



**Best Start Network  
Summary Notes  
Friday, December 19, 2014  
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
Courtyard Marriott**

**Present:** Debbie Myers, Jodi Guilmette, Dorothy Barr-Elliot, Lita Barrie, Brenda Bax, Judith Bishop, Jessica Bryson, Karyn Callaghan, Karen Calligan, Jean Clinton, Andrew Debicki, Ruth Doherty, Marni Flaherty, Ivana Fortino, Suzanne Iskander, Don Jaffray, Lisa Kiriakopoulos, Monique Lavalley, Grace Mater, Colin McMullan, Rachelle Moore, Lyne Proulx, Lorraine Robinson, Wanda St. Francois, Sharon Stephanian, Cheryl Velenosi, Dean Younger

**Regrets:** Bonnie Buchanan, Shawn Chisholm, Karen Davis, Denise Doyle, Paula Forbes, Rocco Gizzarelli, Sylvie Gravelle, Aisling Higgins, Paul Johnson, Laura Lukasik, Salomeh Majorher, Laura Martindale, Ruth Wells

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Discussion/Decision</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Welcome/Introductions/ Review of Meeting Notes/Declaration of Conflict of Interest	<p>Debbie welcomed everyone to the meeting including Lyne Proulx and Suzanne Iskander from the French School Board. Congratulations were extended to Judith Bishop on her retirement and a thank you for her years of service as a Trustee with the Public School Board. Debbie indicated that December and June are times of celebration for the Network and where we take a closer look at what is happening in our community</p> <p>Round-the-table introductions were made.</p> <p>There were no declarations of conflicts of interest noted.</p> <p>If there are any changes needed to the November meeting minutes, please bring this to the attention of Joyce.</p>	
2	Presentation of Think, Feel, Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Power of Positive Adult/Child Relationships</li> <li>• The Environment is a Teacher</li> </ul>	<p>Dr. Jean Clinton and Karyn Callaghan were part of the production of the Ministry document entitled, “Think, Feel, Act”.</p> <p>Jean was recently appointed as one of four Special Advisors to the Premier and will be meeting with her in January. She will also be a full professor at McMaster University in the new year. Jean thanked Hamilton Best Start for supporting the 18-month Well-Baby Initiative as it has helped to expand her professional journey.</p> <p>Jean and Karyn were approached by the Ministry of Education as 2 of 6 authors of “Think, Feel, Act”. Each author was asked to write a research brief which has subsequently been</p>	

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		<p>made available on the Ministry website. Jean consulted with Wanda St. Francois and Lois Saunders from ASCY on her research brief and extended thanks to them for their input. Jean stated that what we think affects how we feel and act in our relationships with children and others. She emphasized that she is always learning from the Elders and teachings of the First Nations, a culture far wiser than our own.</p> <p>Jean indicated the Ministry website is an excellent resource and includes videos and research papers providing insight with regards to some of the core understandings that children need adults in their lives to understand. The other authors who contributed to “Think, Feel, Act” are Lorrie Baird &amp; Anne Marie Coughlin on pedagogical leadership, Dr. Stuart Shanker on self-regulation, Dr. Carol Anne Wien on pedagogical documentation and Dr. Kathryn Underwood on inclusion. Karyn’s brief was on the environment as a teacher and Jean’s was on the power of connections and relationships. There are questions to reflect upon after each brief. A segment of the videos that Jean and Karyn were involved in were viewed. Jean stated that, interestingly, the authors of the briefs didn’t consult with one another when they were creating their briefs; however, there are common themes between them. The briefs, videos, etc. are a mechanism to exchange information with others and for staff teams working in learning environments.</p> <p>Jean spoke of our view of the child – do we see them as an empty vessel whereby our role as parents and educators is to fill them with information or do we view them as powerful, resourceful, creative co-learners/creators? She suggested that we also consider our views of the parent, family, educator, etc. She indicated that we know children are wired to connect, they are born learning. The brain is built to serve and return. The Nurse Family Partnership Project is important because it considers the tone of voice used with the infant/child and the relationship between the parent and child, nurse and parent, etc. A video on imitation was shown to the Network. There are studies from the Netherlands which show babies who are 10 minutes old imitating behaviours/actions of others.</p> <p>Psychologist Carol Dweck talks about mindsets – what is your world-view? Do you think your intelligence is fixed? The approach that you bring to your mindset has a huge influence. Intelligence is malleable. Carol talks about not limiting potential and the importance of opening your mind to curiosity. Jean indicated there are great things happening in England with regards to mindsets. Carol’s book speaks to how we view learning and attributes. There is evidence indicating that kids don’t want to take risks and it is our role as educators to culture a growth mindset in children. Studies have shown that if</p>	

