



**Best Start Network
Summary Notes
Friday, May 23, 2014
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
The Waterfront Centre**

Present: Debbie Myers, Karen Davis, Jodi Guilmette, Karen Calligan, Dorothy Barr-Elliott Brenda Bax, Judith Bishop, Bonnie Buchanan, Karyn Callaghan, Shawn Chisholm, Jim Commerford, Andrew Debicki, Denise Doyle, Marni Flaherty, Paula Forbes, Rocco Gizzarelli, Aisling Higgins, Pauline Kajiura, Colin McMullan, Rachelle Moore, Sherry Parsley, Dina Phillips, Wanda St. Francois, Marion Trent-Kratz, Cheryl Velenosi

Guest: Kathryn O’Hagan-Todd

Regrets: Jean Clinton, Debbie Crickmore, Ruth Doherty, Sam Gardner, Matt Goodman, Paul Johnson, Lisa Kiriakopoulos, Monique Lavalley, Laura Lukasik, Grace Mater, Shirley McCoy, Sharon Stephanian

	Agenda Item	Discussion/Decision	Action
1	Welcome/Introductions/ Review of Meeting Notes/Declaration of Conflict of Interest	<p>Debbie welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that the Board of Education representatives have sent their regrets as they are attending a meeting in Toronto today. Due to an urgent matter, Jim Commerford has to leave by 2 p.m. so the order of the agenda has been changed to allow him to present first.</p> <p>There were no declarations of conflicts of interest noted.</p> <p>If there are any changes needed to the May meeting minutes, please bring this to the attention of Joyce.</p>	
2	YMCA Study	<p>Jim thanked the Network for changing the order of the agenda so he could attend to other business.</p> <p>The YMCA conducted an Early Years Research Parental Perspectives study of parents with newborns to age five. Jim indicated that when conducting studies, it is important to use data for illumination and not to support the current position of the organization/sector. They looked at the results with 2 lenses: opportunities that reinforce what we are doing and challenges to address areas identified by parents. The gaps noted were strictly from a parental perspective. Participating parents were from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Hamilton Region which includes Burlington, Hamilton and Brantford. Data was segregated into Toronto and Hamilton. The study focused on five milestones: physical development, brain development, emotional development, social development and language development.</p>	For additional information, please refer to the full copy of the Report.

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		<p>Parents were asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 5, how confident they feel they are in gauging their own child’s development. Thirty-seven percent of parents felt their child was behind in one or more areas of development. A total of 70% would like more information about preschool children and 59% found the information available globally to be confusing. Parents of all ages, incomes and backgrounds felt they needed more help in fostering their child’s development.</p> <p>Even though we have a good early years’ system in Hamilton, parents still felt they needed more information. There is more work to do in getting parents to utilize OEYCs, Parent and Family Literacy Centres, etc.</p> <p>Twenty percent of participating parents were unsure of whether their child was meeting developmental milestones. Between birth to 2 years, parents see their doctor more, however, the feeling is that without a strong social network, parents may not realize where their child is developmentally but compare their child’s development to other children within their social network. It was noted that parents in Hamilton tend to have a high level of trust in their relationships with the medical community and teachers/ECEs. If parents feel worried about their understanding of child development, then they likely wouldn’t have as much trust in their ability. The developmental area rated highest by parents was brain development and the lowest area was physical development. Three areas of focus that is being promoted to parents are to ensure their child is receiving a healthy diet, to read every night to their child and playing outdoors.</p> <p>Marni congratulated Jim on the study as it is important to obtain the parents’ perspective on their child’s development and the outcomes noted offer a sense of optimism for our children.</p> <p>Jim stated the YMCA will be conducting research on 6-to-12-year olds next.</p> <p>Denise wondered if or how barriers had been considered in the study. Jim indicated that they were not able to segment the data in that manner as the sample size was not large enough. There was a lot of symmetry around parental attitudes and perceptions from those parents who participated in the study.</p> <p>Similarities in developmental areas were noted between the YMCA study and the EDI. Jodi indicated it would be interesting to compare the YMCA study with the EDI as one focuses on the parental perspective and the EDI focuses on teacher perspectives.</p>	

