

MILFORD

School Readiness Council



In partnership with the
CT Office of Early Childhood

Milford School Readiness Council December 15, 2021 Minutes (Unapproved)

Members Present

Mayor Benjamin Blake (Co-chair)
Dr. Amy Fedigan (Co-chair)
Suzanne Thomas
Christine Kennedy
Gary Johnson
Mary Kate Williams
Joan Campbell
Tammy Satterlee
Amanda Steigers
Nicole Flanagan

Council Members Absent

Lesley Darling
Lindsay Doyle
Andrea Giannattasio
Amy Donegan

Administrators Present

Elizabeth Gaffney
Carole Swift

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call:** Mayor Blake called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and conducted the roll call. 12 members were present; 4 members absent.
2. **Consideration of Minutes:** [November 17, 2021](#)
Gary Johnson made a motion to accept the November 17, 2021 minutes; Amanda Steigers seconded. There being no discussion, a vote was taken. Minutes were approved unanimously.
3. **Program Coordinator Report: Ms.** Liz Gaffney delivered her Program Coordinator Report.
 - A. **Enrollment:** Ms. Gaffney reported all grant seats remain full.
 - B. **Staffing:** The issue of staffing continues to be a challenge. Areas of most challenge are hiring and arranging for substitute coverage. Two positions have been posted on the Milford Public School district website - one for an open permanent position and one for an afternoon substitute position. There have been no applicants so far. Liz shared a link to the available jobs as posted on the MPS website and reviewed pay and health benefits with Council. Hourly rates range from \$16.50 - \$18.50 hr. Liz will explore additional outreach opportunities to gain more applicants.

The staffing issues we are experiencing are not unique to Milford; in fact, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has developed waivers for programs to temporarily decrease their hours of operation because of staffing difficulties being seen across the state. Many programs have had to do this.

- C. NAEYC update:** Ms. Gaffney was pleased to report all NAEYC documentation for the grant proposal was submitted earlier that day.

4. Liaison Report: Mrs. Carole Swift delivered her Liaison Report.

A. Follow Up Reports from November Meeting

1) Data Review Connected to Our Use of Full Year/Full Day grant seats

Per the OEC, the evidence needed to consider if Full Year/Full Day seat conversion to School Year/School Day seat conversion is justified includes: a history of chronically unfilled full day/full year grant seats; no wait lists, and evidence of financial sustainability should the program experience a decrease in income (due to a loss associated with the conversion of a full day/full year seat). The following items were identified as this evidence.

- **Historical State reports:** Mrs. Swift reported she had reviewed available records of state reports going back to 2017. The reports indicate that the 56 **grant** seats were always full, including during the summer months. The only exception occurred during the 2020-21 school year, when many families chose to keep their child home due to COVID pandemic - even though they had been granted a seat in the RTL program. For that particular school year, only 36 seats were full (out of 56 grant seats). It's important to note when school readiness seats are unfilled in a more typical year, the OEC takes those seats back and awards them to other communities that need them. We have never lost any grant seats once they have been awarded.

We have no history of chronically unfilled full day/full year grant seats. If we did, the State would have taken back those seats. We have never lost any grant seats once awarded to us.

- **Historical Minutes (Council):** Since July 2017 through July 2021, it appears SRC meetings were conducted quarterly. When enrollment was on the agenda, it was noted that the seats were full - both the grant and the non-grant seats. Wait lists were also noted when enrollment was on the agenda.

Historical minutes from 2017 to present indicated seats were full – for both grant and non-grant seats. Wait lists were also in place.

- **2021-22 School Year:** Our records indicate that roughly half of the RTL student population moves on to kindergarten each year (approx. 28-30 students out of the 56 grant seats available). For the 2021-22 school year, however, only 15 students continued with us in the RTL program (grant seat attendees) leaving 41 seats as being available for the start of this academic year. All 41 available seats were filled with families in need of up to 50 hours a week of care for 50 weeks.

As of the 2021-22 school year, all 41 of the grant seats available have been filled with families in need of up to 50 hours a week of care for 50 weeks.

- **Wait Lists:** As of September 1, 2020 it was noted no more students would be placed on wait lists beyond the 2023-2024 school year. There is an existing waitlist for the 2022-2023 school year, and the 2023-2024 school year.

Waitlists are indicators that there is a community need for the seats you have.

- **Fiscal implications:** Chief Operations Officer, Mr. James Richetelli, reconfirmed to Mrs. Swift if Full Year/Full Day seats were converted to only School Year/School Day seats, the program could not be financially sustained. The loss of Full Day/Full Year tuition (replaced by a School Year/School Day commitment and corresponding reduction of tuition/program income) would impact the program's operation, resulting in it not being financially sustainable.

If Full Year/Full Day seats were converted to School Year/School Day seats, the program could not be financially sustained.

Given the guidelines put forth by the OEC, the evidence does not support the conversion of Full Year/ Full Day seats to School Year/School Day seats. If Council membership still wishes to pursue this concept, it can – but based on the guidelines and evidence considered by OEC, it is unlikely the seat conversion would be approved.

Discussion followed. Mayor Blake asked for general consensus of board members as to whether to pursue the issue of seat conversion or to keep things as status quo. No action was taken.

2) Survey Results for Council Constitution

We have received 11 responses, we are waiting on 4 more responses.

- **Supporting Documents:** [Census Report](#)
- **Next Steps:** We need to acquire a council member who serves in the role of workforce training, we may need more parents to serve, as well as a local business owner. We also must work toward having the council better reflect the race and ethnic diversity of Milford. Gary Johnson said he will search for an interested small business owner because of his relationship with the Milford Chamber of Commerce Board.

3) Supplemental Administrative Grant Update

Mrs. Swift has attended 9 meetings since the last Council meeting. The focus of these meetings is centered on the *Build Back Better* plan. Mrs. Swift suggested the Council and teams should do the prep work now in order to be 'ready to go' if monies are available for additional grant seats.

Some of items to work on now might be:

- Prepare a template for a Request for Proposal and post it in February/March or as soon as possible so child care programs can easily apply when the funds become available;
- Create a subcommittee that would be responsible for the review of any proposals that come in (including the grant put forward by MPS);
- Utilize upcoming kindergarten transition meetings to communicate with local preschool providers to explain/publicize the school readiness grant and availability of RFP;

Christine emphasized the importance of getting the RFP out through multiple sources. Amanda suggested attending PTA/PTO meetings to discuss the program so families might get the word out to their preschool providers to look for the RFP.

The second site visit has been planned to take place over vacation in December.

5. New Business

Mrs. Swift asked Council to add the '*2022 Council Meeting Calendar*' as an item under New Business. Gary Johnson made a motion to add '*2022 Council Meeting Calendar*' to the agenda under New Business. Nicole Flannagan seconded. Discussion followed.

Mrs. Swift reported that the current meeting calendar would conclude with this meeting and the calendar for the 2022 calendar year needed to be presented and approved.

The 2022 Council Meeting Calendar was approved unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Mayor Blake called for a motion to adjourn; motion approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.