



May 18, 2007, 1:00-2:30 PM

Meeting Minutes

North Branch Area Library

- ❖ Introductions *10 present: (Lisa Isaacson, Sue Monroe, Wendy Walburg, Rachel Fercho, Kerry Moberg, Kathy Lentz, Laura Rolf, Barb Lundeen, Cindy Anderson, Sally Nault-Maurer)*
- ❖ Open Announcements/Updates/Resource Sharing
 - From Karin:

The Minnesota School Readiness Study Fall 2006 Brief has been released, check it out at: http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Publications/index.html. If you have questions please contact Lisa Barnidge at 651-582-8849 and Lisa.Barnidge@state.mn.us or Avisia Whiteman 651-582-8329 and Avisia.Whiteman@state.mn.us.

Another grant opportunity: Macy's North will be awarding over #350,000 to local grants (MN, IL, etc.) in \$4000 grant amounts to organizations that benefit their communities. That's us! Applications will be considered until May 31.
 - Check out www.ounceofprevention.org The Illinois General Assembly has approved a \$56 billion state budget that contains a string of victories for young children, spearheaded by a \$45 million expansion of the Early Childhood Block Grant to launch the nation's first "Preschool for All" initiative, making Illinois the first state in the nation to provide "Preschool for All." **Preschool for All** is a proposal to make high-quality preschool available to all Illinois three- and four-year-olds whose parents want them to participate. **Preschool for All** will also expand programs for families of at-risk infants and toddlers.
 - *Kathy Lentz announced the \$5000 grant award to the coalition from Greater Twin Cities United Way, Children & Families Impact. THANK YOU Kathy and Greater Twin Cities United Way!!*
 - *Lisa Isaacson has some darling kittens (just ask her) to give away. To contact Lisa: 651-674-2479, lisaacson1@msn.com.*
 - *Sue Monroe talked about the library's summer reading program to begin Monday, June 4 through July. This year's theme is "Go Bananas at Your Library" with a highlight being The Raptor Center, scheduled to be at the library June 11; tickets are free but required and the event is limited to 200 people.*
- ❖ Update on Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Child Care Provider Event, April 26: *Wendy reported 4 providers attending with good results. Providers were appreciative to be connected to support and resources.*

Labels for parents: "I'm at work today because of licensed child care." *Child Care Resource & Referral partnered with the area EC Coalitions to provide these labels to all licensed child care providers who then distributed them to their parents encouraging them to wear them to work on Child Care Provider Appreciation Day, Friday, May 11. This will cost the NB Coalition under \$100.*
- ❖ Legislative update: *No news yet; stay tuned. As the session ends, Ready 4K will have information on what was passed for our children. www.ready4k.org Following meeting notes, see attached summaries from Ready 4K.*
- ❖ Web site update: Lisa, Jodie, Kathy
 - New website for parents: information & resources currently focuses on newborns but there are plans to expand the focus in the future. www.parentsknow.state.mn.us *Kathy Lentz brought samples of one of the promotional tools for this website. Informational cards on a ring will be given to parents of newborns at the hospitals.*
 - Codes for a few of us to enable helping Lisa? *Maybe in the future, but not yet.*
 - Lisa is still looking for information to add to the Infant, Toddler, and Preschool pages. Lisa requested documents be sent as a PDF or in Word. Lisa is also working to make sure that we have correct and helpful information on the links to other programs/agencies we are providing. Watch for a separate email asking for your assistance with this.*

- ❖ Initial plans for Ready, Set, Go project: *Kerry, Lanay, and Sally met and submitted a grant application for this event. Initial plans include an evening for child care providers, preschool and ECFE teachers, and kindergarten teachers to get together at Spectacular Events in Isanti. Goals of the event are:*

- *to get to know one another and build professional relationships*
- *to receive and share information on high quality activities to give children skills & experiences that will be helpful as they begin kindergarten*
- *to receive information on services available through the school system, such as who to contact for services and how to coordinate services for families.*

The event would take place on a Thursday evening sometime this fall. The event will be structured as stations, with each station demonstrating high quality activities to promote skills in a specific area. Participants would rotate to different stations, each one featuring a different appetizer or fondue. The evening will also include some structured small group work.

The group talked about involving other agencies and resources, such as early childhood mental health resources as an outer circle of stations. We also talked about the numbers being higher than budgeted for and looked at the possibility of charging \$5-7 for material costs to attend. We also talked about having a cash bar available. Sally will check with Karin/IF on this and the cash bar idea.

