

**Valley Early Childhood Regional Council Meeting**

**December 9, 2021**

**Zoom 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

***To support the Valley Community as a leader in early childhood development and family engagement in an effort to ensure all Valley children are prepared socially and developmentally to thrive in school***

In attendance:

Council Co-Chair - Carissa Caserta, Naugatuck Valley Health District

Council Co-Chair - Mary Sue Feige, Principal, Bungay School Seymour

Diana Brancato, Ansonia School Readiness Coordinator

Ayanna Williams, Derby, Seymour, Shelton School Readiness Liaison

Darla Lussier, Principal, Mohegan School Shelton

Mario Ciccarini, Principal, Bradley School Derby

David Olechna, Principal, Chatfield Lopresti School Seymour

Meghan Pogonelski, Special Education Seymour

Laura Harris, Derby Board of Education

Dee Kopec, Mayor’s Office, Shelton

Tracy Platt, Ansonia School Readiness-Ansonia Public Schools

Alyson Stanisci, Ansonia School Readiness/Shelton School Readiness-TEAM, Inc.

Barbara Eckner, Ansonia School Readiness/Derby School Readiness-YMCA

Kristen Santilli, Director of Curriculum/Shelton School Readiness-Shelton

Liz Heon, Seymour School Readiness/Derby School Readiness-Kid’s Club

Cathy Pomeroy, Bradley School Derby

Dorca Rodriguez, Family Engagement Coordinator Ansonia

Keely Edwards, Irving School Derby

Debra Hansen, Valley Regional Adult Education

Lynn Rider, Child First, Parent Child Resource Center/BHcare

Linda Jordan, Child First Parent Child Resource Center/BHcare

Rebecca Sotolotto, Seymour Public Library

Jen Shuart, Ansonia Public Library

Krissy Warrenger, Derby Neck Library

Michele Holovach, Early Head Start, TEAM Inc.

**Welcome/Introductions**

 Mary Sue and Carissa called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

**October 14, 2021 Minutes**

 Dee made a motion and Alyson seconded to accept the minutes from the October 14, 2021 meeting. All were in favor with no opposition so the motion carried.

**Regional Budget**

 It was reported the regional budget to date is $9,248.98.

**Naugatuck Valley Health Department**

 Carissa reported that NVHD has been beyond busy with over 100 cases of COVID reported each day. The contact trackers have been phoning 12 hours each day. There is a weekly School Nurse meeting every Wednesday to keep the public schools updated. Today is a vaccination clinic at the Derby Schools and there is an open call vaccination clinic tomorrow in Seymour 3:30-5:30 open to all Valley residents.

**OEC/Liaison Updates (Ayanna & Diana)**

 Only one new memo has been released since the last VECRC meeting by the OEC and it is #47. This memo can be accessed on the OEC website by number and it is regarding COVID19 relating to hours of operation, days of closures, lack of workforce and alternate plans of care. Other topics reviewed were Supplemental Administrative Funds, Monthly Reports, OEC Professional Registry, Sparkler, Liaison Monitoring, and Provider Meetings. Diana met with Ansonia Providers on 12/8/21 and Ayanna met with Derby, Seymour and Shelton Providers the first week of December (See attached School Readiness Liaison Report for December 2021).

**Governance Committee**

 The Governance Committee met on November 17, 2021 (see attached report) and discussed the stipend for Joshua Connor who worked on the new VECRC website ([www.vecrc.org](http://www.vecrc.org) ). Keely made a motion and Barbara seconded it to approve a $500 stipend to Joshua for his work on the new website. All were in favor with no opposition so the motion carried. (See attached Governance Committee Meeting Minutes for December 2021).

**Program/Agency Sharing**

**School Readiness Providers**

Shannon was not in attendance so Diana reported that Julia Day is full with 23/23 full

day/full year Ansonia School Readiness slots. There were family projects with fall leaves and gingerbread houses, a zoom sing-along, nutrition trainings in December and an admissions form that delves deeper into family background.

 Barbara reported that the YMCA has 20/22 full day/full year filled slots for Ansonia School Readiness with a full enrollment of 22 projected for January. Barbara also has 6/7 full day/full year filled slots for Derby School Readiness. The programs had an in-person visit from a dentist, met regarding Care 4 Kids no longer covering parent fees and began a partnership with the Derby Starbucks for foods close to expiration being donated to the YMCA for the children, family and staff.

