

**School Readiness Committee  
Community Indicators Project  
Minutes from May 24<sup>th</sup> 2010 Meeting**

**Present:** Lisa Alexander, Antoinette Amos, Diane Bessel, Susan Block, Helene Kramer, Jean McKeown, Shelley Richards, David Rust, Michelle Simpson-McKinnon, and Michael Weiner

**Excused:** Becki Schicker, Carol Houwaart-Diez, Blythe Merrill, Jane Ogilvie, and Dennis Walczyk

Michael began the meeting by discussing the importance of engaging Niagara County in the project. He mentioned the possibility of having some of the group's meetings in Niagara County and described the project as a joint effort led by the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County and the United Way of Niagara County. Diane had an opportunity to visit the United Way of Niagara County offices and meet with Carol Houwaart-Diez and Becki Schicker to identify possible participants in the project. Together, they generated a list of names including:

- Geraldine Donovan, Niagara County Head Start – **Antoinette will contact**
- Representative from Family and Children's Services (Possibly from Healthy Families) – **Becki will contact**
- Donna Coona, Center for Young Parents – **Carol will contact**
- Debra Colley, Niagara University – **Diane has contacted**
- Bob Kluge, Niagara-Orleans BOCES (Assistant Superintendent) – **Carol will contact**
- Michelle Brady, Lockport School District – **Carol will contact**
- Mark Laury, Niagara Falls School District – **Carol will contact**
- Don Rapphold, Lewport School District – **Carol will contact**
- Representative, Wheatfield School District – **Carol will contact**
- Representative from Youth Bureau – **David will contact**
- Representative from Boys and Girls Clubs – **Carol will contact**
- Kathy Granchelli, YWCA Niagara – **Carol will contact**
- Ed Brown, Planned Parenthood Pediatric
- Tony Restaino, Niagara County Department of Social Services – **Michael will contact**
- Representative from the Grigg Lewis Foundation – **Jean will contact**

Participants at the meeting agreed with the names listed above and suggested a few others including: Angela Burns from the Niagara County Child Care Clearinghouse (**Susan will contact**); representatives from a new Parent Child Home – Evan Start program in Niagara County (**Lisa will contact**); a member from the Niagara Area Foundation (**Jean will contact**), someone from the Lackawanna area (**Diane will reach out to Jim Casion from Baker Victory Services to identify possible representatives**); and Max Donatelli or Susan Barlow (**Michael will contact**). Committee members should report their progress in making contacts to Diane before the next meeting (scheduled June 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 8:30am at United Way of Buffalo & Erie County).

Moving to the next item on the agenda, the revised draft mission statement and concept paper was shared with the current membership for approval. Participants indicated that they wanted to ensure that families have an opportunity to comment and share in this work. Following these comments, the group decided to accept the Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives and Concept Paper. It will be posted 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."

Turning to the draft Environmental Scan, participants were asked to provide updated information on programs and funding for school readiness activities in Erie and Niagara counties. Most recently, Diane received information from the Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York and EPIC. Committee members were certain that there is a good deal more information available locally. The current list was created by examining the websites of local

foundations and has little to no information related to Niagara County funding or governmental support for prenatal to five activities.

Participants discussed the importance of conducting a proper environmental scan to determine the range of resources currently available in the community and the types of funding currently being used. This information will be vitally important should the group seek federal or statewide leverage funds. Lisa Alexander shared some information about the availability of funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – which includes support for early childhood education including programs such as Parent Child Home. She shared a brief paper describing possible resources.

Helene cautioned the group against reinventing the wheel when resources are already available – including Read to Succeed’s need assessment on literacy. She suggested that these types of studies are costly and time consuming. After some additional discussion, the group decided to pursue an informal survey to determine the availability of resources. Diane will prepare draft materials drawing on the five domains of school readiness described in the National School Readiness Indicators initiative. David Rust also talked about the possibility of including a mapping component with assistance from Erie County.

Following discussion of the survey, the committee turned their attention to Project LAUNCH.

Some members of the School Readiness Committee (Diane and Amber Slichta) recently had a conference call with Phil Endress (Erie County Department of Mental Health) and Meghan Guinee (Catalyst Research) to discuss the Project LAUNCH grant opportunity available through the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Project LAUNCH seeks to promote the wellness of young children birth to age eight. Using a public health approach, it focuses on improving the systems that serve young children (birth to 8 years of age) and address their physical, emotional, social, cognitive and behavioral growth. The overarching goal is for all children to reach physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive milestones so that they might reach their developmental potential, enter school ready to learn, and experience success in early grades.

During the conference call, participants felt that they would be unable to put a competitive application together in the time available (about two weeks) but would like to position themselves to pursue future opportunities (as available). Project LAUNCH funds typically include up to \$650,000 a year for up to five years. In New York State, Rensselaer has a Project LAUNCH grant and may be a useful resource to us. Both Amber and Diane felt that the Project LAUNCH website provided valuable guidance and resources – regardless of whether the group decides to draft an application or not. In creating the project timeline, Diane based her work on materials required in the Project LAUNCH. The group will use this information as a guide. For more information, please check out the Project LAUNCH site available at: <http://projectlaunch.promoteprevent.org/>

Finally, Diane did a brief overview of a bare bones plan of action that would allow the group to have a School Readiness Community Indicators Project report by the end of the year.

Objective/Outcome	Timeline
Initial convening of Community Indicators Project - School Readiness Committee; Overview of Project; Review DRAFT Mission Statement and Concept Paper; Identify Other Committee Participants	<b>March 2010</b>
New Member Orientation; Finalize DRAFT Mission Statement and Concept Paper; Review DRAFT Values and Objectives; Review DRAFT Environmental Scan Materials	<b>April 2010</b>
Finalize DRAFT Values and Objectives; Discuss Niagara County Outreach; Review DRAFT Environmental Scan Materials; Review DRAFT Plan of Action	<b>May 2010</b>
Finalize Environmental Scan Materials; Finalize Plan of Action; Review DRAFT Community Indicators List	<b>June 2010</b>
Review Draft Community Indicators List; Begin Gathering Available Data on Indicators; Determine “Result Statements” for Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercise Sessions; Identify Local Experts for Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercises	<b>July 2010</b>

Review Draft Community Indicators List; Continue Gathering Available Data on Indicators; Finalize “Result Statements” Plan and Recruit Expert Participants for Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercise Sessions	<b>August 2010</b>
Host Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercise Sessions; Review Session Results	<b>September 2010</b>
Gather Necessary Data related to Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercise Sessions; Continue Review of Results	<b>October 2010</b>
Draft Report on Results-Based Accountability “Talk to Action” Exercise Sessions; Finalize Decisions on Community Indicators	<b>November 2010</b>
Finalize Report on School Readiness Community Indicators Project	<b>December 2010</b>

Committee members felt that this was a reasonable plan of action. Michelle suggested a possible name for the Indicators project report: A Blueprint to Healthy Children. To facilitate movement on the project, Michael suggested that Diane provide an overview of results-based accountability to bring members up to speed on that methodology.

**Next Steps:**

- Members will reach out to prospective Committee members from Niagara County and Lackawanna
- Diane will prepare preliminary environmental scan survey
- Diane will present an overview of Results Based Accountability

Please be sure to communicate with Diane if you have had success in your outreach efforts to other potential committee members. We would like to make sure they get past minutes as well as the approved mission and concept paper. If you have any suggestions or comments about the environmental scan, please share these items as well.

**Our next meeting is scheduled for June 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 8:30am at United Way of Buffalo & Erie County (742 Delaware Avenue). We will light breakfast fare and coffee available.**