

**Meeting Minutes – Educational Preparedness Working Group**

Date: April 24, 2018

Time: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

Location: Shakopee City Hall

**Work Group Members:**

Kirt Briggs		Judy Mack	X		
Kathy Busch	X	Tamara Severtson			
Renee Erickson		Emily Skahen			
Marie Johnson		Kami Thompson	X		
Kim Latterner	X	Barb Weckman Brekke	X		

**Staff Members:**

Suzanne Arntson	X	Jake Grussing	X	Mary Kay Stevens	X
Lisa Brodsky	X	Kari Ouimette		Tawnya Ward	X
Sarah Geffre	X	Jennifer Schultz	X		

**Guests:**

Doris Action	X	Barb Dahl	X	Jyota Sinha	X
Mary Bartusek	X	Kim Newkirk	X	Caroline Stiemke	X
Cindy Check	X	Becca Richardson	X	Jenna Wendorff	X
Bob Coughlin	X	Julie Ritter	X		
Bob Crawford	X	Julie Sharpe	X		

**Overview and Background:** The Educational Preparedness group was excited to host a special meeting with school district staff to bring them together for feedback, ideas and networking.

Jake opened the evening by giving a brief overview of the Live Learn Earn (LLE) Initiative. LLE is a long term project of four working groups (Housing, Transportation, Workforce Readiness and Educational Preparedness) overseen by a Steering Committee that is dedicated to working on specific issues in Scott County to support the vision that Scott County is a place where residents are stable, connected, educated and contributing. SCALE (Scott County Association for Leadership and Excellence) supports and funds the LLE work. Each of the work groups comprises Scott County staff, community members, businesses and nonprofit organizations in the community. The goal is not to create new programs, but

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rather to align our efforts to create more efficiency and more reach for the many great programs we already have in place in various entities in the county.

The Educational Preparedness group was tasked with looking at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores in the county. We know from data from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Scott County are not reading at grade level. We know that school district staff are aware of the issue and have been working towards solutions. We also know that a lot of this work begins young—primarily from ages 0-3 and that county staff and nonprofit organizations often see children before school district staff do. It is our goal to engage the families we see before school to create a community partnership solution towards ensuring that all children are ready and succeeding in school. One area we have been looking at is Early Childhood Screening and how we can support the great work the school districts already do.

**What is going well:** Jake started the conversation by asking school district staff: “What is going well with screening and/or referrals? What are you most proud of something your school district has done?”

Shakopee staff are very excited about the postcards they have begun to send out. Many parents believe that screening should happen before children go to Kindergarten rather than at age 3 and that the older the child is the more likely the child will “pass” the screening. In light of this Shakopee School District has begun sending postcards to explain what Early Childhood Screening is and that it is best to do at age 3. Shakopee School District feels they have seen an increase in screening as a result of the postcards. Additionally, they recently switched their screening test to MIPS (normed for ELL) that the Minneapolis Public School District created. It is not perfect, but Shakopee School District staff feel that the results and referrals are more accurate.

Additionally, Shakopee School District has seen an increase in families receiving scholarships and attending Headstart programs. Both Headstart and receiving of scholarship funds require that children receive Early Childhood Screening.

Burnsville Eagan Savage (BES) School District is moving forward with a ready for kindergarten curriculum that provides classes for parents/caregivers. The classes occur three times a year for every year the child is aged 0-5. The classes can be conducted anywhere, childcare is provided, the classes get progressively more developmentally appropriate for the age of the child and developmentally age appropriate toys are given to the children as well. The classes help highlight playing with a purpose and provide information in manageable chunks to parents. BES will begin the classes in the fall for parents/caregivers for children 0-5.

Parent and Child Education (PACE) helps support both children and parents. Research has shown that when parents are doing well, kids do well too. As part of the program, parents receive educational support as well as are taught how school is “done” in the United States (the importance of showing up on time, calling the attendance line if your child is sick, etc.) which may be very different than their home country or culture school practices. Staff has tracked progress in the program and have seen “measurable gains” from it and have found that the children who go through the program do better when they enter kindergarten.

Julie Ritter was hired by Lakeville School District seven years ago. At that time, screening needed help and that was one of her first tasks. She utilized World's Best Workforce and made the first goal Early Childhood Screening. When Julie started seven years ago, screening rates by kindergarten were 70%, but are now at 98% and she has decided to focus her continued work on screening at age 3. Julie has found that doing outreach into the community has been key, as well as using consistent and correct language (ie. Early Childhood screening, not preschool screening or kindergarten screening). Julie made a concentrated effort to ensure that School District staff (especially those outside of the Early Childhood Screening office such as building office managers, elementary school staff, etc.) and the medical community staff were using the correct terminology. Julie encouraged staff to talk about Early Childhood Screening more.

Becca started at Prior Lake/Savage School District three years ago. Like Julie, Becca found that many staff outside of the Early Childhood Education office either didn't know what Early Childhood screening was, referred to it incorrectly, etc. As Julie did, Becca also had Early Childhood screening as part of World's Best Workforce as correlations have shown that if children are ready for kindergarten, they are also more likely to succeed in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. There is also a Screening Secretary on staff who leads a lot of grassroots promotion in the community via word of mouth. Becca has also pushed staff at school open houses to not forget younger siblings. Students are assigned an SSID number (similar to a MARSS number) when screened and Becca hopes to someday look at longer term data trends related to Early Childhood Screening.