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		<p>you tell a child he is really smart, he works less hard. If a child is deemed gifted and comes across something hard for him, it really affects him and becomes an intrinsic situation. When you acknowledge effort, kids tend to soar.</p> <p>Jean talked about how we, as parents and educators, spend our time – do we spend our time connecting or correcting? Babies, toddlers, preschoolers are amazing scientists. She showed the Network a video clip of a 15-month old observing an adult who was having difficulty opening up a cabinet to put something inside. The 15-month old saw the problem and helped the adult open the cabinet door.</p> <p>Jean discussed the ‘use it or lose it’ philosophy and showed slides of the brain of a normal 3-year old and one who had experienced extreme neglect. She cautioned that we must be careful and ensure we are creating an environment for all children to thrive and this is why universal early learning is important. U.S. President Obama spoke at the Washington Summit of the importance of investing in early child development not just for that child’s future but for the future of the country. It is one of the most important investments a country can make.</p> <p>Jean indicated the Centre of Excellence has published a briefing paper on infant mental health and supporting Ontario’s youngest minds. It talks about creating well-being. She feels Ontario is going to take a lead role in showing the rest of the world how to create a system of well-being for our children to thrive.</p> <p>Jean will be doing a webinar for educators and hopes to conduct a tweet chat. She encouraged us to think about what social immobilization we can be doing with Hamilton Best Start. She indicated the Ministry will be hosting a webinar on January 13<sup>th</sup> for mental health leads in the School Boards with a dissemination plan to go deeper in the future. There is a big demand for knowledge on mental health for 0 to 6 years.</p> <p>Karyn began by saying she has always viewed children as capable and competent but this is the first time it has been highlighted in Ministry documents “How Does Learning Happen?” and “Think, Feel, Act”. Karyn clarified that she is sharing her perspective and not the Ministry’s view. It’s a change in how we think and view the child, family and educator through foregrounding relationships, pedagogical documentation, critical reflection, etc.</p> <p>Karyn shared the Hamilton story where educators were invited to explore ideas and</p>	<p>Jean is now on social media twitterchat@drjeanforkids</p> <p>For more information on the Artists at the Centre Project, please visit <a href="http://www.artistsatthecentre.ca">www.artistsatthecentre.ca</a></p>

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		<p>articulate their view of the child in 1998. Scenarios about what was happening in early learning environments in the community were circulated and there was a clear disconnect from what was being identified and what was happening. Teachers began thinking about why they had so many rules and began reducing it to principles. Children were citizens in the room with perspectives to offer and were being listened to. It wasn't intentionally designed research; however, children seemed to be safer when they were given responsibility to think about what was possible.</p> <p>The Ministry documents can also be used to provoke critical reflection of our policies and practices in our organizations about our view of the child, family and educator.</p> <p>One of the challenges is the number of checklists which supervisors and educators need to complete. It contributes to a culture of compliance. Karyn feels it has also contributed to a loss of confidence in the educator's ability – that they feel they have a voice and can think. It will take time to change this mindset.</p> <p>Karyn shared a number of stories. She shared a story of Ryan who was 4.5 years old and came with a home caregiver and three other children to an OEYC. He was a fan of Batman and while at the OEYC, he realized he could use string to measure his head to make a bat hat. After he made one for himself, he began making bat hats for everyone. Ryan also began working on a collaborative project in the room spending approximately 40 minutes on it. They have seen improvements in Ryan's relationships with others. If we embrace the child and foreground relationships, it is a context where the child can be his best self.</p> <p>Karyn talked about pedagogical documentation and how it is different from what educators have been taught in the past. The documentation gives visibility to the educator's engagement and expression as well as the child. There is subjectivity to what we see and how we interpret it based on our own experience. It is not to serve as an assessment tool but as a way to document how we know the child. It isn't scrapbooking or what we did but it is asking who are you, what do you love, what are you curious about, what are your theories, what are your best languages, how do you affect and how are you affected by others ideas.</p> <p>Karyn gave another example where Jason who was 5.5 years found a barrette on the floor, turned it over and said "that's a crescendo". His mom is a music teacher and he recognized the barrette as similar to a music symbol. The teacher asked how he would explain what a</p>	

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		<p>key messages from this session as we discuss parent and family centres. It is a positive way of moving forward. Jodi indicated that there will be opportunities for dialogue in the new year.</p> <p>Jean supported the idea of using “How Does Learning Happen?” to bring the entire community thinking through a collective impact lens and how do you make it so. It is a robust conceptual document and people love it. It is something substantial and could be the lever and the process by which we think and change.</p> <p>Karen suggested we start with ourselves and the way we think, reflect, etc. How do we make each person feel welcomed and give them a sense of belonging so they can bring their best self?</p> <p>Jean indicated that as the work of the charter moves forward, we could look through this lens and make it living and dynamic. We view Hamilton as the best place to raise a child, perhaps, we need to extend it to say Hamilton sees children as capable and competent. Cheryl stated that we are working collaboratively with others whom we haven’t worked with before to update the Children’s Charter. One of the plans is to invite children’s voices.</p> <p>Jean would like to hear the Mayor say that Hamilton’s children are capable and competent and here is how we are making it so.</p>	
3	Good News Stories	There was no additional good news stories shared.	
4	Holiday Trivia	The Network engaged in some holiday trivia before concluding the meeting.	
8	Adjourned at 3:30 p.m.	<p><b>Please note:</b> Next Meeting is scheduled for:  <b>Friday, January 16, 2015</b>  <b>The Waterfront Centre (555 Bay St., Hamilton, ON)</b>  <b>1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.</b></p>	