

## **Family and Community Engagement Meeting Minutes**

---

**Wednesday, September 9, 2015 10am-12pm**

**Location: NJ Department of Education, 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ 08625**

**Conference Line: 605-562-3000 Access Code 199332#**

**Attendees:** Grace Boswell, Mary Remhoff, Shonda Laurel, Jillian Parry, Sharon Rawlins, Monica Townsend, Marnie Carrick, Crystal Siniari, Barbara Pugh, Carlos Avila, Kate DiMemmo, Deborah Johnson, Mara Irizarry, Benjamin Irizarry, Niurca Louis, Heather Martindale, Gambi White, Barbara Andrews, and Jennifer Buzby.

- **Introduction**

1. Introduced new members, who are a part of the NJ County Councils.

- **Reviewed Minutes**

- **Updates from the field**

1. NJ's Head Start Collaboration Officer, Suzanne Burnette, had a conference call with BUILD and five other states. BUILD works with early childhood leaders within states to better prepare young children to thrive and succeed. They support state leaders from both the private and public sectors as they work to set policy, offer services and advocate for children from birth to age five. Four "take aways" from the call were:
  - The importance of including families from diverse backgrounds (diverse cultures, language, homeless, etc.)
  - Learning games for families seemed to be more helpful to families than newsletters or handouts. With these learning games, states have been offering materials for parents to take home and do with their children. One specific example was having a math night and make-and-takes for parents, where they practice math games.
  - BUILD also strongly suggested that Higher Education must consider their teacher prep programs, and the importance of teaching future teachers how they can engage families of different backgrounds.
  - BUILD was interested in New Jersey's concept of going to parents first because that is unlike the other states.
2. Sharon Rawlins, from the NJ State Library, mentioned that the family make-and-takes could take place at the library. Libraries are willing to work with the County Councils or Providers. A resource that some libraries use is "Bedtime Math," which provides parents with fun math activities parents can do with their children. There are downloadable resources for parents on the website: <http://bedtimemath.org/>. In addition, Librarians are trying to do outreach; they are willing to go to community

centers, churches, etc. Check with your county library to see if they have an outreach program.

3. Monmouth’s County Council has reached out to libraries to get parents library cards. Hunterdon County Council has reached out to the library to see if their local libraries could do “Story Time” on weekends, for those parents who work during the week.
4. Wednesday, September 16, 2015 New Jersey is going to have “Dads take your child to school day.” Schools can register with the Department of Children and Families (DCF):  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/families/DadsTakeYourChildToSchoolDayEvents2015.pdf>
5. Tuesday, December 8, 2015 DCF Professional Training Center will be conducting “Celebrating Fatherhood.” If you have ideas for sessions please send them to Barbara Andrews.
6. Sharon Rawlins has about 300 copies of a booklet called “Read to your Babies,” which is from the Washington State Library. She has copies in English, Vietnamese, and Korean. Reach out to Sharon to get a copy of these.
7. County Council updates (North region)
  - Grace will send out the County Council highlights from Deborah Johnson.
  - Most have had steering committee and subcommittee councils. The Councils focus on different topics (main focus – education and health but also could be a number of different topics).
    - 1- Middlesex and Bergen County – just had their kick off meeting.
    - 2- Burlington County now has coordinator identified – now recruiting parents.
    - 3- Atlantic County has several initiatives going on. The coordinator is making sure that family’s voices are heard. The Atlantic County Council had a summer safety event, in which the community came out to make homemade bug repellent and a parent resource packet. They are being creative in how to get parents invested.
    - 4- Monmouth and Ocean Counties are working with Practitioners to make them aware of the County Councils.
    - 5- County Council coordinators are attending back-to-school nights, as well as possibly school board meetings in the future. The County Council flyers are on schools virtual backpack.
    - 6- Mercer County Council is inviting the Family and Community Engagement Committee to attend their local meetings.

