

January 22, 2008 Vernon School Readiness Council Meeting held at Vernon Board of Education

In attendance:

Sally Sherman	Supervisor of Early Childhood Education and Special Programs
Alan Slobodien,	Director, Vernon Youth Services
Bruce Blair,	Director, Hockanum Valley Child Day Care Center
Risa Filkoff,	VRABE & Consultant for VSR Public Relations Committee
Ardith Crampton,	ECHN Family Development Center
Tanjua Merrow,	parent
Tess MacKenzie,	ECHN Family Resource Center at Maple St. School
Christy Gademsky	Director Vernon Head Start
Cindy Guerreti,	Liaison, William Caspar Graustein Foundation
Teri LeBel	UCONN intern
Shahla Zarinejad,	Director, Junior Library
Paula Fortier	Owner of Academy of Art and Learning
Deb Hill	Kindergarten teacher Skinner Road School
Carol Burke	Vernon Education Foundation
Ann Scharin	Project Manager

Meeting began around noon.

Alan conducted the meeting.

The legislative council members were invited to attend, but a special session of the legislature was called to deal with crime in CT so none were able to attend.

HVCDCC Program Status:

Bruce Blair reported that over the holiday weekend the water heater broke causing flooding. The center was closed the 22nd and 23rd to clean up the water mess. There are no openings in the program and there are 2 or 3 on the waiting list.

Bruce mentioned that if legislative council members had come he would have addressed the Care 4 Kids program. His concern centers around the families who deal with nontraditional work hours because they are ineligible for the funds. Bruce specifically mentioned parents who work 2nd shift or whom have weekend hours incorporated into their work schedules.

Alan suggested that a small group from our council gather to meet with the legislature delegation to voice these concerns. He suggested a letter be put together about the issues with Care 4 Kids. He asked those connected with the funding program to send their concerns to him. Tanjua Damon-Merrow also mentioned she would send the concerns to Connecticut Parent Power who is also dealing with Care 4 Kids.

Committee Reports:

Minutes of each committee's monthly meeting were sent to members of the council before the meeting.

Executive Committee – The chair from each committee has been invited to attend these meetings. Alan reported that he hoped that the work from the council would now be centered in the committees possibly allowing for reducing the monthly meeting of the entire council.

Parent Engagement Committee: (Tanjua reported) The committee is working to begin one-to-one interviews in the community. Ann Pratt has agreed to present to the entire council at the February meeting to inform the council of the purpose of one-to-ones. Tanjua gave a brief description of the interviews. Cindy added that the committee is asking the entire council to come up with a name or two of people willing to do the interviews. It was explained that an interviewer would need to commit approximately 15 hours over a two to three month time period. Tanjua said she would send a letter to the Vernon school PTO presidents to invite them to the meeting. Early childcare age range is from birth to 8 years old.

The committee is also looking to get a PEP (People Empowering People) class up and running in early spring. The committee discussed ways to find those who would most benefit from the program. Networking with adult education is an idea to help do this. PEP is a 10 week course with a community project at the end. Committee also discussed other leadership programs that could be implemented to meet the needs of parents who are not at the beginning stages as there is a population for this in Vernon already. Ardith mentioned during the council meeting that there is funding out there for this, but it is a lengthy process. Committee needs to find parents to interview to get involved with the course. Pauline stated during the Council meeting that she may have parents that could be interviewed.

Professional Development: Looking to develop a meeting schedule so work can progress. Sally reported that there is an early child forum for January 25 to discuss transition practices. She noted that she was interested in exploring the Kindergarten Transition Institute that will be offered to 7 community teams. It is 4 meetings of half-day workshop program with teams of 4 to 6 members from the communities. There is a March 12 application deadline. The fall workshop initiated by Bruce is still in the idea stages. Ideas centered around getting seasoned teachers to discuss one single topic at a fall workshop. Bruce is working with the University of Hartford on this as well. Community Practice was brought up, which is a new phrase that allows for groups to decide which contents they are passionate about to explore during professional development instead of management solely making professional development decisions.

Public Relations Committee (Risa reported) – In 7 weeks, promotion of kindergarten registration (March 24) will begin around town with the culminating event happening on April 5 at the Ready Set School fair. The Reminder did an article from a committee meeting about things parents can get in order before registration begins. Materials to be handed out will be divided into two packets – registration and orientation. The committee wants to invited businesses to participate in the fair. Ann reported that CHIP is returning to do DNA packets for parents. There will be 6 prizes, one for each of the 5 elementary schools and one grand prize. The fire department cannot give a ride in a truck due to liability issues. Committee is looking for suggestions for another grand prize idea. Action Blue Print in Manchester is dealing with printing the signs to be placed around town.

Alan reminded the council that the grant for 2008 is \$38,000 and another \$27,000 is available in 2009 but will be reviewed by the Foundation to see the council's success and money usage. Alan expressed to the council that a neighboring community did not receive monies so the work being done in Vernon on School Readiness is being noticed.

The town council was presented to about the kindergarten survey. Alan mentioned that the Mayor is onboard with school readiness.

Alan is also serving on United Way Leadership Council as an expert in early childhood education. United Way has found 13 discovery communities that are at risk. Vernon is one of them. There are monies in the future for some of these communities. Joe Gervase is now the new rep on the council from United Way.

Cindy reported on a fiscal scan that will be done for discovery communities who received monies. She suggested that the council review the information and utilize the resources that are available in the state and local community. She mentioned the importance of the community assessment and suggested it be reviewed at an upcoming meeting.

Meeting adjourned around 1:20 pm
Next meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday February 26 at 6:30-8:00
At Rockville Public Library
A light supper will be served
Ann Pratt from Parent Power
will be speaking