



GREAT START COLLABORATIVE OF KENT COUNTY

Mission: To assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to help all Kent County families provide a great start for their children from birth to age five.

Minutes

October 26, 2023 – 1:30pm-3:00pm

DA Blodgett – St. John's

2172 Dean Lake Ave NE, Grand Rapids 49505.

Attendees: Maureen Hale, Sarah Miller, Jaime Mueller, Kathryn Steiner, Betsy Zandstra, Brittany Price, LeeAnne Ritzema, Lesly Sis, Barb Hawkins-Palmer, Merin DeKruyter, Ashley Sturgis, Lindsey VanDyke, Mary Claire Meimers, Joann Hoganson, Ashley Karsten, Traci Schenkel, Rebecca Boot, Pam Shoemaker, Jamal Dawson, Abby Bishop, Kristen Gietzen, Wali Thomas, Kathleen Neumann, Cara Sutcliffe, Nicole Pratt, Deyni I Ventura-Figueroa

Staff: Paula Brown, Tomarra Richardson, Shanequa Mosley

- **Welcome** **Maureen Hale**
Approval of minutes for August 24th
Need to revise attendance list to include Pam Shoemaker. No other revisions were noted.

- **Inclusion Activity** **Barb Hawkins-Palmer**
When More People Speak Up, More People Listen
Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1nJppqgzR0>

- **Kent County Health Department** **Mary Claire Meimers**
Presentation: Firearm Injury Prevention: A Brief Overview

- **Great Start Parent Coalition Report** **Tomarra Richardson**
Shanequa Mosley
 - **New Name**
Effective October 1, 2023 the Great Start Parent Coalition's name has been changed to Great Start Family Coalition. This change will take place over fiscal year 2024. Coalitions are allowed to continue to utilize material that is currently under the old name, however new purchases need to reflect the new name. Michigan Department of Education will provide updated logos to all coalitions.
 - **New Parent Representative**
LeeAnne Ritzema is a new parent representative. She is also on Head Start's Policy Council.
 - **Great Start Parent Coalition Meetings**
Dondrea Brown, Young Money Finances will present at the November 9th GSFC meeting and Chris McKenna, Protect Young Eyes will present at the December 14th GSFC meeting. GSC Partners are encouraged to share these meetings with the families that they serve. Dinner and childcare are provided for those that RSVP. Please email gsparents@successstartsearly.org or call 616-632-1007 to RSVP.
 - **Opportunity Empowered Grant**
The GSFC was awarded the Opportunity Empowered Grant. There were over 100 applicants and the GSFC's initiative Oh Baby! Baby Shower was one of 20 initiatives selected to pitch their idea to community members selected by Urban League of West Michigan. After live voting, Oh Baby! Baby Shower was one of 10 initiatives funded for \$15,000. The community baby shower will take place late spring/early summer 2024.
 - **Diaper Drive Update**
We collected 15,387 Diapers from Nestlings, Gold Coast Douglas and Kent District Library. C4 Collective is currently hosting a diaper drive. Organizations that are interested in hosting diaper drives in the future can contact gsparents@successstartsearly.org. We appreciate the partnership we have with our partners.
 - **Parent Cafés**
Our next parent café will be November 28th after the holidays. The parent café will be held at Neland Christian Reformed Church from 6pm – 8pm. A light dinner and childcare is provided for those that RSVP. Parent cafés



are a great way to connect with other caregivers. Caregivers that attend cafés feel supported and empowered and as a result are even better caregivers for the children in their care. Please continue to share this great work that is going on.

➤ FY2023 Accomplishments

A video was shared summarizing some of the highlights of the GSCF during the past fiscal year!

- **GSC Updates**

Paula Brown

- **Staffing Update**

GSC is currently hiring for two open positions: GSC Administrative Coordinator and Help Me Grow Care Coordinator. We are currently interviewing and are hopeful. There has been a good pool of candidates that have applied.

- **FY2024 Proposed Budget**

Paula reviewed the budget and asked for feedback. No feedback was given at this time. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Paula Brown.

- **32p6 Literacy Funds**

- Allocation: \$162,144
- For the purpose of improving access to books and other literacy materials for children from birth to age 5.
- May use funding to support programs, including, but not limited to, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Reach Out and Read Michigan, or any other program that provides books and literacy materials to children from birth to age 5.
- Must prioritize enrollment to those families with the highest levels of economic need.

