Danbury School Readiness Council Minutes

**Date:** May 3, 2023  
**Time:** 12:00-1:30pm  
**Location:** Workspace

**Attendance:** Michelle Anderson, Kerzell Barnes, Tara Carvalho, Eileen Costello, Sue Giglio, Nicole Giro, Michelle James, Anne Mead, Mark Meyer, Jennifer Pane, Elizabeth Quinonez, Thomas Schrack, Robin Scott, Judy Sims, Maria Vargas

Guests: Delia Wroblewski and Megin Meyer from Hudson Country Montessori School & Holly Ghannam from Little People Learning Center

**Welcome:** Michelle Anderson & **Approval of Minutes:** Mark Meyer & Second by: Anne Mead with amendment to minutes to reflect that Judy Simpson presented the Grant Review Team report in coordination with Claudia Anderson at the March 1st meeting.

**Agenda Item:** Michelle Anderson, EdAdvance

Michelle gave a review of the School Readiness Attestations; copies were emailed to Council members prior to the meeting and hard copies were available at the meeting. Council agreed to all Attestations by motion/vote. Council understands FOI of grant. Liaison/Council reviewed requirements. Affirm monitoring and recommend funding. Affirm School Readiness Council membership and that the Council has met requirements.

Mark Meyer made a motion to accept Attestations and 2nd by Michelle James.

All in favor, no one opposed.

**Agenda Item:** Anne Mead for Kevin Walston, Danbury Public Schools

Kindergarten registration is ongoing with 400 plus children having completed the process and another 100 children still in process. Enrollment is up by 300 students above the demographer’s predictions. We are seeing increased numbers of kindergarteners as well as first graders. Some of which haven’t had any kindergarten experience. Toilet training is still an issue for some kindergarten children. Families are coming to kindergarten from outside the U.S. without SPED services who had needed it. Funding has been received for a new school-based Health Center at Ellsworth School and it will open in August and will include a family model for mental health services in the evenings. Rick Raucci is the new director of Continuing ED.
DPS will be rolling out an attendance campaign in July. The absenteeism rate was 24% this year. LEAP grant has some funds that can help. Staff are finding that parents are still not comfortable sending their children to school as related to Covid. Also, linking absenteeism to older siblings staying home to take care of younger children who are home sick as well as, a fair number of students at the high school who are working to help support their families. While they are seeing a lot of chronic absenteeism at all levels, DPS continues to “walk a mile in their shoes” and support and work with families to help get the numbers down and get students back in school. The People Empowering People program is starting.

**Agenda Item: SR Consultant Report- Eileen Costello, EdAdvance**

Eileen shared the grant paperwork with scores for each of the programs. This year’s grant was a smaller grant with less narratives. Corrections were done and the grants are due tomorrow. Judy Sims as a member of the Grant Review Team added that the team did review the grants and discuss them thoroughly. She added that professional development is important and that directors should review their submissions carefully as well as enlist the aid of a proofreader. Save the date for the School Readiness Annual Professional Development Day on August 25th at the Ethan Allen.

See full Coordinators report attached and on the website.

**Agenda Item: Robin Scott, CIFC**

CIFC will be hosting a Cultural Fair on June 1st, invites will be sent soon.

**Agenda Item: Maria Vargas, Parent Outreach & OEC Cabinet**

Positive Discipline in Spanish, Portuguese and English is being offered. Marcela is becoming more involved in her role as a Parent Ambassador in our area. She has been connecting with families one-on-one at parks etc., continuing the Portuguese Storytime and is working on getting information to parents about the Sparkler App. and is developing some ideas about how we can have a social media presence that families could follow. Maria is continuing her work on the Blue-Ribbon Panel. On May 11th in Norwalk there will be a presentation on workforce and quality with a presentation from Harvard Center for the Developing Child scholar, Junlei Li. There will also be virtual public forums for public comment and conversation on May 19th, June 8th and July 27th.

We will be attending the Early Childhood Fair and the Danbury Library Community Baby Shower.
**Community Sharing:** Tara Carvalho, Danbury Public Library

Many events are coming up, the library staff will be the Early Childhood Fair and a Community Baby Shower is being held at the library on May 13th. There will be free lunch at the library over the summer for children up to 18 years old. They will offer movies, coloring etc. while the lunch is eaten. Summer programs are mostly free, and you do not need to have a library card to participate. Will be working with Emanuela Palmares at the New American Dream Center to get families info on the library. The Summer Reading Program flyer will be out soon. Eileen Costello asked if a summer reading list for incoming Kindergarteners was available to distribute to the preschool programs to read over the summer.

**Community Sharing:** Michelle James, CAAWC

Under Working Cities, we have an individual on staff who will be speaking with employers to identify what employes are looking for and the skill sets needed and matching them with employers. He can also assist in finding employees. A security guard training class is being held as well as first time home buying and budgeting training. The diaper bank, food and energy assistance programs continue to run. We are seeing increased numbers of people that need help. The agency is focused on the upcoming Early Childhood and Resource Fair being held this weekend.

**Community Sharing:** Sue Giglio, Families Network of Western CT.

The 25th Anniversary Luncheon was held last week and was very successful as our largest yet. Thank you to the SR Council for sponsoring a table at the event. Donations are still coming in. We will be out in the community over the next few months, at the Farmer’s Market in Danbury, Danbury CoDA and the Head Start Cultural Fair and will also have a table at the Early Childhood Fair on Saturday and the Community Baby Shower on May 12th being held at the library. Home visiting services will be represented, and we will help parents sign up for the Sparkler App. Promoting the QE grant to provide consultation in-home to providers. FNWC is hiring.

**Community Sharing:** Elizabeth Quinonez, United Way

Unlicensed providers are seeing visits from the OEC, so many providers are coming to UW for assistance. The BCIS system is time consuming. There will be a series of 6 Community Cafe’s discussing issues around mental health, vaccines, absenteeism etc. There is a meeting scheduled with Beth Bye to have conversations around providers. The Incubator Model is in the works. Four classrooms are needed, and a training space. UW will have a table at the upcoming Early Childhood Fair. Providers are asking for referrals for children.
**Community Sharing:** Nicole Giro, Birth to Three

Birth to Three had the highest number of visits with 1097 visits and 2281 hours, serving 420 children for the Danbury/Torrington/Waterbury region. Birth to Three referrals are a forced rotation and many children are staying over the summer and not aging out, so the next several months will be incredibly busy. We have hired a new physical therapist, teacher and SLP and teacher for Southbury. Communication, motor skills and autism are the top referrals. Language development is also an issue.

**Guest Presentations:** Two School Readiness programs: Holly Ghannam from Little People Learning Center and Delia Wroblewski and Megin Meyer from Hudson Country Montessori School gave presentations to the Council on the remaining two of the eleven Quality Components. Holly spoke to us about the Referrals for Health Services component and Delia and Megin shared information about the Family Literacy Component.

**Motion to adjourn at 1:30pm:** Mark Meyer, Second by Michelle James

**Next meeting:** Fall calendar to be distributed, tentatively September 6, 2023