect, if any, of FRC pre-k enrollment.

BELC:

Diane reported technical difficulties and provided her updates in the chat:

- We have full enrollment, we have had a busy month!
- We had a zoom workshop for parents on literacy and also pre-reading skills.
- Transitions: we will be working with the Community Dining Room to have a town wide meet and greet in August for all incoming Kindergarteners, I will contact FRC about our next meeting. A former student came to our school to read to our preschool class and talk about Kindergarten and most of the questions were about the bus
- Our families have been introduced to each other on our Bright Wheel App which has helped kids and parents to form friendships, so they are meeting on the weekend, either here, another park or the trampoline park. Tuesday night is pizza night at CDR so a few of my teachers went to do art projects.
- SR wait list 14 children, we will be full for September, I am happy to share
- Care for kids (C4K) we are attempting to go through redetermination for a few families, but it is a tough process

For future meetings, Carole has asked the program directors to report on any activities they have conducted between meetings that relate to the 11 Quality Indicators for School Readiness.

#### **School/Community:**

De Popkin reported that the Strengthening Families program is currently at capacity, but will have openings soon. She encouraged programs to let families who may benefit from this program know and to reach out to her with any questions.

#### **Preschool Fair and Week of the Young Child**

Discussion centered on what we would like to do this year. Last year's preschool fair was held in April to coincide with the Week of the Young Child. It was a great success with approximately 300+ families participating, but there was a cost to all the activities (such as entertainment, etc.) and books provided. Without grant funds we are not able to provide the same type of event. Diane reported that there were two grant opportunities that might be available that could provide some funding for this type of event. We also discussed the possibility of having the preschool fair in March as this event can happen without extra costs.

All agreed that whatever events we plan, the Branford Community House would be the ideal place to hold such events. We recognized that dates needed to be secured soon as the community house gets booked up.

It was proposed that a committee be formed to move this along. Carole will send an email to the council to find a date for a first meeting.

Meeting concluded at 2:00pm