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		<p>Marion stated that parents often misperceive their child’s milestones and feel their child is underachieving. Trust feeds into relationship-building.</p> <p>Andrew indicated a small study of parents (approximately 20) had been conducted by the Boys and Girls’ Club. From that study, parents commented that information is confusing, out of date and they found services unwelcoming especially government services.</p> <p>Karen indicated that sometimes hosting focus groups provides for richer dialogue and discussion.</p> <p>Jim indicated there was an online survey, however, most of the interviews were conducted 1:1 and were between 30 to 35 minutes in length. Parents were randomly selected for participation in the study.</p> <p>In response to a question, Jim indicated that with all of the quality information available, it was interesting that parents still felt there was a shortage of information.</p> <p>Karen commented that maybe it is more that the information is out there in a way they are unable to access or that it is more about establishing trusting relationships with service providers.</p> <p>Marion stated that in one of the Integration Projects, families indicated they were not ready to receive the information when it was presented to them. Parents seek out the information when they need it.</p> <p>Debbie stated it is different for every child and family in terms of when they need the information. She thanked Jim for presenting the findings of the YMCA study.</p>	
3	One HSN Demo	<p>Jodi advised that the One HSN website has been in operation for the past few months. The One HSN website allows parents to find out information about licensed programs. She introduced Kathryn O’Hagan-Todd to give us a demonstration on the One HSN system. For the Network’s perspective, the One HSN can be used as a tool from a planning and service system perspective.</p> <p>Kathryn indicated that she will walk us through the website looking at it from the parent’s experience. Parents and particularly younger parents are looking for instantaneous information and providing information online fulfills that need.</p>	

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		<p>The application is running in a number of different municipalities. They are presently working on the application for Ottawa. As Hamilton is coming on board later than some municipalities, we have been able to benefit from the innovation that has been applied elsewhere.</p> <p>Kathryn demonstrated how parents would create an account, if they so chose. They can access information without creating an account, however, once the account is created, the parents complete a profile outlining their need/request for child care and this is saved in the system and can be accessed and changed at a later date. There is a consent form in which the parent must indicate agreement to the terms and conditions. Phone and online support is available. There is a section the parent would complete if their child has a special need. If they feel they would require child care subsidy, there is a calculator to determine whether they may be eligible. This section links the parent to the City of Hamilton’s, Child Care Subsidy information on the City website.</p> <p>Child care operators add information about their programs and can change this as needed. There are links to the Ministry of Education’s website re: quality child care information.</p> <p>The types of information the parent can complete to identify child care needs are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of child care (i.e.: hours, type of care preferred, etc.) • Parents can choose radius of how far they will travel for child care • Can apply to a child care program online and remove application if they find another provider • Filtering system so parent can sort by type of provider (i.e.: home child care, preschool, etc.) • Parent can print a list of the preferred options <p>The application the parent has completed online is forwarded to the child care operators the parent has selected.</p> <p>Karen Calligan asked if we have heard how One HSN is working for the parents. Kathryn indicated that they are working with a usability expert. They can highlight where there are problems from an IT perspective and look for ways to modify it.</p> <p>Debbie stated it is a good opportunity for front-line workers to be trained in the software. Pauline asked whether or not the name could be changed from One HSN. Kathryn indicated</p>	

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		<p>the name can be redefined however, the platform remains One HSN.</p> <p>Kathryn explained there are privacy settings. The site is very secure. Providers only see applications for their own programs. The data is backed-up regularly. The software automatically can configure the timeline for accounts to be updated, for example, it will send an e-mail to the parent indicating the account is inactive and they have 30 or 60 days to sign into the system, otherwise their profile is deactivated.</p> <p>Brenda indicated we are still in the implementation phase. There are still some elements we will build into our work plan, for example, they are building additional modules. Another example is one of the modules is tied to the notification of fee subsidy. The modules were completed in consultation with an Advisory Committee that supported the process. She stated they also intend to identify the provider rates for child care. Over 1800 parents have visited the site with 400 unique children in the system. Of these, 135 are infants, 100 toddlers, 100 preschoolers and 45 JK/SK children and 33 school age. They have received positive feedback from home child care caregivers. One HSN is one strategy to sustain and support the child care system. A thank you was extended to Aisling who has helped in pulling the information together and Pauline and her staff who have provided a great deal of assistance and support.</p>	
4	Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years: How Does Learning Happen?	<p>Karen Calligan stated that the Ministry document, “How Does Learning Happen?” was released by the Ministry on April 25th. Every program will receive a copy of the document. Webcasts were held on May 13th and 14th and are available for viewing on the Ministry of Education Website.</p> <p>“How Does Learning Happen?” is a document that delivers on the Ministry’s commitment to provide resources that support pedagogy in the early years. Pedagogy is the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practise that supports that understanding of learning.</p> <p>It is the hope of the Ministry of Education that “How Does Learning Happen?” will invite discussion and rich dialogue/debate among educators and parents and provoke deeper thinking about how learning happens. It is a transformational document to promote quality by inspiring self-motivation for continuous learning and improvement (i.e. intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic) by starting with an examination of our view of children, families and educators.</p> <p>The focus on sustaining high-quality programs challenges us to reconsider exclusive use of</p>	

