

**School Readiness Committee  
Community Indicators Project  
Minutes from June 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 Meeting**

**Present:** Diane Bessel, Susan Block, Helene Kramer, Jean McKeown, Blythe Merrill, Jane Ogilvie, Shelley Richards, Pamela Rouse, David Rust, Becki Schicker, Amber Slichta, and Michael Weiner

Michael began the meeting by welcoming Committee members and updating them on outreach efforts. The following individuals have expressed an interest in joining the Committee.

- Ken Sass (or representative), Family and Children's Services
- Michelle Bradley, Lockport School District
- Mark Laurie, Niagara Falls School District
- Meghan Gajkowski, Niagara County Youth Bureau
- Diane Quarantello, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Kathy Granchelli, YWCA Niagara
- Max Donnetelli, Baker Victory Services
- Susan Barlow, The Parent Network

Michael has also engaged in outreach to Tony Restaino from the Niagara County Department of Social Services but has been unable to reach him directly. Jean McKeown indicated that she will reach out to someone from the Niagara County funding community pending some organizational changes. Susan Block indicated that she would reach out to the Niagara County Child Care Clearinghouse. Following these last efforts, the group decided to discontinue outreach in the interest of focusing on the work of the Committee and reducing the need to bring new members up to speed at each session.

Michael reminded Committee members that materials from the Committee are available on the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County's website. Documents for the School Readiness Steering Committee are available at: [http://www.uwbec.org/content/pages/school\\_readiness](http://www.uwbec.org/content/pages/school_readiness) or go to: <http://www.uwbec.org> and click on "For Nonprofits" and find "School Readiness." Michael also instructed Diane to make adjustments to the website to make it more user friendly and to add a list of Committee participants as well as the action plan (once completed).

Diane presented a modified version of the action plan to Committee members which maintained the one year timeline. Members quickly recognized that this action plan was too aggressive and time compressed. Diane was asked to draft a new action plan which would allow for more time. The group also discussed the possibility of seeking an external resource to secure data on identified indicators. Related to this, Michael mentioned that Business First is interested in aiding in data collection efforts and producing a "wider-ranging" community indicators report.

Helene cautioned the group against reinventing the wheel when resources are already available. She provided materials relating the Buffalo Public School district's standards for Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1st-6th grade (see: Attachments). Unfortunately, data related to these standards is not being collected in all school districts in Erie and Niagara counties. Following this, there was a discussion on the overarching goals of the project as their appeared to be some confusion among Committee members.

The group decided that the initial focus of the Committee's efforts was not on developing projects or direct service intervention models but on the identification of community wide results related to school readiness. These results will be tracked over time using publicly available population-level indicators. Following the selection of key results and indicators, there will be an opportunity to identify strategies that will help us to "turn the curve" or improve community conditions. Once this is completed, individual foundations and service providers will be able to select the results/strategies that are most appropriate for them. Progress on goals and opportunities for increased collaboration will be discussed on an on-going basis in an effort to hold each other accountable. This approach is based on the Results-Based Accountability framework created by Mark Friedman.

Following this discussion, Diane provided a very brief overview of Results-Based Accountability. During the presentation, she described two levels of accountability: population and program accountability and described how they work together. She also described the “talk to action” exercises which are at the heart of the model. David Rust also briefly described his use of Results-Based Accountability in his work at the Erie County Youth Bureau (See: Attachments for a copy of the presentation and David’s materials).

In the interest of time, Michael asked that the discussion of initial indicators be tabled. Members were asked to review the materials provided by Diane (See: Attachments) as well as the indicators presented in the National School Readiness Initiative document (Available on the School Readiness Committee website) for future discussion.

Finally, Diane presented the draft Environmental Scan survey for distribution to organizations providing Early Childhood and/or School Readiness services. The goal of this project is to gain a greater understanding of the resources currently available in Erie and Niagara County and to identify possible gaps in services. Diane provided a list of providers (created in 2007) for review by committee members. This list will form the sampling frame for the study. After reviewing the survey, Committee members indicated that they felt comfortable with it.

Members were asked to review the list of providers and to suggest any organization/program not currently on it. Susan Block indicated that she would provide contact information for child care providers. Diane will take responsibility for converting the survey to a web-based form and will draft a cover letter. These materials will be reviewed by the Committee during the July meeting.

#### Next Steps:

- Diane will update the School Readiness website
- Diane will modify the action plan
- Diane will make create web-based environmental scan survey
- Diane will secure contact information for survey targets
- Diane will prepare a cover letter for the survey
- Members will identify other possible participants for the survey
- Members will review National School Readiness Initiative materials (focus on indicators)

Finally, in keeping with the goal of making this Committee a regional effort, the August meeting will be held in Niagara Falls. The session will be held on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 at American Red Cross is 2079 Sawyer Drive, Niagara Falls, NY 14304. This session will begin at 9am.

**Our next Committee meeting will be held on July 26<sup>th</sup> 2010 8:30am at the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County (742 Delaware Avenue). Light breakfast fare and coffee will be available.**