- ❖ Fundraising update

Letters sent to:

- NB Lions, Don Hartzell, 651-674-4965
- ~~American Legion Post #85, 651-674-4810- denied~~
- North Branch VFW Post 6424, Pat Tallrico, 651-674-7854
- ~~Rush City Jaycees- Jodie: denied~~
- NB Area Hockey Association: Lisa, yes, \$500
- Rotary: Linda, yes, \$1000
- Lioness: Linda
- Casino: Kerry
- United Way: Yes, \$5000

- ❖ Year Three Projects: Let's form some task teams—*Meeting in June will be small group work on these areas. Think ahead to what you'd like to be involved in.*

- *Connect with families via newsletter focusing on late infancy & toddler development (6, 12, 18 months.) Develop a publication highlighting toddler development tailored to local resources. Brief discussion included thoughts of promoting what is already available rather than create another set of information. So, how can we use what has already been created as education and promotion of local resources for families?*
- *Website promotion How can we let families know this is available? When do we begin?*
- *Ongoing fundraising/business engagement Kathy Lentz introduced Mark Scally, board chair of Oxygen Plus as a resource to engage local businesses in the EC efforts. Who will work with Sally on this?*
- *Periodic articles in the newspaper? Not a great idea. Is there another way to create a culture of valuing children, parenting, and learning? One idea was to work with the area ministerial association to include information on the importance of children as churches kick-off their Sunday school programs in the fall.*
- *Any interest in Marti Erickson as a speaker on the importance of attachment & brain development of infants? Not much interest.*

- ❖ Our next meeting:

Members chose to stick to Friday's for meetings but scheduled them for the morning. Summer meetings will be held in the Community Room at the North Branch Area Library on:

Friday, June 15, 2007, 9-10:30 AM

Friday, August 17, 2007, 9-10:30 AM

No meeting in July to enable small groups to meet or individuals to work on tasks generated by the team.

Ready 4 K @ the Capitol

May 22, 2007

A weekly update from Ready4K on what's happening at the State Capitol on early childhood issues.

Session Wrap-Up

The Minnesota Legislature adjourned last night at midnight, having passed the budget bills. Those bills are awaiting Governor Pawlenty's signature. While there apparently was never a final budget agreement between the Legislature and the Governor, he has indicated that he is likely to sign the bills. He has said he might line-item veto some spending provisions, but we don't anticipate that any of the funding for early childhood education and child care will be line-item vetoed. According to this morning's [Star Tribune](#), "The governor is still deciding whether to veto budget bills and call a special session." We'll see what happens.

Here's a quick summary of the results. Stay tuned for a more thorough analysis of the outcomes of the session in a few days. All dollar figures are for the 2008-09 biennium.

E-12 Education bill

\$5.5 million to restore cuts to ECFE and implement new accountability measures

\$2 million to restore cuts to Head Start

\$1.9 million to restore cuts to School Readiness programs

\$3 million for Early Literacy programs within Head Start (Reading Corps)

\$1 million for Early Reading Intervention

\$136,000 for Early Childhood Programs in Tribal Schools

Subtotal: \$13.5 million

The E-12 Education bill also provided \$32.5 million to phase in All Day Kindergarten.

Health and Human Services bill

\$6 million to pilot a "Pre-K Exploratory Program" to provide scholarships of up to \$4,000 to low-income 3- and 4-year olds (up to 185% of poverty) to participate in a high quality early education program. Pilots would be implemented by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) in three sites: City of St. Paul, Hennepin County and Blue Earth/Nicollet Counties. Here's a [link](#) to the bill language on scholarships.

\$1 million for Child Care "School Readiness Service Agreements," to provide low-income children access to higher quality care by paying higher rates to a limited number of high quality child care providers

\$5.5 million to reduce parent co-pays for child care

\$500,000 for child care service grants to improve their facilities or make other quality improvements

\$500,000 for the design of a professional development system

\$99,000 for child care absent day modifications

\$750,000 million for grants to work with Family, Friend and Neighbor providers

\$8.8 million for home visits to help parents get their children ready for school

Cap licensing fees for family child care at \$50

Subtotal: \$23.1 million

Higher Education Bill

\$500,000 for TEACH scholarships for early childhood providers seeking advanced degrees

\$2.5 million for child care assistance for students in higher education institutions (\$300/month increase)

Subtotal \$3 million

Total new funding for early care and education: \$39.6 million

Thanks again for raising your voice on behalf of the youngest Minnesotans. Stay tuned for more

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From Todd Otis:

Looking at the 2007 legislative session brings to mind the age-old question: is the glass half empty or half full? I think that is an incomplete question. I would add: what is in the glass in the first place?