Jordan School District sends Early Childhood screening postcards after the birth of a child; however, they struggle to track children who move into the area after birth. It was brought up that currently school districts only receive about 50% of birth records due to parents opting out whereas public health receives 100% of birth records. At this time, there is no data agreement in place to share data, however, collaboration between public health and school district staff could result in public health distributing Early Childhood screening information for the school districts since public health already sends information to every parent that has a child. Bob Crawford asked about the possibility of city utility companies becoming involved as far as collecting information for who lives in the house when new services are turned on and that information possibly being passed onto the school district so that school districts are aware of children who move into the community. Again, no data agreement is in place at this time, but is something that could be considered for the future.

**Referrals and Tracking:** The conversation then shifted to Early Childhood screening referrals. Do districts follow-up with families? Do they track if families follow-up on referrals?

School district staff mentioned that a typical referral follow-up period is around 30 days with the exception being that for any screening that is conducted after April 1<sup>st</sup> a referral waits for September if the referral is for Special Education Services. During a referral, the parents are contacted and typically the information is passed on to Special Education Services or to the parents directly for a community referral (vision, etc.). Most referrals are for Special Education Services. All referrals are tracked. Usually, if a parent has taken their child to Early Childhood Screening, they are open to hearing referral information; although there is always a small population that deny referral services and certain populations refuse more than others. The quality of screening staff is important both to perform the screening well, but also for the ability to talk to parents about referrals in a way so that parents or the

family doesn't feel judged. Referrals for adults (i.e. Adult Basic Education) can be given as part of the Early Childhood Screening process as well.

Many school district staff mentioned the struggle with kids who are on the "bubble." If a stoplight metaphor is used, children who easily complete the screening score "green" whereas children who need more help score "red." Typically the bubble children are children who would score "yellow." They aren't red, but they aren't green either and with no major red flags they are often pushed through and aren't referred to for Special Education Services.

An Apple Valley school recently started to send a form (with parental permission) for children who screen "yellow" to the child's early childcare provider asking them to fill out the information and return the form. Sometimes the information provided provides clarity around if the child truly screens more to red (and needing a referral) or more toward green (perhaps the child was just having an off day during screening).

Several School District staff mentioned that they have families who will make appointments to go to an Early Childhood screening and then either reschedule continually, or forget to show up and never come back. Some parents have had bad childhood experiences with schools while others have told Early Childhood Screening staff that they are too busy to take their child to be screened. Other parents find the school district websites difficult to navigate and find the information about Early Childhood screening. Additionally, some websites you couldn't book appointments online or the websites weren't mobile friendly.

Burnsville Eagan Savage School District staff are trying to work with parents who have children in the pre-kindergarten classes about the importance of screening, following up, etc.

Becca from Prior Lake/Savage School District mentioned that she had thought about mobilized screening options for busy families, but without the ability to control the testing environment, there is no guarantee that the test is standardized for all children and the school district wants to build a relationship with families, so it wants families to come to school buildings to meet school staff.

The conversation then turned to tracking students. School district staff thinks it is possible to anonymously track children and see if children who were screened at 3 perform better than children who were not screened at 3.

**Supportive Efforts:** The Educational Preparedness group then asked school district staff what the group could focus on to support the school districts in their efforts.

Community awareness about the importance of screening at age 3 was felt to be a big need, especially with families who may move around the county a lot and may not be aware of services offered or where to go for services. Welcome Wagons were tossed out as one idea for gaining awareness; however, those are often only given to home owners who move into the community, not renters and not every community offers information the same way.

Kami asked what the school district staff thought about a website that would have resource information for multiple areas (food, housing, health, education, etc.) in one place. School district staff felt that would be a great resource for the community both for families and for professionals who work with

families. The Edina Resource Directory and New Prague Area Coalition website were suggested as websites to take a look at.

The Medical Community was a niche that was mentioned as someone that could be collaborated with. Pediatricians typically see children frequently in their early years, but they don't always ask if parents have had their children screened.

School district staff mentioned that parents spend too much time on their cell phones and need to put their phones down and talk to their babies. Additionally, many children are given cell phones to play with at a young age and are not developing fine motor skills that they need too. Home visiting and other Public Health services are always beneficial to families.

**Early Childhood Screening Flyer:** Kami then presented the flyer that the Educational Preparedness group has been working on. The group tried to keep the information simple and in one spot so that it could be used for families all over Scott County. The design and theme comes from the Library's Readmobile (purchased with donations from a private donor and SMSC funds). One idea is to have the flyers available in the Readmobile for families as well as for Public Health staff to use with families during home visits.

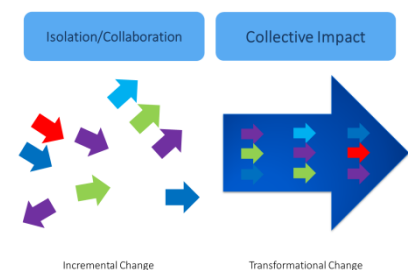
The school district staff were excited about the idea of a flyer and felt it would help get the word out to families they are possibly missing. Suggestions for tweaking the flyer included having it available in other languages, adding a QR code or link about what Early Childhood Screening is, changing the wording from "Scott County Screening Information" to "Screening Information in Scott County", reworking the yellow box so the emphasis isn't so heavily on school preparedness and reworking the map key so that the colors are in order/proportion to the map. They suggested it be made into a poster and hung in schools, libraries, public places (grocery stores, gyms, etc.), and preschools. It could also be given out at pediatrician offices, and sent to the schools as a PDF link so that it is available for the school districts to print and use if they would like to (especially for school districts who may not already have something they send out to families).

The conversation closed with the Educational Preparedness group thanking everyone for coming. It will not be our last conversation and everyone is welcome to attend the regular Educational Preparedness group meetings.

**Next Meeting Date: May 22, 2018 from 5:00-6:30 p.m. at Prior Lake Library**

Minutes taken by Sarah Geffre

***Educational Preparedness Vision Statement***  
Ensure children are developmentally on track and prepared for educational success.



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