

Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative

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Early Childhood Work Group Meeting

10-Noon January 19, 2012

McKinley Elementary School, Fergus Falls

Attendance: Beth Achter (Lakes Country Service Cooperative-2); Jan Herseth & Patty Deery (OTWCAC Head Start-110); Jerry Ness, Scott Colbeck, Mark Masten, Mary Matteson & Karen Hanan (Fergus Falls Public Schools -10); Marion Kershner (OTC Public Health-2) and Guest Sabina (nursing student); Nancy Jost and Marsha Erickson (West Central Initiative-4); Stacy Haugen-McAllister & Jessica Raguse (Fergus Falls Area Special Ed Coop); Kay Brown (Freshwater Education District-120); Arielle Krohn (Fergus Falls Public Library-4); Debbie Walter (Morning Sun Christian School-2); and Jane Patrick (Collaborative Coordinator).
Special guests: Mike Brown, Amanda Verley and Debbie Hewitt, Minnesota Department of Education Department of Early Learning Services.

1. The Early Childhood Work Group collaborated with Lakes Country Service Cooperative and the Fergus Falls Early Childhood Initiative in arranging and hosting a meeting with Mike Brown from the Minnesota Department of Education, Office of Early Learning on January 19th in Fergus Falls. With the help of Superintendent Jerry Ness and other Fergus Falls Early Childhood Program staff, and a collective group of early childhood advocates from across the county, they painted and delivered a very complete picture of the current programs and overall early childhood system within our region. Needless to say, the group's guests from the state were duly impressed with what they saw, heard and learned.

It is ultimately the hope of the Early Childhood Work Group to continue to work toward quality, integrated early childhood programming throughout Otter Tail County such as the Otter Preschool in Fergus Falls. By implementing similar models county-wide, it would help ensure that every child has access to experiences which will help prepare them for kindergarten, regardless of their socio-economic status.

2. Mike's goal for the day was to improve communication between MDE and our Regional Networks and get to know people in person. Updates from Mike Brown included:
 - Race to the Top. I have been heavily involved in two large components of the grant: Parent Aware and Title I. Here is what I can share at this point: School-based preschool programs will have the opportunity to be Parent Aware rated (please note that participation is voluntary). The Target areas (White Earth Reservation, Itasca Invest Early, MPLS Northside Achievement Zone, and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood) will be an initial focus because they have to be rated in order to be eligible for the scholarships and Title I portions of the grant. Since it is a collaboration with the departments of Health and Human Services, there are more details to be worked out. Nevertheless, I do know, in order to receive a four star rating, you will need a curriculum aligned with the ECIPs and an approved assessment. You will also need documentation that your lead teachers have had 8

hours of training in curriculum and 8 hours of training in assessment. Certainly, I will be providing more information in the coming weeks as soon as there are more details (we are planning a WebEx training for technical assistance).

- “We are getting social [media going](#) again with our MN Parents Know Facebook (FB) account! Find and like the FB page at: www.facebook.com/parentsknow. We also have a Twitter feed for MN Parent Know that will be linked from FB (http://twitter.com/mn_parentsknow. Stay connected and receive trusted, updated information for parents and those that work with families!”
- 2012 School Readiness Program Plan. This is close to being ready to be posted on the MDE website. It still has to go through IT, finance, and communications. It will be very similar to last year, but I expect a very different plan for 2013.
- We will be creating Advisory Groups for ECFE and SR. Some groups have met with Karen Cadigan and other members of the Office of Early Learning to discuss ECFE and School Readiness issues and opportunities. Based partly on these meetings, we would like to create a couple advisory groups in order to improve communication among various groups. Debbykay Peterson and I will be working on this project.
- I have created a Wiki for EC Administrators: <http://ecadmin.wikidot.com>. There is a small group that will help me refine the tool and provide guidance on its implementation. In short, think of Wikipedia. It is a site where the users create the content. I envisioned a “one stop shop” for EC administrators and a place where you can share knowledge, expertise and resources.
- The Office of Economic Opportunity announced the availability of \$1,900,000 for grants to construct or rehabilitate facilities for Early Childhood programs. I am attaching the announcement.

3. The topics covered during the meeting included:

- Early Childhood priorities for Fergus Falls Schools (Jerry Ness)
- Otter Preschool (Patty Deery/Karen Hanan)
- Age 0 – 4 population numbers and projections at McKinley School (Patty/Karen)
- Early Childhood Special Education benefits (Stacy Haugen-McAllister)
- Summer preschool success (Patty Deery)
- Summary funding strategies used to make this happen (Jerry Ness)
- Regional/statewide ECI overview and updates (Nancy Jost)
- Fergus Falls ECI priorities: Mud Pie Park; Fatherhood initiative; EC dental (Marsha Erickson)

4. The meeting was adjourned by consensus. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1 from 10AM – Noon in the GSC in Fergus Falls.