- **Small Group Discussions**

Broke into to small groups to discuss Outcome 4/GSC Literacy Initiatives and provide feedback

Outcome 4 Group Feedback:

Group: LeeAnne Ritzema | Deyni Ventura | Nicole Pratt | Lesly Sis | Cara Sutcliffe | Barb Hawkins – Palmer | Mary Claire | Tomarra Richardson

- **Storytime In The Evening**

- There are many parents that work during the day. It would be nice if Storytime options were available for families in the evenings or on weekends.

- **Literacy Resources**

- Referring families to literacy resources that are available will help with reading.

- **Birth Books**

- Provide books to new parents after they given birth in the hospital. Perhaps include a new book in the hospital bag of resources provided to new parents. Note: Healthnet is currently doing this at Corewell Health and is in the process of getting a partnership established with University of Michigan.

- **Hearing & Vision Visits Partnership With Health Department**

- The Kent County Health Department travels to schools and childcare centers throughout the year to perform hearing and vision screenings. It would be a great opportunity to attend these visits or provide health care related books to provide to children when these visits are happening. Information about these visits can be found on the KCHD homepage or connect with Joann Hoganson to find out who the direct contact would be to set this up.

- **Dental Week / Infant Month**

- Find books to support national efforts that are going on.

- **Parent – Child Literacy**

- Develop a program to encourage parent/child literacy efforts. Find a book that includes a family activity that the parent and child can do together. Ideally a book that would be easy to integrate in the family if there is a parent that struggles with reading.

- **New Partner Connections**

- Connect with Bethany to do a literacy collaboration for the refugee community. Treetops collective has circles of support which would be a great connection.

- **Limited Word Books**



- Find books with limited words and vivid pictures so that the focus is on the pictures and doesn't limit those caregivers that struggle with literacy.

- **Book Club**

- Create a GSFC book club. GSFC is planning a book club/movie compare & contrast for the March GSFC meeting.

- **New Parent Kits**

- Cara suggested a book for the new parent kits around safe sleep. "Sleep Safe Little One" by Theresa Dubiel. This could also be included in the book bundles for the Community Baby Shower.

Group: Jamie-Great Start to Quality

- **Expand focus areas to rural areas, as well as areas where shelters are located (I.e-49505)**

- **Books/resources distribution should be inclusive of those children who are not typically developing**

- We need to think about the fact that these children are not only in low-income families...they need supports too

Group: Kathryn Steiner | Pam Shoemaker | Shanequa Mosley | Betsy Zandstra

- **Reaching the refugee community.**

- Creating relationships with The Refugee Center, Treetop Collective, and Glimpse of Africa to see how we can establish trust with this community and help them with resources. In experience, they are not trusting outsiders and tend to not truthfully share what needs they may need. Establishing a relationship with someone in these organizations that they trust can help close that gap with them trusting us.

Group: Becca Boot | Bryana Hopkins | Ben Brower | Kristin Gietzen

- **Concern about Dolly Parton Imagination Library**

- **Utilizing things learned, Reach out and read. Connecting mth this?**

- **More partnerships with all libraries.**

- Intentionally getting the word out about libraries.

- **Refugee Education Center could be a partnership**

Group: No Names

- **One County One Book Initiative**

- Value of one book/year vs 12 books/year (Dolly Parton)

- Data/outcome related to one county one book?

- **Ready 4K- data and outcomes**

- **Do we need to focus money and effort on one initiative vs. Many?**

➤ **Nomination Committee Update**

Maureen Hale

- The search for a new chair is still in process. We had identified a candidate who was planning to transition into the role this fiscal year. Due to personal reasons, they could not continue.
- Committee will continue to meet to identify and vet potential candidates
- If you are interested in joining the committee, contact Maureen or Paula

- **Partner Announcements**

Upcoming Meetings:

GSC Executive Team: November 14th, 2:30pm-4pm (Zoom)

December 12th, 2:30pm-4pm (Zoom)

**GSC Membership Meeting: December 14th, 1:30-3:00pm MSU Extension
775 Ball Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503**