Aly shared that TEAM has 16/18 full day/full year slots for Ansonia School Readiness and 22/28 full day/full year slots for Shelton School Readiness. The Head Start Health Services meeting was held where the community discussed COVID, masking policies and vaccinations.

 Tracy reported that Ansonia Public Schools is full with 50/50 full day/full year School Readiness slots and 10/10 part day/part year slots. Tracy said reading with children daily is taking place and Lisa sends home a literacy log to families. The Seymour Lion’s Club recently held a vison screening in November with 24 out of 60 families interested. Lisa helped families to sign-up for TEAM’s Toys 4Kids. Families were provided with Thanksgiving meals and coats. On 11/2/21, East CONN offered professional development in CT DOTS and each classroom received an I-PAD.

 Liz reported that Kid’s Club has 12/13 full day/full year Seymour School Readiness slots and 0/6 full day/full year Derby School Readiness slots with recruitment focused on filling those vacancies. A flyer will be sent to the VECRC to distribute to Derby families. The program is using the Bright Wheels app with families focusing on health/flu vaccines. The Seymour Public Library holds in-person story activities at the library along with upcoming story times and movement programs. There is a professional development focus on accreditation and AQIS Training. Kid’s Club will be sending an annual program evaluation to families on 1/12/2022 and again in the spring to address needs.

Darla shared that there are 10/10 school day/school year Shelton School Readiness slots. There is a focus on parent involvement through Class Dojo for updates, pictures, messages, along with a backpack newsletter. The school nurse sends out vaccination reminders to families. Social stories are used for topics such as mask compliance and social mitigation measures. Professional Development includes the pre-school math curriculum – Eureka Math which is aligned with the district program. CES is working with teachers on accreditation and focusing on learning CT Dots.

(See attached VECRC Program Provider for the above six providers for December 2021).

**Child First –** Lynn reported that Child First has been rebuilding since OEC funds were lost and the program received emergency RFP funding. One clinician is on temporary leave and is only able to serve half as many children. Currently, they are serving 12 out of 15 available children. The program continues to work with DCF to keep kids safe. The Child First data reports demonstrate that there are short-term changes in behavior so there is now a focus on long-term goals, depression, PTSD and the quality of interactions and engagement. Hopefully, more cases will be opened in February 2022. (See attached Child First report for December 2021).

**Early Head Start Home Based** – Michele thanked everyone for sending referrals to the program as enrollment has been increasing. There is still one vacancy for a Home Visitor that needs to be filled. Three pregnant teens (an OEC priority population) have enrolled in the Early Head Start Home Based program. Also, Michele had put in her report that TEAM’s Toys 4Kids was doing on line applications but the registration has been closed due to the volume of requests. (See attached Early Head Start Home Based report for December 2021).

**Valley Regional Adult Education** – Deb reported that enrollment has increased and asked for providers to send flyers to her for the parents who have young children and may need the School Readiness program. VRAE received a $40,000 grant to be used toward a focus on engagement. The programs had a speaker from Housatonic Community College. (See attached Valley Regional Adult Education report for December 2021).

**Ansonia Public Library** - Jen shared that in-person activities in music and movement have taken place along with an author visit. Monica Peterson (winter stories storyteller) will be presenting and on Saturday, 12/11/21 the New Haven Symphony Orchestra will appear at 11:00 a.m. Check out the Ansonia Public Library on Facebook and see the activities listed under Children’s Room At Ansonia Library. Jen encouraged the VECRC to email her in order to receive her newsletters and to visit the library. Diana recommends the Facebook page.

**Seymour Public Library** - Rebecca announced the library cards for children younger than 5 program has begun with about 6 children having signed up so far. The library is planning a “1000 Books Before Kindergarten Program” which will be open to the entire Valley. A new library employee recently held a story time in Spanish on the Seymour Public Library Facebook page. Rebecca is pleased that Kids Club is able to join every Wednesday for programming.

**Derby Neck Library** - Krissy is hopeful for in-person activities that are being planned for March 2022 (depending on COVID). Currently, Derby Neck offers virtual programs, story times, music, movement, crafts and science a minimum of three times each week. The VECRC is encouraged to email Krissy if interested in programs or receiving the library newsletter. She is pleased to offer programs to classes, including Little Raiders.

The meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.

**Next VECRC Meeting: February 10, 2022**

**9:00-11:00 via Zoom**