What was in the “glass” of the 2007 legislative session for school readiness was of pretty good quality, and for that the Legislature and Governor deserve credit. Clearly they understand the value and importance of early care and education, and want to move forward, not backward, on this issue.

Here are some of the positive aspects of the recent session: increased access to high quality early learning experiences for our youngest citizens; restored and expanded support for parents; and encouragement of quality improvements, including professional development. For a quick summary of all the early care and education items that received increased funding, go to today's edition of our [Ready 4 K @ the Capitol](#) update.

Access to high quality early learning was increased by additional funding for Head Start, including enhancing that program's ability to improve early literacy. School Readiness programs saw increases. Child care, which is early education, gained funding in a variety of ways that helped parents and providers, and many initiatives that passed also spurred the improvement of quality, that all-important concept which needs to infuse all early learning settings. An innovative scholarship program was passed on a pilot basis as well, further enlarging parent choice.

Parents were supported in two key ways: one through restoration of Early Childhood Family Education funding, a proposal that was one of few that both the House and Senate agreed to from the outset. The other was in the form of funding for home visiting for families that are most at risk for not having their young children ready for kindergarten. Parents remain the center of all early childhood work, so these two measures were encouraging.

Quality improvements also saw significant gains this year. Nothing is more important in early education than the quality of the provider. The 2007 legislative session finally saw the passage of an appropriation for TEACH scholarships which provide an incentive to practitioners to get additional training. The Legislature also approved proposals from the Governor for a streamlined structure to enhance providers' access to additional professional development. Support for Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers was also given in the form of a grant program to be carried out locally with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, libraries and tribes. Small though that appropriation is, the new law acknowledges the vital importance of this sector.

We are also pleased to see that 37,000 more children will have health care coverage under MinnesotaCare. The health and physical development of children is a critical building block for school readiness, so progress in health care access is welcome. This legislative session also elevated the work of the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF), which Ready 4 K helped to create. The MELF is playing an increasingly significant role in funding and evaluating innovative early learning projects and Ready 4 K will be working closely with them to monitor the implementation of the new policies that were created this year.

Having said all this, and in no way wanting to disparage the work done by the legislature and the Governor, I must be candid that, although the “glass” has a fine substance in it, the glass is about a quarter full. Why? Because if the real goal is to move the school readiness “needle” from 50 percent to 80 percent, this \$40 million of additional funding does not take us far enough fast enough. Elements of a new system based on effective outreach, parent choice, and high quality are infused in the legislation that just passed, and that is significant, but the resources devoted to the larger mission are simply inadequate.

Patience is a virtue, and Minnesota policymakers will some day make early care and education a true priority, as is happening in other states throughout America. Unfortunately, failure to act boldly today is closing the door of opportunity for too many of our youngest children right now. State leaders understand that the issue is important, but there are two serious disconnects that we need to encourage them to confront.

One, there is a disconnect between the evidence of the importance of this issue and current legislative and gubernatorial budgetary priorities. Many studies show the true value of providing early learning experiences to young children. Yet early childhood still receives only one percent of the state budget. Two, there is a disconnect between the actions of policymakers and what the public expects. Ready 4 K's public opinion poll shows strong support for giving school readiness a much higher priority than it currently enjoys.

The bottom line from Ready 4 K's perspective is that the 2007 legislative session was pretty good, but not yet up to what our youngest citizens deserve. So thank you, legislative leaders, particularly education committee co-chairs Representative Mindy Greiling and Senator Tarryl Clark, Governor Pawlenty, and especially our early childhood champion Representative Nora Slawik, and know that your good work has been noticed and appreciated. But please also know that literally thousands of young Minnesotans and their families need and deserve more support than you have provided so far.

Ready 4 K will continue to engage individuals across the state to speak out on behalf of what is needed for our children and we will not stop until we see the leaders of our state commit to real changes that will measurably improve the lives and future fortunes of our youngest citizens. We thank the Governor and lawmakers for the modest but strategically important steps taken this year, and look forward to working with them in the future.

Todd Otis
President