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		<p>extrinsic motivators such as developmental checklists, templates and other compliance frameworks.</p> <p>“How Does Learning Happen?” asks us to start by considering our view of children, educators and families from an asset lens as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in experience. When we consider our view of children, families, educators from this lens, we can then look at how our programs, policies and practices are in alignment with this view.</p> <p>Karen referred to the triangle on page 6 of the document which identifies the child in the centre and the critical relationship with the family, educator and environment as the third teacher. Rich learning environments provide children with access to open-ended materials that invite them to be curious, express their ideas, theories, and meaning-making in many different ways. The dotted lines in the diagram suggest that the relationships must be reciprocal between the child, families, educators and environment. In order for us to truly support children’s learning, we need to step inside the circle with the children and respectfully enter their space as co-learners, co-creators, co-researchers with children in their learning. It takes practice to turn on that curiosity for educators so it opens up opportunities for educators to see themselves as lead learners alongside of children.</p> <p>Karen relayed an example from a licensed child care program where an educator observed how a particular child was spending a lot of time at the aquarium. The educator thought the child was really interested in the fish but she intentionally stopped herself from jumping to conclusions about the child’s interest in ‘fish’ to be curious with the child and learn more about what he was thinking. After thoughtful consideration of how to approach the child, she said, “I noticed that you are really looking, what are you seeing?” The child commented that one of the fish was turning white like old people turn white. This led to a discussion with the child and the parents. The parents indicated there was an older person in the child’s life experiencing health issues and physical changes which opened up the door to a meaningful inquiry for the child and for other children in the program.</p> <p>It is the hope that the document will keep us on a journey of discovery and constant study of our work with young children as theories are being developed every day. It is a framework to help us keep our thinking and learning open rather than shut down our thinking.</p> <p>Karen reviewed the 4 key foundations, they are: belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. It is recognized that it is a human need to belong and feel connected. How are we</p>	

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		<p>ensuring that we are creating a sense of belonging for every child, parent, family and educator? Do our environments reflect the children in these spaces? Are their voices visible? Can we see evidence that children, families, educators have a sense of deep belonging to this space? In terms of well-being, are we supporting children’s sense of self? Do we know what matters to them? How do we thoughtfully listen to understand children’s thinking? How are we doing that with educators, families and children? How are we supporting physical well-being in our centres? In relation to engagement, are children’s, parents and educators perspectives validated and integrated into the work we are doing? Expression – how are we giving children, families, educators a voice and what is the evidence of their voices in the program? The document includes reflective questions, goals/expectations in each of the four foundations to stimulate deeper thinking, shared conversations and continuous learning.</p> <p>Karen stated that human development research supports the notion that we all have blind spots. We can uncover those blind spots by asking for feedback from those who know us well which will enable us to connect what we think to how we feel and how we act.</p> <p>How do we become more intentional in our learning? Steven Katz, researcher, suggests that if we think about the importance of learning through relationships, dialogue, inviting diverse perspectives, then we should consider how we are intentionally supporting professional learning communities of practice. It is hoped that “How Does Learning Happen?” will be a catalyst for rich dialogue, shared study and debate among educators and parents who come together regularly to learn through relationships.</p> <p>“How Does Learning Happen?” is a professional resource for professionals working in early years settings from birth to 8 years. This is the start of what we hope will be many, many conversations as we learn together about children, teaching and learning through relationships.</p> <p>Debbie thanked Karen for providing this deeper exploration of the Ministry document. Jodi encouraged people to think about how we are each doing this in our own organizations, in our interactions with children and colleagues, in terms of taking a step back and engaging in self-reflection. To think of it in terms of our role as systems leaders and champions in programs that serve young children – what are our shared understandings and beliefs about the four foundations?</p> <p>Brenda stated that she has participated in the online learning that was conducted by the</p>	

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		<p>Ministry and has heard Karen talk about the document several times. Each time she learns something new or it provokes something deeper in her thinking. She suggested that we revisit this in the fall to see what is happening in the community.</p> <p>Karen stated that she has conducted similar presentations to OEYCs and financial staff and has been inspired by the level of interest and engagement in discussions about this document.</p> <p>Debbie closed by saying that it reflects all the great things we are doing in Hamilton.</p>	
5	Best Start Website Demo	This was deferred till the next meeting due to time constraints.	
6	Children’s Charter of Rights	This was deferred until a future meeting due to time constraints.	
6	Adjourn	<p>Please note: Next Meeting is scheduled for: Friday, June 20, 2014 The Waterfront Centre 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Waterfront Centre, 555 Bay St. N., Hamilton</p>	