

**School Readiness Council
Hamden
Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2006**

Members present: Portia Bonner, Catherine Bradshaw, Louise Brundage, Arlene Cassello, Debbie Culligan, Gretchen Ferri, LuAnn Gallicchio, Jennifer Heath, Yvonne Jones, Betty Mettler, Edie Reichard, Susan Rubino, Ellen Thompson, Alice Torres, Virginia Wright-Younger, and Karen Piedescalzo, coordinator

1. Sub-Committee Updates

A. Steering Committee – no report

B. Communications and Marketing Committee – The Hamden Kids website is getting used but has more potential. Kinder Prep activities will be posted as they are announced. Karen Piedescalzo will send letters to the Arts Commission, Hamden/North Haven YMCA, Hamden Library, Parks and Recreation, PTA and PACK to invite them to post activities on the website.

The Hamden Kids Expo was held on Saturday, March 18 at Thornton Wilder Hall. Child care programs, community agencies and local businesses attended. There was an animal presentation from Beardsley Zoo, an interactive drumming demonstration, a clown with balloons, a musician and a face painter to provide entertainment throughout the day. There were free books, refreshments, a raffle and give aways. Several hundred people attended. Karen has sent a survey to the participants to get feedback. People attending gave very positive comments.

C. Program Committee – On Friday, March 24, a group of six people attended the Kindergarten Transition Institute at the Graustein Memorial Fund office in Hamden. They were given the chance to discuss ideas and bring them to the next level. Hamden will be offering Kinder Prep at all eight elementary schools. Each school will have guidelines but can alter them to personalize for their particular school. There will be collaboration between the schools and the School Readiness Council. The next Kindergarten Transition Institute will be held on Friday, May 19. There will be a meeting on Wednesday, April 26 with the Kindergarten Task Force. Kinder Prep will be held on August 28 and 29. The schools will send a letter in May or June with an invitation for children and parents to come in to the school. In August the Kindergarten teachers will send an invitation to the children in their class inviting them to Kinder Prep. When the families come to Kinder Prep, the children and parents will tour the school together and then they will separate. The parents will go with the principal and school nurse to talk about school policies and procedures. The children will go with their teacher to explore the classroom. Some schools will offer a school bus ride.

A Kindergarten Transition workshop was held on Thursday, March 30 at Alice Peck School. This was a professional development opportunity for Hamden kindergarten teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, preschool special education teachers, preschool teachers and child care directors. Ninety people attended. The participants were divided into seven groups. First they had lunch and got to know each other. Then the preschool directors shared what goes on in preschool and the kindergarten teachers shared what goes on in Kindergarten. The participants worked in groups and discussed topics including Behavioral Expectations, Language/Reading Readiness, Listening/Following Directions, Parent Involvement, Science/Math Readiness, Small/Gross Motor and Self Help Skills, and Social Skills. Then they reported back to the entire group. The workshop evaluations were very positive and many of the participants would like to attend another similar workshop. Karen Piedescalzo will type up the notes from each group and distribute them to the Kindergarten Task Force and the child care programs who participated.

An OSHA workshop was held on Wednesday, March 23. Anne Mead from the Early Care and Education Training Institute presented information on Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration. Thirty-three people attended and received materials to bring back to their centers.

D. Research and Development Committee – An application has been completed and is being submitted for a United Way Success By Six small grant. The grant would provide general information and mentors for child care providers to attain NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Accreditation. This is a lengthy process that many providers want to do but find it too time consuming and expensive. The standards for staff have greatly increased. The grant is due on April 19.

Last year the School Readiness Council received a Success By Six grant that supported the Hamden Kids Expo, parent meetings and expanded professional development.

E. Advocacy Committee – There is no word yet on the possible change in age for children entering kindergarten.

2. Graustein Report – A Request for On-Site Technical Assistance form has been completed and will be submitted to the Graustein Memorial Fund. Concerns to be discussed are the SRC Co-Chairs, sharing the burden of the work and covering expenses to continue the work of the SRC after the money is no longer available from Graustein. Three days of technical assistance are being requested.

The next Cohort Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 25 from 9:30 am-3:00 pm at the GMF Office. The topic will be "Parent Engagement". They will create a toolkit for parent engagement and share training resources.

3. Community Reports

- A. School Readiness Program** – Another School Readiness Program will open in June at Alice Peck School. It will be held in the classroom adjoining the current School Readiness Program. LuAnn Gallicchio will be interviewing staff. They are waiting for supplies to arrive.

The two existing School Readiness Programs are having a workshop on health and nutrition. Parents and children will share a meal, participate in music and movement and receive a cd of the music.

The Capitol Improvement Grant has been given a verbal approval. This will allow the School Readiness Reports to be prepared and submitted electronically.

- B. Family Resource Center** – The Play Groups have been expanded to Alice Peck School on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. There are also plans to work with four year olds when the room is not in use. Play Groups for four year olds will be started at Wintergreen Magnet School on Thursday afternoons during May and June. LuAnn is looking at ways to sustain these play groups and make them available to all Hamden families.

LuAnn is looking to hire two part-time Parent Educators with experience in Early Childhood. They must be comfortable with both children and parents.

The Spanish PEP (People Empowering People) Program is going great. The participants have very little English skills. The program helps parents work on self-esteem, learn to become more involved in their child's school and their community, and then become advocates for their families. It lets people know about ESL classes in Hamden. At the end of this session, the participants will do a community project and help people in the next session; this is the advocacy piece of the program. Eighteen children were cared for by the babysitters during this program.

- C. PACK** – On April 6 the PACK at Brundage Community Branch Library celebrated Poetry Month and National Library Week with activities that included the works of Jack Prelutski and Shel Silverstein. Sandy Bartell and Becky Cuevas introduced children and their families to humorous, entertaining, and fun poetry like A Dizzy Little Duzzle, I am Your Mirror Image, Eyeballs for Sale, and also discussed the different types of poetry. Children and their families created their own poetry books and were given ideas and take home materials that would show them how to turn words and ideas into descriptive powerful poems. There were 22 participants at this event. The materials for this activity were made possible by a generous donation by the Friends of the Library.

- D. Coordinator** – see report under Program Committee

4. Other Business – no report

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 9, 2006, at 9:00 A.M. at Alice Peck School.