• **Feedback from Parent Focus Groups**

**Family Engagement Parent Focus Group Responses**  
**Southern Regional Child Care Resource Center/EIRC**  
**Wednesday, April 8, 2015**

**What would your parents say about this document?**

1) A lot to read
2) Consider literacy issues
3) Explain abbreviations

Possible name: National NJ Parent Resource Booklet: Raising Safe & Healthy Children

**Can this document be improved? Explain**

1) No title pages: include titles on the top of pages
2) Explain titles
3) Less pictures/smaller pictures
4) How will it be distributed?
5) After baby, add something on post partum depression; shaken baby syndrome
6) What is an intake hub?
7) What does county councils do?
8) Intro page does not need to be separate sheet; too much paper

**Do you think your families can or will use this as a resource? Why or Why not?**

1) Yes but must be made aware of it; will need support to use resources
2) It could be in our family worker packet
3) How would my center get it?
4) How would other providers get it?
5) Can be told about it at parent night/parent-teacher conferences
6) CCR&Rs can add to their packet
7) School teachers need to know about it/PTOs

**Do you have any other thoughts?**

1) <i>National Parent Resources for Raising Healthy Children</i> could be the name
2) We should sign that we received a copy or know about it
3) We need it
4) It does not replace the resources from our family worker
5) All additional resources are helpful
6) Make sure there is support for using the document

- Vineland Focus Group –
  - Parents want to be reached out to by going door to door or by mail.
  - They want to host a big community event to bring families out to learn more about the initiative.
  - They recommend spreading the information through word of mouth from counselors or community leaders instead of using the paperwork.
  - Document is too lengthy.
  - Parents want to voice their concerns through the CCCYC.
  - Parents recommend reading out and collaborating with the local churches and schools where the families are in the community.
  
- Sharon Budka’s Café meeting:
  - The parents wanted the document in Spanish.
  - The document and survey are now translated into Spanish.
  - Carlos, from Mercer County Council, will share the document with Spanish speaking families.
  
- Newark’s Programs for Parents

- Suggested that we group all the recommended practices together (and have each category).
- Head Start Parents
  1. They also wanted more information on mental health and autism. Parents wanted to know more about County Services and Special Child Health Services.
  2. They recommended using more checkboxes – rather than having so many words on the page.
  3. “Taking care of yourself” should be added (pg. 6).
  4. They said more resources for grandparents should be added.
  5. Also, Parents would like strategies on how to address areas that have high crime rate.
  6. They liked “getting in the rhythm of school.” Engage, Empower, Encourage and Educate (could be part of meaning behind getting). They wanted a checklist of expectations. What are the expectations before the child go into school.
  7. They wanted more information on “Daddy Time.”
  8. They said the school age section was weak.
  9. They would also like to do a YouTube video once document is finished. They would like parents to do the talking (not committee). (Everyone has a cell phone – research says this is an effective way to reach families.)
- Commercial Township –
  - They thought the document should be a tri-fold.
  - They also suggested that there be more phone numbers than websites. Solution: We could add the Central Intake Hubs phone numbers.

- **Reviewed Documents**

1. Parent Practices/Standards Document (English/Spanish)
2. Table of Contents
3. Jillian created a one-pager for each section. She added what would be least known to parents – that is how she organized one-pagers.)
  - One-pager – Before your baby is born
  - One-pager – Parents of an Infant/Toddler
  - One-pager – Parents of a Preschooler
  - One-pager – Parents of a school-age child
  - One-pager – Community Involvement for Families

Carlos will have one focus group – for “Spanish speaking parents.”

- **Next Steps**

1. Carlos, from Mercer County Council, will have one focus group – for “Spanish speaking parents,” and will distribute document and survey in the next two weeks.
2. Create tri-folds that have predictable format (group into categories and flip titles)
  - Turn one pagers into tri-fold (each age will have its own tri-fold).

- Add the three recommended practices in the introduction of the tri-folds.
  - Final decision on Title: **“Helping your Child to be Healthy and Learn.”** Then subtitle, “before your baby is born, infant and toddlers, preschoolers and school age.
  - Back page should be “Community Involvement and Resources” (add Central Intake Hub phone numbers).
  - Add Early Intervention blurb about what it is and how families can benefit from early intervention services.
  - Add more information on County Councils (encourage parents to participate).
  - Add footnote to corresponding resource, so that it flows.
  - Change “parent resources” to “parents and caregivers resources.”
  - Add images
3. Committee Members who will work on tri-folds:
    - Infant and Toddler – Jillian and Suzanne
    - Preschool – Monica and Grace
    - School age – Paula, Crystal, and Heather
    - Mental Health – Barbara
  4. \*Let us know if you would like to join one of these categories.
  5. Once tri-folds are finished, send them to Gambi, who will forward to the graphic artist.
  6. Invite Diane Genco to the next meeting from DFD to attend. She would be a great in supporting the school age portion of this project. (Recommended by Shonda).
  7. Ask Deborah for meeting space because County Council coordinators will be invited.
  8. Next meeting will be scheduled for middle of October.
  9. Grace will send out a Doodle Poll.